SICKNESS, SCOUNDRELS AND SAINTS: TANTA IN THE WORLD AND
THE WORLD IN TANTA 1856-1907

by

Stephanie Anne Boyle

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History in the Graduate School of Northeastern University, August 2012
**Sickness, Scoundrels and Saints: Tanta in the World and the World in Tanta**

*1856-1907*

My dissertation is an investigation of the Egyptian Delta city of Tanta during its period of rapid urbanization, modernization and development (1856-1907). It determines that in an effort to modernize Tanta along with Cairo and Alexandria-the Cairo-based state authorities exponentially increased Tanta’s bureaucracy and physically transformed Tanta through public work and building projects. Local elites collaborated in this endeavor by joining the new administrative and judicial bureaucracies. Reforms to institutions that focused on physical and spiritual health (new forms of Sunni orthodoxy) became a vehicle to incorporate the governed classes into the project. Specifically, this project underlines the idea that the result of this undertaking was a form of modernity that was created by individuals and affected by local particularities, global forces and the Egyptian state’s reform.

This work emphasizes that modernization was a process and shows the interchange between local, global and regional forces. I argue that unlike other urban histories of Egypt that have focused on Cairo and Alexandria, a study of Tanta, (the Delta’s most prominent city) illustrates the national, regional and global character of modernization and urbanization between 1856 and 1907. It shows that modernization was a site of collaboration where members of civil society negotiated in three areas: the public health system, the administrative and judicial bureaucracy and religious institutions. These arenas illustrate that modernity was a space where a wide array of individuals (Egyptian, Western European, Greek, Syrian, American and others) participated and shaped cultural practices and modern institutions during the second half of the nineteenth-century.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It takes an army to get a PhD. An army of people pushing you forward telling you every step along the way that you can finish, you will finish, and that you deserve to finish. When I think back to the many ways that my friends and family have helped me, I am overwhelmed by my gratitude. This PhD has been an intellectual transformation and journey that has taken me around the world and back again. It has been more than just a project, but a major part of my life for the last seven years. It has defined how I think about things and how I understand my place in the world. It has been the most transformative period in my life to date and there are a number of people who have been responsible for helping me get through this difficult process.

I want to begin as this dissertation did by thanking the people who have become my friends and lifelong companions in Boston. First and foremost, I would like to thank my fellow graduate students at Northeastern who have helped me laugh through this difficult process. Zach Scarlett and Sam Christiansen have always been available to discuss, dissertate and complain about graduate school. They helped me work through the early days and have always been there to talk. Burleigh Hendrickson has also become a good friend at Northeastern who has helped me immensely by reading my junky drafts and giving me good advice. Zach, Sam, James Bradford and he have always been there for me to blow off steam and have a good time. I thank Rachel Gillett for so many good times and all of her assistance with reading my chapters and listening to my undeveloped ideas. I also want to thank the staff of the history department: Nancy Borromey and Jennifer Mocarski. Particularly, Jennifer has always been willing to give me a pep talk and make life a little more pleasant.

I also want to thank a number of people in Cairo. After the three years I spent there conducting research, I now think of Egypt as my second home. In Tanta, I want to thank Hany
Helmy. His patience and hospitality during my time in Tanta made my experience there truly enjoyable. I also want to thank the staff of the Fulbright Commission and ARCE for their assistance with this project. I also want to thank the staff of Dar al-Watha’iq and Dar al-Mahfuzat for their endless patience with me. I want to thank the great friends that I made in Cairo who made my life so much better while I lived there. I want to thank Syonara Tomoum and her husband Russell who helped me translate and make sense of some of the most poorly written Arabic that anyone has ever seen. Syonara has always been willing to help me and has greatly aided in this project. I also want to thank Erin Snider, Matt Axelrod, Anne Peters, and Hildagard Kiel for their friendship and companionship during our Fulbright year. I also greatly benefitted from my time with Sara Nimis and Matt Ellis who both taught me ways to enjoy life in Cairo. Sara Nimis has always been there for me and for her and her two children Aliya and Zayn I am very grateful. I want to especially thank David Faris and Jeff Culang who have both become very good friends. David’s uncanny ability to make me laugh coupled with his caring personality has made him an important friend. Jeff’s willingness to read drafts has made my journey so much easier and I am eternally grateful for his friendship. As long as I live, I will always remember my research time in Cairo as one of the greatest periods in my life.

I want to also take this opportunity to thank my wonderful advisor, Ilham Khuri-Makdisi who has been a source of inspiration and always able to make me push through. Her frankness coupled with sincere kindness has made my process one that will always be remembered. I also want to thank Philip Khoury was willing to take me on as an advisee even in the midst of his very busy schedule. I want to thank Laura Frader for all of her help during my early days of graduate school. I want to thank Peter Gran for all of his help over the course of my graduate career. His advice and help have really helped my project, but also helped me navigate through
I also want to thank Tim Brown for his help with grant writing and the job market, Clay McShane for all of his help and both Bill Fowler and Tony Penna for their wise words. I also want to thank the late Chris Gilmartin who was both a role model and mentor and taught me how to be a woman and mother in academia. She will be greatly missed.

While this dissertation has brought many new people into my life who have enriched the project and me, my longtime friends and family are largely the responsible for my success in completing this project and maintaining my sanity through these last seven years. I want to thank Mary, Audrey and Carrie for their longtime friendships. Individually they have held me up along the way and have been inspirational women whom I admire. I also want to thank Joel Zea. Words cannot express the amount of time and energy that he has spent with me. His wit and lightheartedness have carried me through many a difficult situation and the greatest of all conversations on porches from Boston to Cairo will always be remembered. I want to also thank my father Robin Jones and his partner Eddie for all of their help with my son. It would have been a very difficult year without them. I also want to thank my sister-in-law Nancy Setrakian for always bringing things back to reality and teaching me about popular culture. My brothers Oscar and Chris Martinez and my nieces Emily, Abby and nephew Milo have all helped me to laugh and stay in touch with reality.

To my mother, there are not words enough in this whole document to express my gratitude. She has put up with my bad attitude, my lack of funds at times and my erratic mood swings over the years and has always been there to help me finish. Thank you mom for all that you do. To my husband Hany Botros, I thank for all of his love and support and making my life in Egypt amazing. Lastly, to my beautiful son Karim, you are the best thing that happened to me
while I was writing my dissertation. You make me laugh and make me crazy every day. I am so grateful for you and your life. I am grateful to everyone who helped me on this journey.
To Karim
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NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

This dissertation will use the simplified version of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES)* and omit all diacritical markings. The *hamza* (‘) and *‘ayn* (‘) will be represented by a comma, but all of the hard consonants in Arabic will be represented without their markings. Similarly, the dissertation will follow the prescribed *IJMES* standards for capitalization. Place names will not be placed in italics and similarly the Sufi Orders will be capitalized and italicized as prescribed by *IJMES*. Also, the commonly used word shaykh will not be italicized, but the plural Arabic form *shuyukh* will be. Finally, this dissertation will refer to the *mulid* rather than *mawlid* because of the more common and popular use of the former. Common names such as ‘Ali and Sa’id will be simplified to Ali and Said.

All translations have been done by the author of all languages in the dissertation.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Archives

BLA Bibliotheca Alexandrina (Alexandria, Egypt)
CSF Collège de la Sainte Famille Archive (Cairo, Egypt)
CEDEJ Centre d'Études et de Documentation Économiques, Juridiques et Sociales (Cairo, Egypt)
DWQ Dar al-Watha’iq (National Archives, Cairo, Egypt)
DMZ Dar al-Mahfuzat (Provincial Archives, Cairo, Egypt)
BFO British Foreign Office, (London, British National Archives)
UNL University of Leiden, (Leiden, Holland)
UPM Presbyterian Historical Society (Philadelphia, PA)
SMA Society of African Missions

Arabic terms

‘alim/ ‘ulama Islamic Scholar
dhikr remembrance (of God), Sufi ritual
madhab/madhahib Schools of Islamic thought
muhafaza/muhafizat Governorate(s)
tariqa/turuq Sufi Order(s)
takiyya/takiyya¹ Sufi lodge/hostel
sharif/ashraf Descendants of the prophet Muhammad
shaykh al-balad/shuyukh al-bilad Village/Neighborhood headmen
waqf/awqaf Religious endowment

¹ Similar to other Sufi spaces, the takiyya is a multi-functional space that both welcomed Sufis and was a benevolent space that helped people in need.
Introduction: Tanta: A Growing Modern City 1854-1907

In 1266 /1848 Abbas Hilmi, the governor of the Gharbiyya province, publically read a 
**firman** (decree) issued by the Egyptian governor Said. The decree stated that the annual grand 
**mulid** of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi would be extended from five to eight days. The event 
brought together a diverse group of people to celebrate the life and teachings of Sayyid Ahmad 
al-Badawi. The reason for attendance was as diverse as the people who attended. Prolonging the 
**mulid** would restore the event to its previous grandeur. Abbas Hilmi claimed that expanding the 
celebration would benefit visitors, residents and merchants and that the resulting good work 
would be remembered. In the same year, Abbas Hilmi, bellowing from the balcony of his 
palace, greeted the visitors of the **mulid** by saying, “God joined us together for the purpose of 
this event and I am better as a result.” The issuance of the decree and the public greeting from 
Abbas later that year signified that the Egyptian government recognized the economic, social and 
religious significance of the event as well as its potential. The public reading of the edict speaks

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2 Sami Amin, *Taqwim al-Nil [The Almanac of the Nile]* vol. 3, (Cairo: 1928-1936), 45. Abbas Hilmi I would become the governor of Egypt very shortly after he read this decree (1849 to 1854). Tanta was the capital of the province of Gharbiyya and the city is about 90 kilometers north of Cairo and rests nearly in the center of the Delta. 

3 Abdul Fatah Ashur, *Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi: Shaykh wa-Tariqa [Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi: Shaykh and Order]* (Cairo: al Dar al Massrid, 1966). Ahmad al-Badawi was born in Fez, Morocco and died in Tanta around 1299. The most famous story of how he arrived can be found in Ali Mubarak’s *al-Khitat al-Tawfiqyya al-Jadida [Tawfiq’s New Plans]* (Cairo: Bulaq, 1306 H.) amongst other nineteenth-century hagiographies which claims that in Baghdad, Ahmad al-Badawi dreamt that God told him to go to the Egyptian Delta city of Tanta. When he arrived, Shaykh Rukayn, a honey merchant claimed that God had told him in a dream that a great **wali** (saint) would come and settle in Tanta and teach its people a great **Sufi** tradition. Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi (as he is known by his followers) founded the Ahmadiyya Sufi Order. Edward Reeves argues in his PhD dissertation the term **saint** is problematic because unlike Catholic saints there is no formal canonization for Sufi saints. Sufi saints are designated such by societal consensus. The above story is amongst the most popular account of Sayyid Badawi’s life as recounted by Edward Reeves, (the only American scholar who works on Tanta as a subject of inquiry). Edward Bradley Reeves, “The Wali Complex at Tanta, Egypt: An Ethnographic Approach to Popular Islam” (PhD Dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1981).


5 Abbas Hilmi I and the family of Muhammad Ali were the largest landowners in Gharbiyya. For more on the Khedival lands in the province of Gharbiyya please see F. Robert Hunter, *Egypt Under the Khedives, 1805-1879: from Household Government to Modern Bureaucracy* (Cairo: American University Press, 1999). Hunter uses the employee files from Dar al-Mahfuzat to craft the history of the Egyptian government and its vast bureaucracy from 1805 to 1879.
to the states growing interest in the *mulid*, but more importantly foreshadowed how Tanta would transform from a provincial town to Egypt’s third largest city between the years 1856 and 1907.\(^6\)

Abbas Hilmi I made a public spectacle of the significance of the *mulid* and the way that it united him and his people together as pilgrims and ostensibly designated the *mulid* as a zone of class and social harmony.\(^7\) His statement of unity concealed his real interest in the *mulid* and his desire to maximize the financial rewards for the city, residents and to some extent Egypt as well.\(^8\) The grand *mulid* brought hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, consumers, merchants and people looking to enjoy the food and entertainment at the event. These visitors donated money to the shrine, purchased wares from local merchants, stayed in local hotels, frequented local coffee and sweet shops and therefore generated revenue for local merchants, the mosque and the city in general. By modernizing the city and organizing the public space, the assumption was that more visitors would attend and subsequently generate more money for the city.

In many ways, the spectacle of Abbas shouting down from his palace at the anonymous crowd was symbolic of how the Egyptian government would deal with the city of Tanta between 1856 and 1907. The relationship between the government and the city was based on the state’s continual and gradual attempt at national incorporation through local intermediaries who collaborated with the state’s efforts.\(^9\) The main way that these intermediaries collaborated with the state was through their participation in the ever-changing and growing administrative

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\(^6\) CEDEJ, *Egyptian Census 1882-1996*, CD-ROM, 2003. This cd-rom also has some scant information from the earlier Ottoman census of the 1840s and 1860s.

\(^7\) In his speech, he referred to the *mulid* as pilgrimage (*hajj*) and spoke about it having equal importance as the Mecca pilgrimage.

\(^8\) There is no real account of the number of people who attended the *mulid* prior to the mid-19\(^{th}\) century, but the event clearly held great significance to the people of Egypt before the 19\(^{th}\) century. Accounts of the *mulid* and its regional significance go back to much earlier times. For more on this see Ronald Messier, “Maghrebs in the Mashriq during the Modern Period,” in *North Africa, Islam and the Mediterranean*, ed. Julia Clancy Smith (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), 87.

\(^9\) While Muhammad Ali established a small bureaucracy that included many members of his family, his progeny greatly expanded upon this system and incorporated local landed elites into the government as employees. This process will be discussed at great length in chapter four. For more on the reign of Muhammad Ali see Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men* (New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2002).
bureaucracy alongside transplanted government employees stationed in Tanta. Both groups of elites fancied themselves as modern, progressive and civilized folk. The elites waged battle against those who thwarted these efforts and maintained unsanctioned local rituals, promoted chaotic social order and/or participated unorthodox religious practices.

The foreign communities also contributed to the process of modernity both locally and globally. The exchange of ideas coming from Europe enriched notions of society. People from Europe, the larger Middle East and America moved to Tanta during the second half of the nineteenth-century also contributed to the project of modernity through intimate contacts with locals. These new residents participated in modernizing Tanta in a variety of capacities. Some were members of the state bureaucracy (mostly Syrians), foreign missionaries (American and French), and local business owners (Greeks, Italians, and Syrians), part of the urban elite and members of the intelligentsia. The Greek and Syrian communities treaded between distinctions of local and foreign. Being from the eastern Mediterranean and often being Ottoman subjects, they held a unique position socially in Tanta- they were local in one sense, but not native to Tanta. Their reasons for coming to Tanta were as diverse as their nationalities and each group

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10 Michael Gasper, *The Power of Representation: Publics, Peasants and Islam in Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 2. Gasper argues that a distinctly urban-middle-class identity developed in Egypt from the 1870s to 1910s. Gasper included Tanta among the “dusty provincial towns” as Egypt’s urban space. The diminutive and somewhat dismissive depiction of Tanta perpetuates a pervasive trend in urban Egyptian history which diminishes the importance of the provinces and their function as intellectual centers. Gasper clearly recognizes the need to include the provincial capitals in his discussion, but doesn’t provide any real discussion of the intellectual life of these cities.

11 The Syrians actively participated in intellectual life in Tanta. On 10 November 1905, *al-Sayha [The Shout]* published a letter of dissatisfaction written by the Syrian community that was originally published in another daily in Tanta, *al-Hurriyya*. The letter asserted that their ideas were being censored in the press in Tanta. According to the periodical finding guide at Dar al-Kutub (The Egyptian National Library), there were six journals published in Tanta during the period of study: *al-Hurriyya* (weekly) published by Mahmud Fahmy (1902-1934), *al-Ra’id al-‘Uthmani* (weekly)(published by Muhammad Tawfiq 1902-1920s), *al-Sayha* (1903-unknown), *al-Mumtaz* (weekly) published by Mustafa Shatir and Salah al-Din Shatir (1899-unknown), *al-Nafa’a* (weekly) published by Mustafa Nafa’a from 1904-1906 and *al-Hijra* (weekly) published by ‘Abd al-Rahman Dahabi (1904-unknown). Unfortunately, the library lists that they have a scattered selection of these papers, but in reality Dar al-Kutub only have *al-Sayha* for the period under study. They do have some of these journals for the twentieth-century. *Al-Sayha* provided a variety of articles that included book and theater reviews as well as political commentary about the workings of the local government and the corruption of the bureaucratic system in Tanta. It also provided a critique of the city’s
of foreigners participated in the public space in many ways. As this dissertation will show, each of these groups had very different ways of engaging in the public space and oftentimes had different visions for how it should function.

**Tanta: Rapid Transformations and Urbanization**

The transformation of Tanta was part of the global process of urbanization that followed industrialization and the strengthening of global capitalism. Beginning in the early nineteenth-century, towns swelled to become cities and existing cities expanded physically and demographically at an extraordinary pace throughout the world. This transformation was largely facilitated by the global interconnectivity that accompanied western European global commerce and the capitalist system that eventually emerged. Global capitalism also affected where and how people lived. A demographic boom (partially as a result of better nutrition) and the rise of industrialization pushed rural dwellers into cities. This process transformed many people in Europe and North America from farmers to industrial workers. By the late nineteenth-century, as more migrant and immigrant workers crammed into cities for economic survival, capitalists and merchants flooded cities to take part in the massive transformation in the global economy. The peculiar mix of social classes, economic development and geographic expansion produced a variety of consequences for the cities’ residents. The poor felt the most negative impact of urban life. Cramped living conditions, poor sanitation and noise shaped their urban experience.

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[^14]: Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt’s Poor and the Politics of Benevolence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). The first instance of Sudanese labor in Tanta that I have found was in 1882 when a number of slaves were freed in the city; “Tanta,” *al-Ahram*, 12 February 1882.
In Egypt, southern workers and rural Delta inhabitants mixed with Sudanese laborers (slaves and former slaves) to form a work force that would maximize Egypt’s role in the global economy. Egypt’s vast agricultural land and seemingly endless agricultural yield created an agro-industrial complex in which rural landed elites employed local peasants, migrant workers and slaves to pick crops (and, toward the end of the 19th century) to work in factories. Then commodities merchants sold the crops in major markets throughout the Delta. Many of these crops, particularly cotton, eventually made their way to Europe. Egypt, taking advantage of the American Civil War and the halt on American production of cotton, began to export large quantities of fine Egyptian cotton. European bankers stationed in Egypt largely financed this endeavor. Existing Delta towns became provincial cities and small southern towns and cities swelled as rural laborers moved to urban spaces to find work on food plantations and factories throughout the Delta and the South.

Tanta transformed from a large provincial town into Egypt’s third largest city over the course of the second half of the 19th century. Its process of transformation really began in 1856 when the railroad first came to Tanta. The new stop in Tanta on the Cairo/Alexandria line brought goods, ideas and people to Tanta at a much faster rate. According to André Raymond, the introduction of the railroad provided the physical and intellectual space for the

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17 This was particularly true during the American Civil War when the American Southern States stopped producing cotton. For more on this topic see Roger Owen, Cotton and the Egyptian Economy (New York: Clarendon Press, 1969).
“modernization (that) would enter the old city.” In Tanta, the train, or construction of rail lines and a station that housed trains and travelers functioned as a lobby or outer hallway that brought individuals immediately to the core of the city. For Tanta, the train became part of the core of the city and fed the economically prosperous core more rapidly than ever before. Other modern institutions and innovations also came to Tanta after the train. In 1878, the post office arrived in Tanta.21 Between 1900 and 1904 both the telephone and electricity came to Tanta.22 Rapid demographic growth accompanied these modern innovations. Between 1821 and 1846 the population of Tanta jumped from approximately 10,000 to approximately 19,500 (a 95% increase).23 The population rose again from approximately 19,500 to 33,750 by 1882 (an 80.3% increase). Between 1882 and 1897 the population increased to 57,289 (a 69.7% increase), but then stabilized, remaining at 54,437 by the time of the British administered 1907 census.24 In relationship to Cairo and Alexandria, Tanta experienced similar demographic growth, albeit on a smaller numeric scale. Cairo’s population grew from 210,900 (approx.) at the beginning of the century to 678,433 in 1907, actually growing at a smaller rate than Tanta and Alexandria. Alexandria by far witnessed the most rapid population increase over the nineteenth-century, growing from an estimated 15,000 -20,000 in 1800 to 370,009 in 1907.25

The Global Forces of Modernity and its Impact on Tanta

This dissertation emphasizes the impact of global, regional and local forces on interpersonal relationships in Tanta. Particularly it shows that institutions such as the court, the public health care system and the Ahmadi mosque complex were important venues that

20 André Raymond, Cairo (New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2000).
21 “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 12 July 1878.
22 UPM, History of the American Hospital in Tanta, pamphlet, (np.; nd).
23 CEDEJ, Egyptian Census’ 1800-1907.
24 CEDEJ, Egyptian Census’ 1800-1907.
25 CEDEJ, Egyptian Census’ 1800-1907.
witnessed modernizing transformations during the second half of the nineteenth century. It is a study of urbanization in Tanta and more specifically how urbanization and the global project of modernity played out in Egypt’s third largest city. I define modernity as the global capitalist system that emerged with industrialized weaponry, machinery and modes of transportation propelled by and utilized as modes of imperialism which compressed (travel) time and (physical) space. This definition expands upon Anthony Giddens’ notion of modernity in *The Consequences of Modernity.* Giddens asserts that there are a number of features that mark modernity which includes its global character, a total and rapid rupture with the past and the establishment of modern institutions. Modernity necessarily transformed the way that individuals engaged with each other through these institutions and (by default) the state. Between 1856 and 1907, modernity manifested in the ways that the state and state-linked institutions attempted to force Tanta into an increasingly invasive and ever-growing nationalization project. The Egyptian government (under governor Abbas and later the Khedives), after establishing a strong central bureaucracy in Cairo based on the army and cash-cropping system created by Muhammad Ali, turned to the provinces to forge ties with elites, establish urban order and develop a modern infrastructure to support these changes.

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26 Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). While Giddens maps out a clear definition of modernity and its trajectory, he asserts that it emerged in the west during the seventeenth century as a byproduct of the Enlightenment and therefore supports the dominant paradigm.  
27 Importantly, Giddens notes that the nation-state system, militarization, internationalization of industrial work and the world capitalist system form the complex that conjures modernity, Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity,* 71. 
28 Ze’evi Dror, “Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle East,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19, no.1, (2004): 73 - 94. Dror rejects the idea that modernity emanated out of Europe and asserts that modernity came through colonial institutions, but that local particularities had a particularly important role in shaping modernity. 
29 Muhammad Ali’s reign focused on modernizing the provinces through agricultural reform and building his vast army. It wasn’t until Said that there was really a focus on improving the urban space of the Delta. In reality, the mid-nineteenth century government really continued the efforts of Ali Bey al-Kabir rather than a continual expansion of Muhammad Ali and his dynasty. For more on the re-periodization of modern Egyptian history please see Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt 1760-1840* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998).
Landed elites sat at the top of the social structure in Tanta as they did in all of the provinces. These elites dominated both the local public landscape and would also come to be part of the government’s public bureaucracy in Tanta particularly after 1866 and the creation of the Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab (Advisory Council of Representatives). The Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab was the national manifestation of the regional councils that controlled Tanta’s local politics and the provinces generally. It advised the government on matters that affected the representatives of the council, particularly in the area of land reform, public health and legislation. The Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab provided elites with a political voice within the Egyptian governmental framework. Until that point, elites were incorporated into the government as employees without giving them (as a class) political power. Furthermore, the Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab gave elites a vehicle to both participate in the government’s modernization efforts, but also affect its trajectory. Landed elites and urban elites attempted to redefine Tanta’s public space by imposing modernization efforts onto ordinary people, but as this dissertation will show, the project of modernization was not only accomplished by elite collaboration, but to some extent the consent of ordinary people.

Ordinary people in Tanta had a much different relationship with the process of modernization of the city. For them, modernization was a process in which elite bureaucrats working for or in union with the government would attempt to impose a change or

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30 Yunan Labib Riziq, al-‘Ayb fi Dhat Afandina: Dirasa Tarikhiyya Muwaththaqa min 1866 Hatta al-Yawm [The Shameful Behavior of the Khedive: A Documented Historical Study from 1866 to the Present] (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2008). The word ‘Ayb connotes both shameful behavior and blame and the term Afandina was one of the many alqab associated with the office of the Khedive. The title of this text pays homage to an earlier work by Sayyid ‘Ushmawi, al-‘Ayb fi al-Dhat al-Malakiiya [The Shameful Behavior of the King] that critiqued the government from 1882 to 1952. The Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab was a unicameral body that gave elites a political position in government, allowed them to participate in its administration and gave them political power as a social class to sway the government.

31 Byron Cannon, Politics of Law and the Courts in Nineteenth-Century Egypt (Sat Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 95.

transformation to existing systems or institutions. These reforms came in many ways that included (but were not limited to): the creation and expansion of public health institutions and procedures such as vaccination and the creation of new hospitals (both governmental and non-governmental), reforms to religious institutions like the Ahmadi Mosque and Sufi order associated with the saint as well as a constant and continual government encroachment into Tanta with the establishment of new bureaucratic institutions. Ordinary people did not merely adhere to all of Tanta’s modernization, but rather consented to certain portions that benefitted them individually and rejected those that did not.

This dissertation approaches the city of Tanta from a variety of vantage points to explore how ordinary people and elites engaged in the processes of modernization and urbanization. It looks at how the world, the region and Egypt represented Tanta in print and shows that amongst these three spheres, Tanta most often appeared as a dangerous place. The reputation that emerged in print came largely from an association between the annual mulid of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi and a number of waves of cholera that swept the world during the nineteenth-century.\(^ {33} \) In an effort to explore this notion of danger, this dissertation looks at public health, the bureaucratization of religion and the court system to show that there was a marked battle over the use of public space in Tanta. As (governmental and local) elites pushed to use public space in more modern ways they ran up against others in Tanta who seemed to impede the city’s reform and continued to use the public space in unsanctioned or unorthodox ways.\(^ {34} \)


\(^{34}\) In this dissertation, the term *elites* refers to landed gentry (*a’yan*) and members of the Egyptian state bureaucracy as well as the urban intelligentsia.
Diverse groups of scholars grapple with defining and locating modernity, specifically the origination and dissemination of modernity from Europe. The malleability of *modernity* facilitates a larger debate concerning the place of the global south or “non-west” in the process of modernity.  

Timothy Mitchell notes in *Questions of Modernity*:

Modernity has always been associated with a certain place. In many uses the modern is just a synonym for the West (or the North in more recent writing) Modernization continues to be commonly understood as a process begun and finished in Europe, from where it has been exported across ever-expanding regions of the non-West. The destiny of those regions has been to mimic, never quite successfully, the history already performed by the west. To become modern, it is still said, or today to become postmodern, is to act like the West.

Mitchell’s work critiques this claim and shows that modernity was necessarily a symbiotic relationship (although often turbulent) between the West and the rest of the world which spurred and facilitated modern capitalism and the resulting global market that emerged between Europe and the world. Other scholars such as Partha Chaterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Lila Abu-Lughod also critique the idea that modernity emanates from Europe in their work. These authors show that Europe should be considered in any discussion of modernity, but that it was part of a much larger economic system. Europe’s economic dominance, which dates to the conquest of North and South America, is merely one factor among many in considering what shapes and dictates modernity.  

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35 The term *global south* is preferred to the use of the term “non-west” in order to diminish the binary between the west and the rest.
38 In the field of World History there is a debate about two historical moments that Europe lunged ahead of the rest of the world economically, politically and culturally. This notion is referred to as the “European Triumphalist Narrative.” Some argue for an early take-off in 1492 when Christopher Columbus arrived in North America. The second model purports that industrialization pushed Europe ahead of the rest of the world and laid the foundation for
dominant Foucaultian model of institutional power structures emerging in 19th century Europe resulting from “The Enlightenment.”

Like Stoler, Mitchell illustrates the “periphery’s” influences on the “center,” while recognizing the problematic nature of casting Europe and the world into a binary. This dissertation moves a step beyond the work of these authors and asserts that while modernity was a global phenomenon; it transformed and was experienced in different ways at the local level. Like these scholars, this dissertation attempts to upset the Foucaultian model by destabilizing the inherently teleological assumptions that essentialize the rest of the world merely as theaters for Europe to perform modernity rather than places where active participants engaged in the economic, social, and cultural transformations that came with modernity.

A Note on Periodization

This dissertation begins in 1856 when the train arrived in Tanta and ends in 1907 when the city’s demographic boom ended as a result of the global economic crisis or “Panic of 1907.” This project upsets the dominant model that separates modern Egyptian history into the period before and after the British occupation. While the British occupation officially began in
	nineteenth-century colonialism which expanded the economic, political and social gap between Europe and the rest of the world. In both scenarios, Europe is special or different to other places because of the unique nature of their historical past and trajectory. There are a number of works that engage with this model. Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence* (Chicago: Northwestern University, 2001). Pomeranz argues that industrialization was when Europe took off. According to Pomeranz, prior to the nineteenth-century, Europe and China competed equally in the global market. Charles Mann, *1491* (New York: Random House, 2005) argues that the cultures of North and South America were rich and vibrant systems before the coming of Europeans. While this text does not directly address the Columbian exchange or the coming of Columbus, the periodization asserts that 1492 was a watershed moment again participating in the European triumphalist narrative.


40 Gudrun Kramer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt* (London: IB Tauris, 1989), 109. Kramer argues that there was an exodus of middle and upper class Jewish bankers from Tanta as a result of the “Panic of 1907.” This was much earlier than some other provincial towns were the Jewish population fled to Cairo and Alexandria a little later.

41 The periodization model that breaks up nineteenth-century Egypt into the period before the occupation and after the occupation can be found in a variety of works, such as Harold Tollefson, *Policing Islam: The British Occupation of Egypt* (Westport: Greenview Press, 1999). Tollefson’s study argues that there was a rise in police brutality and repression after the British occupation. For more recent work on the subject of the British occupation, please see Lanver Mak, *The British in Egypt: Community, Crime and Crises 1882-1922* (London: IB Tauris, 2011). This work
1882, Western European venture capitalists, tourists, missionaries and travelers skulked amongst the Egyptian population well before 1882.\textsuperscript{42} Egypt was an ethnically and religiously diverse place with people from many parts of the world who lived and worked in Egypt before the revolution of Ahmad ‘Urabi of 1882. The revolution of Ahmad ‘Urabi and the occupation that followed has defined the study of colonial Egyptian history and has categorized 1882 as a watershed moment in Egyptian history.\textsuperscript{43} British administrative and economic reforms coupled with the military occupation connoted a break with earlier periods rather than an expansion or continuation of earlier governmental efforts. The Egyptian government appeared as a defunct organization that engaged in wasteful spending that eventually led to the British occupation. Within this framework, the military occupation transformed the relationship between Britons (and other Westerners) and individual Egyptian residents and also the occupation was pervasive and experienced unilaterally throughout Egypt. Furthermore, this model implies that the occupation changed the face of public space and interpersonal engagement between foreigners and locals. Economic favoritism for Western European citizens, governmental modernization

looks at the ordinary Britons who lived in Egypt during the British occupation and shows how their position as Britons afforded them legal privileges and gave them the ability to commit crimes. It is not a history of Egypt, but British imperial history set in Egypt. Conversely, Hunter’s \textit{Egypt Under the Khedives} looks at the Egyptian administration from 1805-1879 and discusses the increased power of Muhammad Ali and his dynasty. While this work does not engage with the British occupation it follows a periodization model that cuts the century into two periods.

Ibrahim Dhu al-Fiqar, \textit{al-Imbaraturiya al-Britaniyya fi Misr 1882-1914 [The British Empire in Egypt 1882-1914]} (Geneve: Dar al-Nashr, 1973). Ibrahim Dhu al-Fiqar notes that the notion of empire and colonialism must be problematized. He cites that French and British imperial interests began with the French expedition of Egypt. British intervention on the side of the Ottomans which put Muhammad Ali in power in 1805 is the beginning of what he calls the “veiled” empire. The veiled imperial period was marked by foreigner economic dominance. He says that veiled empire existed until the ‘Urabi Revolution of 1882. With the military occupation the British lifted the “veil” and the British Egyptian relationship changed to active imperialism. He also notes that American and French presence has been written out of the story of the history of the British Occupation of Egypt. Rather, he claims that their presence facilitated and propelled a local economic reality that made way for the military occupation. French economic interest coupled with American ex-civil war troops laid the structural foundation for British economic control.

\textsuperscript{42} Juan Cole, \textit{Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Revolutions of the ‘Urabi Revolt} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Juan Cole has written extensively on the ‘Urabi Revolt and claims that it was not a revolt, but rather a revolution because of the active participation of many strata of Egyptian society which cut through economic class and location- an interesting point that needs further exploration.
projects, and the establishment of governmental ties to local elites existed well before the British occupied Egypt.\textsuperscript{44} This dissertation underscores that splitting the nineteenth-century into the period before and after the occupation cannot be applied to understand Tanta’s period of transformation during the second half of the nineteenth-century because Tanta’s transformation straddles the period before and after the coming of the British Occupation.

\textbf{Literature on Tanta and Urban History}

While Egyptian governmental interest remained constant in Tanta during much of the nineteenth-century, historians’ interest has not. There is no historiography related to the urbanization and urban development of Tanta specifically.\textsuperscript{45} Urban histories of Egypt have focused on Alexandria and Cairo and given little or no attention to any of the provincial cities.\textsuperscript{46} Egyptian and Middle Eastern urban history is not unique in privileging the large city as the unit of study. Scholars have used the metropolis as the dominant model to study the city globally. A small yet significant literature on the “secondary city” illustrates the economic, cultural, intellectual and social significance of smaller cities and towns within a global urban economic system. The work of James Connolly and Kenneth Hall (and the Middletown Studies program at Ball State) in particular seeks to de-center urban studies by addressing the role and significance of the “secondary city” and its role within the global community. The work of the Middletown

\textsuperscript{44} Hunter, Egypt Under the Khedives 1805-1879 and Ehud R. Toledano, State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). These two authors have written extensively about the Egyptian administration and Toledano’s specifically targets the cultural and social reality of Egypt during the “forgotten years” between Khedive Isma’il (1863-1879) and the reign of Muhammad Ali.

\textsuperscript{45} There has been a dissertation on the urbanization of Egypt generally. For more on this subject please see Ahmad, Muhammad Said Ahmad, “\textit{Athar al-Tatawwarat al-Siyasiyya wa’l-Iqtisadiyya ‘ala Munadhdhamat al-‘Umran al-Misri Mundhu Nihayat al-Hamla al-Fransaviyya wa-hatta Nihayat al-Qarn al-Ashrin [The Impact of Political and Economic Developments on Egyptian Urbanization from the End of the French Occupation until the End of the 20th Century]},” (PhD Dissertation, Cairo University, 2007).

\textsuperscript{46} The oases and the western Libyan border are other important factors to be considered in the construction of Egyptian history during the nineteenth-century. These areas of Egypt are almost entirely absent in the study of Egypt. However, new work by Matthew Ellis looks at the western border and uses it to understand how it relates to the construction of a national Egyptian history. For more on this work see Matthew Ellis, “Between Empire and Nation: The Emergence of Egypt's Libyan Borderland, 1841-1911” (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2012).
Studies program and scholars associated with it illustrates that the secondary city has its own culture and social and economic network and not merely as a smaller replica of metropolitan cities. The Middletown Studies program recognizes the multiple ways that smaller cities function and shows that secondary cities played a critical role as both urban launching points for individuals new to city life as well as an important (albeit smaller) node in global urban networks.

Research that focuses on Tanta remains scant. The only scholarly works that use Tanta as a unit of study are those that discuss the city in terms of its relationship to its patron saint, Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi and the myriad of shrines that pepper the city. Catherine Mayer-Jaouen’s *Histoire d’un pèlerinage légendaire en Islam: le mouled de Tanta du XIII siècle à nos jours*, the only modern history that focuses on Tanta, traces the transformation of Badawi’s *mulid* from a small localized rural celebration to the largest pilgrimage in Egypt, second only to the pilgrimage to Mecca. The author also argues that the *mulid* transformed from a religious celebration to a large scale commercial bazaar by the end of the 18\(^{th}\) century. When the train came to Tanta in 1856 and linked the city to the Cairo/Alexandria line, the *mulid* exploded in prosperity as more merchants attended along with more pilgrims. Mayer-Jaouen demonstrates

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47 The Middletown Studies program at Ball State has held a semi-annual conference to address the small city since 2001 and in recent years has expanded research interests to illustrate the role of the secondary city in the global urban network. Some of the publications that address the secondary city are as follows: James J. Connolly and E. Bruce Geelhoed ed., “The Small City Experience in the Midwest,” special issue of the *Indiana Magazine of History* 99:4 (December, 2003), Kenneth R. Hall, *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking in the Indian Ocean Realm, c. 1400-1800* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2008). This work has particular interest because it upsets the metropole as the center of the urban universe, but also displaces the role of the western city as central to global economics. “Decentering Urban History: Peripheral Cities in the Modern World,” ed. James Connolly special issue of the *Journal of Urban History* (November, 2008).

48 There are no modern histories of Tanta or the province of Gharbiyya in any language at this point. I have not found any masters theses, PhD dissertations or published manuscripts in Arabic that focus on Tanta in the modern period.

that the magnitude of visitors to the *mulid* became a source of fear for the Egyptian government and later the British who banned the *mulid* over the course of the second half of the 19th century.\(^{50}\) Similarly, *The Hidden Government*, an anthropological study of saint worship and shrine visitation in Tanta written by Edward Reeves in 1990, looks at the influences of these structures on social life in 20th century Tanta. It shows that saint worship and shrine visitation dictates the social and economic life of the city.\(^{51}\) My work recognizes the importance of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi and all of the other saints in Tanta as core factors that shaped the economic, social and cultural life of Tanta. However, the shrine/saint complex dominates the study of Tanta and relegates the city to a shrine town that slumbered when there was no *mulid* in town.

My work shows that while economic, social and cultural life emanated from the Badawi mosque/market core, Tanta was also an important provincial center with a rich cultural and social life well beyond the mosque/market complex.

Urban history of the Middle East is limited to a few cities and a few scholars. André Raymond’s work serves as the foundation for the study of the urban Middle East.\(^{52}\) Raymond argues that these cities contained an internal order understood largely by the residents and those familiar with the terrain.\(^{53}\) Foreigners or those unfamiliar with Middle Eastern cities, found the cities difficult to navigate, disorganized and backward rather than recognizing the organic way that Middle Eastern cities developed over long periods of time. Raymond’s assessment of the

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\(^{50}\) Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 73. Mitchell makes this argument regarding the relationship between cholera and the *mulid*, but only anecdotally to discuss the ordering of Egyptian public space.


\(^{52}\) André Raymond, *Cairo* (New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2000).

\(^{53}\) Raymond, *Cairo*. The most famous example of the *occidentalization* of a Middle Eastern city can be shown in Khedive Isma’il’s re-organization of Cairo. He specifically shaped Cairo along the lines of Paris and simultaneously joined Cairo into one city from two adjacent cities: Fustat and Cairo. The term occidentalization is problematic in that it purports that there was a wholesale adoption of western city models rather than an incorporation of those models into existing structures. However, with the case of Isma’il, his adoption of the Paris model was very deliberate.
Middle Eastern city addresses a specific genre of Orientalist literature which positioned the Middle Eastern city against European cities. This dissertation will show that beginning in the early 19th century, Egyptian administrators sought to map and order cities, not using a particularly occidental model, but one that would maximize information about the country’s inhabitants in order to more efficiently move goods, products and people through the city and maximize the city’s economic output.

The lack of discussions about the city of Tanta in urban history literature exists as a result of the improper characterization of Tanta as part of the rural Egyptian Delta. The constant depiction of the Delta as a rural space mischaracterizes the diverse nature of the Delta generally. Towns, villages and cities peppered the lush Delta, but in the historiography on Egypt the Delta sits in the backdrop as a space of production or cultivation. This characterization comes largely as a result of Orientalizing historical forces and the perpetual sidelining of demographic factors and population densities in favor of agricultural output. These features are further exacerbated by the predominance of scholarship on Cairo and Alexandria which creates an uneven image of Egypt that diminishes the importance of other urban spaces in Egypt and inflates the significance of Egypt’s capital and seaport. Because sixty-five percent of urban dwellers lived in Cairo or Alexandria at the end of the nineteenth-century, the perception remains that the remainder of Egypt was rural space.54 The Delta is a diverse space with vast swaths of agricultural lands, but it also had a rich intellectual, social and cultural life that centered around urban and town markets. This dissertation hopes to enrich the study of the Delta and join the small, but growing group of historians who use the Delta as a zone to study Egyptian history. The most insightful

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54 Janet Abu-Lughod, “Urbanization in Egypt: Present State and Future,” *Economic Development & Cultural Change* 13, no. 3 (1965): 313-331. While this argument was made over forty years ago, this idea pervades urban history of Egypt and more importantly diminishes provincial cities as small spaces that were not urban.
text on the Delta is Kenneth Cuno’s *The Pasha’s Peasants*.\textsuperscript{55} Using mainly court records from Mansura, Cuno’s work looks at “market towns” in the Delta that were linked economically and socially to Cairo and Alexandria. These towns or economic hubs served as centralizing locales for farmers, planters and artisans to sell their wares between 1740 and 1858. Similarly, the early work of Nathan Brown (*Peasant Politics in Modern Egypt: The Struggle against the State*) attempts to show governmental/peasant relationships in the Egyptian Delta between 1882 and 1952 (or during the British Occupation). Brown’s work asserts that peasants regarded the state with hostility because it was an alien or foreign element. It further asserts that many peasant organizations formed as a result of informal social networks.\textsuperscript{56} Brown’s work provides an important methodological foundation to frame governmental/peasant engagements, but lacks a substantive body of sources in Arabic on the topic. Hanan Hammad’s work looks at prostitution and the laws associated with the profession in the Delta center of Mahallat Kubra during the first half of the twentieth century (Gharbiyya’s major industrial center).\textsuperscript{57} Her work shows that the central Delta city became a zone of contestation between nationalist efforts and colonial objectives. This dissertation seeks to fit into this small but rich body of literature and inform it in a number of ways. First, the population density of the Delta, the economic significance of its urban centers, its rich cultural and religious life and the diverse population of people who live there makes the Delta an important focal point for the study of Egyptian history. By illustrating the unique nature of the Delta coupled with its relationship to the larger epicenters, the region and the world, this dissertation shows that moving focus of study away from the urban core (Cairo and Alexandria) into the urban periphery complicates the image of Egyptian history.

\textsuperscript{57} Hanan Hammad, “Between Egyptian “National Purity” and “Local Flexibility” Prostitution in al-Mahalla al-Kubra in the First Half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century” *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 3 (2011): 751-783.
Furthermore, it asserts that each region beyond Cairo and Alexandria should be explored to further enrich our understanding of nineteenth-century Egypt. It shows that the continual use of Cairo as the case-study for Egyptian history obfuscates the rich social, religious and economic life that both fed and bolstered Cairo.

Health and the Egyptian health care system feature prominently in this dissertation. Because the Delta was a socially designated zone of spiritual healing and Tanta served as the capital of that zone, discrediting the work of local healers-particularly women-was important to establishing the integrity of a legitimate public health care system. A small, but important body of literature on health in 19th century Egypt expresses this sentiment. Hibba Abugideiri’s work *Gender and the Making of Modern Medicine in Colonial Egypt* traces the transformation of women’s roles in the medical community during the colonial period. She argues that the heightened position enjoyed by doctors trained in Europe and employed by Qasr al-‘Aini created a discourse in which barber-surgeons and midwives (*daya*) were depicted as archaic and anti-modern.58 Similar to Khalid Fahmy’s article “Medicine and Power,” her book looks at how the local professional medical community embraced Orientalist tropes to equate local practices with backwardness.59 While my work recognizes the pervasive nature of Orientalism and its hold on professional local physicians, this dissertation asserts that on the ground in Tanta, collaboration with spiritual medical practitioners became the norm among some missionaries who were forced to recognize its position as the dominant method of healing in Tanta.

As this dissertation shows, health and healing did not only occur within the realm of professional doctors, but among missionaries as well. The medical historical literature is as

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important as the small, but growing field on the history of the American Protestant missionary movement in the modern Middle East. Heather Sharkey’s work, *American Evangelicals in Egypt Missionary Encounters in the Age of Empire* traces the United Presbyterian’s movement from its inception in 1854 to 1967. She argues that between 1882 and 1918, missionaries identified Egypt as a strategic center, particularly flourishing after the British occupation. The work is limited in geographic focus and only in very loose terms recognizes Egypt’s position in the larger missionary global project of Christianizing all of the heathen lands. Similar to Sharkey’s work, this study recognizes the role of the occupation in facilitating missionaries’ ability to access populations beyond the major urban epicenters. However, it expands upon a discussion of the history of missionaries and explores how the latter functioned within a larger group of healers and mendicants who were attracted to Tanta because of its particular relationship with illness and health. In fact, this study shows that missionaries themselves (and other colonial agents for that matter) offered very little to the medical culture of Tanta without the existence and support of the local community.

Another important text that this chapter speaks to is Ussama Makdisi’s ground breaking texts *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* and *Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations: 1820-2001*. It focuses on the Protestant Missionary Movement as part of a larger discourse about American foreign relations and policy by tracing the relationship between Arabs and the United States beginning with a highly understudied section of history, the American missionary movement in the Middle East in

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61 Anna Y. Thompson served as a missionary for the United Presbyterian Missionaries between 1871 and 1932. She ended her missionary career in India. Also a number of missionaries originally stationed in Egypt were moved to Sudan eventually. UPM, Record group 209 Box 22 Folder 22, *Missionaries with the American Mission in Egypt*, n.d.
the 19th century. His work shows that the missionary movement was a global phenomenon, but seeks to elucidate the local particularity that shapes the missionary experience in the Middle East. His work asserts that these early encounters shaped American/Middle East relations. Similar to Makdisi’s work, my work seeks to elaborate upon the role of missionaries in cultural encounters with local communities. The missionaries who came to Tanta provided a particular perspective based on the idea that they were doing God’s work and that their mission was benevolent. They shared this perspective with the local community that helped them work with the sick and afflicted.

**Analytical Approaches and the Impact of the Field of World History on this Project**

This dissertation is a micro-historical survey of the Egyptian Delta city of Tanta, but is equally grounded in the field of World History. While world historical studies have often been characterized by macro-historical engagements that both perpetuate and embody a Eurocentric worldview, there is also a growing body of literature that seeks to challenge the European triumphalist narrative and show that the world was and is an interconnected system in which local realities engage with regional and global forces. Most of the world histories that critique the European triumphalist narrative continue to perpetuate it by seeking to show how Europe was successful. *The Columbian Exchange* by Alfred Crosby is a masterful work of environmental history that shows that disease and the transplantation of new animals and plants were the real cause of Europe’s success in the “New World.” This sentiment has been picked up by Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs and Steel* which argues that it was technological advancements,

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biological accidents and resources that made Europe victorious. While seeking to upset the dominant narrative, these works continue to assert that Europe was triumphant even if accidentally. This dissertation, similar to the work of Donald Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*, hopes to illustrate how small places engaged with the world and were influenced by global forces. Rather, this dissertation shows by looking at the global theme of modernity that there were local, regional and global components. This dissertation fits into a very small body of World History that hopes to step out of the European triumphalist narrative and disentangle the field from Europe’s capitalist project. Two texts by Peter Gran have greatly influenced this study: *Beyond Eurocentrism: A New View of Modern World History* and his later work *The Rise of the Rich*, which are critical in terms of how this dissertation engages with World History. The basic premise of both texts is that local elites colluded with one another in the world and that shared economic wealth and alliances among the rich are the real forces that move modern world history rather than the governments of individual nations positioned in Western Europe. Gran’s work asserts that for too long World History as a field has focused on elite white males living in Western Europe. The irony of this is that most of the people of the world are not white, nor are they rich or live in Europe. Thus, similar to Gran’s work this dissertation hopes to enrich the field of World History by acknowledging that elite alliances shaped local particularities and were heavily reliant on global forces. This dissertation also shows that it was not elites from around the world acting in concert that shaped modernity, but

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63 Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*. New work by Alan Mikhail seeks to complicate the Egyptian nationalist narrative which asserts that the first half of the nineteenth-century marked the beginning of modern history for Egypt. He does so by looking at environmental reform during the Ottoman period. This is the first work of its kind that includes environmental history as part of its methodological framework. Alan Mikhail, *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt: An Environmental History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).


the diverse interchanges between individuals and social classes that most greatly impacted modernity.

**Chapter Summaries**

Chapter 1 provides a sketch of how the global medical and missionary community represented Tanta to their reading audiences between 1848 and 1907. It also shows that there was a brief break in 1882 from previous representations of Tanta. Tanta most often appeared as an epicenter of cholera that disseminated the disease throughout the world. Mecca, the site of the annual pilgrimage of Hajj and India were also named as epicenters. The medical and missionary presses demonized these three locales, claiming that they contributed to the spread of the disease globally. In 1882, in the midst of a massive national revolution led by Colonial Ahmad ‘Urabi, the murder of about eighty Europeans in Tanta appeared in newspapers throughout the British Empire and the United States. Thus, focus shifted away from the city which hosted disease to the people who murdered and raged against innocent Europeans. The death of this group of Europeans became a beacon to assert the need for British occupation as a well as an extreme example of Tanta’s threat to the global community (which really means Europe and America to these writers). The danger that threatened the world culminated in the series of stories that claimed that the infamous Dinishway incident occurred in Tanta. Thus, Tanta, a relatively small city, enjoyed some international infamy.

Chapter 2 expands upon Chapter 1 and shows that Tanta’s global reputation as an epicenter of cholera drew a diverse group of Christian missionaries who sought to bring spiritual and physical health to Tanta’s community. It explores the relationship between missionaries and the local medical community. Specifically, it touches upon how missionaries established clinics and hospitals and shows that these medical ventures did not really gain steam until missionaries
found local support for their project. Because of Tanta’s reputation as a site of cholera, these missionaries hoped to do God’s work by healing the sick. While Tanta’s reputation as an epicenter of cholera brought the missionaries, Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi’s reputation as a healer brought many people to the city to seek blessings and find mental and spiritual health. The particular relationship between health and the patron saint of the city also drew a wide variety of people who identified as healers. This group of healers used spiritual methods to heal the sick and operated in a different sphere from the professionally trained physicians. This chapter shows that when the Christian missionaries worked with local elites they were able to gain currency in the community. By establishing hospitals together and sometimes combining resources, missionaries were able to heal the sick in greater numbers over time because of their growing reputations as colleagues and collaborators with local elites.

Building from the idea that Tanta contained dangerous elements, Chapter 3 focused on how two Egyptian based periodicals represented Tanta to Egypt’s reading audience. Chapter 3 shows that Tanta was also depicted as a dangerous location by some Egyptian-based periodicals, but that certain social classes threatened public order in Tanta. Similarly to the global press, one of the threats was public health. However, this was not the only concern for Egypt’s literate audience. The first newspaper under study is *al-Ahram*. It was Egypt’s mostly widely read and circulated newspaper after its founding in 1875 in Alexandria. Chapter 3 shows *al-Ahram* represented Tanta as a city that was generally organized and controlled because of strong police and governamental presence. However, the appearance of a few sensational stories in *al-Ahram* about poor Egyptians and Greeks highlight class tension that lived below the surface and were not readily known to Egypt’s literate class. While these stories were numerically insignificant, their appearance illustrated cracks in the pristine veneer of a modern city that dominated the
pages of *al-Ahram*. Like *al-Ahram, al-Manar*, a journal edited by a leading Salafi thinker Rashid Rida, highlighted destructive elements that impeded the city’s progress. *Al-Manar* represented the city as the host of the *mulid* that promoted disorder, lascivious behavior, and chaos. While *al-Ahram* and *al-Manar* depicted Tanta differently, both highlighted the point that anti-modern elements impeding Egypt’s progress resided within the city. *Al-Ahram*’s representation reflected the sentiment of the literate, elite, and urban reading audience while *al-Manar*’s representation was more of an attack on the nature of the Ahmadiyya Sufi Order and the unsanctioned use of the mosque.

Chapter 4 is the first chapter of this dissertation to look closely at how modernity played out on the ground in Tanta. It continues the discussion of social class that began in Chapter 3 and similarly to Chapter 2 it looks at governmental structures put in place in Tanta. It surveys the bureaucratic structure of the city by looking at how the government produced knowledge about Tanta and then implemented policies. It shows that this zone of contact between the government and its governed sheds light on how relationships between elites and the government began and were fostered. It also shows how elites and average citizens used these structures for their own ends. In particular, this chapter shows that the true nature of elite privilege and status appeared most acutely in the courts and elite governmental positions and councils which allowed elites to be both agents of the government as well as local residents who could sway governmental decisions. These arenas served as a theater for the rich to expound upon their vast wealth and status and simultaneously pigeon hole regular folk into subservient positions. This chapter also shows that ordinary citizens participated in this bureaucratic structure albeit in meager ways. It argues that the bureaucratic structures in place in Tanta were where elites and the government attempted to impose their version of modernity.
Chapter 5 builds on the ideas of religious orthodoxy discussed in Chapters 3 and systems of bureaucratization found in chapter 4 to explore how religious institutions became part of the national governmental bureaucracy. It shows that the Egyptian government attempted to co-opt the Ahmadi Sufi network and incorporate it into two important religious institutions: the High Council of Sufi Order and the premier center of Islamic learning, al-Azhar. The Ahmadi Sufi order was unlike many of the orders in Cairo that had a structured system of membership, but rather was a network that included those who identified Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi as their spiritual mentor, those who worshipped the saint and members of a tight-knit fraternal order. Because of their unique character and social position in the Delta, the Egyptian government and religious elites in Cairo sought out this organization to be agents of modernity on the ground in Tanta. This chapter shows that al-Azhar and the High Council of Sufi Brotherhoods separated the notion of spiritual knowledge into two distinct categories: ma’rifat and ‘ilm. This separation disentangled the multi-functional space of the Ahmadi mosque into a center of Sufism and a center of learning. The Ahmadi mosque and the brotherhoods associated with it had historically functioned as a single unit where both popular Islam and religious ascetics existed side by side. By creating two spheres, one of knowledge and one of practice, the religious bureaucracy in Cairo was able to infiltrate the mosque, displace the local leadership, and create a satellite institution of al-Azhar.

A Discussion of Sources

The diverse nature of the sources illuminates the challenges of crafting a history of Tanta during the second half of the 19th century. Newspapers and journals from the Middle East and around the world feature prominently in this dissertation. The project of Chapters 1 and 3 is to critique them, but periodicals also feature prominently in the remaining chapters. Stories about
Tanta travelled across the vast Reuters universe that brought news of the exotic locale as far as Australia and as close as London. Arabic language journals and newspapers provide a closer vantage point and illustrate the ways in which the Egyptian government used them as a vehicle to promote a particular brand of modernity among the literate. Another prominent feature of this dissertation is the use of Western missionary sources in Chapter 2. Missionary sources, albeit often Orientalist and polemical, provide a very detailed record of their experience and oftentimes provide insight into people who may not appear in the public record. Finally, official documents from various ministries, the local courts of Tanta and documents from the Sufi orders complete the vast literature that was consulted for this dissertation. These archival sources came from the Public Records Office at the National Archive in London, Dar al-Wathiq (Egypt’s National Archive), Dar al-Mahfuzat (Provincial Archive at the Citadel), Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and the University of Leiden. The diversity of these sources helped to craft the global component of this dissertation, but also illustrates the difficulty with researching the project. The issues with governmental documents in Egypt relate to the organization of archival material and access to them. Oftentimes only a few documents existed in specific files. Another problem with the Egyptian national sources was that because Tanta was the largest provincial capital, it was also a regional center. Quite often, court cases would be heard from individuals from other provinces, therefore making it impossible at times to use police records or court records as sources for social history about Tanta alone. The shortcoming of the project is that no one large body of documents exists that sheds light on Tanta during its rapid urbanization. This diversity has also strengthened this project by providing a mosaic of information that has been woven together to craft the story of Tanta.
Chapter One: Something in the Water Up There: Tanta in the Global Press

Introduction:

On 18 June 1906, the Daily Mail, a London-based newspaper, officially confirmed the authenticity of the rumored “Tantah” incident and the general anti-European sentiment in the city. But the events it recounted did not occur in Tanta, but rather in a village called Dinishway, nearly sixty-three kilometers from the city. On 13 June 1906, five British soldiers were shooting pigeons for sport in Dinishway. The pigeons’ owner, Hassan Mahfouz, and several others attempted to stop the soldiers, and the confrontation devolved into a chaotic melee. Amidst the frenzy, the British troops opened fire on the villagers. The British wounded five people and set fire to the grain of a man named ‘Abd al-Nabi; his wife, seriously injured, struck an officer with a stick. Others threw rocks. Alarmed by the villagers’ defiance, three of the soldiers relinquished their weapons, money, and watches. General Bell, the group’s leader, fled on foot with another soldier. A nearby infantry called to the scene found General Bell unconscious, with an unknown Egyptian man standing over him. Assuming that the man standing over General Bell’s listless body had bludgeoned him, one of the infantrymen leapt into action and shot the supposed assailant—who was only attempting to revive the languid Bell. The

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67 “The Denshawai Affair,” Star (New Zealand), 6 February 1908. This article reported that General Bell was murdered in Tantah.
68 Dinishway is located in the province of Minufiyya, to the south of Gharbiyya and north of Cairo.
69 Abbas Hilmi al-Thani, Khudawi Misr al-Akhir, 1892-1914 [The Last Khedive of Egypt: The Memoirs of Abbas Hilmi II] (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2006). Abbas Hilmi II recounted that the British soldiers always drank heavily in Cairo and implied that they may have been drinking the day before the incident. He also asserted that the entire incident stemmed from cultural misunderstanding. The British did not understand that Egyptian pigeons were meant to be eaten or sold and that shooting these pigeons would affect the owner economically. From the Egyptian perspective, there had been very few troops stationed in the Delta, and their presence was unusual which, according to Abbas Hilmi, probably led to the harsh response by the villagers.
next day, the British army arrested fifty-two people for the death of General Bell, including ‘Abd al-Nabi, Hassan Mahfouz, and two men later identified as Darwish and Zahran. Within the week, the British press reported the events as the “Tantah incident” despite the fact that Tanta actually played no part in the debacle.

The trial of these individuals began a few months later, when a special tribunal of English and Egyptian judges convicted Hassan Mahfouz, Darweesh, Zahran, and another man for General Bell’s death. The members of the tribunal sentenced two men to hanging and four to flogging and life imprisonment. The “Denshwai incident” became widely condemned both inside the British Empire and in Egypt. To critics within the British Empire, the episode signified the brutality and mercilessness of the British government’s treatment of colonial subjects. The story reignited in 1908 when an autopsy revealed that General Bell had died from heat exhaustion and dehydration.

The brief account of the affair in the Daily Mail is riddled with misinformation, which is typical of most news about Tanta that appeared in periodicals and missionary and medical

71 It would eventually be reported as the “Dinishway Incident.” However, references to it occurring “at Tantah” continued for two more years.
74 George Bernard Shaw, “The Denshwai Affair,” in John Bull’s Other Island—How He lied to Her Husband—General Barbara (London: Hesperides, 1908, 2006), xliv-li. See also Wilfred Scawen Blunt, Atrocities of Justice Under British Rule (London: T.F. Unwin, 1906). These two were by far the most outspoken on the topic in the English-language press.
journals from 1848 to the 1890s-Tanta’s most sensational period in print.\textsuperscript{76} Tanta threatened death for the global community, with cholera presenting the primary threat between 1848 and the 1890s. The murder of several European residents of Tanta in 1882 (the year of the famous ‘Urabi Revolution), however, shifted focus away from cholera toward a xenophobic, murderous mob of Egyptians who lashed out against foreign residents on several occasions during the revolution. Following the British suppression of ‘Urabi’s uprising and the occupation of Egypt, the image of Tanta as a unsafe place remained constant and culminated most notably in the incorrect placement of the Dinishway incident in Tanta. The \textit{Daily Mail}’s “Tantah Incident,” therefore, represented the culmination of a half of a century of print that narrowly and erroneously represented Tanta as a dangerous city.\textsuperscript{77}

Publications about Tanta prompt a re-examination of the larger discourse of Orientalist tropes generated in the nineteenth century by scientific experts,\textsuperscript{78} missionaries, and popular writers.\textsuperscript{79} The group of writers explored by the late Edward Said constructed an Orient in opposition to Europe or the Occident that was racially inferior, in decline, mysterious, exotic, and backwards in the midst of British and French imperial designs. They were not the only group of writers, however, who contributed to the Orientalist trope within the imperial context. Said has eloquently provided an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon he calls \textit{Orientalism}, but he established limited parameters for his definition of “experts.” Said argues in \textit{Orientalism} that there was “dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped

\textsuperscript{76} “The Tantah Incident,” \textit{Daily Mail}, 18 June 1906.
\textsuperscript{77} “Tantah” appeared in the \textit{Times} one hundred and eighty-one times alone between 1856 and 1907. It appeared thirty-three times, however, between 1 January 1906 and 31 December 1907. Forty-four articles appeared about cholera between 1848 and 1907. “Tantah” and “massacre” appeared seven times and only in 1882.
\textsuperscript{79} The terms “popular writers” and “non-experts” refer to novelists, poets, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and colonial administrators who accept the organic difference between the “west” and the “east.” Said, \textit{Orientalism}, 2.
by the three great empires—British, French, American—in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced.”

As a result, the popular western press—which also stereotyped the Orient—remains free of Said’s analysis in this text. The absence of newspapers and medical journals in Said’s framework excludes an important sector that perpetuated ideas about the East. Examination of medical journals, missionary literature, and newspapers reveals the pervasiveness of Orientalism beyond Said’s select group of writers. For Tanta specifically, Said’s analysis offers useful insight but does not fully capture the implications of how periodicals throughout the globe represented and continually reproduced the city.

Because Tanta is physically located in the Orient, it represented exoticism, decline, and mystery, but it also held unique significance to the Occident as a cholera epicenter and as a town that fostered a life-threatening form of anti-Europeanism. André Raymond argued that Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism was personified in the occidental representation of the “Oriental” or “Islamic” city. Raymond claims that “the doctrine of the Orientalists concerning the Muslim city and Muslim town planning fits naturally into the fundamental concept of Orientalism.” As Raymond shows, Said’s concept of Orientalism provides a methodological foundation for understanding how Orientalist writers represented the “Oriental City.” These Oriental cities had become shabby, eroding, and decrepit contemporary manifestations of their ancient glorious selves. Because newer towns or cities did not have ancient counterparts or enjoy historical fame, their oriental representations adhered to many of the characteristics of Ramon’s cities, but with unique features. The representation of the “oriental town or secondary city” in popular

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80 Said, 14-15.
81 Said, 14-15. Said expanded upon his arguments from Orientalism in Covering Islam and Culture and Imperialism. He noted that the three texts should be seen as a trilogy to fully capture the arguments regarding Orientalism. For more on his work see Edward Said, Covering Islam (New York: Vintage Books, 1997) or Culture and Imperialism (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
83 Raymond, Cairo, 264.
newspapers has yet to be explored. This chapter argues that the global literary community used a different set of essentializing tropes to represent Tanta as an “Oriental town or secondary city” while continuing to perpetuate stereotypes that existed for the Oriental cities of Raymond and Said. As a result of these tropes, Tanta came to be represented as a medically dangerous place, a site of physical danger for western residents, and a bastion of fanatical Islam.

This chapter extends the boundary of Tanta’s (mis)representation in print beyond the colonial powers that had direct relations with Egypt. Tanta also appeared as a dangerous place in Italian, Spanish, and Latin American newspapers, medical journals, and missionary periodicals. The English-language press in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand ran similar stories, contributing to a global discourse that impacted reading audiences. By expanding the geographic boundaries of this study beyond the relevant colonial powers, I show that the representation of Tanta as a hazardous city was not the result merely of British colonial objectives following the occupation of Egypt but of a more widespread perception on the part of the global community.

Oriental representations were not simply located intellectually in Europe, but disseminated globally. This chapter shows that Orientalism was a truly global phenomenon and that experts frequently represented Tanta as dangerous terrain, untamed and in need of corraling.

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84 Fernando Ferrer and Manual Ortiz de la Vega, Los Héroes y las Grandezas de la Tierra [The Heros and Greatness of the Earth] (Madrid: Libreria de Juan Cuesta, 1855), 475; Real Academia Nacional de Medicina (España), Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos (Madrid) [The Royal National Academy of Medicine, the Society of Mutual Aid], El Siglo Médico: Revista Clínica de Madrid [The Medical Century: Clinical Journal of Madrid], vol. 13, 627-678, 456; Reale Società Italiana D'igiene [Royal Italian Society for Hygiene], Giornale Della Reale Società, Italiana d'igiene [The Journal of the Royal Italian Society for Hygiene], 5th year (Milan: Stabilimento Giuseppe Civelli, 1883), 946; Instituto Médico Valenciano [Medical Institute of Valencia], Bulletin del Instituto Médico Valenciano [Bulletin of the Medical Institute of Valencia] 10 (1867-1868): 22. The journal reported in 1882 that 539 cholera victims died in Tanta.

85 Rural spaces also had their own tropes; for more on the representation of the peasant see Michael Gasper’s The Power of Representation: Publics, Peasants, and Islam in Egypt. The way that the west depicted the Middle East according to Said can be applied quite aptly to the representation of the mulid of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi, which occupied about a third of articles about Tanta. Focus on the Orientalist images of the mulid, however, does not provide any new analysis about Tanta but rather reproduces an already rich terrain most successfully tackled by Said.
The power of the narratives created by “experts” representing Tanta was intensified by technological advances that transmitted ideas across the globe. Three advances are central to this story: the telegraph, the train, and the steamship. The telegraph (central to the creation of Reuters’s global news service) served as a conduit that allowed newspapers around the world to transport information about Tanta. The train and the steamship provided a different (albeit important) function to Tanta’s place in the global discourse. The train came to Tanta in 1856, linking the city to the Egyptian capital of Cairo and the seaport of Alexandria and expediting travel by land. The completion of the Suez Canal in 1869, shortly after British advancement in steamships, redirected British trade through the Red Sea into the Mediterranean and brought Tanta into the global superhighway that moved goods, people, ideas, and cholera. The same technological advances that brought news to the world made that world boundless and contracted, bringing physical danger closer to the reading audience. Tanta’s ascension as part of the rapidly transforming global trade network made it a subject of inquiry to those who perceived the city as a threat to the global community.

In order to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of Tanta’s place in the world during the nineteenth century, this chapter explores how the medical, missionary, and periodical presses represented the city in this rapidly transforming world. It also seeks to establish how experts and lay people outside of Egypt understood and represented Tanta, analyzing the negative historical portraits of Tanta while also showing the mechanisms through which these views of “Tanta as threat” emerged. It also avoids the pitfall of reproducing the narrow sets of data provided by two dominant sources from the era: news from the telegraph and reports from the few doctors who investigated Tanta’s relationship to cholera. Often times, the stories about Tanta were merely recycled from Reuters' vast telegraph. However, this information appeared in a variety of written
venues in multiple languages throughout the globe. The presentation in print of poor sanitation, savage Egyptians, and social disorder created a global perception of Tanta as backward and dangerous. These representations eventually contributed greatly to justifications for the onset and continuation of British occupation. The British used this rhetoric of danger and Tanta’s reputation to solidify its claims to Egypt.

**Tanta before Cholera**

Tanta remained generally absent in the English, Spanish and French language press prior to the second cholera pandemic (1829-1851). It appeared sporadically in encyclopedias and travel accounts as the final resting place of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi and the location of the yearly *mulid*, or festival, celebrating his life. The *mulid* (or “fair,” as it was represented in most cases) appeared in travel literature as one of the major stopping-off points for travelers throughout the Middle East. These travel guides and descriptions of Egyptian society featured short, curious depictions of Tanta well into the twentieth century. Following a cholera outbreak which struck Tanta in 1848, however, the city also became a subject of medical inquiry. The danger of the disease challenged the dominant stories about the *mulid*. The famed *mulid*

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86 Dhiman Barua and William B. Greenough, *Cholera* (New York: Plenum Publishing Corporation, 1992). There is a great debate about the periodization of the cholera pandemics of the nineteenth century. I will use the periodization of Barua and Greenough in this chapter. Between 1884 and 1924 the periodization model shifted over time as more data surfaced and disseminated among physicians who studied the disease. However, during the nineteenth century there were only a few years that were not part of larger waves of epidemic: 1823-1829 and 1879-1881. Before 1848, the French language materials that included Tanta dwarfed the English press. A number of the texts are reproductions of Napoleon’s exposition into Egypt. For more on Tanta before the 1848 cholera outbreak see Antoine Clot Bey, *Aperçu général sur l’Egypte* (Bruxelles: Maline, Cans et Compagnie, 1840). Dr. Antoine Clot Bey was part of a group of European experts who came to Egypt at the request of Muhammad Ali. He started the first medical school and Qasr al ‘Aini Hospital in Cairo, Egypt in 1827. When Abbas Hilmi I came to power in 1848, he dismissed Clot Bey along with many of the other European advisors. Clot Bey returned to Egypt in 1856. For more on his life see P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt: From Muhammad Ali to Mubarak* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) or Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt.*


transformed the city in western representations from a pilgrimage site known for its beautiful mosque to a breeding ground for disease. Representations of Tanta greatly transformed from 1848 until the revolution in 1882. Prior to 1848, standard Orientalist tropes dominated, but these changed to include danger after 1848. Medical and religious journals dominated discussions about Tanta between 1848 and 1882 because of Tanta’s role in the 1848 cholera pandemic. This distinction made Tanta uniquely dangerous for the world at large. This amorphous danger would lay the foundation for Tanta’s representation in American and British imperial newspapers during the days of the ‘Urabi Revolution, during which a number of Europeans died.

**Defining Tanta before 1848**

Tanta appeared sporadically in collected volumes that depicted the culture, environment, and “everyday life” of Egypt during the first half of the nineteenth century. Articles about Tanta defined the city geographically, highlighted its significance in Egypt, and provided anecdotal information about the city for a largely unfamiliar audience. These articles became part of the litany of writing that sought to define Egyptian exotic locales for a European audience. In the 1837 *Penny Cyclopaedia*, Tanta occupied four lines under the section heading “Present State of Egypt”:

> [...] south of Mehallet, with the town of Tantah situated near the middle of the Delta, one of the principle towns of Lower Egypt remarkable for its fine mosque, and its fair that takes place three times a year and is much frequented by pilgrims who come to visit the tomb of Seyd Ahmad el Bedaouy, a celebrated Mohammadan saint.  

The encyclopedia’s incidental report provided limited data and defined the city as “one of the principle towns of Lower Egypt.” It situated Tanta geographically, placing the city south of Mahalla-Gharbiyya’s commercial epicenter. Tanta appeared as the site for pilgrims to visit the

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architectural marvel—an unnamed mosque—and to attend the *mulid* of the dead Muslim saint Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi. Tanta’s representation as an urban fairground provided no data about the social, economic or cultural life of the city—life in the city did not exist beyond its mosque and *mulid*. This scant, lifeless representation of Egyptian life adhered to pervasive representations of Egyptian life found in Orientalist literature that depicted the city as it described its people: exotic, timeless, chaotic, and backward.⁹¹

A specific set of information about Tanta appeared time and time again. Tanta’s significance was limited to its “temporary centrality” as the site of the tomb of Ahmad al-Badawi and to the festival venerating him.⁹² *The Encyclopaedia Metropolitana: or Universal Dictionary of Knowledge* asserted that “Tantah, nearly in the center of the Delta, and now the most populous town in Lower Egypt, has upwards of 10,000 inhabitants. Its prosperity is not due to the richness of the soil alone, but to the wonder-working sepulcher of Ahmad el-Badewi.”⁹³ The city’s cultural life or rapid urban development had no interest to consumers of travel literature, geographic tracts, or encyclopedias. Tanta’s position in print during the first half of the nineteenth century was limited and reproduced *en masse* for audiences throughout the West. The shift in how people learned about Tanta and who reproduced information about it changed dramatically after the second global cholera pandemic struck the city during the *mulid* in 1848.

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⁹¹ André Raymond’s seminal work on Cairo addresses this argument directly and to some extent applies Said’s argument to the city. However, only the largest cities have been explored in this regard, namely, Cairo, Alexandria, Istanbul, Baghdad, Beirut, and Aleppo. No work to date has looked at how cities beyond the metropoles are depicted and understood throughout the globe or within the national boundaries. For more on urban studies of the Middle East see André Raymond, *Cairo* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Philip Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1983); Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600-1750* (New York: New York University Press, 1988); and Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010).


⁹³ Smedley, Rose, and Rose, *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*, 431. Similar accounts also appeared in a number of other sources. In all accounts, Tanta was placed geographically and named as the home of Ahmad al-Badawi’s tomb and *mulid*. For more representations of Tanta before 1848 see *The Polar Star of Entertainment and Popular Science, Universal Repetorium of General Literature* (London: H. Flower, 1830), 207-208.
The Second Cholera Pandemic

The second cholera pandemic of the nineteenth century began in 1829 and reached New York, New Orleans, London, Tanta and many parts of Russia by 1848 and California by 1850. Within a two-year period, cholera spread from North Africa to North America. The disease caused dehydration, diarrhea, and death in a matter of days for most of its victims. Cholera perplexed doctors who struggled to discover how victims became infected. Some argued that the disease dispersed by way of miasma, “a cloud of putrid air or pollution.” Humid, marshy geographies with poor sanitation and densely gathered populations—like the Nile Delta—seemed most hospitable to the conjuring of the miasma cloud. John Snow, a London-based doctor, challenged this paradigm by showing that unclean drinking water was the culprit. Snow’s findings and the subsequent support by the German medical community led to what Peter Baldwin refers to as “neo-contagionism.” Neo-contagionism focused on the spread of the disease, inspection of victims, quarantining, and “medical surveillance of travelers.” Subsequent medical findings led to advancements in sewage and sanitation and shifted focus from identifying the cause of the disease to arresting its spread. Mapping the disease’s trajectory and pinpointing locations susceptible to the disease became the primary objective. As a result, Tanta’s location on the map of cholera brought it into the forefront of exploration among doctors and colonial administrators.

94 There is considerable debate about the chronology and number of cholera pandemics. Some have argued that what I have defined as the second cholera pandemic is really the second and third. This comes largely as a result of when cholera struck Europe for the first time rather than any significant gap in infection throughout the globe. J. Coreil, Social and Behavioral Foundation of Public Health (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2009), 38-39.
95 John Snow, On the Mode of Communication of Cholera (London: John Churchill, 1855). Once populations outside of urban centers became infected, new theories developed about the march of the disease. Most notably, John Snow, a London-based physician, ran experiments in 1854 on water pumps in the Soho district of London. He spoke with local residents and created a site map which highlighted cholera outbreaks and linked the disease to a water pump on Broad Street. He asserted that water soiled with the fecal matter of cholera victims was the source of contagion.
96 John Snow, On the Mode of Communication of Cholera.
97 Peter Baldwin, Contagion and the State of Europe, 1830-1930 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 9.
**Cholera and the Missionary Press**

Missionaries and religious conservatives paid particular attention to the cholera map during the nineteenth century. Unlike the medical press, which sought to understand how and why the disease moved so quickly and killed so dramatically, many evangelical Christians saw cholera as an urban disease that targeted those who ignored God’s law. The evangelical Christian literature, authored largely by evangelical missionaries and members of the clergy, saw cholera victims at home and abroad as filthy, spiritually bankrupt, and dangerous. According to the missionaries, the intervention of conversion and sanitation, rather than scientific innovation alone, could arrest the spread of the disease. Evangelization amongst the “putrid bunch” would produce the moral and spiritual health necessary to combat the pestilence resulting from the unclean environment.

**1848: Cholera Comes to the Mulid of Sayyid al-Badawi**

Tanta became a site of inquiry for Christian and medical journals when cholera appeared at the *mulid* of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi in 1848. During cholera’s first appearance at the *mulid*, miasma theory dominated amongst many doctors. They believed that the miasma cloud emerged in marshy, putrid climates and was particularly prevalent in the East. As a result, to the global medical community and to missionaries living in the field, Tanta’s location and *mulid* appeared central to understanding cholera. The number of human casualties in the city and the speed, with which people died, they argued, illustrated that fairs and pilgrimages served as entry points for the disease. The *Evangelical Repository*, an American Presbyterian journal, reported in 1848:

> It [cholera] made its first appearance about the middle of the last month in a town of the Delta, called Tanta where an immense number of people amounting to 165,000 were assembled in pilgrimage from all parts of

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Egypt and Syria to celebrate the festival of a Mahomedan saint…Before the people dispersed at Tantah, it is said there must have been three thousand deaths from this disease.101

The description recounted information sent to the mission board from a missionary stationed in Cairo.102 The snippet, written matter-of-factly, provided the number in attendance, their national origin, and the purpose of the event. It clearly stated the facts of the tragedy and articulated a somewhat detailed representation of how the deaths occurred. The author placed the city as “a town of the Delta called Tanta,” then explained the motivations of the diverse people in attendance in an effort to familiarize the reading audience with the curious fair. 103 It is clear from the author’s representation of the events that Tanta remained a relatively obscure location. The author took great care to familiarize his reading audience with the city in order to illustrate that the large gathering comprised of traveling pilgrims produced death. By showing the popularity of the mulid, the numbers of people who had gathered, and the distances that the pilgrims had traveled in order to attend, the author showed the high potential for danger that this event represented. People moving from throughout the Middle East and North Africa would transmit the disease beyond this fair to other parts of the Muslim world, and the contagion would eventually make its way into Europe and the United States.

The representation of Tanta in missionary tracts represented a particular kind of Orientalism that had far different goals from the writings of medical experts and government officials. The supreme objectives of the missionary authors were to convert the heathen lands rather than to dominate them politically and exploit them financially. “Missionary Orientalism” was based on the binary of righteous versus heathen rather than East versus West. What resulted for Tanta was a representation of the city that focused on its danger for the Christian world; but,

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more importantly, missionaries highlighted the significance of the *mulid* as a gathering point for Muslims. Tanta’s representation as a Muslim space became conflated with disease and illness, highlighting the fact that Islam represented a health risk to the righteous Christian community. This depiction, as well as the focus on Islam and pilgrimages, was translated and reproduced by secular government elites as well.

In a report by the American Surgeon General entitled *The Cholera Epidemic of 1873 in the United States*, a description of the cholera outbreak of the 1870s blamed the licentious behavior of the *mulid* as contributing to the general filth associated with the event.\(^{104}\) In a statement that recounted earlier epidemics, the Surgeon General wrote:

> In Olympe Audouards, “Les Mystères de L’Egypte,” I edition, Paris, 1866, p. 251 will be found the rable of all festivals, which takes place at Tantah in June at the tomb of Said el Badoui who had a reputation of the cure of the great sterility. All barren women have the privilege of going and assembling, where from two to six hundred thousand persons are said to congregate. The scenes of licentiousness exceed all ordinary credence; and the cures are stated to be numberless. All of the most obscene practices of the ancient heathen worship are there rivaled. The result of this outbreak of cholera was also united on the Mediterranean with those which had come from Russia, Turkey and Germany in 1848.\(^ {105}\)

Like the Christian tracts, the Surgeon General’s report asserts that the *mulid* is the cause for the spread of the disease. In this account, the Orientalist trope of equating the East with the ancient world appears in the author’s description of the immoral happenings at the event. The Surgeon General, a medical doctor, reported that sexual and unethical behavior was at the root of the death toll in 1848. By using a moral barometer to assert the cause for the movement of the disease, the Surgeon General’s office wholly accepted that morality played a role in the disease. The doctor also described how the disease moved throughout the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean to illustrate the seriousness of the epidemic.


A similar descriptive account of the 1848 epidemic appeared in The Complete Works of Andrés Bello:

In the middle of July, it [cholera] invaded Egypt and it appeared it spread throughout the whole country. In Cairo, there were 300 victims daily and 250 to 300 dead in Alexandria. In Tanta a city in the Delta, there were 195,000 pilgrims gathered, it is said that there were approximately 3000."106

In his account, Bello placed the spread of cholera contextually and claimed the same three thousand deaths in Tanta. He tracked the disease’s spread to Cairo and Alexandria in the same month. Providing daily death tolls, he claimed that nearly 200,000 people had attended the mulid that year. Bello too provided a geographic detail, placing the city “in the Delta” in order to give his readers both detail and definition. 107 While the spirit of the story remains the same, the number of new, small details begins to mount—a form of sensationalism that would accompany depictions about Tanta for the rest of the nineteenth century. The number of attendees went up from 165,000 to nearly 200,000, and the information about victims who died outside of Tanta instilled fear about the disease’s trajectory.108 The relative public threat to the West made cholera—and Tanta’s relationship to the disease—a subject for inquiry for religious, medical, and governmental authorities.

The appearance of the disease in Tanta led many doctors to assert that miasma brought, conjured, and propelled the disease. William Farr, nineteenth-century epidemiologist and

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106 Andrés Bello, Obras Completas de Don Andrés Bello [The Complete Works of Andrés Bello] (Santiago: Imprenta Cervantes, 1892), 478. Andrés Bolla, the Chilean minister of finance, was born in Caracas, Venezuela and later moved to London, where he accompanied Simon Bolivar. He relocated to Chile in 1829 and became the high officer of the ministry of the hacienda, a branch within the Ministry of the Interior. He was a professor at the Instituto Nacional, part of the Literati Movement of 1842, a famed poet and philosopher, and a central figure in the writing of the Chilean Civil Code. Although the publication date of his complete works is 1892, he must have written them much earlier, since he died in 1865. For more about his life see “Andrés Bello” in Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education 22, no. 1/2 (1993): 71-83.


108 The marshy Nile Delta was a hospitable location for cholera, according to proponents of the miasma theory—the belief that a cloudy of putridity conjured cholera. The strongest proponents of the miasma theory resided in Britain, and some doctors were employed by the British government. Many of these doctors continued to support the miasma theory well after John Snow’s discovery.
medical statistician, was one such doctor.\textsuperscript{109} In his article “Influence of Elevation on the Fatality of Cholera,” he claimed:

> The plague is most fatal in the parts of Lower Egypt near the Nile and the great canals. Almost all the villages on the banks of the Nile, on the road to Fayoum, were attacked in the pandemic of 1841; travelers and merchandize arrived there every day from the infected parts, and two of the travelers were attacked in Fayoum, but the population of the province escaped. Fayoum offers a striking contrast to Damietta, where the plague is most destructive. \textsuperscript{110}

Doctor Farr did not mention Tanta by name; instead, he asserted susceptibility for the entire Delta. He claimed that goods and people coming from these regions carried the disease with them without explicitly saying that the movement of these people and goods spread the disease. He implied that very few people in Fayum—beyond the Delta—contracted cholera, implicitly arguing that the Delta itself infected people. Much of this type of argumentation dissipated outside of Britain after Doctor Snow’s discovery. However, the miasma theory fit nicely into the Orientalist paradigm that depicted the East as different from the West. People and places in the East had a mysterious and magical quality that promoted death and destruction and conjured disease.

**Tanta and Muslim Cholera: Blaming the Victims**

The fourth cholera pandemic (1863-1875) began in India, as it had in previous pandemics. It followed the path of the previous outbreaks from the Indian subcontinent to the Mediterranean. Once physicians identified India as the source of the disease, arresting its spread became the focus of global medical community’s efforts. It became clear that cholera spread largely as a result of English trade. Ships leaving India for the port of Aden in Yemen carried the disease along with commercial goods. The sea traffic between the port of Aden and the Red Sea sent the disease into Jeddah next, to greet pilgrims on their way to Mecca and Medina for


Hajj. When these pilgrims returned home, they brought the disease to Syria, Egypt, Palestine, and North Africa, making deposits of death along their journey. 15,000 pilgrims died during 1865. When it arrived into Egypt, it killed 60,000 between June and July of that year. The sheer level of devastation in Egypt made cholera an issue of international concern. Tanta’s position as an epicenter of disease soon took on political implications; it became the subject of an international commission on the spread of cholera held in Istanbul in 1866.

**International Sanitation Commission on Cholera 1866**

The Third International Commission on Cholera convened in Istanbul on February 13, 1866 in the midst of the worst year of the outbreak. The same steamships that threatened to spread cholera across the globe brought together delegations comprised of doctors and diplomats from twenty-one governments “to study the progress of the disease, its march and special character, with a view to arrest its onward movement, if possible and preventing its introduction into the empire.” The attendees unanimously agreed that India’s people and geography greatly contributed to the spread of “Asiatic Cholera,” but that the most pressing issue was to “convince Oriental governments to arrest the disease.” The Hajj pilgrimage represented the most dangerous site of transmittal. Pilgrims traveling by steamship and train could potentially carry

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112 V. Huber, “The Unification of the Globe by Disease? The International Sanitary Conferences on Cholera, 1851-1894,” *Historical Journal* 49 (2006): 453-76. The governments that sent delegations were Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Persia, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Ottoman Empire, which sent a delegation from Istanbul, and Egypt. There were a total of eleven international conferences on cholera between 1851 and 1903. France, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Germany hosted other conferences.
113 Samuel L. Abbott, M.D., *Report to the International Sanitary Conference to Which Refers to the Origin, Endemicity, Transmissibility, and Propagation of Asiatic Cholera—Istanbul* (Boston, n.p.,1867), 3. The proceedings of this conference appear to have been read by doctors in the United States and London. Also, see C. Macnamara, M.D., *A History of Asiatic Cholera* (London: MacMillan and Company, 1876), 160. This text, using the report from the Istanbul Conference, claims that Tanta’s visitors had largely been infected by their pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina during the month of Hajj. The particular role of the Hajj pilgrimage appeared to be the central point for the spreading of the disease as Muslims from India infected other Muslims.
the disease back to Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. Tanta, the third epicenter, was the final site
where arresting the disease—and stopping its march to Europe—was of the upmost importance
for European governments and medical professionals. For many of the delegates at this
conference, convincing the Ottoman government to be a buffer zone between the sickly East and
the healthy West was the supreme objective.

1848: In a New Context

The debate between the global medical community and the British played out in the
discussion of the role of pilgrimage. A report of the *Third International Conference on Cholera*
claimed that caravan travel quarantined pilgrims because no victims had appeared *en route*
between Mecca and Morocco. The report’s authors concluded that pilgrims who traveled by
steamship and trains to Muslim pilgrimage sites played a central role in transmitting the disease
across Asia and, more specifically, British-controlled ports. Because the Ottoman Empire sat
between the cholera-infected East and sanitized West, the Ottoman government’s support
became central to halting the disease’s spread throughout Europe. The Ottoman Empire thus
served as the gatekeeper, protecting Europe from being infected again by its Asian brethren. In
this context, the 1848 outbreak in Tanta took on new meaning; Tanta was no longer viewed as a
harbor of cholera for its residents but, rather, as a site of transmission:

> the pandemic which broke out in 1848 in Egypt, is traced to a festival in Tantah in honor of a
> Mohammedan saint, which called together about 165,000 pilgrims. The Cholera appeared among them and
> immediately on their dispersion was observed in Alexandria. 117

Representations in medical literature, popular press and missionary journals immediately
following the outbreak of 1848 led with the daily death tolls in Alexandria and Cairo, then

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115 Egyptian authorities also feared Hajj’s role in spreading cholera and often quarantined boats that returned from
the pilgrimage. For more on this topic see M. Ogawa, “Uneasy Bedfellows,” 671-707.
appeared in “Special Report on the Pandemic of Cholera with Practical History of the Disease,” *Medical Times and
Gazette* 2 (London: John Churchill and Sons, 1865), 424.
recorded how many died at the mulid in Tanta. In this representation of the cholera outbreak of 1848, Tanta was not merely part of the path of the disease but the actual place where the pandemic began. Pilgrimage and pilgrims in Tanta represented the greatest threat to the West—and, as Said argues in *Orientalism*, “the Orient was a place of pilgrimage, and every major work belonging to a genuine, if not always to an academic Orientalism, took its form, style and intention from the idea of pilgrimage there.”

For Orientalist writers, pilgrimage was a complicated idea that was geographically bounded in the East. For Christians in Europe, the East was the birth-and death-place of Jesus Christ and the site of the Holy Lands, but pilgrimages performed by Easterners represented something very different from Christian pilgrimages. Eastern (Muslim and Hindu) pilgrimages were constant and continuous. They promoted unhealthy gatherings as poor and rural pilgrims traveled great distances, joined together, and intermingled germs and sickness. Blaming Tanta and the victims that died at the mulid showed, simultaneously, that the European medical community had successfully mapped the disease and that the pilgrimage exacerbated an already dire reality. Cholera was a disease born and spread at Eastern pilgrimages. This association marked Tanta, the Hajj, and India as constant sites of potential public health risks.

Pinpointing the epicenter of the disease and disseminating that information among doctors throughout Europe and the United States labeled Tanta as a threat for all other future epidemics. No cholera victims actually died in Tanta in 1866, but the strength of the rhetoric surrounding pilgrimage brought Tanta into the foreground. The author of an 1866 report entitled “Report of City Physician” recounts the cholera pandemic of 1848 and positions it in relation to the 1866 outbreak. He alerts the reader:

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Tantah, in Egypt, which in 1848, contributed much to the spread of Cholera. Nevertheless, with regard to this fair of Tantah, we ought to say that this year, taking place a short time after the pandemic of cholera, it has had no unfavorable effect upon public health, thus confirming what we have advanced about concerning the relative which a crowd may enjoy which has just come from undergoing the trial of a pandemic.  

This assessment appeared as part of a larger investigation of the global impact of the relationship between “great collections of men in armies, fairs, pilgrimages, exercise[d] on the development and propagation of the pandemic of Cholera.” Like French doctors, American doctors sought to understand the pandemic and highlighted the movement of populations as the root mode of transmission. In subtle terms, the report’s author, a Boston doctor, argued that controlling armies, fairs, and festivals was central to arresting the disease. He diminished Tanta’s role in spreading cholera and shifted focus towards movement rather than stagnating the discussion on a particular space. Tanta represented one space where people gathered rather than a uniquely culpable place. The nuance in the American doctor’s representation of the movement of the disease was representative of the difference in America’s relationship with the Middle East generally.

Those beyond the colonial metropole, who had no interest in occupying Egypt, showed that Tanta was not a target zone of illness. The Spanish journal *La España Médica* asserted:

Tantah, in Egypt, which contributed to much of the spread of Cholera, however we want to say, with regard to this fair, which this year is celebrated a short time after the Cholera pandemic, that there was no negative result with regard to public health. This confirms that people previously exposed to Cholera become immune to the illness.

Tanta’s absence in the 1860’s outbreak led some physicians to a puzzling conclusion: that people who had been exposed to the disease previously would remain immune to future outbreaks. This

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119 *The Report of the City Physician 157* (Boston: Board of Aldermen presented to the City Council, 1867), 126. The report asserts that Doctor Salim Bey confirmed this data. This report was read at the Board of Aldermen meeting in 1866, and 800 copies were eventually printed.


121 “*La España Médica* [Medical Spain],” *Boletín del Instituto Medico Valenciano [The Bulletin of the Medical Institute of Valencia]* (Valencia: Instituto Medico, 1866), 492.
seemed to be an attempt to combat the theory of miasma, but this assumption, in addition to being scientifically false, illustrated the flattened representation of Tanta—part of the Orient—as timeless. The belief that previously exposed victims remained immune assumed that the same group of people attended the mulid seventeen years later. It ignored that most victims exposed to cholera died almost instantly and that a number of measures to arrest the disease had been developed by the Egyptian public health system. The claim by the Spanish doctor, although erroneous, illustrated that the role of place, central to British claims, was inconclusive in determining how the disease spread. It also seems to subtly amplify the threat to unaffected Europeans. If the diseased could become immune, then virgin populations in Europe and the rest of the West faced the greatest threat. The continual reproduction of Tanta’s role in the 1848 outbreak kept Tanta in the public eye regardless of the fact that no one died in 1866.

The International Conference on Sanitation in Istanbul was the source of the immunity theory. Dr. Salim Bey—an internal medical specialist at Qasr al ‘Aini Hospital and Medical School and attendee of the conference—confirmed the validity of this claim. An Egyptian doctor, Salim Bey had a very different understanding of the data than a European colleague based at the Qasr al-'Aini hospital. Conflicting information came from Bey’s colleague Dr. Sandwith, who asserted that fear spread readily among pilgrims because of the reported death of 3,000 visitors to the city. Egyptian-based doctors, as the “experts on the ground,” engaged in the same debates about the disease as doctors based in Europe and America. The debate within the

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123 This could have been related to the relative power struggle between European and Egyptian doctors. Many of the Egyptian doctors who worked at this hospital went to Europe for their medical training, but those who were educated at the Qasr al-'Aini medical school were not initially granted the professional degree of physician. The subordinate treatment of and disrespect for Egyptian doctors led to animosity between the two groups of doctors. Muhammad Ali in many ways initiated this problem with his initial appointment of Clot Bey, who wanted to have a national medical council in which European doctors sat at the very top of the hierarchy. For more on this topic see Kuhnke’s *Lives at Risk*. 
medical community about the role of place and the march of disease fit within the global debate regarding Tanta and its position as a diseased and dangerous place. While some doctors asserted that Tanta symbolized the worst aspects of the East, others saw Tanta as one point on the globe where cholera thrived because of its unique position as a pilgrimage site. In both claims, Tanta held a very important geographic placement for cholera. The debates about what made Tanta a dangerous place created and solidified a specific reputation about the city. It was a place that was dangerous specifically for the West. This reputation would be further validated in 1882, when Egypt exploded in revolution against the government.

1882: The Sensational Year of Outbreak, Cholera and Occupation

So far, this chapter has demonstrated that the medical and missionary press represented Tanta as a threat to the global community because of periodic cholera pandemics from 1848 to 1866. Arguments shifted from privileging location to a unified assessment that pilgrimage and unclean drinking water spread cholera. A nearly universal consensus among the medical community shifted the discussion toward sanitation and quarantine. The British medical community continued to assert that sanitation instead of quarantine would arrest the disease. French doctors claimed subtly that British interest in sanitation and the rejection of quarantine resulted from Britain’s desire to maintain lucrative trade between the epicenters of cholera. The subtlety with which the French tried to convince the British medical community would fall away after 1882, when the British invaded and occupied Egypt and took direct control over the inspection of ships traveling through the Suez Canal. Tanta appeared as a site of danger during the early days of British occupation, as it had during the previous cholera pandemics. The complexity of Tanta’s representation in 1883 shows that two themes—discussions about cholera
and the subsequent colonial occupation—are not mutually exclusive. Tanta continued to
appear as a site from which cholera spread in medical and missionary literature, but in
newspapers and periodicals it also was represented as a city filled with a murderous mob of
Egyptians lying in wait to kill European (or Christian) residents during the Egyptian revolution
of mid-1882. Cholera and Tanta’s murderous mob justified British occupation and brought the
dangerous city into the orbit of the periodical press, which expanded the reading audience that
concluded that Tanta was dangerous.

The Coming of a Revolution

In 1882, during the revolution of Ahmad ‘Urabi, Tanta appeared for the first time in
newspapers in the United States and the British Empire in substantial numbers. The invention of
the telegraph in 1844 facilitated this process. The actual mode of transportation was Reuters’s
News Agency after its founding in London in 1851. Reuters disseminated news about Tanta as
far as the physical periphery of the British Empire, into New Zealand and Australia. The short,
gruesome accounts of 1882 provided justification for English intervention by crafting an image
of a savage Delta interior which threatened “Europeans” peacefully residing in Tanta. The
absence of geographic markers in these stories, along with the frequency with which such stories
about Tanta appeared during that year shows that Tanta’s depiction no longer rested with a
highly specialized group of writers but had transferred into the popular press. Many local people
targeted European interlopers throughout the western European empires. In Egypt, Tanta’s
preexisting reputation amongst missionaries and the medical press paved the way for a new way
in which the city endangered European residents. The dual threat of riotous mobs of poor rural
Egyptians and continual threats of cholera epidemics exacerbated this preexisting reputation.

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124 Ogawa, “Uneasy Bedfellows.”
The British Occupation: Justifying the Occupation

In 1882, an explosion in the English language press coverage of Tanta shifted focus away from cholera and brought attention to a more immediate concern, the Egyptian revolution led by the military officer Ahmad ‘Urabi. ‘Urabi’s dissatisfaction with European economic intervention in Egypt, coupled with the dominance of Circassian and Turkish Ottomans in the Egyptian government led to explosive uprisings throughout the country. Many Egyptians perceived ‘Urabi as an appropriate representative to battle the Khedive’s unfair practices, particularly his propensity to favor European entrepreneurs. ‘Urabi grew up in the Delta province of Sharqiyya, attended al-Azhar, and joined the military. His birth, training, and education brought him popularity among local Egyptians. ‘Urabi initially voiced his concern against Khedive Ismail and his risky economic policies, which continually increased Egypt’s debt to its European lenders. ‘Urabi’s concerns reverberated with the Egyptian population, which supported him in large numbers. When his concerns transformed from official complaints to the palace to armed combat, the British intervened in Alexandria in June of 1882 at the battle of Tel al-Kabir. Riots and opposition that began in Alexandria very quickly spread throughout the country. Tanta was particularly sympathetic to ‘Urabi’s cause. European business owners who moved into the city upset the previously vibrant economic market. Large estates owned by these Europeans began to pepper the countryside, and the privileges that this group enjoyed

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129 Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*, 45.
130 Egypt had been marching toward unparalleled economic debt to the French and the British since the days of governor Said. ‘Urabi’s rebellion resulted from Ismail’s decision to reduce some of the military’s pay by half. The vast majority of those men—native Egyptians—complained that they were not only subject to the pay cut but had been overlooked for promotions. Ismail did little to oppose ‘Urabi and dissolved the government. The British and the French demanded that the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II depose Khedive Isma’il. In 1879, the Khedive left Egypt, originally exiled to Naples. His son Tawfiq assumed the throne and inherited an economic, political, and social disaster.
131 Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*, 47.
angered many of Tanta’s residents. What resulted was a series of altercations between Egyptians sympathetic to ‘Urabi and the foreign community.

Covering Tanta

Tanta debuted in the British popular press on 30 January 1882 in an article that foreshadowed how Tanta would be covered for most of that year. An article titled “Rioting in Cairo” in the New Zealand paper The Grey River Argus claimed that “Serious rioting has taken place in Tantah, between European and Egyptian residents, the latter being the aggressors. The disturbances lasted for some time, but order has been restored.” The story appeared six months prior to the British bombardment of Alexandria and pitted Egyptian against European. The author did not explain to the reading audience the magnitude or source of the problem between the two groups. In his telling, nameless Europeans simply became victims to a riotous mob of unknown Egyptians, who had inexplicably turned against their neighbors, sweeping them into a maelstrom of violence. The omission of a discussion of the cause, length, or gravity of the conflict pitted victims against victimizers. A binary emerged that identified the Egyptian residents as perpetrators and their European neighbors as victims, particularly after the revolution of Ahmad ‘Urabi.

A similar story appeared in the midst of the revolution that took place at Tanta’s train station. On 20 July 1882, the Reuters office in Alexandria reported, “Several disturbances have occurred at Tantah a large town at the junction of the railway from Cairo to Alexandria and Damietta branch. The natives attacked the European quarters in forces, and several of the latter

132 Cole, Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East, 47.
133 “Rioting in Cairo,” Green River Argus, 2 February 1882, 2.

Ironically, there was no mention of such a problem in Tantah in al-Ahram. Had the case been of significant importance, it would have surely appeared in the Egyptian press. The story arrived on the wire from Cairo, but an identical story appeared in another paper in New Zealand. The source for the latter article was Paris, illustrating that the stories were reproduced across the Reuters universe.
have been killed.” Reuters’s initial report used the train route to frame Tanta geographically. The geographic precision present in this article replaced previous representations that obfuscated the city as part of the Delta. The train, which stopped in Tanta between Cairo and Alexandria, also became a site of danger. Tanta’s proximity to those attempting to escape Egypt expanded the base of danger which threatened Europeans living in Alexandria and Cairo. Later accounts confirmed that some Europeans feared murder on the platform of the train station as they attempted to flee the city.136

Others attempting to leave Cairo to reach Alexandria and board ship also faced impending doom as their trains rolled in Tanta’s station.137 An article entitled “An American Girl’s Diary” claimed, “there has been a massacre of Christians at Tantah, a station on the railroad between Cairo and Alexandria. We have been sitting here shivering with horror for an hour.”138 The terror imbedded in the American girl’s story depicted Tanta as a zone filled a riotous mob that blocked all possible methods to escape Egypt. Tanta represented a particularly dangerous threat because both residents of the city and those traveling by train could potentially be killed. The threat was both real and imagined, but the sensational nature and perverseness of these types of accounts escalated the sense of danger for foreign residents.

Only two years later, a British account of the massacres at Tanta appeared in a published collection of descriptions of British battles.139 In a sensational account of the British intervention against Ahmad ‘Urabi, Tanta’s train station becomes the executioner’s block for innocent Europeans seeking to escape Egypt. James Grant writes, “At Tantah, Messrs. Crowthers and MacAllen were seized on the platform and taken to the buffet where their throats were about to

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135 “War in Egypt,” Taranaki Herald (New Zealand), 20 July 1882.
136 James Grant, Recent British Battles on Land and Sea (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1883), 400.
138 The Century, 293.
139 Grant, Recent British Battles on Land and Sea, 489.
be cut when they were rescued, and reached Port Said to report that 100 had perished.” This vivid representation of the experience of two named individuals provides an intimate look at the massacre on the platform in Tanta. Their narrow escape from having their throats slit provides an aura of mystery and adventure to these military men, who become heroes of this terrible day. This depiction both valorized the British military and laid the foundation for the subsequent occupation’s legitimacy. The variety of representations of danger on the train platform in Tanta in 1882 showed that the depictions served many objectives. By placing the story of the massacre within an account of British battles, Tanta appeared as one of many locations conquered by the British. The subsequent defeat of ferocious and savage natives bolstered British military might. The power to subdue these dangerous individuals provided credence for British occupation and also showed that the British could protect those who confronted the mob. For the western reading audiences, Tanta represented the dangerous, dark space between Cairo, Egypt’s capital, and Alexandria, the gateway to freedom.

Immediately after ‘Urabi’s revolution, a deluge of similar reports harkened for a savior for the Europeans at risk. On 28 July 1882, the Green River Argus claimed, “News is at hand that further disturbances occurred at Tantah, in which Europeans have been attacked and killed by natives. Most frightful atrocities are reported to have been committed by Egyptians on the victims.” The initial riotous mob had not dissipated and threatened all Europeans in Tanta. Tanta’s Egyptian residents possessed a certain savage murderous quality. They had radicalized. They not only killed Europeans but committed unknown, horrifying atrocities in perpetrating the murders. The transference of danger from location to individual asserted an inherent quality of

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140 Grant, *Recent British Battles on Land and Sea*, 489.
141 “Excitement at Tantah,” *South Australian Advertiser*, 13 October 1882.
the Egyptian as a “dangerous Oriental.” The depiction of this dangerous Oriental provided both a worthy adversary to the strength of the British military as well as a legitimization of long-term military intervention in Egypt. By showing the reading audiences of the British empire that Egypt was a dangerous country and Tanta was a gathering point where Egypt’s most savage congregated, subsequent discussions of occupation could potentially be welcomed rather than rejected. Furthermore, by building upon the preexisting abstract threat of cholera, the threat of life to westerners living in Egypt could become a palpable motivation for occupation.

Official imperial sources claimed that they only sought to protect the office of the Khedive and restore social order. The months of occupation following the battle of Tel al-Kabir resulted from a lack of stability in the country and the continual threat to the central government. As time progressed and the revolution radicalized, representations of the events purported something quite different. According to John M. Mackenzie’s article, The British war against ‘Urabi’s appeared as part of an “imperial roundup” in which similar stories appeared throughout the British press. Thus, while the British government officially claimed no long-term interest in occupation, the British press beyond the metropole, particularly in Ireland, New Zealand, and Australia, represented the information differently. Although some Irish nationalists felt solidarity with ‘Urabi, Australia and New Zealand tended to be complimentary to British efforts in Egypt. These provinces of the British Empire participated in what Simon Potter calls “an imperial press system.” Like the London-based press, these writers looked to the

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143 Gran, Rise of the Rich, 119.
145 John M. MacKenzie argues that during the revolution, “their main thrust [the British Press] seems to have been to indicate the presence in Ireland of dangerously seditious views, such as the widespread support for ‘Urabi as a fellow anti-royal nationalist.” “The Press and the Dominant Ideology of Empire,” in Newspapers and Empires in Ireland and Britain, Reporting the British Empire, c.1857–1921, ed. Simon J. Potter (Dublin: Four Courts Publications, 2004), 33.
telegraph as a source of news that connected them to the metropole across vast geographies. The aggregate contracted time and space allowed journalists to respond and inform British policy in the colonies.

Atrocities against Europeans appeared in the Australian and New Zealand press. The Melbourne based \textit{Evening Post} claimed:

\begin{quote}
Fearful atrocities have been committed at Tantah a town 76 ½ miles from Alexandria on the line of railway to Cairo. An infuriated mob from Alexandria arrived on July 13\textsuperscript{th} and massacred 100 European residents…Women took prominent part in these atrocities. A Hundred foreigners were saved from a similar fate by an Arab Shaykh.\textsuperscript{147}
\end{quote}

The narrowly represented story that came across Reuters’ telegraph transformed Tanta from the site of nationalist violence to the locale of a roving band of rioters. In this depiction, the perpetrators were not residents of the city but, rather, had traveled through the Delta and landed in Tanta in order to attack one hundred Europeans. The particular savagery in this depiction of the riot highlighted women’s roles as the perpetrators of violence. The movement of the mob promoted the idea that Tanta was a war zone where roving bands of Egyptians could gather to attack Europeans trying to escape.

The most violent and colorful representation of the outbreak of violence appeared in the American, not the British, press. The \textit{New York Times} reported on 24 July 1882:

\begin{quote}
An eye witness from Tantah states that 85 Europeans were tortured, disemboweled, and torn to pieces and that women were violated and tortured. The soldiers participated in this atrocity…Urabi Pasha’s new government has issued a proclamation that every native molesting Christians will be shot. It is believed that this is a mere form to cover themselves should they hereafter fall into English hands.\textsuperscript{148}
\end{quote}

The air of mystery that characterized depictions of the conflict between Egyptians and Europeans played out in the American press. Detailed descriptions of rape and sexual violence against women illustrated the particular savage nature of the battle. In these reports, the Egyptian military not only sanctioned but actively participated in the disemboweling of victims, rape of

\textsuperscript{147} “From the Telegraph,” \textit{Evening Post} (Melbourne, Australia), 7 August 1882.

women, and torture. ‘Urabi, motivated by fear of British retribution, officially condemned the acts. More importantly, however, the binary shifted from that of natives against foreigners to that of Muslims against Christians, highlighting a sectarian perception of the battle. Also significant, while the British claimed that they had no long-term interest in occupying Egypt, print journalists beyond the borders of the British Empire predicted a British occupation.

The British government further protected the Europeans when it occupied Tanta in late September. Reuters’s telegram reported on 20 September that “Tantah, one of the most important towns of the Delta, with a population of 30,000, was occupied to-day by British troops,” and on 28 September, “Tantah has been garrisoned by two companies of English troops.”149 The occupation of the city illustrated that the situation had become so grave for residents that British troops had been stationed there to protect the local population and monitor potential insurrections. The Times of London reported on 21 September 1882, “the European factories at Tantah have been looted by the rebels.”150 In the depictions of the events of the fall, class and class violence colored the representations. The shifting focus from European and Christian to factories brought the threat into economics. Protecting both the factories and factory owners provided further legitimization for a British presence. The rebels not only threatened the lives of the foreign population but also promised to upset the internal economy.

**Shifting Objectives: Using Tanta**

The representation of events of the autumn of 1882, particularly those in October, illuminates the subtly laid arguments made by some of the British press foreshadowing British governmental objectives in Egypt. The British government claimed that restoring order was the sole objective. On 7 October, however, Reuters reported:

150 “From our Correspondent in Egypt,” The Times (London), 21 September 1882.
Lord Dufferin, in replying to the request of the Porte that the British Government should state definitely the date upon which the British troops would be withdrawn from Egypt, has informed the Porte that the English troops will leave the Principality as soon as the restoration of order and the pacification of the country has been accomplished.  

Two days later, a New Zealand paper reported, “A seizure of a considerable number of concealed arms has been made at Tantah. An Arab Shaykh who has been inciting the populace to acts of lawlessness, has been arrested and subject to 100 lashes.” By the first week of October, questions regarding Britain’s intentions prompted great concern from the Ottoman sultan. The British government responded that once order returned to Egypt, they would leave, but as long as the threat remained, Britain would occupy Egypt. The stockpiling of weapons and potential insurrections in Tanta corroborated British claims that the Delta remained politically unstable. As long as Tanta remained a refuge for insurgents, the British could claim legitimacy. Tanta’s depiction as a particularly dangerous locale fed into shifting British governmental objectives with regard to occupation.

Class danger accompanied potential insurrection and further supported British occupation. The Star in New Zealand reported, “A revival of fanaticism has manifested at Tantah, one of the towns recently evacuated by the British and it is feared that further outrages may be perpetuated. The Egyptian nobles are petitioning for the retention of troop.” Tanta transformed from a dangerous place for Europeans to a noxious place for Egyptian elites. This brief, yet rich, depiction illustrated the potential danger inherent in the stratification of Tanta’s social classes. The populace appeared as fanatical, no longer targeting Europeans but, rather, Egyptian elites. A strong undercurrent in this article is that the Egyptian elite class sought the

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151 “Reuters Telegraph Constantinople and Alexandria,” Bay Of Plenty Times (New Zealand), 15 October 1882.
152 “The New Egyptian Army,” Marlborough Express (New Zealand), 13 October 1882.
153 In the following year, the Mahdist Revolt in Khartoum further supported British occupation and led to a long-term occupation of Egypt and joint condominium between Egypt and Britain in the Sudan. For more on this subject, see Noah Salomon, Undoing the Mahdiyya: British Colonialism as Religious Reform in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1898-1914 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004).
154 “Revival of Troubles in Egypt,” Hawera and Normanby Star (New Zealand), 10 October 1882.
protection of the British army against Tanta’s underclasses. In some way, it implies, the Egyptian nobles supported the military occupation of the city and, potentially, the general occupation of Egypt. In September, the nobles claimed that they could control the city and stop potential violent outbreaks. However, recent “fanaticism” required the retention of British troops to ensure order in Tanta. This representation depicted Egyptian elites as part of a respectable class who suffered dangers similar to those of the Europeans. This was a shift from the flattened dichotomy of European against Egyptian or Muslim against Christian. Instead, the dichotomy focused on notable against peasant. Peasants had quite often appeared as victims in the Orientalist tradition, subject to the brutality of provincial notables. The total reverse of class antagonism in Egypt perpetuated the victim/victimizer binary, which required both a mediator and savior. By depicting the absolute vulnerability of the landed classes during the revolution, the British government legitimated not only the occupation of the major cities but of the provinces as well.

Between June and October of 1882, British imperial objectives became evident as rhetoric in the periodic press shifted attention from the atrocities committed by Egyptians to the protection of Europeans and Egyptian elite residents. Officially, the British came to protect the Khedive, and they would leave when his authority became secure. Deeper investigation into the motivations underlying British occupation, however, makes our story return to cholera and its relationship to British shipping. Understanding the relationship between British shipping and cholera sheds light on why Tanta continuously appeared as a public health risk in no uncertain terms following the British occupation of Egypt.

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Tanta and Cholera under Occupation

By far, Tanta’s greatest presence in the western medical press began in 1882 with the outbreak of the fifth pandemic (1881-1886) and continued into the 1890s. The magnitude of the cholera outbreak and the number of infected countries made the fifth pandemic the worst to date. All of North Africa and major cities in France, Germany, Russia, the Caucasus, Iran, Afghanistan, the United States, and East Asia reported victims. Britain remained unscathed as a result of aggressive and strictly enforced sanitation regulations. Three locations propelled the disease into pandemic: the Arabian pilgrim cites of Mecca, Medina, and Tanta, as well as all of India. According to Barau and Greenough’s Cholera, “there were serious exacerbations in India (1881) and in Mecca (1881 & 1882), returning pilgrims from Mecca and a fair in Egypt helped to disseminate the disease widely in Egypt.” As in previous outbreaks, urban sanitation, the steamship, and pilgrimage remained central to the discourse surrounding cholera. However, members of the global community no longer addressed each other in print alone, but rather sent emissaries to Egypt to track cholera and run experiments. This effort led to the groundbreaking discovery of Robert Koch, who isolated the bacteria that caused cholera in Alexandria in 1884. Even after his discovery, the 1848 outbreak continued to loom over Tanta, although the city had not been affected by cholera for forty years. The potential threat of cholera spread by train in India and Egypt and then transported to Europe via British shipping made European doctors apt to travel to Egypt (the border between east and west) and find the cause of cholera. Proving

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156 For more on this outbreak see Richard Evans, A Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Era 1830-1910 (New York: Penguin, 2005).
157 Barau and Greenough, Cholera, 15. Although Tanta is not named, it is clear from the primary source material that Tanta is the city that hosted the famed fair.
158 That is not to say that there was no cholera in Egypt, but the scale of the 1848 outbreak was not repeated again. There were handfuls of cases, but while much has been said about how Europeans cleaned up their streets, there is a marked silence about Egypt’s response.
159 Mary Carpenter, Health, Medicine, and Society in Victorian England (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010).
the way the cholera spread would illustrate the central role of transportation in the movement of the disease.

1848: In Yet Another Context

Active collaboration in print and on the ground led to intriguing new information regarding Tanta’s 1848 outbreak. The death toll and number of attendees at the mulid remained the same. No new data emerged about Tanta’s role in the second pandemic. Yet the story continued to proliferate. The August 1891 report of the Annual International Council on Hygiene and Demography in London claimed, “the accounts that I have read say that it broke out in Egypt on June 24 at the Tantah fair, which was attended by many pilgrims, swelling the crowd to 195,000. Of these, 3000 died at Tantah, and this outbreak is still named after the patron saint of that fair.”

The assessment from yet another international conference on hygiene and cholera concluded that Tanta was the epicenter of cholera in Egypt yet again. However, in contrast to previous pandemics, the British now controlled India and Egypt and implemented laws to appease the medical community. Until the threat dissipated, Tanta would no longer host the mulid.

The British responded to international pressure to quarantine ships but continued to claim that miasma spread cholera through Tanta. Thus, they claimed, as long as no large-scale public gatherings existed in Tanta, the global community would be safe.

The Lancet, a British medical journal, recounted that “At Tantah, there is an average daily rate of 10 [cholera victims], with about 2 cases only of intestinal disease, or 21.4 percent.”

The percentage and rate of illness of the 1882 outbreak illustrated that cholera had always

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160 Transactions of the Seventh International Congress of Hygiene and Demography (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1891), 347.
161 Transactions of the Seventh International Congress of Hygiene and Demography, 347. The British banned the mulid a number of times between 1884 and 1890.
existed in Tanta. The *Lancet* claimed, “It is interesting at this time to look back to the account of the reappearance of cholera in Lower Egypt in 1866…In August ‘cholerine’ probably existed in Tantah and Cairo.” Here, Tanta and Cairo hosted the disease, expanding the threat from the Delta city to the capital. The *Medical Record*, an American medical journal, continuing to report on the outbreak, merely listed the city among a number of Egyptian regions cited that experienced cholera deaths. The threat of the spread of the disease came as a result of two factors: the condition of the cities, or lack of sanitation; and the population density of the Delta. The journal stated, “The [American] consular-general encloses tables including the number of cholera deaths in Egypt …Tanta 33,725.” The magnitude of the fifth pandemic, coupled with Britain’s occupation of Egypt, brought the global medical community together, and it concluded that official British medical assessments had grossly misunderstood the literature, or that British desire to maintain a lucrative trade had come at the expense of the global community.

As in previous outbreaks, the Christian press participated in debates concerning Tanta. The *Tablet*, a Catholic newspaper in New Zealand, reported in 1882 that because of the Muslim pilgrimages, contagion spread throughout the Delta and was carried by rail to Cairo, Suez, and Alexandria, eventually spreading pandemic throughout the world. Debauchery accompanied the medical threat specifically because most of the visitors to the *mulid* danced decadently while drunk on *arak*. Because of modern modes of transportation, the *mulid* eventually threatened the physical health of people in the modern civilized world. For the clergy, Tanta’s threat had far-reaching implications for the health of the global community, but as the cholera victims’ savage immoral behavior had conjured the disease, God’s wrath prevailed as they fell ill. Thus,

164 George F. Shrady, “Progress of Cholera,” *Medical Record* (7 July 1883 to 31 December 1883), 268.
165 “Scenes of the Outrages,” *New Zealand Tablet*, 27 October 1882. The *Tablet* was founded by Patrick Moran in May of 1873. He was the first Catholic bishop of Dunedin, New Zealand. He was outspoken against the
Tanta’s representation in the fifth cholera pandemic incorporated all preexisting theories about the spread of the disease and concluded with the British taking away the potential threat.

British official doctors directly contradicted the sentiment expressed in the British and American newspapers and journals. In 1884, in direct conflict with evidence to the contrary, the Egyptian Surgeon General reported:

Dr. Flood’s statement that the disease was imported in the person of Mahomed Halifa has been satisfactorily refuted. Drs. Chaffey Bey and Salvatore Ferrari are of the opinion, after inquiry, that the disease was not imported, and there existed in the deplorable unsanitary condition of Damietta itself sufficient cause for the development of the disease itself.\textsuperscript{166}

In direct conflict with the global medical community and existing data, Doctor Hunter asserted that miasma was the cholera in the Delta, not the movement of an infected individual. At this point, after the British occupation, the stakes were quite high for the British Empire. Control of Egypt and the Suez Canal would guarantee quick and lucrative trade. Conceding that the disease moved as a result of some unknown contagion would subvert the lucrative trade endeavor if word reached the international community. Thus, the claims of miasma became intimately linked to politics and economics rather than just a scientific debate. In many ways, the representation of Tanta as both an epicenter of cholera and a mortally xenophobic city often worked with British imperial designs. But print media also worked against the policy when it highlighted Tanta as part of the British imperial space and subtly blamed the British for the spread of the disease.

\textbf{Returning to Dinis\textsuperscript{h}way}

Periodic global cholera epidemics over the course of the nineteenth century, coupled with first-hand accounts of the atrocities committed against foreigners in Tanta during Egypt’s secularization of the school system and an advocate for the Irish Catholic community. Moran often edited the paper and was a regular contributor to it. The article and information about the founder of the paper come from the New Zealand National Libraries’ extensive electronic periodical collection.

\textsuperscript{166} \textit{Surgeon General Hunter’s Report}, 1883.
revolution in 1882, made Tanta well known to reading audiences of the popular press, medical journals, and missionary tracts. The familiar city appeared again frequently in 1906 after the famed altercation between British troops and locals in the village of Dinishway in Minufiyya (a province adjacent to Gharbiyya). Dinishway, an unknown place to a western reading audience, faded into the backdrop in newspapers, and Tanta became the location of the horrifying events. Misplacing the events in Tanta resulted from Tanta’s association with danger for nearly half a century in a variety of publication genres. The Tasmanian newspaper Examiner confirmed Tanta’s bad reputation on 20 June 1906 in an article called “The Tantah Outrage.” The article stated that “The ‘Daily Mail's’ account of the Tantah incident has been confirmed officially. It is stated that the district has a bad reputation.”\(^{167}\) The known reputation provided familiarity for the readership and a justification for the British government’s response. The Wanganui Herald in New Zealand reported a statement from the British official Sir Edward Grey on 7 July 1906. Grey responded to the widespread dissatisfaction with the manner in which the accused were executed in the famed “Tanta Incident.”\(^{168}\) Merely a week earlier, another newspaper from New Zealand had reported Grey’s claims that the British government, acting in conjunction with the Egyptian government, responded appropriately to the incident.\(^{169}\) The Taranaki Herald provided a vivid description of the hangings of two Egyptians and the flogging of others. The paper asserted, “The women wailed as the drop fell, and the flogging caused horrible cries, and evoked groans from native onlookers. The scene was exceedingly painful. The condemned men were quiet.”\(^{170}\) Tanta had become associated with violence and danger, infamous for being disease-ridden and known in print, but by 1906 the image of Tanta had become complicated by the harsh

\(^{167}\) “Tantah Outrage, Report Confirmed,” Examiner (Australia), 20 June 1906.

\(^{168}\) “The Tantah Incident,” Wanganui Herald (New Zealand), 7 July 1906.

\(^{169}\) A newspaper from Australia, the Advertiser, recounted the full details of the event. Appearing below the title was the subtitle “Egyptians killed.”

response to altercation between locals and British troops. The reprehensibility of the act and the subsequently harsh response by the British government in many ways shifted Tanta’s reputation in the western media as it (incorrectly) became the site of a horrible tragedy.

Concluding Statements

After mapping the ways newspapers, medical, and missionary presses represented Tanta, we discover that for a half of a century, Tanta appeared as a location that threatened death for the global community. The global fear of cholera, coupled with a perception that cholera was endemic to Tanta, created fifty years of discourse surrounding how to arrest the disease, what spread the disease, and Tanta’s role in its transmission or origin. In the midst of these international debates, Egypt erupted in a revolution that ended with British occupation. During that revolution, which ended in the killing of a number of Europeans, Tanta became a place of insurrection, sectarian violence, and nativist nationalism. Following the occupation, Tanta came physically under British control, resulting in the periodic banning of the mulid. As this chapter has shown, the depiction of Tanta as a dangerous place resulted from a specific set of Orientalist tropes that both adhered to dominant articulations about the Oriental city as argued by André Raymond and from a unique set of generalizations applied specifically to Tanta. This form of Orientalism crafted an image of Tanta as a danger to public health, filled with murderous mobs of Egyptians and the location of the Dinishway incident. The reputation did not merely remain part of the discourse of Tanta, but also brought people to the city. As Chapter 2 will show, the depiction of Tanta as a place of sick people brought missionaries, doctors, folk practitioners and mystics to Tanta to combat illness.
Chapter Two: Doing God’s Work: The Transformation of Tanta’s HealthCare System from 1884-1907

Introduction:

The British began the military occupation of Egypt in July of 1882, after putting down a popularly supported insurrection led by Colonel Ahmad ‘Urabi.\(^{171}\) The American and British media reported that the British stationed two regiments in Tanta during the initial days of the occupation because of the threats of violence against the foreign Christian community. The occupation was short lived in Tanta. At the behest of the city’s elites, the British evacuated the city after a month.\(^{172}\) The reputation of the city spread through medical literature, missionary journals and along Reuters telegraph, marking the city as dangerous to some and intriguing to others. \(^{173}\) A few years later, a small population of westerners returned to the once deadly city. They came from the United States and France, accompanied by a few Austrians and Britons (amongst the litany of Italians, Greeks and Syrians that had moved into the city earlier in the century).\(^{174}\) Unlike many of the other foreigners in Tanta, the American and French residents did not come to Tanta as merchants or bureaucrats, but as Catholic and Protestant missionaries.\(^{175}\)

The Catholic Society of African Missions (SMA) from Lyon and the United Presbyterian Missionaries (UPM) based in Philadelphia selected Tanta as a hub for their larger regional mission. They shared similar reasons for establishing a base in Tanta. Tanta was geographically

\(^{171}\) Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East.*
\(^{172}\) *North Ottogo Times,* (New Zealand) 28, no. 3234, 7 October 1882.
\(^{173}\) American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine,* 63-64 (1883), 51. Unlike sources cited in chapter one of this study, this source asserted that the number of murdered in the midst of the revolution was at least 140 in 1882. Conversely, the stories of the marvels at Tanta are far too numerous to count and many sources in the west exist to articulate this point. One example of the colorful accounts of the *mulid* is found in “The Great Fair at Tantah,” *The Lancet,* 2, (1886), 245. The story focuses particularly on the smoking of cannabis and the festivities that resulted.
\(^{174}\) CEDEJ, *Census 1907.*
\(^{175}\) CEDEJ, *Census 1907.* According to the 1907 census, there were a little over 400 Greeks and 1100 Syrians in Tanta.
and strategically important for both groups. The city’s reputation as a breeding ground for cholera presented the possibility of healing the afflicted as a viable method to spread the message of Christ.\textsuperscript{176} The regional significance and number of visitors to the \textit{mulid} of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi expanded the potential audience significantly and the lack of any existing mission field in the city also drew great interest. Tanta’s geographic placement in the center of the densely populated Delta amidst smaller towns and villages brought Egypt’s third-largest city into the mental orbit of these global missionary organizations as well. The city drew them as it drew many others, to heal and treat the sick devotees of the patron saint.

Health and issues of wellness did not merely draw western missionaries, but served also as an identifying feature of Tanta’s patron saint. Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi’s reputation for providing healing \textit{baraka} drew a number of his devotees.\textsuperscript{177} The Delta region, generally, was seen as a space that attracted people who engaged in popular forms of healing, employing both spiritual and medicinal remedies.\textsuperscript{178} The Delta had a relatively high number of people afflicted with (one/both eye) blindness, as well as victims of mental illness.\textsuperscript{179} Zar practitioners made their way to Tanta as freed former Sudanese female slaves or as (female) pilgrims to the \textit{mulid}.\textsuperscript{180} Demon possession by the \textit{jinn} sometimes served as a popular diagnosis for mental illness and as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{176} American Bible Society, \textit{Annual Report 80} (New York: American Bible Society, 1897), 135.
\item \textsuperscript{177} Muhammad Abu al-Wafah, \textit{Ishraq al-Sabah fi al-Ta’rif bi-Nur al-Sabah [The Radiance of the Morning in the Presence of Nur al-Sabah]} (Tanta: al-Jami ‘at al-Shaykha Sabah, 1969). Edward Lane asserted in \textit{Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians}, (London: J.M. Dent & Company, 1908) that the bread made at the mosque was passed out at various \textit{mawalid} throughout Egypt and people believed that eating it was preventative for illness.
\item \textsuperscript{178} CEDEJ, \textit{Census 1907}. The census also reported that there were 19 males and 18 females who were defined as quacks, acrobats, exhibitors of curiosities, wild animals etc. as well as 184 peddlers.
\item \textsuperscript{179} CEDEJ, \textit{Census 1907}. Blindness afflicted many people living in the Delta. There were a total of 8,703 people afflicted with one- eye blindness and 3,159 during the census of 1907. There was also a relatively high number of insane as well. 123 people were classified insane in Tanta with Mit Ghamr in Daqaliyya having 248 and Delingat (sic) having 184. There were also a relatively high number of invalids, insane, prisoners, beggars, vagrants and prostitutes (12,315) in Tanta.
\item \textsuperscript{180} Mrs. H.C. Campbell, \textit{Zar Or The Casting Out of Devils} (Philadelphia: Women’s General Missionary Society of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, n.d.) The story recounts the experience of the missionary who was invited to witness a \textit{zar} ritual performed by a former Sudanese slave and nurse at the hospital Tanta. It most likely took place around the turn of the century because it was in that period that she was most active in missionary work for the Presbyterian missions.
\end{itemize}
a result the *mulid* brought the Zar practitioner and the possessed alike.¹⁸¹ The *shaykha* al-zar or the kudiya exorcized demons from the afflicted by using loud music and ritual chants. Their position as exorcists brought them in contact with a variety of afflictions.¹⁸² Women held a particularly special relationship to the saint because of his ability to cure infertility and summon husbands for unmarried women.¹⁸³ Healing and treatment took place in many parts of the city, but revolved around the mosque. Private medical practices peppered the two major squares in town as well.¹⁸⁴ Sufi hostels (takiyya), private homes and the shrines of Tanta’s many saints also hosted both practitioners and patients.¹⁸⁵

The culture of healing and the nature of illness that surrounded Tanta and the *mulid* did not go unnoticed by the medical bureaucracy in Cairo.¹⁸⁶ Tanta remained renowned in medical circles because of the long-standing reputation of Tanta’s position as a center of cholera, but also because public health was an important part of modernization and governmental reform.¹⁸⁷ The marshy terrain and the existence of stagnant water created particular concern for the government and medical community.¹⁸⁸ Foreign and Egyptian physicians in Tanta operated in a separate orbit

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¹⁸² El-Shamy, *Religion Among the Folk in Egypt*, 92. Very few men participated in this ritual, but those that did, feminized themselves by adorning gold earrings and wearing their hair long according to this author.


¹⁸⁵ Yaqub Sarraf, *al-Muqtafif* 16, (1892). Dr. Sandwith a (foreign) physician employed at the medical school at the Qasr al-‘Aini hospital asserted that the *mulid* drew cholera.

¹⁸⁶ BLA, “‘Il’an, [Announcements],” *al-Sayha*, 19 January 1905.


¹⁸⁸ BLA, “Insha’ al-Salkhanat [The Establishment of Slaughterhouses],” *al-Waqa’i’ al-Misriyya*, 5 Jumada 1285/ 21 September 1868. The government asserted that the blood from the public slaughtering of animals could potentially
from local health practitioners such as midwives, butcher-surgeons, zar practitioners, mystics and local women. Modern medicine focused specifically on the physiology of the body and developed the fields of medicine and psychiatry to separate the study of the body from the mind. As germ theory replaced miasma theory in the final days of the nineteenth-century physicians used innovations in science to diagnose and determine the cause of diseases and physical affliction. Some professionally trained doctors despised “old wives” methods or folk medicine practiced by female spiritual healers from the Egyptian Delta. These “healers” lacked professional or legitimate training and as a result were socially and medically dangerous. Their practices challenged modernist trends in the Egyptian national medical bureaucracy. In fact, some of the practices actually caused further illness or death in some patients.

Intellectuals and modern physicians rallied against “quackery” or this brand of pseudo-medicine. Dr. ‘Abd al-Rahman Effendi Isma‘il, a graduate of the Qasr al-‘Aini hospital, and a member of the Egyptian medical bureaucracy wrote a treatise entitled Tibb al-Rukka (Old Wives Medicine) which criticized folk healing methods including divination, the consumption of certain herbs, confinement and zar. According to the doctor, Zar, or the practice of exorcism, appeared to contaminate the water supply and so forthwith, animals should be slaughtered indoors in slaughterhouses rather than in the streets.

189 The distinction came as a result of the continual government effort to legalize the health care profession and assert who was allowed to identify as a medical professional. Beginning during the reign of Muhammad Ali, he required that midwifery be a professional position and required a degree of those who hoped to practice. BLA, Subheading, Tarikh al-Tibb fi Misr [The History of Medicine in Egypt], decree dated 27 July 1836. The decree asserted that midwives attend the school of midwifery and had to remain a student for four years under the supervision of the French Midwife and teacher.


191 The professionalization of medicine and the establishment of a community of physicians created and subsequently expanded Egypt’s system of health between the 1830s and 1860s. The title of physician connoted an expert in modern medicine. The physician earned the title through a process of education and academic credentials (degrees and certificates). This new credential marked a separation from spiritually-based healing practitioners.

to be widely practiced amongst women in the Delta. He notes that the *Jaridat al-Nil* (The Nile Journal) published a case of *zar* and he responded with, “such women are the most undesirable and most wicked of charlatans, for they are female quacks.”¹⁹³ *Zar* practitioners (*Kudiya* or *Shaykha*) expelled spirits from the possessed through music, chanting and the use of talismans. The ritual and remedy relieved the afflicted of a supernatural illness or possession.¹⁹⁴ Because there seemed to be a concentration of these women in the Delta, Tanta became a place that drew folk practitioners, but also the scrutiny of medical professionals.

Discourse about medicine and healing established a gender binary that pitted urban, male and educated physicians against rural, female and ignorant healers. Practices that did not employ methods taught and sanctioned by Qasr al- Aini or European medical schools impeded Egypt’s medical progress generally. Urban men practiced viable forms of healing -modern scientific medicine- based on the separation of body and soul instead seeing them as intimately linked.¹⁹⁵ Female folk healers did not separate the body from the mind and spirit. The medical argument against folk healing was grounded in the physicians’ need to lure patients away from local methods and convince them of the superiority of modern treatment.¹⁹⁶ Foreign and Egyptian doctors trained in modern medicine believed that local/folk medicine conflicted with the project of providing an organized public health care system which used hygiene, sanitation and vaccination as the basis of treatment.¹⁹⁷ The medicine of rural female healers perpetuated

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¹⁹⁴ The *zar* practitioners in this story are a Sudanese woman and there is a long held belief that Sudanese and/or Southern Egyptian women make the best *zar* practitioners.
¹⁹⁷ BLA, *Majlis al-Sahha*. A letter from the head physician of the governorate to the governor of Cairo, 26 October 1857. Interestingly, a letter to the governor of Cairo from the local medical school in Tanta asserted that according to the law that foreigners needed to be knowledgeable enough in Arabic to be able to pass an examination. The medical school asserted that these foreigners should not be allowed to considered doctors in Egypt without the
superstition and promoted suspicion amongst the Egyptian population who averted and disbelieved the supremacy of modern medicine. This chapter shows that in reality, the local population embraced a pantheon of healing methods that included folk healing and modern medicine brought rather than abandoning one for the other. Healing and treating the sick through modern medicine became a collaborate effort between missionaries and local elites.

This chapter will investigate the period in which the collaborative work between Christian missionaries (many of whom were medical professionals) and the local population (many of whom were healers) resulted in a hybrid modern health care system in Tanta between 1884 and 1907. It will elucidate how local/foreign and traditional/modern health encounters produced a unique privatized health care system that competed with national public health efforts. This chapter is a departure from existing studies of medicine in modern Egypt because it highlights collaboration between local healers and missionaries rather than antagonism and distain. Missionaries new to Tanta sought alliances with local wealthy families. These missionaries forged friendships with existing health care practitioners such as pharmacists and spiritual healers, and eventually co-opted some of these healers to work with their hospitals. This chapter argues that until those who practiced a professionalized form of medicine embraced local forms of healing and forged alliances with religious and provincial elites, they gained no currency with the residents of Tanta. It shows that while each of these groups had their own knowledge of Arabic. The letter refers to Number 9 Section 1273 Number 15 of the legal Code of Medicine in Egypt.

198. The medical educational system that emerged almost intentionally excluded any of these women from the potential of receiving a degree. Female students were required to have a secondary school education and had to be at least sixteen years of age. Thus, a system emerged in which two parallel health systems emerged—one practiced by professional physicians and one used by those who did not necessarily adhere to the educational requirements. BLA, Ta’lim al-‘Aliyya fi-Misr [Higher Education in Egypt], “Tarjamat al-Qanun Madrasat al-Tibb al-Ihjazi wa-l-Madrasat al-Tibbiyya lil-Binat [Interpretation of the Law Concerning the Ihjazi Medical School and the Medical School for Girls],” 12 December 1890.
agendas, they all acted in what they believed to be an effort to do God’s work by healing the sick.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the medical culture in Tanta just before the missionaries arrived. It will show that the Egyptian administration’s efforts at public health were miniscule, unsuccessful and based in the appearance of order above all else. It will then shift to a brief history of the two missionary movements to show how Tanta fit into larger missionary projects for both groups. It asserts that their relative success was based largely on the acceptance of the local community and more importantly collaboration with (spiritual and landed) elites. Finally, it will end with a discussion of one particular spiritual healer, Nur al-Sabah (known as Shaykha Sabah) and illustrate her personal impact on the American mission as well as her important position within the healing system in Tanta generally. Shaykha Sabah, the daughter of a Delta notable, a folk-healer and respected mystic extended her help and her mosque/takiyya complex to the American doctors. This gesture led to collaboration between the doctors and the mystic and represents the ultimate example of the medical collaboration that existed in Tanta between spiritual mendicants and physicians during the early days of the British occupation.

**Public Health in Tanta**

In 1827, the medical school, Abu Zabal opened its doors and began training professional doctors on the outskirts of Cairo. Ten years later, in 1837, the medical school moved to the al-ʿAini palace, in the center of Cairo, and added the Qasr al ʿAini hospital. The initial function of the medical school and hospital was to train military doctors to support Muhammad Ali’s expansive standing army. Administrative authority and financial support fell under the *diwan al-jihadiyya* (Military Bureau) which created a centralized bureaucracy over all departments related
to the military including medical and military schools. Early graduates of the medical school joined the army as surgeons and doctors to treat the soldiers and their superiors. Employment in the military provided a prestigious title and lucrative salary for its medical personnel. However, the creation of an army of physicians did not merely serve the military, but created professional doctors who combated existing practices that threatened public health, initially in Cairo, but eventually throughout Egypt.

With regard to public health, the Egypt government’s continual objective was to provide cleanliness, sanitation and order in Egyptian provincial cities and rural villages. It further contended that those who hoped to practice medicine and all fields related to it required both a license and to pass an examination to assert professional training. Tanta’s position as the largest provincial capital and its reputation for attracting both mentally and physically ill people made health a serious priority by the 1850s. The first step in drawing Tanta into the national medical orbit was the appointment of individuals in two positions- a regional medical examiner and an inspector during the 1850s. Khawaja Raymond Burshad became one of the first

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199 Even fairly later in the century many doctors and certain aspects of public health remained part of the army. As noted in chapter two a number of these doctors were Syrian.
201 Prestigious titles and military ranking provided status to those who joined the military even though many of these people merely benefitted from military titles and did not actually participate in the military.
202 In the midst of an expanding medical bureaucracy and military, Muhammad Ali appointed the French born doctor Antoine Clot as chief surgeon of Egypt. Muhammad Ali bestowed Clot with the title of Bey in 1832 and made him a general in his military in 1836. The medical school also contained a school of pharmacy and midwifery. With his new found authority, Clot-Bey suggested to Muhammad Ali that a Health Council should be formed and led by foreign doctors from three countries that would propel the modernization of the medical profession. European doctors, with a superior mastery of surgery and dissection, trained local Egyptian doctors who would eventually become the primary health care providers for the civilian population, enrich themselves as legitimate healers and subvert existing medical practice. Clot Bey, *Aperçu général sur l'égypte.*
204 BLA, *Firman min Muhammad Sharif Basha li-l-Khudawi Isma‘il [A Public Decree Issued by Muhammad Sharif Pasha on Behalf of Khedive Isma‘il]*, 15 May 1878. This decree said that all pharmacists from that day forward needed a license as well as a certification from the Board of Health that showed that they could legally provide medical advice to those that visited the pharmacy.
regional health officers for the province of Gharbiyya in 1853. He served in his post until his death in 1865, appointed by the Health Council in Cairo. He, similarly to other western doctors, occupied the highest and most influential positions within the healthcare bureaucracy. His position brought the Cairo-based medical bureaucracy into Tanta to investigate the general health of the province with particular attention to cholera. His appointment followed a governmental decree that asserted:

Whereas it is required by equity and justice that, in accordance with the principles of hygiene, the goals in the governorate and the district capitals be clean and have access to so much fresh air that a person’s health is not impaired, and whereas it has been noticed that some of these prisons do not satisfy these conditions, therefore the governors are instructed to conduct personally an examination and inspection of the prisons in their governorate, together with the chief engineer and the regional health officer. These efforts to link Tanta to Cairo through public health focused on urban organization, the suppression of miasma and the promotion of hygiene. Public health and urban planning were wedded as interconnected vehicles of modernity to be practiced by local governmental authority and overseen by Cairo’s representatives in the provinces.

When Isma’il came to power in 1863 he expanded upon the meager public health system in place in Tanta. Vaccination and inoculation of the population served as a vehicle to ensure Isma’il’s vision of a clean orderly city. In a decree issued on 22 Jan 1865/ 24 Sha’aban 1281, the department of public health asserted that they would supply the materials to inoculate Egyptians

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207 The word Khawaga/Khawaja entered the Ottoman language through Persian. It became a title applied to foreign notables residing in the Middle East, eventually specifically Christians and Jews. The connotation of the word was foreign and Christian or Jew. Today, in Egypt the word can be used quite derogatorily.

208 DMZ, Sijala al-Mahfuzhat al-Mugata bi-l-Makhzan [Registry of Employee Pension Files], (Employee no. 149, File no. 2844). The pension files ended with either the death or the retirement of the employee. Dr. Borshad’s position ended with his death. His file also noted that his position was not hereditary, but his title was. His file also asserted that he left behind three children. His country of origin was not mentioned, but the ministry of foreign affairs would contact his government to alert them of his death. Here was extensive debate about his actual position, but the file clearly states that he was not the Chief Physician, but a special employee. The debate seemed to call the state of his pension into question.

209 Although there were other foreign doctors in the medical bureaucracy that held positions of prominence such as Syrian émigrés, western doctors and their superior knowledge of surgery (or so was claimed by Clot-Bey) put them at the top of the list.

and slaves for small pox with the prolonged hope of vaccination in the provinces. The medical pollution in the Nile’s water supply made the vaccination a top priority.\textsuperscript{211} He attempted to establish a permanent plan for vaccination in order to promote’ progress and growth for the people of this country’ and hoped that this practice would be “inherited.”\textsuperscript{212} For Isma’il, modernization and progress were synonymous with public health. The continual battle to inoculate the population and deal with the factors that contributed to sickness and public disorder illustrated that the people of Tanta did not recognize the legitimacy of government instituted health care professionals. Instead, they continued to seek the services of private doctors and local healers who lived within the city.

Private doctors and local healers continued to lead the day to day treatment of the sick.\textsuperscript{213} Similarly to the medical bureaucracy (maslkhah al-sahha) many of the doctors and pharmacists were not Egyptian.\textsuperscript{214} Doctors from Europe and the Levant dominated the medical bureaucracy and their predominance resulted in a general distrust of these strangers. Shibli Shumayyil- a socialist intellectual from Kafr Shima in present-day Lebanon most noted for his discussions of Darwinism- spent ten years in Tanta practicing medicine.\textsuperscript{215} He was a member of a small but thriving Shami (Syrian/Lebanese) community in Tanta. He spent most of his early medical career in Tanta treating peasants.\textsuperscript{216} He claimed that they most often refused to pay him any medical fees because they didn’t see any immediate results or the treatments did not work at

\begin{footnotes}
\item[211] BLA, Majlis al-Sahha, Private Papers of ‘Amr Arbiyya, 22 Jan 1865/ 24 Sha’aban 1281.
\item[212] BLA, Majlis al-Sahha, Private Papers of ‘Amr Arbiyya, 22 Jan 1865/ 24 Sha’aban 1281.
\item[213] “I’lan [Announcements],” al-Sayha, 19 January 1905. The local newspaper reported that Doctor Ibrahim Shalibi was moving to Tanta to help those inflicted with eye troubles. He spent time in London where he studied medicine.
\item[214] Bulus Qar’ali, al-Suriyyun fi Misr (The Syrians in Egypt) (Misr: al-Matba‘a al-‘Arabiyya, 1927). A list of the Syrian doctors who worked for the government bureaucracy can be found in chapter four of this dissertation.
\end{footnotes}
all.\textsuperscript{217} He also noted that his patients’ family members and friends would take medicines that he
prescribed to test the medicine before allowing the afflicted person to consume it. These
responses showed that some peasants in Tanta saw modern medicine as potentially harmful
rather than an ultimate solution to health issues. A good reputation and evidence of successful
healing practices amongst friends and neighbors weighed heavily for potential patients.

The physical expansion of Tanta, designed to facilitate a healthier city accompanied the
appointment of medical professionals and eventually led to information gathering about death,
ilness and sanitation throughout the city.\textsuperscript{218} The movement of disease into the water supply,
fountains and human waste around the mosque-market complex produced data about the general
sanitation of the city.\textsuperscript{219} Keeping the streets “clean” became the responsibility of other
government agencies as well when it came to social undesirables who appeared diseased and sick
during the reign of Tawfiq. An article in \textit{al-Ahram} dated January 15, 1881 claimed that the
ministry of religious endowments articulated the importance of the establishment of a \textit{takiyya} in
Tanta and set aside funds to establish a place for “the weak and the poor.”\textsuperscript{220} The article claimed
that, “our streets are overrun by (blind and sick) beggars.” The ministry chose Tanta to run this
pilot program and the author claimed “that if this (\textit{takiyya}) existed in Cairo and Alexandria then
it would be on a good path and from the response that we received from the police captain; this is
an improvement for our town.” The creation of the \textit{takiyya} fit into the larger project of deeming
the public space for those who would promote hygiene, cleanliness and sanitation. Begging and
the presence of the ill served as a constant reminder of the frailty of government’s project of

\textsuperscript{217} Shibli Shumayyil, “Min Mudhakkirat Shibli Shumayyil [From the Memoirs of Shibli Shumayyil].” \textit{al-Hilal} 32
(1923): 27.
\textsuperscript{218} BLA, \textit{Bulletin des lois et décrets [Bulletin of Laws and Decrees]} (Port Said: Imprimerie Française J Serrière,
1881). According to this source, Tanta fell under the jurisdiction of the Health office in Alexandria along with the
rest of the Delta (\textit{Bahriyya}) provinces.
\textsuperscript{219} DWQ, \textit{Majlis al-Sahha}, 7/12/3/45/2, Tanta, Correspondence, 1878-1879.
\textsuperscript{220} “Tanta,” \textit{al-Ahram}, 15 January 1881.
order. Thus, removing beggars and invalids gave the (all important) appearance of organization and sanitation.

When the British occupied Egypt, their obsession with sanitation and urban cleanliness translated into an administrative reality for Tanta. Already, notorious for the spread of disease, Tanta became the focus of the organization of public health. The decline in Qasr al-'Aini graduates and the increase in governmental surveillance led to a system in which public health care in Tanta focused specifically upon data collection, the appearance of order and sanitation rather than treating the afflicted. Part of the project of sanitation and cleanliness was the continual attempt at ridding unsanctioned female healers. This accompanied the increased bureaucratization of health care with the separation of physical and mental health government organizations. The expansion and creation of protocol on defining mental and physical illness accompanied this separation. Facilities to house and hide the sick continued alongside governmental attempts to inoculate the population. On April 12, 1882 the public health official Wasili Effendi Dimitri attempted to vaccinate the population of Tanta for smallpox with limited success. Most of the residents of Tanta required coaxing and discussions about the potential threat that would accompany the vaccination. The push to vaccinate the population came after a quarantine of Hajj pilgrims at the end of the season in 1881. Doctor Hassan Bey (representative from the department of public health in the Delta) claimed that a

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222 In many ways, the British system was merely an expansion of the existing structures in place. They built upon the bureaucratic structure that already existed.
225 Mayers, “A Century of Psychiatry: The Egyptian Mental Hospitals.” This mulid visit was also indicative of their mental illness according to the author of the report.
226 Cole, Tucker and Toledano have most effectively accomplished accessing these groups by utilizing police records to illustrate collaboration and resistance to state power.
226 “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 12 April 1882.
group arrived of 1447 pilgrims and 657 were Ottoman. They set out on 29th of December (of the previous year) 1881 by train. Many *mulid* goers would also make Hajj in the same year.

From its earliest public health care reforms, the Egyptian government perceived public health as an important facture in shaping Egypt as a modern nation. The ability to implement these reforms rested heavily upon the power of its bureaucracy and the receptiveness of the population. In Tanta, the sporadic appearance of healthcare officials whose primary function was to promote public health through vaccination and sanitation did not promote a culture in which locals participated as patients in this system. Rather, most people and practitioners continued to function within a local health care system. Those who sought entry into medical realm in Tanta needed to accept this system. Missionaries (who arrived in the 1890s) begrudging accepted this fate over time after they forged close ties with local elites. These ties gave the missionaries the opportunity to fulfill their religious mission, do God’s work and heal the sick.

**The Global Spread of Catholicism and Africa’s Role in the Movement**

The Jesuits were the first order to use the term *mission* in 1598 to define the project of dispatching European priests to convert people in East Asia. Spanish and French missionaries scattered throughout North and South American during the Western European age of expansion and sought converts amongst the Native American populations. Portuguese Catholic missionaries targeted West Africa. The 19th century inaugurated a new age of Catholic missionary activities, but used the existing model of earlier periods. The long tradition of missionaries accompanying imperialists or missionaries laying the groundwork for empire

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expanded dramatically in the 19th century. The papal order to spread Christianity in the 1622
was revived in 1817 and Africa became the primary target for the newly created orders of the
White Fathers and The Holy Ghost Fathers.\textsuperscript{232} The spread of the British, French, Portuguese,
Italian, German, and Spanish empires into Africa brought Western European governments along
with Catholic Missionaries into Africa. Roman Catholic presence was most dominant in French
Algeria from 1868 onward when the White Fathers arrived and eventually revived the ancient
see of Carthage in 1876.\textsuperscript{233} After the White Fathers agreed to cede some territory the Society of
African Missions (SMA) based in Lyon, France established a number of mission fields
throughout southern and western Africa and eventually Egypt.\textsuperscript{234}

The founding father of the Society of African Missions, Melchior de Marion Brésillac,
targeted Africa specifically and concluded that it was a continent that lacked the knowledge of
the (Christian) Bible and Jesus Christ. The first group of missionaries arrived in Freetown,
Sierra Leone. In 1856, the founder of the mission died of yellow fever within weeks of arriving.
The remaining four priests perished from the disease shortly thereafter.\textsuperscript{235} Brésillac left
administrative control to Agustin Planque in Lyon before he left for Sierra Leone. Upon
Brésillac’s death, Planque continued Brésillac’s vision for spreading Catholic Christianity
throughout Africa by opening the mission in Dahomey-Benin merely a few years later in the

\textsuperscript{232} Thera Rasing, \textit{The Bush Burnt, The Stones Remained: Female Initiation Rites in the Zambia} (Leiden: Transaction
251. Clancy-Smith’s work is an important contribution to the study of missionaries for two reasons. First, it looks
at Tunisia, a place that is understudied generally. Secondly, while there is a growing interest in the role of Protestant
missionaries in the Middle East and North Africa, very little work has been done on Catholic missionaries in the 19th
century.

261-292. They were called the White Fathers because of their white clothing, the order was founded in Algeria
along with an order of nuns referred to as the White Sisters.

\textsuperscript{234} Egypt was their major base in north-eastern Africa, but there were others who established base in Zanzibar.
catholiques [The Catholic Missions]}, 27 (1895): 245.

\textsuperscript{235} Father Melchior de Marion Brésillac, \textit{Notice sur la société des missions africaines [Notice on The Society of
African Missions]} (Lyon: Antione Perisse, 1858), 6-7.
early 1860s. He sent the Italian priest Francis Borghero there in 1861. Within a few years of the establishment of the Dahomey-Benin mission, the SMA had established mission stations in West Africa and the Egyptian Delta.

The SMA fathers profited greatly from the tensions between Protestant missionaries and local colonial administrators in Egypt. The British authority established geographic boundaries that limited the creation of new mission fields in southern Egypt and the Sudan. To forge a new mission field, the SMA and the Sisters of Notre Dame established the first Christian Mission in Tanta in 1881 to complement the existing station in Zifta. Establishing the first Christian mission station in Tanta gave them the advantage of proselytizing to a community that had little previous engagement with missionaries. The race to pioneer a new mission fields reflected the existing tension between Catholic and Protestant missionary movements. In a letter from Father Planque to the Pope dated May 7, 1877, the priest claimed that Scottish (Protestant) Missionaries had established a base in Lake Nyassa in Central Africa. Similarly, the Church Missionary Society of England published a discussion of missionary activity in Egypt in 1828 which said, “since the Catholic Missionaries have come to Egypt, who are insinuating themselves among the Copts with their notorious craftiness and afterwards reduced to Popery a great number of their

238 During Cromer’s administration, he engaged in battle with missionaries over their desires to expand and establish new mission fields in southern Egypt and in Sudan. He determined where they would establish new fields and laid tracts of land for them, i.e. established borders of where it was permissible to engage in missionary activity. This was most likely done because of the well documents antagonism between missionaries and the Coptic community in the south of Egypt. For more on this topic see Cromer to the Church Missionary Society, 1903 in Ernest Alfred Wallis Budge, The Egyptian Sudan, (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1907), 68. The English Protestant Mission was placed adjacent to the Catholic mission field most likely to avoid conflict and Cromer explicitly stated that mission work was a private matter and British missions would receive no money or assistance from the British Government.
best families.”240 The American Presbyterian missionaries replicated the same sentiment when they came to Tanta in the 1890s. In a report on the mission field in 1900, Protestant missionaries from Tanta asserted that the local community and the Catholic missionaries strongly opposed to the creation of a school.241 By the time that the Protestants arrived in Tanta, Catholic missionaries had a well-established mission field. Their task was to win over the local community as well as displace the Catholics as the dominant voice of western Christianity.

The SMA mission field in the Egyptian (and Africa generally) grew in three ways. First, the SMA fathers targeted education and created “free schools” to educate young poor children from every religious background. The second method was the agricultural mission. The SMA fathers would teach poor tenant farmers how to maximize the production of their land and its yield. The local farmers could either sell the harvest, eat it or both. Because of the predominance of farming and a large population of farmers around the city, Tanta served as the base of the agricultural operation.242 Urban mission (Cairo and Alexandria) work remained with the Franciscan Fathers:

There are Franciscans in the cities on the coast, at Cairo, and in two other cities. But the Delta, with its population of Fellahin, so down-trodden, so overworked, and often so sadly oppressed by the extortions of pitiless masters, is entirely without Christian influence… We must become farmers so as to employ these Fellahin and teach them to gain an honest livelihood, this is a project that we have long contemplated, and which I trust we are now about to realize. The great difficulty is to collect the funds necessary to purchase the land and make the first installment.

With a sanction from the Vatican who created an Apostolic Prefecture, they claimed spiritual authority over the rural spaces within the Delta which included Tanta. The physical treatment of the poor and sick was the third method for their mission work. By creating multiple tasks within the mission, the Society for the African Mission could reach people from different social classes

241 UPM, Record group 209 Box 18 Folder 20, Mission Field Report from Tanta 1900.
242 CEDEJ, Census 1897/1907.
and residents of both the rural and urban centers. The approach of leading with “good works” or doing good deeds served as a subtle method to introduce Catholic Christianity. The idea of “good works” is discussed at length in the Gospels. Evangelical Protestant Missionaries criticized the role of good works in Catholicism and assert that Good works alone will not get you into heaven, citing the verse Tutas 3:5, “Not by works of Righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saves us.”

**“Good Works”**

The creation of the College de Saint-Louis in the 1880s under the leadership of Father Desribes Stanislas fulfilled the first aspect of the mission. They specifically targeted young poor Egyptian children, assuming that their families’ lack of funds would encourage poor Egyptians to enroll their children. Instead, they received applications from middle-class Greeks, Syrians, Coptic Egyptians, Jews, Armenians, Syrian Protestants and Muslims. After the influx of applications from wealthier families, they revamped the initial project of targeting the poor and focused on education for the elites. Many of these middle-class and elite families sent their children to the school because they wanted their children to have a French education. The knowledge of French particularly reflected social class and status. Therefore, the Collège de Saint Louis became a center to educate future elites, but also a zone where the Catholic missionaries forged bonds with local elites.

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244 CSF, Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Catholic Church, *Les missions catholiques*, 22 (1890), 554. This article boosts that three of the graduates of this school later went on to attend law school in France. One of the most famous graduates (not mentioned in the article though) was probably the Coptic Pope Cyril V. The school was named after King Louis’ Crusade (11th Crusade) which was waged in the Egyptian Delta. Some claim that this crusade was the true draw for Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi rather than the popular account of the message from God that appeared in a dream.


247 “Tanta,” *al-Ahram* March 1882 reported that the Coptic Benevolent school in Tanta held their language examinations in the public square. Amongst the most important information covered in the article was the student examinations in Arabic, Turkish and French. The opening was a spectacular event in which a number of the local elites attended and were named. The headmaster of the school Murqus Effendi Yusuf asserted that as a resident of Tanta he had personal interest in the success of the school.

248 Magdi Guirguis and Nelly Van Dourn-Hardner, *The Emergence of the Modern Coptic Papacy* (New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2011), 56. The most famous graduate of the school was the Coptic Pope Cyril V.
administration, the SMA relied on their strong ties local elites to support the cost and establishment of a hospital.\textsuperscript{249}

The project of helping Tanta’s poorest children still remained an important aspect of the overall SMA mission. The establishment of the Order of the Sisters of Notre Dame (arrived in Tanta in 1881) by Brésillac provided the Tanta mission with an organization to address public health.\textsuperscript{250} The Delta’s swampy land coupled with poverty and a large percentage of small farmers provided an opportunity for the Sisters of Notre Dame to collaborate with the local elite Minshawi family.\textsuperscript{251} The sisters of Notre Dame served the patients and the Minshawi family provided some of the necessary funding. The sisters and the Minshawi family opened a small clinic for children (later the Minshawi Hospital) in 1893.\textsuperscript{252} Similar to many members of existing healing community, the Catholic mission designated healthcare as the work of its female membership. The sisters’ success amongst the sick in Tanta resulted from the well-established elite student body at the College de Saint-Louis as well as their ability to access the parents of those children.\textsuperscript{253} By providing funds for the clinic, the Minshawi family assisted the establishment of the Catholic mission as a permanent and viable fixture in Tanta’s private health care system. The nuns saw healing and treatment as essential to their mission. Forging ties with these elites through education, the missionaries could call upon their new allies to serve as patrons to Tanta’s poor and marginalized groups.\textsuperscript{254}

\textsuperscript{249} El Azhary Sonbol, \emph{The Creation of a Medical Profession in Egypt, 1800-1922}, 124.
\textsuperscript{250} CSF, SMA Annual Report, \emph{Les mission catholiques}, 18 September 1885: 452-453.
\textsuperscript{251} CSF, SMA Annual Report, \emph{Les mission catholiques}, 18 September 1885: 452-453.
\textsuperscript{252} CSF, Correspondence from Father Alexander (leader of the Mission in Tanta), \emph{Les mission catholiques}, (1 September 1893): 493.
\textsuperscript{253} The sisters reported in “The Annual Report,” \emph{Les mission catholiques}, 1 September 1893 that they treated 47 children during the days of the \textit{mulid}. A number of members of the community were grateful to the nuns and invited them to the local coffee shop to show their appreciation.
\textsuperscript{254} The SMA and the nuns were the first western Christians to provide benevolent health care services in Tanta. Father Planque noted that he had forged strong ties with an unknown local man the priest called Shaykh D’Affa in “SMA Annual Reports,” \emph{Les mission catholiques}, 15 September 1887, 371. While this man may have been a local
educational venture between the missionaries and local elites paved the way for more collaboration between western Christian missionaries and locals.

**The Presbyterian Mission Movement**

Initially, Protestant missionary work had a very different historical trajectory than the Catholic movement. The movement really began with the ideological shift in Protestantism in the United States during the mid-nineteenth-century that focused on evangelical forms of Protestant Christianity that privileged the individual study the Bible and the dissemination of Christ’s message to the ignorant masses throughout the world. This sentiment manifested in an international project to translate the bible into multiple languages and train native preachers. Competition with the Roman Catholic global missionary movement intensified the scramble to increase the sheer number of mission fields and subsequently win more converts.

In 1858, William Clarkson (a Protestant Missionary) asserted that, “the threat of the “Romish missionaries (who) had preceded them, excited hostilities to Protestant missions.” The threat to Protestant Christianity was the success of the Catholic project. “Good Works,” or charitable Christian works, rather than aggressive proselytizing measures seemed to forge stronger bonds of friendship than the hostile experience many Protestants faced. On the ground, in the mission field, this success resulted in a transformation of ways that Protestants engaged with locals.

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257 The way that Catholics and Protestants approached mission work reflected the core theological difference between them. The individual relationship with the Bible was central to Protestantism and the focus on a emulating the life of Christ was the Catholic approach.
259 Relations between locals and missionaries were very hostile in some locations, particularly places that had high populations of Muslims or a strong central Christian church. For example, in India, the spreading of the Indian
By the end of the 19th century the establishment of hospitals and schools replaced translation and street preaching.

**The Establishment and Expansion of the United Presbyterian Tanta Mission**

On April 16, 1904, *The British Journal of Nursing* announced the opening of the “Tanta Hospital” for women and children.\(^\text{260}\) The article stated that the American Nurses had returned to the United States, detailed the physical structure and space of the building and claimed that there was medical accommodation for three classes of patients with fees of 2 *piasters*, 5 *piasters*, and 10 *piasters*.\(^\text{261}\) Arrangements would be made for those who could not pay. The article further said that, “it is a pleasure to see how fresh hospitals are being erected all over Egypt and that the native doctors and nurses are on an increase.” The remarks about social class and native medical professionals helped frame the hospital as a benevolent institution that encouraged *natives* to embrace the modern medicine practiced by university trained physicians and nurses. However, the article concealed local particularities that dictated the shape and staff of the hospital, the mission’s prime motivation for building the hospital, the existence of a long history of local university educated physicians, and a public health system long in place. The implicit relationship between professionally trained physicians and nurses and the rich community of locals who frequented this hospital characterized the health care system that thrived in Tanta a decade after the beginning British occupation of Egypt in 1882. However, much of the success of the Tanta mission came as a result of a well-established base in the Middle East.

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\(^\text{261}\) A *piaster* is 1/100 of an Egyptian Pound which was approximately .0975 English Sterling between 1885-1949 and the United States Dollar was equal to .20 an Egyptian pound between 1885-1939. V. Gonzales, *Modern Foreign Exchange: Monetary Systems, Intrinsic Equivalents and Commercial Rates of Exchange of all Countries and Their Relation to the United States*, 1914, 32.
History of the United Presbyterian Mission (UPM) in Egypt

The Presbyterian Mission to the Middle East began and flourished in the Levant. In 1853, the Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church transferred its missionaries from Damascus to Cairo. By 1865, the Presbyterian movement moved up the Delta to Mansura in 1865, later to Tanta in 1892 and Banha in 1894. By the 1860s, medicine and education became the dominant method to spread Christ’s message in many parts of the world. In Egypt, the first medical mission began in 1868 with the establishment of a medical station in the Upper Egyptian city of Assiut. Initially, the team of physicians and nurses gained little currency with the local population who, according to J.H. Alexander, the President of the Assiut Mission Training school, were afraid of Western Physicians, their methods, their medicines and the relatives of the patients frequently took the medicines prescribed to see whether they would injure the sick person.

Alexander perceived the lack of trust in “modern” practices in terms of ignorance and backwardness. His categorization of western physicians, methods and medicines incorrectly defined Assiut’s residents as Easterners who were not yet socially equipped to cope with innovations in medicine rather than seeing the Presbyterian missionaries as strangers who attempted to disrupt local healing and health treatment. His assessment minimized the intense hostility towards the Protestant missionaries in Assiut (particularly between 1867 and 1871).

262 Makdisi, Artillery of Heaven.
263 UPM, Record group 209 Box 18 Folder 21, Minutes and Reports 1903-1910 (Egyptian Missionary Association).
264 The social gospel theory became the official ideology of the Protestant Missionary movement during the first decade of the twentieth-century. However, on the ground, the use good works (central to social gospel) became a dominant ideology much earlier.
265 UPM, The History of the American Hospital in Tanta.
266 J.H. Alexander, “Medical Missionary Work in Egypt,” The Medical Missionary 16, (January 1910): 262. Alexander contended that the local population was backward rather than understanding the relationship between public health and modern medicine in Egypt.
267 Much of the Coptic Orthodox clergy and some of the lay people resented the missionary effort to convert Copts. Local bishops believed that the Presbyterians overstepped their spiritual boundaries and disrespected the authority of the Church and its Patriarchy. The early attitudes about local particularities and the “eastern” Churches were both essentializing and Orientalist, the information armed future missionaries with ways to refute Coptic articulations of Christianity as well as future projects.
The response of this missionary illustrated a fundamental misunderstanding and arrogance about the community that they hoped to win over to Protestant Christianity. The resistance to modern medicine was more closely linked to the Coptic distain for Protestant missionary work rather than a lack of interest or understanding of modern medicine.\textsuperscript{268} The future success of missionaries rested with their ability to understand local health care structures. Twenty-eight years later (1898) the United Presbyterian Missions (having greatly expanded throughout Egypt) in conjunction with the Women’s Mission Board opened a small mission field in Tanta modeled after the Assiut.

**Expanding the Mission in Tanta**

In August 1896, at the Annual Summer Mission meeting in Ramlah, Egypt, the Women’s Board of the Presbyterian Mission suggested that two female doctors be placed in the Egyptian Delta city of Tanta.\textsuperscript{269} The minutes of the meeting noted that Dr. Anna Watson\textsuperscript{270} and Dr. Caroline Lawrence would be located in Tanta, but that Dr. Lawrence would have a clinic in Banha and Dr. Watson would begin establishing the American hospital in Tanta.\textsuperscript{271} The addition of the clinics would complement the newly established boarding school for girls. The constant threat of cholera in Tanta made it a particularly receptive location from the perspective of the missionaries.\textsuperscript{272} The UMP missionaries would provide both health and education to Tanta’s female community. Providing both health and education fit into the larger missionary worldview that asserted that they were responsible for bringing civilization through education to the

\textsuperscript{268} “Foreign Missions,” in *The New American Cyclopædia*, ed. G. Ripley and C.A. Dana, vol. 11, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1861), 576. According to this source, the Greek Catholic Church was very resistant to the Protestant Missionaries initially, but as the Protestants spent more time on the ground in Egypt opposition from the Coptic Church and laity was much more prevalent and more sour.

\textsuperscript{269} UPM, *The History of the American Hospital at Tanta*.

\textsuperscript{270} UPM, Record group 209 box 22, Personal Papers of Dr. Anna Watson. Anna Watson graduated from Franklin college (the women’s medical college) in 1887 and did a post graduate degree at John Hopkins.

\textsuperscript{271} UPM, Record group 209 box 22, Personal Papers of Dr. Carol Lawrence. Application for employment.

\textsuperscript{272} UPM, Record group 209 box 21 Folder 22, letter from Hunt to Barr. In 1902 it was reported that 700 people had died of cholera in Tanta and 29,000 total in Egypt.
ignorant masses. Thus, their endeavor was both benevolent and personal. Being able to provide these necessities to the poor and downtrodden would also provide them with good favor in God’s eyes.

The two doctors moved to Tanta and began studying Arabic. It was important that they acquaint themselves with locals as well as provide diagnoses to their patients “unlike (the) other Presbyterian missionaries in the field who read from the Quran, the “medical missionaries…read pages from the [unnamed] Arabic Medical Journal, page by page.” The intense focus on language and diagnosis served as the foundation to establish close bonds and strong relationships with women in the community. In many ways, the female medical mission mimicked and expanded upon earlier missionary movements in South Asia to women’s homes. The zenana missionaries (as they were called) illustrated the importance of targeting women as the recipient of the gospel in their most intimate space, their home. Similarly the medical missionary movement used the most intimate place as the zone of contact, the body. The believed that, “medical ministry is not only a physical benefit, but also an evangelistic agency of great power. Pain has a message to the soul as well as an admonition to the body, and the medical missionary seeks to impress its spiritual lesson at the same time that he mitigates its physical pangs.” Relying on their medical knowledge, meager Arabic skills and their friendships with a small established community of Syrians, these two doctors set out to serve women in Tanta.

The new mission in Tanta greatly benefited from a small group of Protestant Syrians who settled in the city of Tanta in the 1880s. Many of these Syrian Protestants had established

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273 *The Female Missionary Intelligencer* 18 (London: E.D Suter, 1875).
274 UPM, *History of the American Hospital*.
275 William Browne Hockley, *The Zenana*, (London, Henry King and Co., 1874). The term zenana refers to women living in seclusion in South Asia, similar to the harem of the Middle East.
277 UPM, Record Group 209 File 22 Box 12, *Missionaries with the American Mission in Egypt*. 
friendships with Egyptian missionaries because many of these missionaries had also spent some time in Syria and Mt. Lebanon. 278 The small Syrian community provided a strong foundation of support for the new missionaries. 279 A small select group of Protestant Syrian Christians women met regularly with missionaries and participated in prayer meetings. 280 Anna Thompson a well-established and well-travelled missionary based in Cairo wrote that she attended a prayer meeting in Tanta with Mrs. Butros, Mrs. Antonius and Mrs. Abdul Masih, Syrian women who had recently made Tanta their home. 281 The small Syrian community served as initial mediators and guides for the city of Tanta, but the United Presbyterian mission hoped to forge bonds with other members of Tanta’s community.

The two doctors’ reputations grew as they successfully healed members of the community in Tanta between 1897 and 1899. 282 The number of patients treated grew from 387 to 2093 as a result of the changing relations with locals. The doctors reported that the vast majority of their patients came from the poorest of people from Tanta and its surrounding villages and that the patients “were of all religions.” 283 They began to receive assistance and contributions from locals. Dr. Luigi, a local pharmacist contributed medications for those whom were unable to pay. For the local pharmacist being part of the medical system created by the hospital gave him the opportunity to expand his services well beyond those who walked into his shop of the street. Furthermore, also as a foreigner to Tanta, providing free medicine could potentially win him favor with potential patients.

278 United Presbyterian Church of North America Women’s General Missionary Society, Pittsburg, pamphlet, n.d., “in the 1880s when the Turks were ruling a Syria, a group of Protestant Christians came from that country to city of Tanta, in Egypt, that they might escape being pressed into military service. They prospered in Tanta and there they had a church and establish a school for boys and one for girls.” 670.
279 The Boarding School for girls in Tanta was founded in 1893 and run by Mary Cloker Porter. Many members of the supporting staff of missionaries in Tanta had also spent time in the Levant as well.
280 UPM, Record group 58 Box 1 Folder 14, Private Diary of Anna Thompson, 15 March 1901.
281 UPM, Record group 58 Box 1 Folder 14, Private Diary of Anna Thompson, 29th May 1897.
282 UPM, Record group 58 Box 1 Folder 14, Private Diary of Anna Thompson, 29th May 1897.
283 UPM, Record group 58 Box 1 Folder 14, Private Diary of Anna Thompson, 29th May 1897.
Not all members of the local community embraced the presence of the missionaries. The Coptic laity and clergy believed that missionaries’ efforts to target Coptic Christians threatened the viability of the already small community.\textsuperscript{284} This hostile field made one missionary remark that, “the seed has been sown in stony ground.”\textsuperscript{285} The complex relationship with the local Christian community shaped the experience of the missionary doctors working at the clinic. Missionaries believed that their work was important because it promoted modernity and Western Christianity through modern medicine.\textsuperscript{286} The establishment and expansion of the hospital and the staff positively benefited the community and provided more people with access to health care and the message of Christ.

In February of 1900, the Egyptian mission formed a committee for the building of a much larger facility known as the American Hospital in Tanta. The British Consular Agent, Joseph English facilitated the purchase of land (about 3 ½ acres) at a cost of 516 L.E. ($2580) west of the Ga‘fariyyah Canal and east of the Kuhara Canal. Land to the south and north was under negotiation. The land had originally belonged to the “Syrian party of the Greek Orthodox Church (sic) for the erection of a church; but that plan has now been abandoned, and it is again for sale.”\textsuperscript{287} The hospital would be erected in close proximity to the SMA whose school and church sat just across the canal. The existing SMA and Sisters of Notre Dame had immersed themselves into the elite class from this space and the Presbyterians seeking local alliances.

\textsuperscript{284} American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, “Scriptural and Useful Education,” \textit{The Missionary Herald XXIII} (1840). A Missionary from Cairo asserted that the Coptic Church threatened to excommunicate those who attended the Protestant school established there. The missionaries faced harsh criticism from the Greek-Catholic Church as well. “Africa,” \textit{Baptist Missionary Magazine} (1893): 164. The Missionary who wrote this piece asserted that the Copts were part of a corrupt faith. There was an attempt by the missionaries to capitalize on the well-documented debate between the Coptic laity and the clergy. The laity wanted to have more power in matters of Church affairs and attempted to draw the Egyptian government into the issue. BLA, Coptic Patriarch, Letter from Matran Bayhra (Tanta) to the Patriarch in Support, 1 August 1892. There were a few letters sent to Cyril V to congratulate him on his victory against the incursion.

\textsuperscript{285} UPM, Record group 58 Box 1 Folder 14, \textit{Private Diary of Anna Thompson}, 29 May 1897.

\textsuperscript{286} Makdisi, \textit{Artillery of Heaven}, 5. He has referred to the type of modernity promoted by missionaries as evangelical modernity.

\textsuperscript{287} UPM, Record group 209 Box 22 Folder 16, Report of Managing Committee, Tanta Hospital, 1905.
placed themselves in direct physical competition with the Catholics. In 1900, Doctor Watson wrote, “that ground for a hospital had been purchased north of the city so that “the location for air and ventilation is the best obtainable for our purpose.” The location of the clinic provided better air quality for the patients.

The grand opening of the Martha J. McKown Hospital in Tanta illustrated the success of the United Presbyterian Missionary project Tanta.\textsuperscript{288} The small clinic that started out in an apartment in 1893 blossomed into a fully staffed and functioning hospital only a decade later. The reputation of the missionary doctors and the practice that they created drew people from Tanta and surrounding towns and villages. The objective of connecting the interior Delta to existing mission fields in Cairo and Alexandria and expanding the base of operations succeeded in the establishment of the hospital.\textsuperscript{289} The hospital proved so successful that a satellite clinic existed in Banha to provide access to health care for rural Egyptians living just one train stop beyond the urban center.\textsuperscript{290}

In an effort to gain further currency with locals, the mission constructed the hospital in a locally acceptable manner. A committee member noted that in accordance with the “laws of the country:”

\begin{quote}
it is necessary to provide ward for three classes of patients it’s recommended that the first building be erected, be a third class ward for women. That a second ward be erected for the accommodations of first and second class female patients, containing six beds, this to be as conditions demand. And at the same time a suitable building be erected for use as clinic, offices, dispensary and physicians’ dwelling, of one story and basement.\textsuperscript{291}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{288} UPM, Record group 209 Box 21 Folder 22, Report on the American Hospital in Tanta, from the Minutes of Association, February 28, 1908, “Report of Managing Committee of Tanta Hospital.” Also on the list of missionaries with the American Mission in Egypt, prepared in 1962- Martha J. McKown was a missionary in Egypt for one year 1894. She died in 1895.

\textsuperscript{289} Sharkey, American Evangelicals in Egypt Missionary Encounters in the Age of Empire, 7.

\textsuperscript{290} UPM, The History of the American Hospital in Tanta.

\textsuperscript{291} UPM, The History of the American Hospital in Tanta.
The Presbyterian doctors expanded their initial call to include all classes of Tanta’s society and not merely poor women and children and constructed the hospital according to “local” provisions clearly appeased the most elite patients who did not want to intermingle with the middle and lower classes. The inclusion of quarters for the three classes of patients also showed that their reach expanded beyond local elites and the poor only, but that they had success amongst a variety of social classes. Their success directly competed with the Egyptian local hospital in Tanta which treated very few patients. The ministry of health’s annual report for 1884 catalogued the number of deaths in Tanta’s Egyptian hospital versus residence. The 1884 Sanitation Reports articulated that out of the nearly one thousand who died in Tanta, only twenty actually died in the hospital, all the rest died at home.292

A blind Muslim woman admitted on April 18, 1904 was the first patient in the new hospital. Illnesses associated with eye were particularly prevalent in the Delta. The patients that frequented the hospital were not only Arabic speakers, but often very poor women who relied on reputation to make medical decisions. One of the doctors noted, “People came from the nearby villages and asked, “we have heard that you will tell us the truth. Tell us plainly, can you help us or not?” The statement by the local patient showed a general distrust of foreign doctors, but also illustrated that these locals had begun to discuss the potential benefit of using the American doctors as healers.

The American hospital (as it would come to be known) gained relative success because of its treatment of locally respected religious elites, such as the Caliph of the Sayyid el-Badawi Mosque who “called one of the doctors to his home.”293 The treatment of the Caliph, the most powerful and locally respected religious leader in Tanta, illustrated his respect for the doctor’s

292 DWQ, Diwan al-Sahha, 7/65/1/49/2, 1884. Why this occurred was not catalogued. However, the function of these reports was sanitation. They focused on the diseases that caused death.
293 UPM, The History of the American Hospital in Tanta.
medical credentials, but also the confluence of local religious and secular elites who began to forge strong bonds with missionaries regardless of the missionaries underlying desire to convert. These local elites and poorest residents recognized that these doctors and nurses provided viable health services and found ways to forge unions with them without having to convert to the missionaries’ particular brands of Christianity. Thus, missionary entry into the community resulted largely as a result of elite collaboration and consent by the masses.

In the first year, the doctors boasted that they treated 19 Muslims, 32 Copts, 1 Jew, 6 Syrians, 6 Americans and 6 English patients. Their meager success came from a growing reputation, but also because it was the only hospital in Egypt that cared exclusively for women and children. The project of healing Tanta’s women and children did not solely rest with the American doctors who ran the American Hospital in Tanta. A group of nurses, many originally from Sudan provided support staff. In 1904, Lulu Harvey became the superintendent of nurses. The lack of foreign nurses and official school for nurses and very limited local support made staffing the hospital very difficult. The newly appointed head of nurses sought out freed slaves from the freed slaves’ home in Cairo and appointed twelve girls to serve as nurses, all of them Christian. The core of nurses assisted with surgery, attended to patients and “were sincere Christians.”

The hospital employed a number of freed Sudanese slaves. These nurses, native Arabic speakers, provided linguistic and medical support to the foreign doctors and staff. The Sudanese nurses offered the prospect of having women familiar with local practices working within the walls of the hospital. They served as potent healers particularly because of many nurses were trained in both modern medicine and the art of zar. These nurses served as

295 UPM, Record group 209 Box 21 Folder 22, “Halima, The Gentle One, The Story of the Tanta Hospital.”
296 UPM, Record group 209 Box 21 Folder 22, “Halima, The Gentle One, The Story of the Tanta Hospital.”
particularly valuable resources and strengthened the claim of modern medicine for members of the local community that preferred to use both folk and modern medicine as a means to treat themselves. These nurses wielded both spiritual and medical influence over the patients.

The hospital’s service to local patients brought them successes, but the collaboration between the two doctors and a local Sufi mystic transformed the hospital from a place that served very few to one that locals would increasingly use. In the History of the American Hospital in Tanta, the author reports that:

During the first year of the hospital’s existence, contact was made by Dr. Watson with Shaykha Sabah, a highly honored Mohammedan holy woman. She helped the poor and willingly agreed to furnish shelter for poor village women who came to Dr. Watson for treatment. This arrangement was particularly for those who came from distant villages and because of eye infections needed daily treatment, but did not need hospitalization and nursing care. ²⁹⁷

The shaykha and those associated with her mosque forged a new path by extending friendship and assistance to the Protestant missionaries. Seeing herself as a friend (waliya) to God, it was her duty to assist those who also saw healing as part of a spiritual journey regardless of their faith. Once this collaboration began, the number of patients increased. In 1905, hospital records reported that they treated 135 Muslims, 34 Protestants, 17 Copts and 15 Catholic patients. ²⁹⁸ They also had 8 obstetrics cases and 61 operations. The increase in the number of patients treated illustrates that the hospital began to be seen as a viable alternative or supplement to existing healing practices. Most significantly, the number of operations illustrates that patients began to see surgery as a viable method to heal and trusted the doctors to practice more invasive forms of medicine.

²⁹⁷ UPM, History of the American Hospital in Tanta.
²⁹⁸ UPM, Record group 209 Box 18 Folder 21, Annual Missionary Meeting, Cairo, 13 February 1906, 32.
The relative success of the hospital brought the expansion of the medical mission to the forefront at the Cairo Missionary Meeting on February 13, 1906, “Realizing the efficacy of medical work as an agency through which the vast population of the Delta maybe constrained to give a consideration to the claims of the great physician, I would respectfully consider the extension in the delta as an Evangelistic agency.”

The expansion of the American hospital in Tanta resulted from the increasing reputation of the doctors to effectively heal the sick. This success came because of the sheer number of patients, but also because of locally respected religious leaders visited the doctors and established a working relationship with them.

**Shaykha Sabah: Local Healer and Devotee**

Shaykha Sabah was a locally respected female Sufi mystic born in 1828 in the small village of Mit Sudan in the Delta province of Daqaliyya. She initially established three *takiyyat* (hostels) in Dissuq, her home town Mit Sudan and Tanta. She began her devotion as a mystic as young girl. Her father Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Muhammad al-Ghubari, a follower of the *Shadhili* Sufi path, hosted weekly town meetings on Fridays in Mit Sudan that featured issues in the town and surrounding areas and ended the gathering with a Sufi *dhikr*. His daughter Badr or Nur al-Sabah (later known as Shaykha Sabah) attended these meetings and provided food and drinks for the devotees. Shaykha Sabah and her family participated in a number of religious celebrations associated with the Egyptian Delta. She, her parents and her

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299 UPM, Record group 209 Box 18 Folder 21, *Annual Missionary Meeting, Cairo, February 13, 1906*, 32.

300 Muhammad al-Sayyid Abu Wafa’a, *Ishraq al-Sabah fi al-Ta’ rif bi Nur al-Sabah [The Morning’s Dawn Radiance in the Presence of Nur al-Sabah]*. This source comes from the private collection of Mosque of Shaykha Sabah. This hagiography is one of three that I have in my possession. Two were given to me by the Shaykh at the mosque and the one was given to me by Edward Reeves, the author of *The Hidden Government*. Each of these hagiographies are similar in terms of the story of her life, but differ slightly in terms of what is emphasized and some details are quite different however the general story remains unchanged.

301 Reeves, *The Hidden Government*, 175.

302 Mit Sudan fell under the jurisdiction of Dikris in the Province of Daqaliyya. Mansura is the capital.

303 This is part of the version of the hagiography given to me by Edward Reeves who received it from the author. However, it differs slightly from the version that I received at her mosque. Thus, this will be marked as H.1 and the one from the mosque as H.2.
three brothers Hussein, Ahmad and Ali also regularly visited the mosque of Imam Hussein in Cairo, Ahmad al-Badawi in Tanta, and Ibrahim al-Dissuqi in Dissuq.  

Caretakers of the mosques remembered her kind nature and her special character which expanded her reputation in her village as well as among those who frequented the shrines. Over time, her spirituality and special relationship with the divine led her to focus her life on providing food and shelter for the poor and sick. Like many of the other healers who based themselves in Tanta, she eventually abandoned her other two locations and focused all of her economic and mental energies on pilgrims to the mulid of Sayyid Ahmad Badawi. Her surviving brothers also accompanied her and assisted her with her work. Her initial residence and takiyya could not accommodate her work, family and projects. She purchased the land to build a mosque/shrine complex (where she was buried in 1913) stationed next to the American Missionary Hospital in 1904 with financial support from local families. However, the mulid only served as an entry point and she eventually settled in Tanta and joined the residents of the city.

Her reputation with the population did not come only because she was a healer, but also because of number of local miraculous stories that surrounded her life. The most famous of all stories has been recounted in the hagiographies of her life and have become part of oral tradition that legitimates the claim to her sainthood:

Over time Nur al Sabah fought with her father because she did not want to behave like the other village girls. On reaching adolescence, she learned that she was forbidden according to village custom, to travel alone outside of her home, which was contrary to her earlier habit. One of her brothers observed the cause of her rebelliousness when he said, “The Paragon has smitten her, “by which he meant that the Paragon of Men, Sayyid al Badawi (founder of the Ahmadiyya) had attracted her with his mystical love. The misunderstanding

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304 Simultaneous devotion to Dissuqi and Badawi are part of the Delta cosmology.
305 Reeves, The Hidden Government, 177.
306 Reeves, The Hidden Government, 179.
between daughter and father came to a head when a family from the village asked for her hand in marriage. When she learned that her father was weighing an offer of marriage, Nur al Sabah was upset and told her mother, “We are people of our Lord and the ahl al-bait and servants of the mystics and the saints. I don’t want to have anything to do with marriage. Tell my father and put a stop to this talk.” But her mother did not tell her husband of their daughter’s words because a girl was not supposed to oppose her father’s wishes. When the suitor persisted, Nur al Sabah reminded her mother of what she had said. Although her mother feared what her husband’s response would be, she finally told him of their daughter’s opposition to the marriage. Shaykh al-Ghubari was angered by his daughter’s independence of mind and decided to set the date for the marriage without reply because he was concerned that his daughter’s stubbornness would become known, causing embarrassment to the family. Miraculously she escaped her wedding chamber. (The door was locked and there were no windows).

The miraculous escape from the bridal chamber ended any further discussion of marriage for Shaykh al-Ghubari’s daughter and confirmed her sainthood amongst her contemporaries and those who followed her after her death. Her desire to remain a virgin, maintain an ascetic lifestyle and serve God was legitimated by God’s intervention in halting the marriage process.

It became the most famous of all stories reported about her transformation to a saint and established her reputation as being special amongst her community. Shaykha Sabah gained financial support for takiyya which provided a space for poor people to be fed during the mulid and throughout the rest of the year, but her role as a living saint imbued her with the ability to bestow blessings on the sick and afflicted. She seemed to come to “the aid of the weak and punish the strong for their vanity and injustice.”

Shaykha Sabah became an important local healer and mystic amongst the devotees of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi in Tanta. Her position, kindness and spirituality represented continuity with the existing health care system of popular

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307 Abu Wafa’a, *Ishraq al-Sabah fi al-Ta’rif bi Nur al-Sabah [The Morning’s Dawn Radiance in the Presence of Nur al-Sabah]*, 1. The same story was recounted to me by a Shaykh in Mit Sudan as we sat on the main street of the village in May of 2008. He pointed out the room to me from which she miraculously escaped and also told me that she travelled to Tanta by boat by river which led to the city. The map, Ministry of Public Works, *Plan General de Tantah*, 1884, 1892 confirms that a river and route from Mit Sudan did in fact exist.

308 Nur al-Sabah’s virginity was central to the claims of her sainthood and symbolized her devotion to God and the sufis only. The sacrifice of marriage and children was rewarded with a spiritual life and a number of followers. The plaque on her mausoleum said that she lived and died a virgin.

medicines amidst western medical professionals who physically rested just at Shaykha Sabah’s doorstep. Her mosque/takiyya (similar to other Sufi spaces) was a multipurpose space. Spiritual, medical and psychological healing practices were among the rituals performed in her space.

Abu Wafa’a, her biographer and nephew claimed that he witnessed her heal a woman afflicted with a form of hysteria. He claimed that:

Shaykha Sabah put her hand on this woman and had her remain in the khalwa (her room for personal meditation). Then she ordered the woman be put in the corner of the room where the zikr and prayers were recited and she instructed someone at the takiyya who carried a thurible to fumigate the woman morning and evening. After that she prepared a tahwita made of red leather that contained some red lines drawn on paper, and she ordered the woman to carry it with her. The woman returned to her house and family and after six months the symptoms disappeared.\(^{310}\)

Shaykha Sabah’s method for healing the afflicted women was firmly based in her commitment to God and her intense desire to serve him. Healing was central to her mission. Similarly to the Catholic and Protestant Missionaries, Tanta drew her to the city to work among sick people. This shared ideology amongst healers and the missionaries united them as those who saw health as a means to serve God, regardless of the religion or vehicle used to heal.

Shaykha Sabah’s reputation as a living saint, local healer and her collaboration with the American missionary hospital in Tanta represented the diverse ways in which local residents in Tanta engaged with modern forms of medicine while maintaining local healing practices. Her reputation throughout the Delta brought patients and devotees to her takiyya, but also gave the American doctors the opportunity to practice medicine amongst a population that largely resisted the Egyptian public health care system. They did not resist modern medicine, but rather preferred to become the patients of doctors who had established local ties with elites and religiously respected locals.

**Concluding Statements:**

\(^{310}\) Reeves, “Power, Resistance, and the Cult of Muslim Saints in a Northern Egyptian Town,” 313.
In the 1880’s, shortly after the beginning of the popularly opposed British occupation, Catholic and Presbyterian Missionaries arrived to the city of Tanta. Both groups opened hospitals, targeting the poor and ended up forging relationships with locals. These missionaries intended to use healing as a means to convert the poorest people of Tanta, but what resulted were collaborative relationships with elites who provided them the greatest political currency with a population that initially feared if not resented their presence. For the Catholic community, they found allies amongst the richest families in the area. The Presbyterians established themselves by surrounding themselves with local healers. Ties with the Sudanese nurses and a local mystic brought them amongst the poorest people of Tanta. The ability to heal the sick and participate as members of the community came largely as a result of the support of these local elites, the increased reputation of these missionaries and the benevolence of their work. The friendship and professional relationship between the two American doctors and a local Sufi mystic, Shaykha Sabah represented the strongest example of the creation of a uniquely modern health care system in Tanta. Many residents continued to use existing forms of healing to help the afflicted along with visits to the American hospital in Tanta. The acceptance of the legitimacy of these doctors by those who practiced healing provided currency amongst the masses in Tanta while simultaneously provincial elites forged alliances with the Society of African Missions to establish a competing alternative to the American Presbyterian Mission. Both groups gain successful entry into Tanta’s society and competed with the largely unsuccessful efforts made by the Egyptian government. Interest in social engagement and public health in Tanta was not only limited to foreign missionaries, elites and the local healing community. It was also a site of inquiry for periodicals in Egypt. In particular, al-Ahram (newspaper) and al-Manar (journal) dedicated a few stories to Tanta that illustrated the complexity of society in Tanta during the
second half of the nineteenth-century. Chapter 3 will look into those representations and show that class and position affected how individuals represented themselves or were represented in print.
Chapter Three: Cracks in the Veneer of the Modern City of Tanta: Representations of Greeks and the Poor in Tanta in Print in the Newspaper *al-Ahram* and the Journal *al-Manar*

Introduction:

On the 1st of Sha’ban, 1295/ the 31st of July, 1878, the periodical, *al-Ahram* meticulously reported a historic event for the city of Tanta.311 The Khedive (viceroy) invited the periodical’s two editors, Salim and Bishara Taqla, recent Lebanese émigrés, to provide a first-hand account of his visit to the *mulid* of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi.312 The article began with a vivid image of the Khedive’s arrival, “around five o’clock in the evening on Thursday the 7th of this month the telegraph dispatched that His Highness the Khedive’s locomotive pulled into the train station (at Tanta).”313 The carriage, ornately decorated with mother-of-pearl and inlaid wood carried Khedive Isma’il and his two sons, the princes Muhammad Tawfiq314 and Hussein.315 Billowing

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311 *al-Ahram* [the Pyramids] is Egypt’s second oldest periodical and was founded in 1875. The oldest periodical, *al-Waqa’i’ al-Misriyya* [The Egyptian Bulletin], was founded in 1832. For more on famous intellectuals, merchants, lawyers, doctors and other professionals from Syria and Lebanon in the 19th century please see Qar`ali, *al-Suriyyun fi Misr* [The Syrians in Egypt], 179. The publication most likely was in Cairo because quite often Misr and Qahirat are used interchangeably colloquially.

312 “Tasharaf al-Hadrat al-Khudawi al-Fakhma li-Madinat Tanta [The Honor of the Presence of the Khedive for the City of Tanta],” *al-Ahram*, 1 Sha’ban, 1295/31 July 1878.

313 PRO/FO 786, Diagram of the succession of Muhammad Ali and his Dynasty. The title Khedive was an honorific given to Isma’il by the Ottoman Sultan ‘Abd al-Aziz in 1867. It was a change from the previous title of pasha because it asserted that he was viceroy of Egypt, but also that the position was hereditary. It was used by Tawfiq and Abbas Hilmi II, but was replaced by the term Sultan at the turn of the century when Egypt officially became a protectorate of Britain. Khedive Abbas Hilmi II, *The Last Khedive of Egypt: The Memoirs of Abbas Hilmi II* was recently translated into Arabic and English from the original French. Also, for a complete listing of the transformation of titles please see Mustafa Barakat, *al-Alqab wa-l-Waza’if al-Uthmaniyya [Honorific and Official Ottoman Titles1517-1924]* (Cairo: Dar al-Gharib, 2000), 77. The author recounts the first time that he found the term pasha and argues that titles became popular in the 15th century, but really were more pervasively used beginning in the 17th century.

314 Isma’il became the Viceroy (Khedive) of Egypt and Sudan after his father was exiled in 1879 and ruled as the 6th member of Muhammad Ali’s dynasty. For more on his predecessors see F. Robert Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives, 1805–1879: From Household Government to Modern Bureaucracy*.

smoke from the train’s steam engine filled the Delta sky as a hundred thousand onlookers awaited the special guests. Egypt’s three regal sons descended from the train with an elaborate entourage to the sounds of music from a military band and cheers from the crowd. The general inspector of the Delta, Shahin Pasha, along with local notables, merchants and mayors from the provinces greeted the royal family. At seven in the evening the Khedive and his hosts made their way to his kiosk.

The Khedive specifically selected the mulid for his official visit because of its economic, political and social significance. The mulid, hosted by the Ahmadi Sufi Order was both the largest religiously significant event in the region and a major market. Merchants flooded the city periodically to sell commodities (mainly cotton and rice) throughout the year, but the mulid promised major economic rewards. Here they could exchange a wider variety of goods such as fabrics, children’s toys, perfume, fish and cotton. They also sold Abyssinian, Sudanese and Circassian slaves amongst the commercial goods. The mulid was a major event that men and women from a variety of social classes collectively shared in the festivities for many different reasons. People traveled great distances and flooded Tanta’s narrow passage ways to purchase

316 “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 5 July 1878.
317 “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 5 July 1878. The Khedive’s kiosk was a large tent with a long table where the Khedive sat to watch the mulid, eat and meet with guests. Foreign time denoted a.m. or p.m. and divides the day into two cycles. Often the day was cut into five sections in Egypt and followed prayer times.
318 Felix Bovet, Voyage en terre-sainte [Voyage in Holy Land] (Paris: Simon Bacon and Company, 1862), 91. The structure of the city was such that there were permanently designated zones for selling wares around the mosque. For more on this topic see the Ministry of Public Works, General Plan for the City of Tanta, 1884, 1892. The descriptions, legends, street names and major structures appeared in both French and Arabic. The urban planning map depicted the inner or old city as it was along with plans laid out on a grid system for new developments.
319 Gabriel Baer, “Slavery in 19th Century Egypt,” The Journal of African Studies 8, no. 3 (1967): 417-441. Baer argued that the mulid of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi was the largest slave market in Egypt and the most prominent market in the Mediterranean world.
320 Yaqub Sarruf, “Min Ayna Ya’tina al-Waba’ ”[Where the Epidemic Leaves Us] al-Muqtataf 16: 1 (1892). Egyptian Calendar for the Year 1295 A. H., 1878, Corresponding with the Years 1594 to 1595 of the Koptic Era, (Alexandria: French Printing Office, 1879), 94. Women’s participation at the mulid has been documented as far back as the early Ottoman period, but often referring to their immoral acts as prostitutes. For more on this see al-Jabarti’s Chronicles, vol. 1, 72, 261. For a detailed analysis of this behavior in the earlier periods see Michael Winter, Egyptian Society Under Ottoman Rule 1517-1798 (London: Routledge, 1992), 176.
wares, watch dancing and gain blessings from the dead saint. Some women attended the event as dancers and others hoped to find husbands or be blessed with fertility.

The article represented Khedive Isma’il’s visit as majestic, organized and supported by local dignitaries. The Khedive arrived, sat under his tent, and received local notables (a’yān) and townsfolk. He celebrated with the mayor of Alexandria, merchants, landowners, doctors, and members of Ahmadiyya Sufi order. Then, the Khedive, the leadership of the Ahmadiyya Sufi order, the governor of Gharbiyya, and the founders of al-Ahram gathered in the Khedive’s kiosk and greeted other visitors to the mulid. Shahin Pasha, the ministers of justice and interior and Doctor Iskandar Effendi Dahan (a wealthy doctor from Tanta’s notable families) also sat with the Khedive.

The complexity of the Khedival government’s relationship with Egyptian society (particularly in the provinces of the Delta) appeared in the Khedive’s participation and presence at Ahmad al-Badawi’s mulid. The grand entrance coupled with the entourage framed the Khedive in the majestic fashion that asserted his rightful position as leader of Egypt and its provinces. As the largest landowning resident of Gharbiyya, his presence also signified the Khedive’s power to populate the province with those sympathetic to his government – both

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321 Yaqub Sarruf, al-Muqtatat 16: 1 (1892). The author asserted that the mulid annually hosted at least 100,000 pilgrims if not more.
322 “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 13 April 1882 published a discussion about how the mulid went after the army and police were stationed at the mulid to provide order. Their presence illustrates that there was actually very little control over the event.
323 Plan General de Tantah, 1884, 1892. By 1884, the Khedive’s kiosk was a permanent fixture in the city. This map features future city plans, but also shows the existence of a permanent structure designated as the Khedive’s kiosk.
324 The Dahan family featured amongst the most prominent families in Tanta. Similar to the editors of al-Ahram, they were recent émigrés from the Levant. On 7 January 1903 al-Ahram reported about Khawaga Constantine Dahan’s presence at a Catholic Church opening. “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 7 January 1903. Another family member was featured as one of the most prominent business men in Tanta. “The Most Prominent Eastern Business Men,” al-Ahram, 12 July 1878. Finally, Dahan Dahan was the American Consular agent in Tanta in the 1880’s. For more on this see The United States Congressional Series Set (Washington D.C: GPO, 1884).
foreigners and locals. His opulent wealth and position were manifested most deeply in the ornately decorated carriage that transported the royal family to Tanta. The Exeter was a gift from the English locomotive engineer Robert Stevenson to the royal family in the 1850s. The entourage and the support by local dignitaries illustrated an unspoken agreement between Egypt’s government in Cairo and the landed elites in Tanta. These two parties mutually supported one another’s authority. Ironically, the pomp and circumstance was meant to be a vehicle for the Khedive to access mulid-goers and show the government’s recognition of the cultural significance of this event.

The article describing the Khedive’s participation in the mulid indicated how al-Ahram would represent Tanta generally between 1878 and 1907. It also depicted a city in which elites promoted modernity through rich intellectual, economic and social engagement. In the descriptions that circulated to al-Ahram’s readership, Tanta contained a strong centralized police force and judicial system with powerful ties to the national government in Cairo. The representation did not emerge because of a close link between the Egyptian government and the periodical, but because of the type of information that local branch of the Egyptian authority

325 PRO/FO140/20, British Consular to the English Crown, 11 June 1878. The British Consular reported to the English Crown that at the time British landowners owned approximately 3000 fiddans, but are “anxious to obtain more land.” The populating of Gharbiyya with European foreigners through land sale created much tension and hostility amongst the residents of Tanta. Plantations that popped up and were owned by Europeans created tensions with small farmers who squatted on kafr (disputed or forgotten territory).
327 This article listed the most prominent Eastern business men and included fourteen from Tanta. “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 12 January 1878. This article recounted the inauguration of the African-French Language School in Tanta. “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 15 January 1881. In this article, the police run a hostel (takīyya) for the poor and its great success were featured. It further stated that Cairo and Alexandria should look to this takīyya as a model to remove beggars from the streets. “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 21 January 1882. This article announced the opening of the Coptic Benevolent School in Tanta and a similar article featured the public examination of students from this school, see “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 26 May 1885, for more on this subject. Similarly, the mulid appeared as a place of governmental organization where the presence of the police at the event illustrated the total control over the mulid and its visitors. For more on this see “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 13 April 1882.
dispatched about Tanta to *al-Ahram*. Ultimately, the *mulid* appeared as a location that generated economic prosperity, in which local elites and government co-existed harmoniously with all of Tanta’s residents, rather than as a religious ceremony of critical importance to the spiritual life of the country.” The religious significance and what happened at the event disappeared from the sterilized government sanctioned cultural fair. Tanta rarely appeared as a dangerous place during the *mulid*, but rather as a city that *averted* violence through an organized bureaucracy and strong political economy. This selective image resulted from Tanta’s reputation in Arabic periodicals which focused on the progress of landed elites and urban merchants who prospered greatly from the *mulid*’s success rather than on detailed discussions of conflict between social classes.

Despite this skew in the reportage, a more complicated picture of the state and class interactions emerged in articles that engaged with social issues instead of governance. In a very few instances, *al-Ahram* wrote sensational stories that illustrated the underlying class tensions that threatened Tanta’s administrative progress. While these articles were infrequent and appeared mostly around the ‘Urabi revolution, they show that the idyllic image of an ordered city depicted by the government was only one face of Tanta. These articles occupied the entire front page, conjured vivid images and addressed class conflict directly, all aspects that were usually absent in *al-Ahram*’s depiction of Tanta. Typically, *al-Ahram* wrote complimentary summaries

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328 There are a number of examples of the type of information that assert order in Tanta in the pages of *al-Ahram*. For example on 16 January of 1882, *al-Ahram* reported that an officer from the army was coming to Tanta in order to collect the census. Similarly on 16 February 1882, *al-Ahram* reported the presence of Yusuf Bey the head of the police force would be visiting the city. Also that month, *al-Ahram* reported the shifting of administrators throughout the provinces; for example, Nagib Effendi Shakr was moved to Kafr Zayat, but at some point was in Damanhur - and Nagib Effendi Nasrallah, who was once placed in Tanta, was being transferred to Damanhur as well.


330 I will define political economy in its plainest definition as the relationship between commerce and governmental organization within a bounded state. Peter Gran has argued that political economists use social class as a tool for analysis that breaks from the modernization theory that privileges the elites. Furthermore, political events and decisions of the elites are not disembodied from elites, but rather effect, and are affected, by the rest of society. For more on this topic see Peter Gran, “Political Economy as a Paradigm for the Study of Islamic History,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11, no. 4 (July 1980): 511-526.
of the events at Tanta that illustrated the city’s public order and social transformation. Imbedded in many of those compilations, (elite and governmental) fear of the populace bubbled to the surface. Greek immigrants, foreigners immune to local laws, wreaked havoc throughout the city, while impoverished Egyptians threatened public health and created perpetual disorder, violence and vandalism. However, the economic prosperity of the event strengthened Tanta’s expansive financial future coupled with increased governmental integration through public works made the mulid a symbol of Tanta’s modernization on the pages of al-Ahram. In spite of the existence of unwanted groups who threatened Tanta’s march to modernization, the grand event was depicted as a space where elites forged stronger ties with the government and publically asserted this strong bond.

In contrast to the mulid’s depiction as a modern event that promoted financial opportunities and harmonious relationships amongst elites in al-Ahram, a dissenting voice came from Rashid Rida, the editor and owner of the internationally read and widely circulated intellectual journal al-Manar. Rida was a founding member of the Salafiyya (modernist Islamic) movement and critic of western encroachment on the Middle East and the social position of unqualified 'ulama as a dominant voice for Islam. For Rida and other thinkers in the Salafiyya movement, a spiritual return to the early days of Islam coupled with an intellectual resurgence that embraced modernity was the key to rejuvenating Islam and ridding the Muslim world of European encroachment. Rida set himself the task of illuminating the anti-modern and dangerous elements in Middle Eastern society in his writings and used the mulid as a vehicle to

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331 “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 21 May 1885.
332 Philip Khoury defined an urban notable as an urban resident who dominated “the religious, judicial, and educational institutions, and along with a few well-placed laity, were found in the upper echelons of the bureaucracy.” For more on this subject see Khoury, Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism, The Politics of Damascus 1860-1920, 12.
define social and religious issues in Egypt.\textsuperscript{334} For Rida, the events during the \textit{mulid} at Tanta represented some of the most morally reprehensible and spiritually dangerous components of Egyptian society. Rida’s journal, based out of Cairo, critiqued the \textit{mulid} within the larger context of the state of Islam in Egypt. Like \textit{al-Ahram}, \textit{al-Manar} depicted class interaction, particularly the mixing of social classes. In \textit{al-Manar}’s description of the event, the perceived class harmony that existed at the \textit{mulid} was a façade fabricated for the masses that saw the event as period of social utopia and the zone around the mosque as shared social space. For many participants at the event, the \textit{mulid} upset the dominant social structure that existed throughout the rest of the year. Social class and problems within the religious intellectual hierarchy were the most prominent features of \textit{al-Manar}’s critique of the \textit{mulid}. Poor and uneducated \textit{shuyukh} asserting themselves as learned scholars, capable and qualified to transmit knowledge, particularly upset Rida. Unlike \textit{al-Ahram}, Rida’s journal depicted the \textit{mulid} as a space in which ignorance dominated and the moral ills of Egyptian society manifested most acutely. Yet, as this chapter will show, a survey of their combined representation of Tanta reveals a shared concern that social class tensions and the danger imposed by the lower socio-economic strata threatened the larger project of modernizing Tanta.

A comparison of the representation of Tanta in the newspaper \textit{al-Ahram} and the journal \textit{al-Manar} shows how these periodicals represented Tanta for their reading audiences and how those depictions reflected how intellectuals and elites asserted their class in print. Both journals dedicated a number of pages to Tanta’s contribution to Egyptian society. These news sources approached the city critically by commenting on proposed methods to improve physical and spiritual safety in Tanta. \textit{Al-Ahram} critiqued the increasing power of the police state by featuring

\textsuperscript{334} The significance of this journal in this study is that it was widely dispersed amongst and was read as far as Indonesia. So, similarly to the way that Tanta was presented by print in chapter one of this dissertation, Rida’s work disseminated pejorative images of Tanta well beyond the national borders of Egypt and the Arabic-speaking world.
large exposés that reflected the lack of control over Greeks and poor Egyptians and implicitly revealed the state’s ineffectiveness. These articles illustrated that the ordered city controlled by an effective police force was merely a façade to cover a number of social tensions that existed just below the surface of the city. Rather, *al-Ahram* showed that elite-centered life in Tanta was threatened by a number of factors and that the (often inept) police force had very little control over these elements. *Al-Manar* critiqued the state of religious orthodoxy in Tanta and blamed the (lack of) social control and cultural power of the Sufi orders that perpetuated backward versions of Islam. Each periodical assumed that issues plaguing Tanta symbolized larger threats to Egyptian society, and both asserted that Tanta contained “backward” elements. As such, they were typical examples of Egyptian publications designed for literate elites. For the Egyptian-based literati, modernity meant development and urbanization facilitated by physical order, cleanliness and health. Therefore, these texts function as valuable units of analysis that collectively demonstrate the interaction between written word and political economy in nineteenth-century Tanta.

The representation of Tanta in these two journals illustrates that after 1876 self-identified modern urban Arabic speakers represented the binary of modern/urban against backward/rural through discussions of class, class conflict, and class collusion in Tanta. The representation of Tanta can be categorized as what Ussama Makdisi calls “Ottoman Orientalism.” Ottoman elites, amidst the age of reform known as *Tanzimat* (1838-1876), internalized beliefs in the supremacy of the *West* and the backwardness of the *East*. Like Ottoman elites who defined Mount Lebanon as their Orient, Egypt’s urban intellectuals imposed similar classifications to describe the lower socio-economic strata of Tanta (and in the provinces generally). They accomplished this task by identifying Tanta’s urban elite as modern with no analogous ethnicity and Tanta’s poor became
analogous with *Egyptian*. This localized form of Orientalism was uniquely Ottoman and did not merely mirror image of Orientalism constructed by Europe. Rather, Makdisi’s idea of the “gradations of Orientalism” illustrated how elites turned on their poorer countrymen and blamed them for retarding and impeding efforts for progress. Transported Ottoman Orientalist tropes armed Levantine writers – such as the Taqla brothers and Rashid Rida – with explanations for the incompatibility of “native” Egyptians with modernity.  

**Al-Ahram: Introduction**

*Al-Ahram*, the newspaper started by two Greek Catholic Lebanese brothers named Salim and Bishara Taqla, applied for and received permission to begin publication in 1875. The following year, the editors opened *al-Ahram*’s first office in Alexandria. The brothers moved the headquarters to Cairo in 1898. *Al-Ahram* promised to report on everything from the telegraph such as matters of science, commerce, agriculture as well as local and national news. The endeavor enjoyed patronage from foreign investors, mainly French, which helped the Taqla brothers expand the newspaper’s technical, linguistic and printing standards.

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335 This dissertation does not assert that writers from the Levant were the only ones guilty of perpetuating an Ottoman Orientalism, but the periodicals and journals used for this chapter were all edited by intellectuals from the Levant. For more on Egyptian Orientalist representations please see Gasper, *The Power of Representation: Publics, Peasants and Islam in Egypt*. Gasper’s depiction focuses on the urban/rural binary that dominated modern Egyptian historiography and discusses the dichotomy of urban elite versus rural peasant. While the “peasant” was a dominant trope used by urban-elites to articulate their own identity in print, provincial elites resided within the rural belt of the Delta and thus has to separate themselves from both undesirable urban elements as well as the peasant. It also should be noted that many of the major landowners considered themselves as part of the modern elite and should be considered in any discussion of the elites of the provincial cities.

336 The obituary of Salim Taqla appeared in *al-Hilal* 1:1 (1 September 1892). Bishara died in 1901 and Daud Barakat took over as editor. He himself wrote on the topic of Ibrahim Pasha and his attack on Lebanon. Ironically, he started his career in news in Egypt in the Delta, first in Tanta working under the irrigation authority in 1892, and later in Zifta as a teacher in 1893. He wrote an autobiography entitled *Naththar al-Afkar*, but no existing copies of the document can be found. For more on his life see Qur’ali, *al-Suriyyun fi-Misr* [*The Syrians in Egypt*] 90.


338 The Taqla brothers participated in the vast Reuters’/Havas telegraph empire and received their international news from the telegraph. For more on this topic, please see Donald Read’s *The Power of the News: A History of Reuters*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

339 Martin Hartmann, *The Arabic Press of Egypt* (London: Luzac and Co, Publishers to the India Office, 1899), 10. Many of the British writers who chronicled the press in Egypt asserted that *al-Ahram*’s position against the British
The two editors relied heavily on Egypt’s relative hospitably to private press. The Khedive’s government welcomed foreign journalists, intellectuals and scholars who created a lively intellectual community. Khedive Isma’il remained relatively open-minded to periodically published press in part because he recognized its power to disseminate information about, “his vision and talent in the reformation of every aspect of the country, from the economy to education and from the legal system to the urban architecture.” Al-Ahram depended on local intellectuals, government officials, local police officers and field reporters to provide information about the city. Because most of the information about the city came from the Khedive’s bureaucracy, the image that emerged was one in which the government maintained order, promoted progress and quelled unrest from the lower strata of society.

The Ancient Egyptians of the Nile and Coping with “Tradition”

Representations of Tanta in Egyptian printed newspapers and journals prompt a re-examination of depictions of urban space beyond the Egyptian cities of Alexandria and Cairo. By the 1870s, when Tanta began to appear regularly in the Egyptian press, it was a growing urban epicenter and the capital of the province of Gharbiyya with great economic potential for Egypt. It was also the center of Islamic learning in the Delta, a regional court and mulid was Egypt’s largest annual market. Four socio-economic classes lived in and around Tanta; Egyptian

was related to the financial relationship with the French rather than a reflection of the sentiment of the Egyptian reading audience.


Khedive Abbas Hilmi II, The Last Khedive of Egypt: Memoirs of Abbas Hilmi II. In the English translation by Egyptian Historian Amira el-Azharil Sonbol asserts that al-Ahram was probably the most influential newspaper during the reign of Khedive Ismail (who was rumored to like Syrians), n. 178.

Ami Ayalon, The Press in the Middle East, 42. Ami Ayalon argues that the Khedive’s interest in private press largely stemmed with his gaze towards Western Europe and his desire to make “Egypt part of Europe.”

Muhammad Abduh was a frequent contributor to the journal as well as the other journal that will be covered in this chapter, al-Manar. For a concise look at the interchange between print and Cairo-based Islamic modernist thought please see Juan Cole, “Printing and Urban Islam,” in Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, ed. Leila Tarazi Fawas and C.A. Bayly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 344-358. Fawas and Bayly’s text specifically highlights the interplay between the Salafiyya thinkers and the printed word.
based Ottoman elites, merchants and intellectuals (both local and foreign), Egyptian born elites and native Egyptians. Each of these social groups greatly contributed to the economic and social development of Tanta, but their images in print differed greatly from reality. 344 By focusing on a few sensational stories and juxtaposing them against the dominant ordered depiction of Tanta as an elite-dominated space, a clearer image of class relations emerges.

On July 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1878, \textit{al-Ahram} ran an article entitled “Tanta on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of the Current Month from Our Offices”\textsuperscript{345} about threats to public health in Tanta. The article began by describing the health habits, culture and traditions of the Egyptians of the Nile (\textit{misriyin al-nil}).” According to the article, the ancient Egyptians put their faith in the healing powers of the priest caste (\textit{kahana}). The article asserted that their health practices had flourished for twenty centuries and imbedded themselves into the traditional memory of the Egyptians as the only means to achieve physical health. Because these practices succeeded for centuries, Cairo-based doctors and locally appointed medical examiners faced the herculean task of disentangling the “Egyptians of the Nile” from existing ancient practices. The first paragraph at no point disclosed the dangerous practices, but rather focused on the lengthy practice as culturally imbedded.

The priestly caste was depicted as holding the greatest of secrets (\textit{sir min al- asrar}), an ancient mystery that continued to elude the world. The Egyptian Delta of \textit{al-Ahram}’s article existed as a mysterious place led by religious elites with near supernatural powers who were legitimated by a superstitious group of followers. Their powers dictated the evolution of Egyptian culture and permanently transformed Egyptians into a population that relied on the supernatural and a clergy class. This system worked beautifully for the Egyptian people for
twentieth centuries, but threatened the livelihood of contemporary Egypt. The article represented the Egyptian people as rural, existing outside of time, dictated by superstition and begrudgingly forced to adapt to a changing Egyptian society by the medical bureaucrats dispatched from Cairo.

This article presented a crude vision of Egyptian society which characterized the ancient Egyptians as timeless progenitors of archaic practices and more importantly as a distinct group or class uniquely Egyptian. The relationship between the priestly class and the larger ancient Egyptian society created traditions (‘ada) which served as the basis to make Egyptians a people. In other words these traditions generated an Egyptian identity. Framing the rural dwellers of the Nile as a sole and distinct class inaccurately conjured a generalizing social identity, but also generated intellectual parameters for the authors and readers to conceive of this mysterious group that impeded Egypt’s progress. The depiction of the Ancient Egyptians as a social class trapped them endless in backwardness. The notion of an eternal timelessness fell into Orientalist tropes. Similarly, to western intellectuals who understood themselves and their geographic placement in opposition to the Orient, the Egyptian based intellectual community used its Orient to “come to terms” with their place within the East.346 By defining the progeny of ancient Egyptians in and around Tanta as “Oriental,” as a distinct social group with class identity established not only who these Ancient Egyptians were, but also who the literate ready audience were not.

The construction of social identities based around class became popular amongst the Cairo-based intellectuals (the effendiyya class) in the 1870s.347 Urban-based educated Egyptian elites conversant in European languages and intellectual thought began to conceive of themselves as a group and the poor (urban and rural) Egyptians as a separate social class. The difference

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346 Said, Orientalism, 1.
between the two groups was based on socio-economics, a middle-class sense of superiority, and indignation against peasant social organization (education and traditions). Syrian/Lebanese (shami) journalists and journal editors skulked amongst these Egyptian elites and replicated ways that the effendiyya conceived of class and themselves. However, to say that they represented the Egyptians merely as a distinct social class ignores the position of this community as well as the Orientalist undertones in the beginning of al-Ahram’s article about the “Ancient Egyptians of the Nile.”

Social class and economic prestige was very important to the construction of the effendiyya. The constant appearance of the names of leading capitalists and articles about provincial landowners in al-Ahram further promoted the notion that the newspaper’s readership was both important and noteworthy. On Thursday September 13, 1878, a list appeared that asserted the most influential eastern businessmen of Egypt. Tanta figured prominently amongst the businessmen listed along with men from Cairo, Mansura and Alexandria. Fourteen of the some thirty men hailed from Tanta. This depiction clearly established that all of Tanta was not Oriental, only some of its residents. Public accolades appeared in many forms in al-Ahram and most often articles about Tanta read like a society page of Tanta’s elite. Muhammad Minshawi, a member of Tanta’s most famous elite family and member of the House of Lords received a substantial paragraph on March 28th, 1882 because of a party that he was having. The article asserted that a number of local elites joined him to celebrate and that it was a major event in Tanta. Similarly, a former resident of the city, Dr. Shibli Shumayyil’s name appeared

348 An example of discussion of the practices of non-elites appeared in the pages of al-Ahram on 26 May 1882, which recounted the kidnapping of a local girl by a Bedouin who wrote down a prayer, folded in a triangle and put it in his pocket to ward off the impending danger of her father’s retribution. “Tanta” al-Ahram, 26 May 1882.
349 “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 13 September, 1878.
on 23 January 1882 because he came for a visit to attend a lecture. Linking Shumayyil, now a famous doctor and intellectual to the city as former resident gave credence to the intellectual vibrancy of the city. The constant appearance of locally prominent individuals implies that elites promoted a culture of economic progress or intellectual engagement. The implicit presentation of elite experiences in the public space defined their use of this space as ordered and forward thinking. This stands in stark contrast to how the “Ancient Egyptians of the Nile” seemed to engage with both the physical and public space.

Modernity and Tradition

“Ancient Egyptians of the Nile” shifted attention away from the cultural significance of the Egyptians and came to embody a threat to Egypt’s public health. Cairene doctors and locally appointed health officials quivered in fear when animal and human carcasses floated to the surface around the aqueducts locking station and threatened the purity of the national water supply. The dead bodies poisoned Tanta’s drinking water and agriculture. More significant and far more dangerous was the movement of this polluted water into the general pool of water that all Egyptian’s shared, the Nile.

The presence of dead human bodies (causes of death unknown) in the water supply drew the attention of public health officials as well as al-Ahram’s writers. The local health officer explained the severity of dumping potentially infectious dead bodies into the water to these ancient Egyptians (local farmers). Then he asserted the danger for all Egyptians and demanded that they end the practice. Telling “ancient”/native Egyptians that this custom could potentially kill other Egyptians taught them the relationship between unclean drinking water and public hygiene. The first sentence of the article’s final paragraph states: “…without understanding the

352 “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 5 July 1878.
whole you cannot understand the details and we sincerely hope that governor of the province and the overseer of the interior (nazim al-dakhiliyya) are taking notice.” Characterizing the habits as long standing cultural traditions explained the seemingly archaic behavior. The writing style and tone changed from recounting the tenuous exchange between local health officials and local Egyptians who continued twenty centuries of custom to offering an explanation of the behavior. “The Ancient Egyptians of the Nile” transformed from a backward group of “masses who are making efforts (towards progress) difficult,” to victims of prejudice and misunderstanding. The sympathetic tone taken by the author, meant to show empathy for the misunderstood group, concluded that it was tradition (twenty centuries to be exact) that was the culprit. This characterization, rather than liberating the group from blame, only further depicted them as backward Orientals.

The sensational story of the “Ancient Egyptians of the Nile” stood in stark contrast to the dominant depiction of Tanta as an orderly, organized city that became increasingly enriched as a result of the elites who engaged in both the public space and literary space. Al-Ahram was not alone in this depiction. The scientific journal al-Muqtataf, first published in Beirut (1876) and later in Egypt (1884), also depicted Tanta as an intellectually vibrant and progressive city. A discussion about al-Muqtataf came from someone from Tanta concerning distribution practices of al-Muqtataf in Tanta and possible solutions to issues of copying and distribution in January of 1899. A month later, in February of 1899, al-Muqtataf ran an obituary of Rector of the
Ahmadi Mosque, Muhammad al-Qasabi, who was a brilliant scholar of al-Idris and a contributor to the journal at one time.\textsuperscript{358} The rich community that appeared in \textit{al-Muqtataf} extended well beyond minor contributions and obituaries. A number of people who lived in Tanta wrote into the journal and engaged in debate about topics like mathematics, such as Girgis ‘Anhuri and Muhammad Effendi Ali.\textsuperscript{359} In all of the depictions of Tanta in \textit{al-Muqtataf}, individuals were named along with their profession, providing an individual identity with the contributor. This depiction differed greatly from the depiction of the nameless Egyptians who caused trouble in the public in \textit{al-Ahram}. While \textit{al-Muqtataf} was a scientific journal and \textit{al-Ahram} was a daily periodical, both represented the literature urban elites in Tanta in a positive light.

While \textit{al-Ahram} presented the sensational story of health and health risks in the “Ancient Egyptians of the Nile,” \textit{al-Muqtataf} painted an image of a healthy and organized city where the discoveries of Louis Pasteur flourished. In a visit to the Tanta hospital, the author asserted that after visiting with the sick for a brief period of time, it seemed to him that the new methods of vaccination were quite effective.\textsuperscript{360} The sick appeared as a flattened group without any discussion or interviews from them. The author conducted no interviews with the sick; instead the ill rested in the backdrop as physicians cured them of their particular illnesses with the help of modern medicine. The discussion of medicine and treatment rested only on the observations of the author and the words of (unnamed) doctors. This image was similar to the way in which \textit{al-Ahram} depicted engagement between doctors and locals. On April 12\textsuperscript{th} 1885, \textit{al-Ahram} hadid), 1899. I consulted this periodical from the years 1881 to 1907 and looked at Tanta’s appearance throughout. With the exception of a few articles about Tanta and cholera, Tanta and livestock, Tanta mainly appeared as the location of contributors who engage in the debate in the journal. This is particularly true between 1882 and 1888.\textsuperscript{358} “Wafat Karimin al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Qasabi wa-Amin Basha Fikri [Death of two Generous (People) Muhammad al-Qasabi and Amin Pasha Fikri],” \textit{al-Muqtataf} 23:2 (1899): 120. Qasabi’s significance as an intellectual will be discussed at length in Chapter Five. On a side note, his obituary followed a lengthy discussion of various species and dinosaurs and just before a discussion of the future of Sudan.\textsuperscript{359} “Bab al-Riyadiyat [on Mathematics],” \textit{al-Muqtataf} 15: 5 (1892) 417. These two men were regular contributors to the question and answer section during the 1890s.\textsuperscript{360} “Dawa’ al-Kalb wa Allaj Bastur” [Dog Medicine and Pasteur’s Treatment],” \textit{al-Muqtataf} 14: 4 (1890) : 447.
reported that a member of the medical bureaucracy came from Cairo to vaccinate the local population. The doctor’s ability to convince locals to vaccinate themselves and their children was a central theme. Those who actually received the inoculation appeared only as recipients of the healing practices. Their feelings or concerns about the topic were neither recorded nor recounted.\(^\text{361}\) Thus, the poor and afflicted served mostly as a vehicle to articulate the ways in which educated urban intellectuals engaged with and promoted modern medicine and science.

**Class Danger and Brigandage in the Delta**

*Al-Ahram*’s most sensational coverage of class conflict in Tanta began on January 2, 1885 with a series of articles about the robbery and vandalism of the estate of the local notable named Khurshid Bey.\(^\text{362}\) A group of bandits from a number of provinces led by Ibrahim Abu Harish committed the crime in the final days of 1884.\(^\text{363}\) *Al-Ahram* claimed that fifty men from the countryside hailing from Qalubiyya, Minufiyya, Minya and Gharbiyya\(^\text{364}\) attacked the district of Kafr Salim (*Gharbiyya*) after robbing and vandalizing the man’s estate.\(^\text{365}\) The vandals came from four provinces, mostly from the Delta, but also Upper Egypt and Sudan.\(^\text{366}\) The thieves fired shots that awakened residents from the town. A melee ensued. The robbers then fled the scene without any of the stolen items. Word of the invasion reached the chief prosecutor of *Gharbiyya* the following morning. He immediately alerted the police captain and the two men

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\(^{361}\) “Tanta,” *Al-Ahram*, 12 April 1885.

\(^{362}\) “Tanta,” *Al-Ahram*, 2 January 1885.

\(^{363}\) A similar albeit insignificant story appeared in *Al-Ahram* 28 March 28 1882. After the story of Muhammad Minshawi (the father), a representative of the *Majlis al-Shahr* hosted a celebration in Tanta in which town mayors and local elites attended, and police investigated the robbery of a local merchant referred to as Khawaga Peter.

\(^{364}\) It is likely that these men met as migrant workers. A number of Sa‘idi (Southern) laborers made their way to the Delta to find work during the 19th century. Most often they worked on the Suez Canal or in the Canal zone. For more on this topic see Zach Lockman and Joel Benin, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism and Islam in Egypt 1882-1954* (New York: American University of Cairo Press, 1998), 27.

\(^{365}\) “Tanta,” *Al-Ahram*, 5 January 1885.

\(^{366}\) The one Sudanese assailant was named Faraj Ibrahim al-Qarbi was a resident of Kafr Zayat near Tanta.
began the case against the band of thieves. This group of fifty men clearly met, organized and plotted the crime in advance and targeted the wealthy landowner. The crime was typical of brigands, roaming bands of thieves who robbed and terrorized towns and villages throughout the Delta. In the final days of 1884, the Egyptian government reported the stark rise in gangs of thieves, and that the problem was far greater there than in the south. The crimes of these gangs coincided with a constant stream of harassment, extortion, prison and torture for many peasants and migrant workers living in the Delta. In general, the formation of brigand gangs was a function of young males, recently displaced with no other alternative to resistance. In the days following the British occupation and the increased police presence in the Delta, open resistance became increasingly impossible. The displacement of these individuals from their home largely because of socio-economic factors drove the resentment that is implicit in banditry. While at no point did this band of thieves assert that they were engaged in class warfare, the timing and nature of the crime coupled with the fact that it coincided with the worst year of brigands in the Delta lends credence to the fact that these thieves were most likely part of a gang of bandits. While most peasants and urban poor remained complacent and were frequently the

367 “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 5 January 1885.
368 The details of the cause of the crime or the relationship between the accused were not disclosed in the article. Only a few of the men were actually named along with information about the victim of the crime.
369 House of Commons, British Parliament, Papers by Command, 137, 1906. The British eventually created a commission to deal with brigands in 1884-1885, the most intense year of the documented cases. Procuer General of Egypt came to investigate the harsh prison conditions following this the case of Abu Harish.
371 While none of the members of the gang of thieves identified themselves as part of a brigand, their ages, the crime itself and the origin of their birth fits into the behavior and actions of brigands that were dominant during the time of this crime.
374 Mitchell, Colonising Egypt, 97. Mitchell asserts that after 1882, the British administration and Egyptian government saw organized groups of thieves as bandits and created the Brigandage Commission to deal with the stark rise in these cases. According to Mitchell, “The so-called Brigandage Commissions’ with which the government attempted to crush local armed groups in the countryside employed all the now familiar techniques for
victims of the oppressive measures of local elites, the brigands represented the intense
dissatisfaction of many Egyptians. The representation of the case of Abu Harish in *al-Ahram*
provided no motivation for the robbery and vandalism and did not include any testimony from
the assailants. *Al-Ahram* provided very little about the assailants and only publicly listed the
names of a few assailants led by Abu Harish, the accused ringleader.375 Robberies were not rare
in Egypt, but the vandalism that accompanied this robbery reflected larger class tensions. The
objective of the assailants was not merely theft, but also to leave a mark and deface the victim’s
estate.376 Vandalism according to James Scott was “atomistic activity” or every day forms of
peasant resistance.377 The representation in al-Ahram did not directly address any potential class
conflicts, and instead only depicted certain facts in the case. Over the course of the next few
months a murky representation of the crime appeared in the pages of *al-Ahram*; however, a clear
and organized depiction of the police and judicial system based in Tanta emerged.378

The representation of the robbery and vandalism was typical for the way that *al-Ahram*
represented crime and vandalism in Tanta. The newspaper illustrated the dangerous elements

overcoming peasant resistance to the new power of the modern state: military raids, secret police, informants
massive imprisonment and the systematic use of torture,” 97. Tollefson, *Policing Islam*, 35; Furthermore, Nubar
Pasha issued a new law in February of 1885 because of the upsurge of brigandage in January of 1885. While the
gang of Abu Harish did not assert that they were bandits, their behavior and the fact that the participants came from
all over Egypt and the Sudan shows that they were most likely migrant workers.

*Al-Ahram* may not have been privy to any more than the most basic of information. This may have been a result
of the government not wanting to publicly acknowledge an upsurge of banditry and instead depicted the case as
merely a group of thieves.

375 In the first article about the case, one of the details was that the thieves vandalized the property, but stole nothing.
376 James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press,
1987), 33. Scott argues that normal forms of resistance (vandalism and laziness in the workplace are examples)
accompany normal forms of oppression such as the exploitation of workers. According to Nathan Brown, in the
Egyptian case this meant “vandalism, cattle prodding and murder. The targets of these actions were local
representatives of the social and political order.” Nathan Brown “Political Activity of the Egyptian Peasantry 1882-
case 134, a local peasant Ibrahim Fahmi was arrested in a dispute with a foreigner. Similarly an unnamed local
struck a soldier assigned to the Delta over a dispute. DWQ, *Diwan al-Dakhiliyya*: Markiz Bolis Tanta (1905)
Registry 246 case 135. Because of the nature of how information was gathered and organized it is unclear whether
or not, nor how these cases were adjudicated.
that resided amongst the poor and educated, and depicted elites as victims and ultimately showed the effectiveness of the police. On 3 May 1882 a scuffle between some boys resulted in the arrest of a local man, the boy’s father. The boy told his father that the wretched boys had attacked him, and his father responded by attacking the boys. News reached a teacher at the school and the man, the boys and the teacher all went and filed complaints which eventually resulted in the man’s arrest. The boy, his father and the assailants who attacked the boy remained unnamed, but the story featured the name of the teacher who reported the incident, Rizaq Allah Effendi. The teacher became the hero of the story. He was a defender of justice for the injured boys, but also sought out and recognized the authority of the police. While the story of the heroic teacher was neither sensational nor of the same caliber as the case of Abu Harish, it asserted that, even in the smallest of cases, the police responded in a quick and orderly fashion.

The police and the educated school teacher represented the Egyptian state and its bureaucrats as promoters of law and justice, and unnamed residents as creating havoc and disorder.

Reports on the immediate police response and the subsequent trial in Tanta depicted the city as the epicenter of justice and order for the entire province. The gang led by Abu Harish, who not only robbed the landowner and vandalized his home, terrorized the village and its inhabitants. The attack on the citizens signaled the backwardness and barbarianism that lived just beyond the borders of Tanta in the borderlands between urban and desert. While “atomistic forms of peasant resistance” to local elites and governmental agencies occurred regularly in Egypt, they rarely appeared in al-Ahram’s coverage of Tanta and its surrounding areas. Vandalism, cattle poisoning, petty theft, and sometimes even murder happened frequently with

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379 “Tanta” al-Ahram, 3 May 1882.
380 For more on peasant resistance and class politics see Nathan Brown, Peasant Politics in Modern Egypt.
little mention in print, although pervasive in local police reports. Most common amongst the
misdemeanor crimes committed was illegal planting on lands or squat farming or animal theft or
other forms of petty theft. The police’s harsh response to these petty crimes and to
misdemeanor crime in general, sheds light on the social reality that promoted the creation of
banditry. The absence of a discussion of crimes in large number in *al-Ahram* asserted that they
were neither newsworthy nor in-line with the way the authorities wanted Tanta represented in
print.

The story of the vandalism occupied the pages of *al-Ahram* every few days for nearly two
weeks and then re-emerged a month later to alert the reading audience of the results of the
investigation. The second story in the series appeared on January 10 and began with the
names of the governor (Yusuf Pasha Shahadi), the chief police investigator (Mahmud Bey al-
Rashidi) and a special council representative (Muhammad Pasha Hamadi) who met and formed a
special private council to question the recently captured accused ringleader Ibrahim Abu-
Harish. This article followed with an elaborate series of special sessions that covered all legal
des. Every single name of each of the representatives appeared in the column to illustrate that
an urban elite judiciary committee would thoroughly investigate the events of the crime and

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381 Nathan Brown, “The Conspiracy of Silence and the Atomistic Political Activity of Egyptian Peasants 1882-
C. Scott’s work *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1985) inspired many of
the arguments articulated by Brown and the other contributors to the edited volume.

382 Typical forms of what Nathan Brown has called atomistic (with little to no organization or planning) forms of
peasant resistance can be found in police records for the city of Tanta. Squatting was something that appeared in
police reports. Instances of peasants illegally cultivating small swaths of land raised the issue of how to deal with
this crime, arrest the perpetrator or tax them on their yield. In the end, taxing them seemed to be the solution for
more on the issue of squatting see DWQ, *Diwan al-Dakhliliyya*; Diwan al-Bolis [Bureau of the of Interior: Bureau of
police] (old) registry 217: 20, (14 Muharram 1282/June 1865). DWQ, *Diwan al-Dakhaliiyya*; Daftur al-Zhabit wa
‘Askar [Bureau of the Interior, Registry of Officers and Soldiers], Register 217 (1887) (no case number) A similar
issue was recounted in DWQ, *Diwan al-Dakhliliyya*; Markiz Bolis Tanta [Police Station Tanta] (1905) Registry 246
case 200.

1885; “Tanta,” *al-Ahram*, 26 February 1885. I have yet to find the actual court proceeding of the trial of Abu Harish
which would most likely shed light on the actual events and motivation for the crime.

384 The *mudir*’s jurisdiction extended most acutely in the areas outside of the provincial capital.
protect the victims. Three separate sessions had been constructed (for the first time ever) to
determine the outcome of the case. In total, four judges met to hear evidence, question the
accused and potential witnesses, and access the case. The only mention of Abu Harish was that
he had been arrested recently and was the ringleader of the well-known recent crime. The
spectacle that ensued following the case and al-Ahram’s elaborate representation of detail
regarding the justice system stood in stark contrast to the lack of attention to any motivation or
evidence of the crime.

The absence of any motivation for the crime did not reflect al-Ahram’s lack of interest in
the case, but rather how the Egyptian government crafted the image of the government’s
response to the crime for the press. Excluding the motivation and focusing on the elaborate
investigation presented Tanta as a center of justice rather than a region lacking control over
rebellious peasants. A week later al-Ahram reported on the actual trial, which shed new light
on the case after the police arrested and jailed a number of individuals from (province of) Minya,
The level of organization of the crime did not reflect “everyday resistance,” but something quite
different. It underscored the development of an elaborate network that hailed from urban and
rural locales across Egypt. It also showed that resistance did not only come in the form of
unorganized small petty crimes, but that potential outbursts of violence were possible even in the
midst of increasing police presence. The nervous sentiment existed in the initial lines of the final
articles about Abu Harish’s gang on 26 February 1885. The article began with the line that,
“…the spirit of stability exists in the alleys of the province generally.” The story that followed

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385 It is impossible to know why the motivation did not appear in the articles. Potentially the police and judicial
system did not disclose that information to al-Ahram.
386 “Tanta,” al-Ahram, 17 January 1885. The Sudanese man was most likely a freed slave living in the Delta as a
number of slaves had been freed in early 1882. Al-Ahram reported that 118 female and 170 male slaves had been
freed on 7 February 1882.
illuminated the severity and sensational nature of the crime. Khedive Tawfiq arrived in Tanta to hear the final verdict in person.\(^{387}\) He met with the judges, local dignitaries and the general population and expressed that his, “strong faith was with the court.” He expressed his pleasure with the leadership of the special sessions as well as the judges who heard the case. Shortly thereafter, the British official Colwell demanded an investigation into the police department of Alexandria and Gharbiyya.\(^{388}\) The request fell on deaf ears and Raymond West, the Procurer General of Egypt (accompanied by a number of police officers) traveled from village to village to count residents and investigate corruption amongst local leadership.\(^{389}\) Village leaders who failed to comply with these efforts faced arrest.\(^{390}\) The investigation of the leadership coincided with, and was prompted by, the case of Abu Harish. The objective of the story of Abu Harish was to illustrate the effectiveness of the judiciary and police force and ostensibly ease the fears of Delta dwellers, but what the article illustrates is the inability of the police and judiciary to control both the population and rogue members of the state’s bureaucracy.\(^{391}\)

*Al-Ahram* represented the case of Abu Harish and his diverse band of thieves through data received from the Egyptian government. That data largely depicted Tanta as the center of justice and order, and surrounding areas - as well as other Egyptian provincial cities - as breeding

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\(^{387}\) “Tanta,” *al-Ahram*, 25 February 1885.

\(^{388}\) He may have been trying to capture as much geographic space as possible in order to see if there was something unique about the Delta generally.

\(^{389}\) Raymond West served as the Procurer of Egypt from 1884-1887 and then moved to India. “Obituary of Raymond West,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 45 (1913): 245-250.

\(^{390}\) BLA, *Diwan al-Dakhiliyya*, Taqrir ‘an al-Maliyya wa Idara wa-l-Hala al-Umumiyya fi Misr wa fi Sudan Sana 1907 [A Report on the Finance, the Authority and General Situation in Egypt and the Sudan for the year 1907] (translated and published for publication, 1908). It was clear that the judicial leadership in Cairo was concerned about the state of law in the Delta generally and particularly around governance and police.

\(^{391}\) After the rise of brigands in Egypt a new position was created which essentially gave thugs a legal position as watchmen in places that did not have a police force. Many landowners actually employed former gang members as watchmen to protect their homes from future invasion, *Policing Islam*, 145. The most famous case of this was Ahmad Minshawi who was made famous because of he saved a number of Christians from attack during the ‘Urabi Revolution. He got into big trouble for hiring thugs to find out who stole some of his cattle and angered Lord Cromer personally. For more on this see Wilfred Blunt, *Atrocities of Justice Under British Rule*. The famous Minshawi who saved Christians from death in 1882 was accused of hiring mercenaries to find the thieves of his cattle. This greatly angered Cromer.
The articles privileged the response of the police, judicial system, Khedive and British occupiers, rather than drawing attention to widespread dissatisfaction and disdain towards the landed elite. Banditry (or theft) served as a vehicle to resist the increased police presence and the oppressive relationship between elites and non-elites. Little to no commentary existed in the article about the crime itself or the identity of the criminals, which would have shed light on the particular sensitivity and sensationalism of the crime.

**The Trojan Horse: The Representation of Greeks in The Egyptian Arabic Press**

Thus far this chapter has analyzed two sensational cases that appeared in *al-Ahram* that illuminated underlying class tensions in the city. It has also shown how these articles fit within a larger body of news coming from Tanta in *al-Ahram*. Generally, news sources in Egypt represented Tanta as a space used by well-behaving elites. Occasionally, *al-Ahram*’s representation of melodrama cracked the pristine image of an orderly city. Non-elites most frequently appeared in the backdrop, compliant or not at all. These few stories provide a glimpse at the complexity of class relations in Tanta. *Al-Ahram*’s snapshot of class conflict was not merely limited to the flattened image of Egyptians, but also included the newly arrived group of Greek-speakers. Greek-speaking residents faced harsh criticism as a result of their special status under the capitulation agreements in Egypt and the perception that they promoted violence and drunkenness. “The capitulation agreements” began as a treaty between European powers (initially France) and the Ottoman Empire in 1500 that guaranteed trading privileges to foreign subjects within the Ottoman Empire. By the mid-nineteenth century, because of increasingly centralized power in Cairo and looser ties to Istanbul, traders with European citizenship began to take stronger economic and political liberties. Khedive Isma’il officially expanded the

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capitulations on January 1, 1876 under the guise of increasing previous agreements. Similar to the millet system, which gave legal power to the courts of local religious minorities, an elaborate system called the “mixed courts” developed under the jurisdiction of consulates. They adjudicated and protected the “commercial code” and European citizens against incarceration. However, as Will Hanley has noted, the term “capitulations” implied continual expansion coupled with the establishment of strong consulates and the mixed courts guaranteed aggressive economic practices that favored European traders and angered local merchants.

With the expansion of the agreements came the expansion of the concept of British and subject. Some Ionian Greeks and Maltese Christian non-native Egyptian residents identified as British subjects as early as the mid-1850s. By the mid 1850’s a substantial number of migrating Ionian Greeks had made the Egypt cities of Cairo (1856) and Alexandria (1843) their home. Within two decades they became active residents in the cities of Minya (1862) Mansura (1860), Zagazig (1870), Port Said (1870) and finally Tanta (1880). They came to Egypt for economic opportunity, to establish urban commercial networks and strengthen family ties. Once entrenched in Egypt’s economic life, Greek speakers established social networks, schools and churches. Those who enjoyed the privileges bestowed to foreign European subjects

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393 J. Morton Howell, *Egypt’s Past Present and Future* (Cairo: Howell, 1929), 188.
394 James Harry Scott, *The Law Affecting Foreigners in Egypt: As the Result of the Capitulations* (London: W. Green and Sons, 1908), 182, 277, 315. Established in 1876, they were called mixed because they adjudicated civil or commercial cases between two European subjects or between a European subject and Ottoman citizen. The native courts, influenced by the mixed court, opened in 1883 after the British occupation. They heard cases between locals or when the accused of a criminal crime was local.
396 PRO/ FO 141/25, Relative to the complaint of Giorgio Mauromatti October 3, 1854, Cairo from Mahmud Bey to the Consulate in Alexandria. Issues between Greeks and local residents also made their way to Tanta’s local court. In a dispute over payment for work service, the Greek Khawaga/Khawaja Constantine sued the local notable Shaykh Ali Minshawi for 20 piasters (1/5 of an Egyptian Pound) and won a settlement. However, Shaykh Ali Minshawi appealed the case. DWQ, *Majlis al-Ahkam*, 1278 (1860/61) reel 376. The final outcome was not found which was very common. Multiple requests for the same issue litter the record.
397 Hanley, Foreignness and Localness in Alexandria, 1880-1914, 293.
and established economic and political ties to the British Crown. Their status as British subjects created a tenuous reality because they symbolically represented the British crown as citizens. Like native Egyptians, or other poorer European residents, the extent to which these privileges could be enjoyed depended on social class and status. Because some Greeks had British citizenship, many times Greeks faced violence and appeared in *al-Ahram* on a few occasions as a drunken murderous mob of foreigners that received special treatment.

**The Trojan Horse in Tanta**

The Greek-speaking community in Tanta had a very short, yet very intense, run of stories throughout 1882 between January and May. The articles were unlike most of the stories about Tanta because the stories only featured problems between Greeks and local merchants/members of the community rather than including stories about Greeks along with other news from the city. The strong hostilities against the Greeks accompanied a general sentiment against foreigners that emerged in the city in the decade leading up to the revolution of Ahmad ‘Urabi in July of 1882. Greeks, like other foreigners seemed privileged and enjoyed particular benefits that economically deprived locals from the Delta from selling their particular commodity at the

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399 Will Hanley has noted that the power was largely social. Economic and political power depended on class as it did for “local” Egyptians.

400 This is the central theme to Will Hanley’s argument although he does not only focus on Greeks, but includes Italians, Maltese (British subjects), Algerians and Tunisians (French subjects) residing in Alexandria.

401 The most famous instance was during the ‘Urabi Revolution in 1882, but Juan Cole has noted that this was not an isolated incident. For more on the treatment of Greeks in Egypt please see Juan Cole, "Of Crowds and Empires: Afro-Asian Riots and European Expansions, 1857-1882," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 1 (1989): 106-33 or Juan Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Revolutions of the Urabi Revolt*.

402 There were three articles during that six month period about this case: 14 January 1882, 30 January 1882, 13 February 1882.

403 A common way that *al-Ahram* represented the events in Tanta was by having a paragraph or two about different things happening in the city. However, the stories under study for this chapter defied that method of organization and appeared as full page features.

404 PRO, FO 141/68, Joyce/Stanton, Cairo, 6 March 1872.
The general sentiment of resentment came to a head just before the ‘Urabi revolution in 1882 when on a series of occasions large groups of Greeks made a public spectacle which appeared as features about Tanta in *al-Ahram*.

The inaugural article about Greeks in Tanta appeared as part of a series of vignettes about the city. On 12 January 1881, the Greeks made their first appearance as a problem to the city of Tanta during the *mulid*. The article depicted a scene in which Greeks had become a major problem that wasn’t getting any better. It asserted that because of the actions of some Greeks the police had to be dispatched to the *mulid*. A year later, a similar article discussed of the happenings of the *mulid*, agricultural output and dissatisfaction about the wares near the train station stood in stark contrast to a very small story about Constantine, the Greek store-owner who was attacked on 12 January 1882. Soldiers entered his store and found Constantine in a state of fear from an attack. The issue flared the (apparently) ongoing debate in Tanta about the establishment of a Greek consulate in the city in order to protect the community. The attack on the store-owner represented a much larger issue that the Greek community faced which was bubbling xenophobia in the city. Those defined as foreign increasingly became saddled with difficulties, usually in the form of petty theft (at the smallest scale) and physical harm in the darkest days of ‘Urabi’s revolution.

On January 30th, 1882, six months before Greeks would become the target of local attacks during the revolution of Ahmad ‘Urabi, a group of drunken Greeks spotted in the markets

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405 PRO, FO 141/25, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Letter to the Consular General regarding hostilities from locals about grain being sold by foreigners in the provinces, Cairo, 15 March 1854.
406 “Tanta,” *al-Ahram*, 12 January 1881. The article asserted that the attendees had witnessed daily fights and that in anticipation of more attacks, the police would remain present.
408 The newly established community appeared to be both troublesome and economically prosperous. Greeks owned grog shops and one of the largest hotels in Tanta, opposite the train station. The Hotel Belle Grece was owned and operated by its Greek owner from the 1870s into the first decade of the 20th century. It was one of three hotels in Tanta, the other was rumored to be owned by an Italian and the Hotel les pyramides opened a bit later. For more on hotels in Tanta see Baedeker, *Egypt: Handbook for Travelers.*
wreaked havoc on the city of Tanta. They stole bread, walked into a store, ordered drinks and left without paying. The store’s owner voiced a complaint to a Berber man visiting Tanta. The Berber confronted the drunken men, who beat him. He then returned to get assistance from his group. A fight broke out and a Berber man died at the scene. Some others died leaving the scene. No account of how others died appeared in the article. The vivid imagery of the dead and dying Berbers depicted the Greeks as furious aggressors and the Berbers as heroic victims of undue violence. Some of the Greeks suffered light injuries and returned to drinking alcohol near the train station. The Greek drunkards murdered the innocent Berber and continued to imbibe; the only reason given was that the Berber attempted to apprehend the group. Tanta appears as a socially harmonious locale in which perfect strangers risked their lives for local merchants. Greeks disrupted the city, stole and murdered without remorse. \textit{Al-Ahram’s} coverage of the incident replicated preconceived notions that Greeks perceived themselves as above local laws with no regard for other residents of Egypt. The story of the Greek/Berber encounter also illustrated the complexity of the notion of foreignness in Tanta. Greeks, aligned with the British, appeared to disregard local laws and their behavior in the Greek/Berber encounter illustrated their disregard for human life. But the Berbers (also not local) were seen only as victims both at the hands of the Greeks and the governmental system that allowed for the Greeks to escape without being properly punished for the murder of the Berber.

Like the other sensational stories of Tanta, the police appeared as effective enforcers of the law. ‘Ali Effendi Labib, the police captain responded immediately with soldiers who

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409 “Tanta,” \textit{al-Ahram}, 30 January 1882 told the tale of a group of Greeks stealing wine from a local shop and the news reached the police chief Ali Effendi Labib who personally attended to the problem and as a result of their “citizenship” they were let go. An English contemporary who wrote about the Egyptian press asserted that \textit{al-Ahram} generally depicted foreigners, particularly the English, in a terrible light. He claimed that, “the English are wicked in the eyes of the conductor (editor) and if the doings of the English in Egypt can be misrepresented he engages in the task with infinite gusto.” \textit{The Nineteenth Century} 23 (July-Dec 1892): 220.

410 “Tanta,” \textit{al-Ahram}, 3 May 1882. In a similar article an investigation was launched against some Greeks accused of theft.
arrested all of the men involved (Greek and Berber) and took them to prison. Interestingly, Egypt’s chief medical inspector and chief provincial doctor took the wounded and dying Berber men to the hospital and treated them until some of them died. They buried the dead and the local police attempted to prosecute the Greeks. The final outcome of the case did not appear in the article. The article laid bare the notion of local versus foreign in that a bias towards the Greeks existed. The Greeks did not face official charges until news of the massacre reached the government in Cairo who ordered their official arrest. The article ended with the sad image of the leader of the Berbers traveling to Egypt to tend to the wounded and deal with the dead.

Al-Ahram’s feature recounted the story of the violent Greeks because of its sensational nature, but also because it illustrated the diversity of visitors to Tanta and showed how the efficient government immediately took action against the assailants. However, the symbolic value of the story superseded any of the details of the event in that it highlighted the underlying antagonisms between Greeks and other groups in Egypt.\footnote{Greeks were seen as creating problems and not following the rules of the government, particularly around selling alcohol. The career choice of some Greeks to open grog shops and sell spirits brought them economic success, but also made them the target of anger by local authorities. Problems associated with public drunkenness and the gross disregard for Islamic law created an international incident that involved the Ottoman Sultan, the British government and Egyptian authorities. British sources note problems between the Greek community and the Egyptian authority as early as 1854. The Vice Consular General to the Hellenic community in Alexandria recounted these tensions to the British Consulate in Alexandria. Consular Green’s dispatch to England reported that Giorgio Mauromatti, a British subject and resident of Shubrakhut in the Bahayra province (Delta/coastal region), had been accused of selling spirits by the local authority. Mauromatti then filed a lawsuit against the local authority for interfering in his commercial endeavors. He claimed that as a British subject, the capitulation agreements protected him from Egyptian laws. The man’s arrogance greatly angered the Egyptian authority which demanded that he summarily be expelled from Egypt, regardless of his citizenship. Acting on behalf of the young spirit merchant, a local representative from the Hellenic community protested the decision and again cited that as a British subject the above mentioned could not be subject to Egyptian law. Nine years later, 16 March 1863, another problem between Greeks, the British Crown and Egyptian authority erupted in violence. The British consulate reported that it would return six Greeks who claimed “protection as Ionians” along with one Maltese citizen to their city of residence, Alexandria. These Ionian Greeks had come to Cairo armed with weapons to take part in the election of representatives to the Greek National Assembly. “Serious affrays (had) taken place,” and local police arrested the men. However, none of the men could be prosecuted because of their British citizenship. The viceroy Said demanded that they be summarily removed and dealt with by the British government. These two cases represented the tense relationship between the Greeks, British and Egyptian authority. The public record, printed media and secondary sources are littered with problems with the Greek community. The Greeks enjoyed judicial independence and freedom from}
appeared in consular documents and Egyptian court records and thus reflected how the Egyptian
government targeted Greeks because of their relationship with occupying British forces by
claiming that Greeks used their citizenship to subvert local Egyptian laws.\textsuperscript{412}

Thus far this chapter has argued that \textit{al-Ahram} depicted Tanta as an organized space
whose elites used to showcase progress and modernity. More importantly, it highlighted that the
image of an ordered city became fractured when a few sensational stories revealed class
antagonisms between local bureaucrats, poor Egyptians and Greeks. However, for many writers
(both locally and globally), Tanta’s significance lay in its position as the site of the \textit{mulid}.
Unlike the global press, which focused on the physical threat of cholera, the Egyptian based
journal \textit{al-Manar} represented the \textit{mawalid} and the \textit{mulid} of Sayyid Ahmad al Badawi as a locale
of spiritual danger that weakened Egyptian society and threatened Islam generally. Physical
danger stood in the backdrop against a larger discussion of social ills at the \textit{mulid} that were as
numerous as visitors to the event. In the section that follows, a discussion of Rashid Rida’s
journal \textit{al-Manar} and its representation of the \textit{mulid} will show that unlike \textit{al-Ahram}’s
description, the \textit{mulid} and those that attended impeded modernization.

Rida’s discussions of Tanta’s \textit{mulid} stemmed from his association with the \textit{Salafiyya}
movement founded by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Rida’s teacher Muhammad Abduh. Under
the influence of these two thinkers, Rashid Rida, became a modernist reformer that campaigned
for concrete methods to cope with the “backwardness” that plagued Muslim societies. This
“backwardness” manifested itself acutely in Europe’s near total physical domination over

\textsuperscript{412} “Tanta,” \textit{al-Ahram}, 14 January 1882. There was actually a debate about opening a Greek National Consulate in
appeared a few weeks earlier as \textit{al-Ahram} recounted the stealing of clothing by “foreign Greeks” who were detained
and eventually taken to the consulate.
Muslims by the end of the 19th century. France controlled most of North Africa and pieces of West Africa and established economic ties in the Levant and Egypt. Italy controlled parts of modern Libya (in the early twentieth-century) and Ethiopia and Great Britain physically controlled South Asia, parts of Yemen and Egypt. European nations exerted economic, political and cultural influence over many other nations with Muslim majorities. Both economic and physical domination created an unequal power relationship.

Rashid Rida: An Intellectual in his own Right

Rashid Rida, an intellectual in his own right, adapted his assessments about Muslim society to fit within a larger Salafi framework. Like Abduh and Al-Afghani, Rida, believed that Islam could be compatible with the transforming modern world. The corruption within religious education, the existence of unqualified religious authorities and popular superstition amongst the population degenerated Islam. The return to the glorious early days of the prophet Muhammad and his followers would propel Muslims into the modern world. Unlike Abduh and Afghani, Rida contended that Sufi orders occupied a particularly detrimental position in Muslim society. Unique to Rida’s intellectual contribution to the movement was the focus on stricter educational parameters for Islamic scholars and jurists who would eventually equipped them to use *ijtihad* in meaningful ways. Rida wanted newly trained 'ulama to eventually be supported

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417 *Ijtihad* is the use of independent reasoning of legal sources to make legal decisions. There is a debate about whether *ijtihad* has been used consistently throughout Sunni Islamic history or if the (bab-al-ijtihad) door of *ijtihad* was shut in the 10th century with the rise of *fiqh*. An elaborate legal system emerged with four schools of Islamic thought that interpreted Islamic (Shari’a) law. They are the Shafi‘i, Hanbali (considered the most conservative in
by an Arab-based Caliphate (eventually) to suit modern realities.\textsuperscript{418} He projected long-term goals and used contemporary realities to illustrate stagnation and backwardness in the Muslim world.\textsuperscript{419}

Muhammad Rashid Rida began publishing the eight page weekly periodical \textit{al-Manar} (the Lighthouse) in Cairo in 1898. \textit{Al-Manar} continued publication until 1936.\textsuperscript{420} \textit{Al-Manar} covered a wide variety of subjects and enjoyed a vast reading audience extending beyond Egypt and the Arabic-speaking Middle East. The prominent journal often featured articles written by Rida’s mentor and friend, Muhammad Abduh on topics such as religion and reflections on spiritual life. \textit{Al-Manar} also became the main vehicle for Rida to advance his criticism of Muslim society. Tanta became of particular interest to Rida, most notably because of its position as the home of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi’s \textit{mulid} and the city’s central role in Islamic education at the mosque.\textsuperscript{421}

The societal power of the Sufi orders and the decadence at the \textit{mawalid} shocked him. \textit{Al-Manar’s} editor attacked the \textit{mawalid} in the first year of the journal’s publication (1899), in an article entitled “The Mawalid or the Exhibitions.” The article featured six pages about the ills of \textit{mawalid} generally. After masterfully mapping the various problems created by \textit{mawalid}, he shifted focus to address the \textit{mulid} of Sayyid Ahmad Al-Badawi directly. Rida contended that Tanta’s \textit{mulid} illustrated the greatest transgression against Islam. He claimed, “the educated and

\textsuperscript{418} Rashid Rida did not start advocating for an Arab Caliphate until after the end of WWI with the eventual establishment of the secular modern state of Turkey. At this point his work began to blame the Ottomans for the failures of Muslims societies and strongly supported the return of the Caliphate to the founding place of Islam, the Arab world. This is most acutely clear in Muhammad Rashid Rida, \textit{The Muhammadan Way}.

\textsuperscript{419} Hourani, \textit{Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age}. Also see Ahmad al-Sharabasi, \textit{Rashid Rida: Sahib al-Manar [Rashid Rida, Editor of al-Manar]} (Cairo: Matba‘a al-Ahram al-Tijariyya, 1970).

\textsuperscript{420} Albert Hourani, \textit{Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age}, 224. Rida was the editor of the journal until his death in 1935 and then Hassan al-Banna (the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood) edited the journal in its last year.

ignorant, the prince and the pauper, the rich and the poor, the ascetic and the murderous, the donor and the thief are present and you say that every classification from every social class attends.\textsuperscript{422} The opening paragraph of Rida’s article about the mawalid provides a basis for the complexity with which the mulid threatened moral society. He harshly attacked mulid attendees, religious authority and the Egyptian government. He argued that characterizing the mulid as a utopian space in which social classes intermingled freely and without incident incorrectly depicted the mulid. His artful representation of opposites, “rich and poor” and “educated and ignorant” illustrated that this false assumption ignored the potential threat of the public gathering. The intermingling of social classes did not unite Egyptian society against social difference. The mulid drew murderers, the ignorant and thieves. The rich, educated and benevolent fooled themselves to think that they freely mingled amongst the masses without the threat of potential harm.

The rich critique raised questions about the role of religious elites in Egyptian society. Rida’s most consistent and compelling attack was against the religious authority that both sanctioned and promoted the mixing of social classes at the mulid. Governmental authority that allowed the mulid to function as a free space rejected the necessary hierarchal structure of social class which provided perimeters for individuals to behave in an ordered manner in accordance with their social class. Rida believed that the key to a modern ordered society was a strong educated class trained and supported by qualified ‘ulama whose credentials were above bar and universally accepted. Thus, Rida turned his critique to attacked religious authority that turned a blind eye as “all classifications of all social classes” intermingled freely rather than serving as a moral barometer and correct unsanctioned practices at the mulid. The “teachers” who promoted this behavior by ignoring it did a great disservice to their flock by disregarding Islamic principles

laid out for Muslims in the Qur’an and misled Muslims to believe that the events of the mulid were not sinful. Unlike the representations of social classes in al-Ahram, Rida represented the mulid as a space of misguided social utopia. The misguided class cooperation that Rida depicted at the mulid illustrated something much larger and much more dangerous about Tanta and Egyptian society generally. The mosque became tainted by popular practices that polluted its’ sanctity. Rather, Rida believed that the religious elites should separate themselves from unsanctioned behavior and lead the masses by example.

To Rida, the mulid increasingly became synonymous with the ills of Egyptian society, specifically as a locale that upset appropriate gender norms and desecrated mosques. In the article, “The Abominations of the Mulid,” Rida asserted that men and women slept side by side and danced in the mosque. The mosque had lost its function as a prayer space and been co-opted into a public arena for dancing, sleeping and cross dressing women. Rida asserted that these men and woman acted in an uncivilized manner, claiming that scenes such as these would never occur in the modern cities of Beirut and Europe. He equated the actions of the women as hysterical, utilizing a psychiatric diagnosis commonly applied to women in Europe. Rida equated the actions of these women with mental illness and religious backwardness and utilizes modern scientific rhetoric to explain the religious heresy that occurred at the mulid.

**Backwardness at the Mulid**

For Rida, the culture that mulid bred aptly illustrated Egypt’s backwardness and lack of civilization or development. In a section entitled “The Mawlid,” he commands foreign Arabic speakers not to believe, “…what you hear about the civilization of Egypt or its advancement…oh

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naive people for in Egypt there is no civilization or advancement.” Problems associated with Egyptians’ language, modes of transportation, and the pace of horses existed in the capital as well as the major towns. He also claimed that railroads, telephones, telegraphs and industry established in the towns had been established by foreigners. Essentially, all Egyptians were responsible for the backwardness that dominated. He juxtaposed foreign against local to illustrate that native Egyptians lacked civilization and thus lacked control of their country. The most modern aspect of Egyptian society rested in the hands of the minority of foreign industrialist and merchants who fought against a strong tide of superstition and ignorance. Similarly to al-Ahram, the advancement of Egyptian society rested elites (albeit foreign) who promoted progress and modernity. However, for Rida those “foreigners” who contributed to Egypt’s advancement stood in stark contrast to the vast majority of Egypt’s local residents. The role of the foreign community was an important lens with which Rida understood Egyptian society. As a foreigner himself, he was generally appalled at the state of religion in the hands of local shuyukh.

Rida carefully constructed an argument to include all mawalid, but eventually attacked the greatest of all sinful events, the mulid of Sayyid Ahmad al Badawi. The mulid and the religious authority’s sanctioning and participating in the mulid illustrated “the apparent rejection of Islamic law indicated by the Qur'an and Sunna and biography of the salaf al-salah

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425 Rida, “al-Mawalid” al-Manar, 1. 80. Rida used the word tamaddun, which can mean civilization, development or urbanization. Here he is using the term to illustrate advancement or societal progress. Coupling the term with taqaddum (advancement) illustrated that he sought to illustrate that Egypt was backwards and not moving towards progress or modernization.
426 Rida, “al-Mawalid” al-Manar 1, 78. Rida referred to these towns as the binadar. A term that is used to describe commercial towns or seaports in Egypt both colloquially and administratively. When Rida was writing this article, the term bandar largely excluded Upper Egypt possibly because the towns in the south did not have the demographic numbers at that point to be classified as bandar.
427 Rida, “al-Mawalid,” al-Manar 1, 81. Rida’s view of Cairo and Egypt generally was that anything modern or positive was as a result of foreign intervention and investment. He commented that a wide variety of animals occupied the streets and that there was a general sense of chaos in the public space. For Rida, it was foreigners who were responsible for any of Egypt’s positive transformations.
428 Rida, “al-Mawalid” al-Manar 1, 78.
(companions of the prophet).” Rashid Rida used the *mulid* to illustrate a complete societal moral breakdown. The ‘*ulama* not only allowed the events, but actively participated and sanctioned practices. Rida claimed that ‘*ulama*, “in the general area of the grave of Sayyid Ahmad al Badawi and the grave of Imam Hussein,” practiced an “abominable” form of Islam and rallied their flock to do the same. This corruption of faith centered on the heretical hierarchy of Sufi orders that placed untrained superstitious *shuyukh* at the helm of the orders. These ignorant ‘*ulama* demanded loyalty and unquestioned authority from groups of ignorant complacent sheep. The government and merchants, seeking financial gain from the events, participated and sanctioned heretical practices while ignoring the abominations around them.

For Rida, the *mulid* represented societal problems and the Ahmadiyya Sufi order’s public group meditations represented the ills of Sufism. In the article, “the Mulid or Exhibitions,” Rida illustrates that the Ahmadiyya, who organized and hosted the *mulid*, practiced a heretical form of Islam. They called their public group meditation a *dhikr*, or remembrance. Members of the order and some passerbys swayed in unison to repetitive droning music often chanting devotional songs or repeating the name of God as a mantra that put the participants into a transitive state. This ritual was central to the celebration of the *mulid* when mystics from various orders worshipped together. Rashid Rida looked at this celebration of faith and labeled it ignorant. He asked, “What was their *dhikr*? Mumbles… and Shouts.” He goes on to recount that he asked an observer about the purpose and meaning of this practice, using the high language (*fusha*). The participant responded in Egyptian colloquial Arabic, “Well perhaps they (participants) are not that educated. They say that the days of the *mulid* do not violate

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430 Rida, “al-Mawalid” *al-Manar* 1, (1899), 79.
432 Rida, “al- Mawalid,” 75.
ablutions. Rida’s speech enflamed when he claimed that he held this conversation within the confines of the mosque surrounded by thousands of clerics, leaders of Sufi orders and preachers who witnessed and participated in this ignorant practice. It seemed that the *mulid* was a free zone in which anything could happen and orthodox notions of religious practice was neither appreciated nor practiced at the mosque. The lack of any real efforts to curtail these practices particularly angered Rida.

Rashid Rida used his newly established journal as a springboard to assert his disapproval of the Egyptian religious authority. Specifically, he showed that *mawalid* was a vehicle to convince the masses of class unity, but in fact the public nature of the event impeded Egypt’s progress generally. The religious authority that sanctioned and participated in abominable acts represented the most dominant group of Egyptian religious authority that threatened the spiritual purity of the society. After characterizing some ‘ulama as ignorant and backwards, he attacked the spiritual practices of the Ahmadi Sufi Order and their *dhikr* (remembrance/meditative practice) which represented the greatest physical display of the ignorance of their spiritual practice. Rida used the *mulid* of Sayyid Ahmad al Badawi and its hosts as a case study to illustrate the greatest example of his major critique of Egyptian society. For Rida, class collusion by a group of ignorant elites and their loyal flock was the central theme and most detrimental threat to Egypt’s moral future. For Rida, the purity of Islam was inextricably linked to Egypt’s march towards modernization.

**Concluding Statements**

The literate audience of Egypt’s major cities imagined Tanta as a city that was well organized with a strong central bureaucracy that enforced laws and protected elites from dangerous peasants and foreign Greeks who threatened public order and health. This image

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emerged largely from the consistent coverage of the city in the periodical *al-Ahram*. Egypt’s second newspaper and first non-governmental periodical reinforced the idea that the central authority in Tanta maintained order and control over the population. However, the class tensions that existed just below the surface appeared in a few sensational articles that highlighted a more combative relationship between the governing body and the city’s residents and visitors. *Al-Ahram* particularly represented the *mulid* as a site of order, harmony and economic prosperity. A conflicting image of that event appeared in the early publication of Rashid Rida’s journal *al-Manar* which cast Tanta as a rest haven for adherents to a form of Islam which threatened public order and orthodox religious practices. This chapter has shown that by looking at these sensational representations of Tanta as an ordered space was a flawed image, and, in fact, pervasive class tensions existed below the surface of this image. Building from this chapter’s brief discussion of modern institutions in Tanta, chapter 4 will focus entirely on how the Egyptian state forged alliances with local elites to establish and expand modern institutions. It will also show that ordinary people used and engaged with these institutions as well, albeit in more meager ways.
Chapter Four: *Bandar Bureaucracy: Social Class, Modernity and The Integration of Elites into the National Egyptian Government*

**Introduction:**

In 1884, The Egyptian department of public works produced an urban planning map of Tanta. It was the first of a series of three city maps drafted under the joint British-Egyptian government. These maps transformed Tanta from a three-dimensional city with a rich political, economic and social life into a flat image. The 1884 map focused on Tanta’s buildings, institutions and street system and also showed a sketch of future streets and neighborhoods. It identified key public places and depicted imagined sections of the city. The new sections appeared as an orderly grid and stood in stark contrast to the winding alleys, pathways and streets that emanated outward from the Ahmadi mosque and surrounding market complex. The map defined the city as it was as well as what it could be. These maps provided a legend or a plan to transform the city into an organized space-legible to both locals and visitors. It was a symbol of the culmination of a vast bureaucratic project that gathered demographic, geographic and cadastral information that provided information for future endeavors. The information that the state gathered during the first half of the nineteenth-century provided the foundation for the creation of modern institutions in Tanta (as well as the rest of Egypt) during the second half of the nineteenth-century.

The ability to map the street system, religious institutions, markets, agricultural and inhabited spaces that peppered the map with an Arabic, English and French legend were all made possible because of collaboration and a shared sense (between local elites and the state) of the need to modernize public space in Tanta. The establishment of modern institutions made the

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434 Ministry of Public Works, *General Plan for the City of Tanta, 1884, 1892.* The third map was a survey map. Egypt, Town Series, Tanta, 1923.
435 *General Plan for the City of Tanta, 1884, 1892.*
modernization a project accessible for elites to participate. Public works projects aided in the transformation of the public space and provided a modern venue for the ultimate success of Tanta’s development.

The discussion that follows looks at engagements between the Egyptian bureaucracy based in Tanta and individuals who participated and engaged with the bureaucracy. It explores how people (ordinary and elites) engaged, battled and challenged one another in these bureaucratic institutions in order to create a more modern and organized public space. For elites, institutions such as the Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab and the court system functioned as zones were they could strengthen economic ties, make lucrative transactions, and assert their social positions to the Egyptian state. The court system and state bureaucratic institutions also shaped the way that ordinary people functioned and engaged in the public space generally. The ordinary residents of Tanta (with limited economic and political power) experienced the state’s bureaucracy mostly by being counted, cataloged or vaccinated. The non-elite residents of Tanta (along with the rest of Egypt) represented data for the Egyptian government to improve and modernize Tanta. By looking at modern state institutions and how individuals moved through them, provides the foundation to understand alliances between local elites and the state.

The court system was by far the most public and the most socially accessible of all of state institutions in Tanta. Verdicts from civil and criminal cases often appeared in the newspaper, with intimate details of the cause of the lawsuit, the names of the parties and the eventual outcomes mapped out in extreme detail.436 The courts also recorded the litigants, complaints and outcomes and submitted the information to the central government. This process created a public record. These public records became part of the court’s history and became

436 “Announcing from the Tanta Court,” in al-Sayha, 19 April 1906 and “Qadiyya,” al-Sayha, 10 April 1903. The information about this case came from al-Ra’id al-‘Uthmani another local paper in Tanta. The most famous case in 1885 appeared in chapter two of this dissertation, but a number of cases also appeared in the local press in Tanta.
legal precedent. Thus, individual outcomes affected the general legal climate and legal code which dictated the court system generally. The court system became another venue for the government to gather information that could be translated into action. Because the court was open to all members of Egyptian society, both men and women from elite and modest backgrounds brought cases before the court. This chapter shows that the court system most often illustrated the collaborative relationship between the state and elites. Personal relationships with members of the government and the cost of bringing cases before the court made the court mostly an elite zone. Therefore, elites and government employees moved through the courts with far more ease and panache then ordinary people.

The civil court was a relatively new institution. Until the mid-nineteenth-century, Islamic (Shari’s) courts dominated the judicial landscape. Theoretically, Islamic law embodied all aspects of society and adjudicated both public and private matters. It addressed personal status, government, criminal and civil issues served as the foundation for enacting legal code. In practice, the implementation of law rested with a massive bureaucracy that extended from the board (later ministry) of the interior to local police (civil and military personnel), governors, mayors and administrative bureaucrats. This system changed quite dramatically during the second half of the 19th century with the physical expansion of the governmental bureaucracy, the adoption of secular codes, and the creation of civil courts. The adoption of the civil code, based on the French model in 1875 accompanied new penal and commercial codes, maritime procedures and criminal procedures. The establishment of a civil court system was part of a

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much larger project of establishing modern institutions that strengthened ties between the state and residents in Egypt.\textsuperscript{439}

In 1883, after the start of the British occupation, a new civil court system emerged with lawyers and judges often trained in the European legal traditions.\textsuperscript{440} For Tanta, the establishment of the civil court meant that local elites would have a local venue to engage in civil transactions and discuss their grievances before the government. For ordinary people, the court was a dubious place that potentially gave them the opportunity to express their concerns. For the government, it served as a place where the state’s power was felt most acutely.

The court system was one of a number of important organizations that strengthened ties between the state and elites. The power of elites and their willingness to collaborate with the government manifested in the creation of the \textit{Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab} in 1866.\textsuperscript{441} The \textit{Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab} was a national administrative council that brought representatives from all of the provinces together to advise the government, make decisions about the function of the council and enact change wherever possible in the provinces.\textsuperscript{442} The decisions of the council were published in the official governmental bulletin \textit{al-Waqa’i’ al-Misriyya}.\textsuperscript{443} The \textit{Majlis Shuwra} gave elites a venue to discuss the ways in which they could press the government to

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\textsuperscript{439} The establishment of the \textit{Shuwra} council or the body that gave elites power within the government was one example of how the expansion of the court system accompanied the creation of other bureaucratic institutions. BLA, \textit{Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab}, Daur al-In’iqad al-Thalath- Qarirat Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab, Raqim 9 Dhu al-Hijja Sanat 75 Nimrat 7 [Shura Council- Third Session- Decision of the Shura Council 9/75/7], 1875. Another example of the establishment of bureaucratic structures and public work projects can be found in Riaz Pasha (Ministry of Interior), \textit{Essai de statistique général de l’Égypte années 1873-1877} [\textit{Essay on the General Statistics of Egypt for the years 1873-1877}](Cairo: 1879). This collection tracked the population, immigration, emigration, export, postal work and agricultural statistics. This information was then compared with information from the countries of Europe.

\textsuperscript{440} BLA, \textit{Mahkamat Tanta}, A letter from the head of the court reporting to the Daftarkhana (Dar al-Mahfuzat today) the length of service of the Judge Hafni Nassif and his pay of twenty-five Egyptian pounds. The information was compiled for the purposes of his vacation time, 1 January 1900.

\textsuperscript{441} Riziq, \textit{al-’Ayb fi-Dhat Afandina [The Shameful Behavior of the Khedive]}, 13.


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improve and change the public space (to serve their needs) throughout all of Egypt, particularly after the 1870s.\footnote{BLA, Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab, “Qararat Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab,” [Decisions of the Shuwra Council of Representatives], number 330, 22 January 1872. In their meetings, the representatives on the council discussed things such as ways to improve agricultural production, day to day operations of agriculture, and the census. On 14 Muharram 1290 hijri (13 March 1873), the Majlis Shuwra appointed a special council in Tanta to inspect and monitor agriculture there. This special council consisted of mayors and representatives in Tanta who would then report their findings to the Majlis al-Shuwrat al-Nuwwab.}

By looking specifically at modern institutions such as state ministries, the Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab (later the Majlis Shuwrat al-Qawanin under the British) and the court system, this chapter looks at how the government and local elites worked together to gather information about the geography, people and land in and around Tanta.\footnote{Ami Ayalon, Language and Change in the Arab Middle East: The Evolution of Modern Arab Political Discourse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 121.} It shows that ordinary people were subjects and victims of this collaboration, but sometimes used these institutions to accomplish individual economic objectives. As with chapter two of this dissertation, this chapter looks at how elites attempted to define the public space. This chapter also shows that Tanta’s residents of more modest means and women used these modern institutions for their own economic objectives (both successfully and unsuccessfully). It will begin (as the Egyptian government did) with a sketch of the ways in which the state gathered data about its citizens. This section will show that the data collection served as a foundation — or more aptly a hub — for all other bureaucratic engagements and simultaneously opened channels for individual citizens to provide feedback or complain about their particular relationship to the state. The discussion will then move to a brief discussion of how Tanta was physically transformed during the period under study. Physical transformation coupled with the creation and expansion of modern institutions marked the way that state conceived of modernizing Tanta. It will then move to a discussion of two bureaucratic structures, the Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab and the legal system. The discussion
of the legal system will provide some examples of how social classes performed before the court and how they participated in the legal process.

The use of bureaucratic institutions, particularly court and police records, is not new for the study of social class in modern Egypt. In fact it has been the dominant means to study engagements between state and society in Egypt. Ehud Toledano’s work, *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century Egypt*, provides an insightful look at social interaction during the radically understudied period of Abbas and Said. Through the use of police and court records, Toledano attempts to capture the experiences of the “lower strata” in a few Cairo neighborhoods. New work by Hanam Hammad uses court and bureaucratic records from the city of Mahalla Kubra in Delta to illustrate the experience of prostitutes and their relationship with the state during the first half of the twentieth century. Similarly, much of the work of the well-known Egyptian historian Khaled Fahmy employs court and police records as the principle source for most of his work. The following chapter builds upon this methodological framework. It consults court records, but simultaneously emphasizes and illustrates that the court and police state apparatus were part of a much larger bureaucracy and system to gather knowledge. Appearing in court was merely one way in which the people of Tanta engaged with the state and elite. Some of these institutions brought the state directly into the lives of individuals while other systems employed proxies or emissaries to impose the will of the state.

The elaborate bureaucratic structure that emerged in the 1860s and 1870s was a complicated system that consisted of massive complex. Unclearly defined systems often operated side-by-side without a distinction (for the historian) as to who had jurisdiction over

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446 Toledano, *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century Egypt*.
447 Hammad, “Between Egyptian “National Purity” and “Local Flexibility,”” 784.
448 Fahmy, “Prostitution in Egypt in the 19th Century,” in *Outside In: Marginality in the Modern Middle East*, 77-103.
what aspect of government.\textsuperscript{449} Quite often overlapping organizations were in control of similar functions and often provided no clear means for individuals to negotiate within this vast system. Many times, the Egyptian government put systems in place that would promise recourse for citizens, but instead yielded endless unanswered requests. What characterizes the nature of the bureaucratic system was the constant transformation of institutions and policies. Thus, this chapter seeks to make sense of the ways in which individuals engaged with the bureaucracy and understand how the government and local elites defined and shaped these structures rather than attempt to chronicle the minutia that defined the day-to-day working of provincial governance. It also hopes to understand how ordinary people partook in that process.

Between 1854 and 1907 the Egyptian government made hundreds of appointments to the city of Tanta. The positions ranged from positions in the military (all ranks), the stock exchange, postal employees, doctors, engineers, and members of local councils. All of these employees were linked to the national government. Many of these appointments were not newly employed bureaucrats, but rather hereditary titles bestowed upon local elites.\textsuperscript{450} Providing a prestigious title and a position in the government to local elites expanded their power beyond the borders of the province by giving them official license as agents of the state. These titled positions

\textsuperscript{449} Such an example would be that employees were required to be cleared by other bureaucratic institutions to receive vacations, medical leave or assert his ability to work. One such example was the judge Hafni Nassif who suffered from eczema. He required twenty-five days leave from service. An elaborate correspondence between the court and the ministry of the interior ensued regarding his health. Because of the various departments within the government that oversaw different aspects of employment, Nassif requested time off on multiple occasions. The process of getting cleared was very slow since he provided a note from a doctor on 25 April 1897. BLA, \textit{Mahkamat Tanta}, Letter from Doctor Muhammad Alawi to Hafni Nassif, 25 April 1897. Another example of the confusion of the bureaucracies was found in 1881, when an official decree asserted that the police and governors were supremely responsible for implementing public health laws. BLA, \textit{Bulletin des lois et décrets}[Bulletin of Laws and Decrees],

\textsuperscript{450} There were a number of examples of this. Some local headmen were teachers at local schools in Tanta who became employees of the government. DMZ, Sijala \textit{al-Mahfuzhat al-Muqatat bi-l-Makhzan} [Registry of Employee Pension Files], Shaykh Ahmad Ali al-Haji (employee\# 332) and Shaykh Ahmad al-Jazz were listed as \textit{Khuja} (teacher-Egyptian spoken-Arabic) for the city of Tanta. DMZ, \textit{Employee Files}, Sa'ad Effendi Hanna (Employee \#11582) was a doctor in Tanta for Ga'friyya. His employment was an inherited position. Similarly, another member of his family Ibrahim Effendi Hanna (Employee \# 11571) was the postmaster general.
legitimated their social status and essentially gave them government support for their endeavors. By joining the Egyptian government (even in name only), local elites showed their loyalty and asserted the legitimacy of the state’s authority in Tanta.\textsuperscript{451}

For the city of Tanta, the bureaucratic incursion began in 1836 when it officially became the capital of Gharbiyya.\textsuperscript{452} Muhammad Ali moved the capital from the commercial epicenter of Mahalla Kubra to Tanta.\textsuperscript{453} The new capital became the seat of the administration and the purse for the provinces of Gharbiyya and Minufiyya. Muhammad Ali named Abbas Hilmi (later the governor of Egypt) the governor of the province.\textsuperscript{454} The bureaucracy grew further under Said in 1856 when the railroad that connected Alexandria to Cairo made its first stop in Tanta.\textsuperscript{455} Administrators came to expand the railroad and also provide an administrative infrastructure for the potential changes to Tanta. The establishment of the railroad expanded Tanta’s economic, political and social trajectory and greatly contributed to its demographic growth. The population boom accompanied economic prosperity and increasingly the Egyptian government sought alliances with local elites whom they appointed to governmental positions. As Abbas Hilmi I very quickly learned, incorporating the local social structure into the national Egyptian bureaucracy without safeguards to combat corruption could backfire. Local loyalties often trumped comradery with the state. Local authorities were notorious for the lack of enforcement

\textsuperscript{451} This public display of loyalty was similar in some way to the public celebration at the \textit{mulid} when elites came and joined the Khedive at his table.

\textsuperscript{452} Muhammad Ramzi, \textit{al-Qamus al-Jughrafiyya lil-Bilad al-Misriyya [The Dictionary of Geography of the lands of Egypt],} (Cairo: Wizarat al-Tarbiya wa al-T’alim, 1956), 103.

\textsuperscript{453} Wahbi, \textit{Encyclopedia of the Delta,} 281.

\textsuperscript{454} Ramsi, \textit{Qamus al-Jughrafiyya lil-Bilad al-Misriyya [The Dictionary of Geography of the lands of Egypt}, 105. It is argued in this text that Muhammad Ali chose someone close from his family to be the leader of Gharbiyya and situated him in Tanta because of the economic prosperity of the \textit{mulid} and cotton harvest there.

the government’s authority as well as for their failure to report all of the taxes to government. The issue of corruption earlier in the nineteenth-century shows that the process of forging ties with elites was not a teleological process that resulted in a cohesive bureaucracy, but rather that it was a long road that constantly changed.

Learning from the mistakes of his predecessor, Said expanded upon the pre-existing administrative system, but shortened administrative posts and physically moved individual bureaucrats multiple times before finally settling many of them in Upper Egypt. Said believed that moving bureaucrats into various positions in different departments of the government promoted loyalty to the state rather than collusion with locals. In 1863, the province of Gharbiyya was reorganized to include parts of Minufiyya and renamed Ruda al-Bahrayn. Khedive Isma’il separated the two provinces and their administration for a brief period and then restored the province of Ruda al-Bahrayn from 1866 to 1867. They were again separated and Tanta became the capital of Gharbiyya once more. The position of shaykh al-balad as the local liaison to the government was replaced by a new government position, the ‘umda or mayor. To further incorporate Tanta into the national bureaucracy, Tanta also became a regional police

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456 BLA, Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab, Daur al-In’iqad al-‘Adi Mahdar Yaum al-Arba’a [Shura Council of Representatives, Second Regular Session Minutes from the first year, Wednesday 1288]. A number of the representatives reported that there were major discrepancies with the taxes that were supposed to be collected and those that were actually reported. 7 Jumadi 1288/ 27 July 1871.

457 The system of moving bureaucrats continued well into the 19th century; for example see BLA, Mahkamat Tanta, “Kashf Ahmad Hashmat Pasha [Exploration of Ahmad Hashmat Pasha],” 7 January 1888 asserted that the employee of the court had served in three posts. Two of them with the court and another unmentioned position. Another example was Muhammad Effendi Abd al-Wahab the one time chief engineer for the city of Tanta who was granted land in Fayyum as part of his retirement. DMZ, (employee #3507). Another employee who worked for the same department Jirji Agha (employee #4059) was eventually moved to Sharqiyya after serving as an employee under the Chief Engineer. Ahmad Amin, (employee # 10598) a member of the army, who died in 1884 served in Alexandria, Sharqiyya and finally Gharbiyya. There was some question as to whether or not he had stolen some funds during his service in the military.


459 BLA, Letter from Mustafa Riad Pasha (former Governor of the Province) to the Khedive dated 10 October 1865.

and judicial center that had jurisdiction over most of the Delta.\(^{461}\) The police was later joined by a much larger judiciary in 1890 under the reign of Abbas Hilmi II.\(^ {462}\)

**Information Gathering: Land Investigation and Census**

Beginning in the mid-1840s, Muhammad Ali’s government increasingly sought to exert authority over Egyptians through conscription, taxation, and the collection of the census.\(^{463}\) This process provided the foundation to establish and expand its bureaucratic structures. Because the expansion of authority necessarily connoted territorial integration, the people and property located within that geographical space became subjects of investigation. Conceiving of the space and the subsequent control of those who lived within the borders of Egypt required the difficult task of capturing information about the land and the inhabitants. The process resulted in a constant reordering of provincial borders and expanding of their administration.\(^ {464}\) The continual subdivision of the provinces coincided with the demographic boom in the urban centers.

During Tanta’s period of rapid urbanization between 1848 and 1907, the Egypt government made a strong effort to map Egypt and its residents through a national census.\(^ {465}\)

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\(^{461}\) Kenneth M. Cuno and Michael J. Reimer, “The Census Registers of Nineteenth-Century Egypt: A New Source for Social Historians,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 24, no. 2 (Nov 1997): 193-216. In 1871, Isma’il put a Sheriff in every town and divided up Gharbiyya in to 12 *marakiz* or police centers. This number was later subdivided again into nine in 1882 and then again eleven in 1902. BLA, “min Sharif Basha ili Qunsul al-Dawla [From Sharif Pasha to the National Council] in Kitab Isma’il Kama Taswwir Watha’iq Rasmiyya [Digitized book of Isma’il’s official documents] 6 March 1865. Isma’il also created a commercial court for the Delta and the south. Assiut was the regional commercial court for the south and Tanta was the regional court for the Delta.


\(^{463}\) Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men*.

\(^{464}\) Taha Muhammad Abd al-Mutlib, “Taqsim al-Idara lil-Muhafazat wa-l-Tamniya al-Mutawazina [The Divisions of the Administration of the Provinces and the Development of Balance],” *al-Ahwal al-Misriyya [The Conditions of Egypt]* 22 (2007): 92-94. According to this article, when Muhammad Ali took power there were initially four provinces in the Delta and three in the South. They were further subdivided a number of times over the course of the 19th century.

\(^{465}\) DWQ, *T’add Nu’us Mudiriyyat al-Gharbiyya [National Census 1848]*. Unfortunately, the actual data that was collected is for the Tanta census has been lost. All that remains is the names of the heads of households and their family members. The census that was taken in the 1860’s has been entirely lost for Tanta. However, the Cairo and Alexandria Census data illustrates what information was type of information was gathered as well as how the information was organized. What remains is an intricate explanation of the land designations from the smallest of village to the largest of city. This gives insight into the type of information that the state gathered as well as the way that they gathered it.
Understanding the character and nature of the population could be used to develop new bureaucratic frontiers as well as ways to assert more authority and control over the population. An estimate of the number of households in 1821 based on the French (attempted) national census provided some basis for demographic knowledge and population density. The first two censuses of the 19th century, 1848 and 1868 respectively, were carried out similarly to the contemporary central Ottoman census. Unlike the later British censuses of 1882, 1887, and 1907, the Egyptian-Ottoman style censuses could not be carried out in a single day. The census data showed that Tanta underwent a dramatic demographic boom and (later under the British) provided the occupations, religion, medical afflictions, place of birth among other information for the government.

In 1845, Muhammad Ali sent out census takers to count every man and woman residing in Egypt. The designation of who was responsible for the collected data depended on the location and population density. Census takers in Tanta comprised an army of Cairo-appointed officials. The provincial governor held the responsibility for taking the count. The governors then enlisted local police captains (ma’mur) and soldiers (‘askar) to count individuals house-by-house and record the number of men and women living in each house or apartment. The head of the household told the administrators the number of individuals residing with them. The data

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466 The creation of smaller geographic boundaries for administration over the course of the mid-nineteenth-century provided parameters for the census. The cities were distinguished by their geographic location, size and economic significance. Egypt’s two larger cities, Cairo and Alexandria, were each designated muhafaza along with all of Egypt’s coastal cities such as Damietta, Rosetta and eventually Suez. Bandar, originally a Persian word for a seaport, connoted provincial cities in the Nile Delta. The bandar, smaller than the muhafaza, contained a strong economic center, commercial market and administrative core like the muhafaza. Sub-urban areas surrounded the bandar and contained a local government and police force that extended authority over the bandar and surrounding peri-urban and rural spaces. The police station (markaz) and the provincial governor (muhafiz) and his army of bureaucrats reported directly to Cairo. Smaller than the bandar was the nahiya, or peri-urban space. It was designated as such because it was the land between the urban commercial epicenter and agricultural lands and smaller villages. Villages themselves had distinct designations as well. The smallest of all was the mit or a hundred square meters of land inhabited by people who tilled soil or worked as migrant workers in the nearby provincial capitals. For more on peri-urban spaces see David Simon, Duncan McGregor, and Kwasi Nsiah-Gyabaah, “The Changing Urban-Rural Interface of African Cities: Definitional Issues and an Application of Kumasi, Ghana,” Environment and Urbanization 16, no. 2, (2004): 235-247.
was then organized geographically by neighborhoods and included physical afflictions such as blindness, missing limbs and lameness. The census takers also noted skin color, place of birth and occupations. For most of their lives, the poor remained anonymous to the government in the public space. The collection of the census was one of a few moments that the government sought to know intimate details about people living in Egypt. The census also served as a vehicle for the state to assert its authority. The government expected residents to provide information about their economic and social lives that could then be used or process for governmental projects and the establishment of law and order. In Tanta, like the other provinces, the census takers relied on information from the heads of local households or urban notables to provide information about residents under their jurisdiction.467

Establishing a relationship between state bureaucrats, the government and local elites was not always an easy process. Gleaning demographic and cadastral information was a difficult task and marked by corruption of both administrators and locals. After state officials compiled the data for the government, the state used this it for determining taxation and conscription. Taxation and conscription were examples where there was corruption at many levels.468 In 1282 Hijri/1865, the town council investigated the whereabouts of money designated for the police that appeared to have gone missing.469 In 1865, the British Consulate office in Cairo noted that two men were hanged by Governor Said’s government because they attempted to substitute two other boys for their sons to be conscripted.470 In another letter from the British Consulate, the

467 According to Fredrick Martin’s The Statesman’s Yearbook for 1878 (London: MacMillian and Company, 1878), the population of Tanta in 1872 was 28,500 lagging just behind Damietta in the 1870s.
468 Mahmud Falaki was sent in to investigate the state of finance on 23 August 1882. Falaki held many different governmental positions. He was the national overseer under Nubar Pasha in 1884, but served as the Minister of Public Works and Public Instruction during the reign of Isma’il. BLA, Firman issued by Khedive Muhammad Tawfiq regarding Mahmud Falaki 1884-1888, issued 10 January 1884.
469 DWQ, Diwan al-Dakhiliyya, Taftish al-Aqalim al-Bahriyya wa-l-Qibliyya [Inspection of the Delta and Upper Egypt], 1854-1878, registry 1301.
Consular general asserted that the collection of taxes was based on long since dead data collected from the census. The consular-general noted that townspeople were expected to pay taxes based on old information that did not take into account death or the movement of individuals.\textsuperscript{471} The continual corruption that accompanied gathering funds for the Egyptian state pushed the government to constantly re-evaluate the bureaucracy and find new ways to fight the corruption within the system.

Over the course of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the government used a number of different avenues for dealing with corruption and embezzlement.\textsuperscript{472} Putting Coptic Christians in positions of economic control to oversee the collection of funds for the board/ministry of finance was one way to combat the issue.\textsuperscript{473} The government seemed to believe that Egyptian Christians (and minorities generally) would be more loyal to the state and working for the state protected them from the Muslim majority that could potentially subjugate them.\textsuperscript{474} Another way that the government sought to combat this issue was through the meticulous reporting of funds in and out of Cairo.\textsuperscript{475} The elaborate structures put in place to deal with issues of corruption illustrated the lack of real administrative authority in the provinces. The constant need to shuffle individuals and find means to gain access to revenue owed to the government sheds light on the absolute necessity of alliances with local elites who wielded real power. For Tanta, personal relationships between the royal family and members of the elite class served as the foundation for this project.

\textsuperscript{471} PRO/FO 141-48, Letter from the British Consulate of Alexandria to Borg, dated 18 May 1878. Clearly, the British were mounting a case for the absolute need of their intervention into Egyptian politics.
\textsuperscript{472} Robert Hunter, \textit{Egypt Under the Khedives}, 164 &171.
\textsuperscript{473} DMZ. BLA, \textit{Employee Files}, Jirgis Mina Effendi (Employee #11081) was the overseer or monitor of the Stock Exchange in Tanta as well as a scribe in Minufiyya. He was pensioned in 1884.
\textsuperscript{474} Armenians were another group that was prominent in the government. Muhammad Ali began the tradition of having Armenians serve in his government. He believed that they were more educated and would be more loyal than the Egyptian Sunni population. The most notable of all Armenians was Nubar Pasha who was a politician and Egypt’s first Prime Minister.
\textsuperscript{475} DWQ, \textit{Diwan al-Dakhiliyya}, Taftish al-Aqalim al-Bahriyya wa-l-Qibliyya [Inspection of the Delta and Upper Egypt], registry 1339.
By creating diplomatic, economic and working ties with local elites, the Egyptian government provided the foundation for all future collaboration around public administration.

Analyzing the public space and the uses of land were incredibly important for expanding the bureaucracy and establishing administrative control in Tanta and the provinces generally. Between 1813 and 1822 Muhammad Ali began the first of a series of cadastral surveys in order to count arable lands and mount a basis for land taxation. Mu‘alim Ghali (tax collector) and the Italian M. Masi carried out the survey. In 1853, a survey of sixty villages in Sharqiyya followed and in 1861, Said ordered a topographical survey to be made by Mahmud Pasha. In 1858, the establishment of miri lands centralized control over all of the arable land in Egypt in effect making lands state owned. During the reign of Isma‘il, he commissioned a number of maps of Egypt including city maps of Cairo and Alexandria as well as regional maps of Upper and Lower Egypt. Mahmud Falaki (Minister of Public Works and later General Information) surveyed Tanta along with portions of Bahayra, Gharbiyya, and Minufiyya between 1878 and 1888. Ten years later in 1898, the joint Egyptian-British government created a survey department which took the information gathered over the course of the 19th century and created topographical maps of Egypt. The creation of these maps (similar to maps created under the joint British-Egyptian government) used the existing system and information that came with it and expanded upon it to create more control and order. The supreme objective of the map

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477 Mu‘alim Ghali served as Muhammad Ali’s finance and foreign minister. His primary responsibility was to re-order and organize the provinces. His cadastral survey was meant to insure that the local elites paid their taxes. Amira El Azhary Sonbol, *The New Mamluks: Egyptian Society and Modern Feudalism* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 45.
478 Kenneth Cuno, “Joint Family Households and Rural Notables in 19th Century Egypt,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 4 (Nov 1995): 485-502. *Miri* land essentially asserts that all arable lands were the property of the government. In this article, Cuno discusses how *miri* lands transformed the way that families organized themselves into joint households.
479 BLA, *Le Soudan sous le règne du khédive Ismail [Sudan during the Reign of Khedive Isma’il],* circa 1860s, n.d.
project, like the census, was to represent the land in order to assign numeral and economic value to the residents and land. With this information the production of export crops could be tracked and taxes could be assigned against the land and/or its yield. Surveying the land and administering the census sent an army of Egyptian bureaucrats into the Delta and South and extended the government’s reach.

**The Establishment of Local Councils**

Sending out investigators to gather information naturally expanded the interior ministry and resulted in the further fragmentation of state authority. General investigations of land in the Delta and Southern Egypt began in 1854.\(^{482}\) Subsequently, local councils emerged as an administrative body that contended with complaints from locals. The subject matter under investigation ranged from issues related to aqueduct locking stations (*qantar/qanatir*) to petty court cases about salary and theft. Officials in Cairo responded to complaints levied at the provincial level. Sharqiyya, Minufiyya and Gharbiyya fell under Tanta’s jurisdiction in these matters. Complaints and requests came from planters, local urban elites, and local bureaucrats and in rare cases people wrongfully imprisoned. The concerned party would levy the complaint with the local council, which would request a response from Cairo and ideally rectify the matter at the local level. This system supported the notion that elites acted as proxies for the government and implemented policy created and sanctioned by Cairo.\(^{483}\) For example, on the 12th of Muharram 1279/July 15, 1862, Tanta’s regional council (*Majlis bi-Bahri bi-Tanta*)

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\(^{482}\) DWQ, *Diwan al-Dakhiliyya*, Taftish al-Aqalim al-Bahriyya [The inspection of the region of the Delta], 1854-1878.

\(^{483}\) Beginning with Abbas Hilmi I, a constantly moving system of bureaucrats was established to combat dubious loyalties from local elites. Rather than allowing an elite from the provinces to hold the same governmental position for his whole life, he was often moved. For more on this topic see Zayn al-Abdin Shams al-Din Nijim, *Misr fi ’Ahd Abbas wa-Said* [Egypt during the Reign of Abbas and Said], (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2007), 68. Nijim (Nigim) also makes the argument that Egypt’s modernization began with Said rather than Isma’il.
requested a response regarding the legal judgment of one Ali Yusuf from Sharqiyya. He awaited word from the government regarding the possibility of appealing his sentence. In another example, Hassan Juwish, a prisoner from Sharqiyya, lodged a complaint with Tanta’s local council regarding his wrongful imprisonment. He had been imprisoned for a lengthy period of time without knowledge of the crime he had committed. He lodged a complaint because some of his fellow workers had been released before him and he was still awaiting a response from Cairo regarding his crime and the length of his imprisonment. The council then filed his complaint with the central authority in Cairo and awaited a response. The complaints filed by workers illustrates that the Egyptian authority included a space for citizens’ to challenge the government’s decision by providing recourse for those who felt that they had been treated unjustly. Part of the project of modernization necessarily included the idea that in modern societies individuals had rights that included a just and organized system of recourse.

The system in place provided a vehicle for prisoners to have some forms of appeals process, giving them a sense that there was recourse or justice for them through bureaucratic channels. It framed the system as an organization that kept order in the streets, but did not provide instructions or an organization that provided recourse for those who asserted that they had been wrongfully imprisoned or held for an indeterminate amount of time. Those who sat

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485 It is difficult to know what he was accused of and what his sentence was because that information was not presented when he filed his claim. All that was asserted was that he was imprisoned far longer than the others who were arrested with him.
487 Timothy Mitchell, The Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics and Modernity (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 57. Mitchell argues that the British asserted that they brought both modernity and civilization and this manifested by “establish(ing) the universal character of law.” The Rule of Experts actually challenges the idea that the British brought civilization and modernity to Egypt and argues that many of the generalizations made by the British about Egypt prior to the occupation have been proven to be false.
in jail or prison were not necessarily being accused of anything, but could have witnesses a crime or simply been present.\textsuperscript{489} These exchanges between the local councils and the imprisoned gave the appearance of justice and order in the public space. Simultaneously, the system also perpetuated a general sense of class superiority. Elite members of the bureaucracy could appease prisoners by hearing their complaint, processing it, and sending it off to Cairo. \textsuperscript{490} Adhering to a set protocol illustrated the organization inherent in the system while simultaneously glossing over concerns of imprisoned individuals. Through private engagement, or interviews and the exchange of information, the government could privately acknowledge the needs of its citizens without having to provide a public forum for the discussion. The bureau that led the general inspection of the Delta was designated to hear complaints about a multitude of issues. Rather, the system of lodging complaints gave individuals a sense of personal agency, but without any real recourse for it.

By sending bureaucrats into the provinces to gather censuses or investigate lands, individuals working for the government came face-to-face with Egyptian citizens. A byproduct of these encounters was that in some cases, Egyptian citizens took the opportunity to complain about the government. Simultaneously, the creation of local and regional councils provided channels for them to engage the government and also established a system where citizens’ voices could be heard by the government. However, quite often, their complaints went unanswered. The optimum goal of these channels was not to provide a space for citizens to engage with the government, but rather for the government to give the appearance of order and establish a protocol. These institutions were part of a larger modernization project that also included the

\textsuperscript{489} Peters, “Prisons and Marginalisation in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” 39.

\textsuperscript{490} The complaint would go in one registry written in Cairo and the response would come back through another registry in the provinces. The only link to them was through the record number. However, today, many of the registries are lost and often what remains are a number of complaints or responses without any counterpart.
physical transformation of the city. Providing a well-organized public space would complement the emerging bureaucratic structures. Together, modern institutions and transformation of public space would wed Tanta to the national modernization project.

**Bureaucratic Structures and Physical Transformation**

The 1870s marked a transformative period for the public space in city of Tanta. When Isma‘il came to power in 1863, he sought to make massive renovations to Egypt. Isma‘il’s great urbanization projects marked the mid-nineteenth century in Egypt as a period of reform and modernization and ushered in a period of physical transformation to urban Egypt. Isma‘il’s plans to transform urban Egypt began with Cairo. The newly planned city echoed European models of urban design. Particularly, he looked to the French Haussmannian model of Paris as part of his plan to transform Cairo into a modern city. The public order that accompanied the boulevard and grid street system in Haussmann’s model appealed to Khedive Isma‘il. The ordered street system not only gave the appearance of organization and beauty, but also provided discipline and sanitation. The chaotic, unsanitary, and ill-planned city would be transformed into a modern, organized and productive space. The success of the transformed city of Cairo

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491 A lot has been written about Isma‘il’s project in Cairo, but nothing has been written about how he transformed the provincial cities along the same lines.
493 Haussmann transformed about sixty percent of Paris and the previous city nearly disappeared. The physical transformation of the city also transformed Paris socially. The vision of the city was no longer one that centered on politics, but a socially desirable and economically efficient city for the bourgeoisie. Thus, small narrow streets gave way to broad boulevards with access to train stations with lots of green space. For more on the work of Haussmann please see David P. Jordan, “Haussmann and Haussmannisation: The Legacy for Paris,” *French Historical Studies* 27, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 87-113. Raymond also notes that there were plans in the works for Cairo during the time of Muhammad Ali so it is difficult to know to what extent Haussmann’s plan was the model. Raymond, *Cairo*, 309.
495 Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 65. Mitchell notes that the dominant political ideology and medical thought contended that the narrow street system promoted poor sanitation and thus facilitated the spread of disease.
served as a model to modernize urban Egypt generally. Khedive Isma’il took the Haussmann model and applied it to Tanta during the 1870s.496

The larger goals of Khedive Isma’il’s urbanization project was to recast all of Egypt as on par with Europe. He learned of how Europeans conceptualized his country on his visit to Paris and the Exposition Universelle in 1867.497 He observed a recreation of the city of Cairo as a medieval town. An imitation palace created for the Khedive housed him on his visit. Egypt had become an exhibition, something that could be recreated in a miniature model. 498 According to Timothy Mitchell in Colonising Egypt, “the Khedive returned the favour of the imitation medieval palace that had been constructed for his use at the Paris Exhibition two years earlier by having a palace specially built on the Nile for the Empress Eugenie, in which the rooms were an exact replica of her private apartment in the Tuilleries.”499 Khedive Isma’il’s actions and famous boasts illustrated that he internalized the superiority of European design and organization over the existing structure in Egypt. His famous words, “my country is no longer in Africa; we are now part of Europe. It is therefore natural for us to abandon our former ways and to adopt a new system adapted to our social conditions,” articulated his arrogance, but also made clear that local particularities equally influenced how renovation and urbanization would be

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496 Khedive Isma’il’s knowledge of the “urban geography based on the grid and prior knowledge of the structures to be built” privileged perspective and alignment. Isma’il hired Ali Mubarak, a man born of a notable family from the province of Sharqiyya to lead his Ministry of Public Works. The central and most important project was the urbanization of Cairo. The Khedive selected Mubarak because of his educational background and experience. Ali Mubarak had attended a government-funded journey to Paris. He spent five years in Paris learning French and engineering. When he returned to Egypt, he initially occupied low positions in various ministries such as the Ministry of Public Works, Religious Endowments and the Railroads. Within a decade, he oversaw the creation of new neighborhoods, the destruction of the old street system and the creation of a midan (square) system. Mercedes Volait, “Making Cairo Modern (1870-1950): Multiple Models for a “European-style’ Urbanism,” in Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait eds, Urbanism: Imported or Exported? (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2003), 18. The midan (square) system followed very closely to the Parisian model in that streets emanated out in circular formation from a central square.

497 Mitchell, Colonising Egypt, 17.

498 Mitchell, Colonising Egypt, 17.

499 Mitchell, Colonising Egypt, 17.
As Cairo and Egypt generally became more closely linked to the European market and global capitalism, certain sectors of the city reflected those changes while many parts of the city (namely poorer neighborhoods) remained untouched. Cairo became two cities, one that appeared as a showpiece of Egyptian advancement and a second city of poorer slums largely forgotten.

For Isma’il and his predecessors, the public space served as the ultimate example of the order inherent in his government and administration. The census and land surveys let the state know who lived in Tanta and what could be done with the land. The collection of data was processed by a variety of bureaucrats who met with the government and conferred about how to implement projects to facilitate the advancement of the country generally. The regional councils interpreted that information, but the work of dealing with maintaining order was left to other branches of the government bureaucracy, the Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab, (nationally-although members came from Tanta and represented their interests there) the judiciary, and the police force (locally).

**Bureaucratic Institutions and State/Elite Alliances: the Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab and the Tanta Court**

The creation of the Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab or constitutional assembly in 1866 was one of many ways that the Egyptian state legitimated itself through the establishment of alliances with elites. The Majlis Shuwrara also gave elites a vehicle to collaborate with the government and enact change in their respective localities. Membership in the council could only be granted

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501 BLA, Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab, Taqrir Majlis Shura [Resolutions of the Shura Council], 1289/1290, 1873. The council decided among other things that general investigations of the land showed that they could widen the Nile to benefit the people of Egypt. They also determined that the Council would be consulted on matters of the provinces and establish connections with the local council that already existed in places like Tanta. Because many of the council members were planters and large landowners the discussion that dominated was ways to improve cultivation and also the building of more locking stations for the aqueducts.
502 BLA, “al-Hayat al-Niyabiyyat fi ‘ahd al-Khudawi Abbas Hilmi II [Parliamentary Life Under Abbas Hilmi II]. There was also special legal counsel or legal subdivision of the council in Cairo and Gharbiyya under the reign of Abbas.
to men over the age of twenty-five, with no criminal convictions, bankruptcy or previous expulsion from the government. Also, a number of senior members of the Egyptian government attended the meetings. Initially, there were seventy-five members and they held office for three years. They were responsible for electing local governmental officials in the provinces including the mayors (‘umd) and leadership in various districts (mashaykha). They also appointed members of local councils as well as established special councils in the provinces. Their practices and provisions were to be published in official gazette al-Waqa’i’ al-Misriyya on a regular basis. In a speech at the inaugural meeting, Isma’il said, “My late grandfather came to Egypt and during his rule of Egypt found the disposition of the people to be honest and spirited…and (I place) the highest of importance on establishing security of the people and development of the (all) provinces.” He went on to say that he saw himself as fulfilling Muhammad Ali’s goals and that he was a shepherd and cited a verse from the Quran that asserted the value of mutual consultation. After the British occupation, members met once every two months in secret and their term was six years. Their authority was also diminished and the opinion of the council could not be seen as binding for the government. For Tanta, like other provincial cities in Egypt, the creation of the council and the joint work by the state

503 The government representatives who attended were Sharif Pasha (Ministry of the Interior), Muhamad Hafiz Pasha (Minister of Finance), Muhammad Mazhar Pasha (Undersecretary of Public Works), Muhammad Thaqib Basha (Inspector of Upper Egypt), Salam Bey Pasha (Chief Inspector of the Delta) and Ali Mubarak. The presence of this particular group of bureaucrats signified the type of work that the council would advise. It also shows that modernization and provisions to accomplish these goals were a national project that included all parts of Egypt irrespective of size or demographics.

504 Riziq, al-‘Ayb fi Dhat Afandina, 47.

505 BLA, Resolutions of the Majlis Shuwrat al-Nawwab, 1280 hijri.

506 Riziq, al-‘Ayb fi Dhat Afandina, 56.

507 BLA, al-Hayat al-Niyabiyat ‘ahd al-Khudawi Isma’il [Parliamentary Life During the Reign of Ismail], 18 January 1863 to 26 July 1879.

508 BLA, al-Hayat al-Niyabiyat ‘ahd al-Khudawi [Parliamentary Life During the Reign of Isma’il], 18 January 1863 to 26 July 1879.

509 BLA, al-Hayat al-Niyabiyat ‘ahd al-Khudawi Abbas Hilmi II [Parliamentary Life During the Reign of Abbas Hilmi II], no date provided.
and local elites was a result of collaboration between the two groups in information gathering as well as creating the legislative body of the *Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab*.

The national *Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab* dealt with many parts of the state’s modernization project, but was also assisted by local councils. Local councils served as a representative of the government and dealt with issues specific to the city that emerged as result. Before the creation of the *Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab*, local councils were the only official channel for elites to voice their grievances with the government. For example, the construction of the railroad was a major project that had major economic implications for Tanta. The railroad and the land taken to lay tracks and build stations created problems for landowners. Newly constructed railroad tracks cut through land belonging to local elites. Shaykh Ali, who had land in Minufiyya, requested re-imbursement for the seizure of his land for the purpose of the railroad in 1282/1865. The government asserted the right to seize lands that were not being used for their maximum potential for the larger public good. The government provided him an avenue to air his complaints, but provided no recourse for his problem. The case of Shaykh Ali demonstrates that the alliances between the state and local elites were not unilateral nor were local elites and the government always in agreement about how land or money should be used. In this case, national concerns trumped the concerns of the local elites. Rather, elite/state bonds were most successful when both groups had similar objectives for the public space. When the government and elites disagreed, in this regard, the national modernization project trumped individual needs.

The *Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab* and the regional councils before it represented the culmination of many years of work that was accomplished mostly as a result of collaboration.

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between elites, government appointed bureaucrats (often elites) and the state. Armed with
information about the land, the people and the animals in Egypt as a result of cadastral surveys
and census data, these councils served as a way to translate data into action, but also provide
elites with a political voice within the government. The local court system in Tanta was yet
another way that elites collaborated with the state to promote modernity through the enactment
of new laws and application of existing ones. The court system was one venue where ordinary
people were able to participate (albeit in relatively small numbers) and press the state to meet
their needs.

**The Court System in Tanta**

Like Cairo and Alexandria, Tanta had an elaborate court system that served a variety of
jurisdictions and functions. The civil court was divided into the court of first instance and the
appellate court. All capital cases moved directly to the high court in Cairo. The court at Tanta
was both linked to and beholden to laws and systems of protocol in place at all other courts.
Similarly, decisions made at the civil court became part of a larger body of law or precedent used
in cases in other jurisdictions, making law and the court system an elaborate web with multiple
nodes throughout the country. The court system, like other aspects of the bureaucracy, was
subject to supervision and general investigations to ensure that employees of the court adhered to
mandated laws and decrees issued by the central government. The establishment of the Mixed
Courts followed in 1876 with seventeen foreign judges, twelve Egyptian judges and three courts,
and was one way that the transforming nature of Egypt’s population articulated the independent

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512 Nidharat al-Dakhiliyya [The Administration of the Interior] (Bulaq: al-Matba’a al-Amiri, 1895), 210. “Qararat min Mudiriyyat Gharbiyya, [Decisions regarding the Province of Gharbiyya],” 9 May 1893. All laws put in place in Damietta were applicable and should be applied to Tanta as well.
513 Nidharat al-Dakhiliyya [The Administration of the Interior], 590. On the 17 January 1888, individuals were put in place for a general investigation of the court in Tanta and Mansura.
nature of the court.\textsuperscript{514} Constant issues between foreigners and locals and no jurisdiction to deal with them, made the Mixed Courts (in Tanta in 1902) a zone of contact for those groups to engage.\textsuperscript{515} However, misdemeanor cases between locals and foreigners often remained in local courts. Further, the court engaged in constant communication with the central government and other departments in the government as well.\textsuperscript{516} Thus, the court, like other bureaucratic institutions, served as a vehicle for the Egyptian government to collect data about its employees as well as citizens who engaged with it. It was also a zone where Egyptian elites (members of the judiciary) could partake in the government’s modernization process through the enactment of laws.

In 1865, Khedive Isma‘il expanded the court system and established an appellate court in Alexandria.\textsuperscript{517} Three years later, on the 12\textsuperscript{th} of May in 1868, al-Waqa‘i‘ al-Misriyya reported on the establishment of a commercial court in Tanta.\textsuperscript{518} Accompanying the establishment of the court was Tanta’s separation of authority from the newly created province of Bahayra and the establishment of a court in Banha. The constant reordering of the courts and the redistributing of its authority was an effort by the state to make the system more efficient and provide more services to locals. The separation of the courts coincided with Nubar Pasha’s articulation that

\textsuperscript{514}Rifaat, \textit{Awakening of Modern Egypt}, 96.
\textsuperscript{515}James Harry Scott, \textit{The Law Affecting Foreigners in Egypt: As the Result of the Capitulations} (Ediburgh: William and Sons Company, 1908), 310.
\textsuperscript{516}One such example of this was the famous poet and lead judge in Tanta, Hafni Nassif. The judge was a sickly man who was eventually paralyzed and as a result, he constantly requested time off. The elaborate system to get sick time required that he produce medical evidence of his need for sick leave followed by approval. His sick leave was calculated by his years of service, pay and need for the time. BLA \textit{Mahkamat Tanta}, 1 January 1900, Kashf bi-Muddat Khidma Hafni Bey Nassif al-Qadi bi-Mahkamat Tanta al-Ahliyya min Awwal Yanayir 1900 [Exploration of the Length of Service of Hafni Bey Nassif-Judge of the Tanta Civil Court from 1 January 1900]. A similar exploration was also found for Ahmad Hashma who was also an agent at the court in Tanta (among other positions). DMZ/BLA \textit{Mahkamat Tanta}, Kashf‘an Muddat Khidma Ahmad Hashma [Exploration on the Length of Service of Ahmad Hashma], 5 January 1888.
“justice should emanate from the government and at the same time be independent of it.” The words of Nubar Pasha capture the nature of the civil court system as it emerged. It represented government that demanded that citizens adhere to the laws put forth, but also functioned as an independent system where local particularities dictated the experiences of those who came before it.

The court system was the space where the state’s relationship to elites appeared most acutely. During the 1870s, members of the Khedive’s family appeared before the Shari’s court in Tanta to sell off large swaths of their land to local elites. The lands, which belonged to the entire royal family, were parcelled up amongst the children of the Khedive and then his mother and sons immediately sold in small quantities between 1873 and 1874 to a number of local elites. The total land sold was over 16,449 fiddans.

The continual sale of land to elites in Gharbiyya illustrated the way that Isma’il established close ties to members of the elite class by engaging with them economically, but also showed that the legal system to serve the needs of elites. It is unclear why Isma’il engaged in an elaborate process of bequeathing them to his mother and children before his death who then immediately sold much of it. Potentially, the

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521 Judith Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 13. The above mentioned case was a matter of personal status and could be heard in the Shari’a courts, but since the Shari’a court was independent of the government and had a reputation for justice (according to Judith Tucker), they may have selected this venue so that everything would appear above bar.
522 BLA, *Mahkamat Tanta*, Hujjat Shari’aya b-ism Walda Basha bi-Imtilak Atyan bi-Mudiriyyat al-Gharbiyya [Confirmation of ownership in the name of the Mother of the Khedive of Arable Lands in the Province of Gharbiyya], 2 April 1873.
523 The appearance of this case in front of the Shari’a court is enigmatic considering that almost all of the arable lands had been declared miri lands in the 1850s and were therefore no longer under the jurisdiction of civil court. It’s clear that the miri system created corruption because the Organic Law of 1300 (1883) demanded that all land sales be registered with the civil court.
motivation was to establish stronger economic ties with elites without appearing to show favor through the direct sale of land. The land sale by the Khedive’s family illustrated that even though he was head of the state (and could potentially manipulate the law), he represented himself as modern in the public space adhered to the legal system to promote order. The court served as a venue to foster ties between the government and individual elites. This series of cases also illustrates that while the Khedive was the supreme head of the Egyptian government, he was also Gharbiyya’s largest landowner with established ties amongst his neighbors who used the court in the same way that many landowners did -- as a commercial zone. He used his ties with local elites to forge an alliance and connect more closely to Tanta’s elites.

Women of elite status used the court system to assert their rightful position economically as well. The most elite female resident during the 1850s and 1860s was Khedive Isma’il’s mother Khushayr Hanim. As a member of the household of Muhammad Ali’s family she was a large landowner like many members of her family. Her participation in the case was similar to her grandsons and granddaughter, as a client of the Khedive. Appearing with male heirs was the most way that elite women appeared before the court. In 1873, she petitioned the local Shari’s court in Tanta in order to sell 2803 fiddans around the city in arable regions after the

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524 There was clearly corruption on the part of the Khedive (and elites generally) with regard to selling his property. According to the Resolution of the Shura Council of Representatives in 1883 all changes in landownership had to be legally documents, the government had to send them their budget and the Khedive’s family could not hold positions in any regional or local councils. Ahmad Hashma, the agent who joined the court of Tanta, was a member of this council and may have had first-hand knowledge of the economic corruption within the government. BLA, The Egyptian Organic Law of1883, 1 May 1883.

525 BLA, Mahkamat Tanta, Hujjat Shari’ayya b-Ism Walda Basha [Certification of ownership (of land) of the Khedive’s Mother], 15 December 1872. New laws concerning land and inheritance began in the 1850s (miri statute) as a result of the rise in joint households in the Delta. Rather than land being divided up amongst the remaining children, the eldest son was in control of the funds and the lands. This was based on the assumption that they would all live together in one compound. However, as we see from this case and the case that follows it made selling the land difficult and also caused problems when all of the family members did not agree with this method. For more on this topic see Kenneth Cuno, “Rural Notables in 19th century Egypt,” International Journal of Middle East Studies, 27, no. 4 (Nov 1995): 485-502.

526 Tucker, Women in Nineteenth Century Egypt, 48.
Khedive granted her the land and made his son the head of her estate. The general inspector of the Delta was dispatched to investigate the lands to make sure that they were in fact arable and could be sold as such. She further had to prove that the land was hers legally and provided the necessary information to assert her ownership. Buying and selling a large amount amongst the elites of Gharbiyya was not necessarily dictated by gender, but more often by socio-economics and status. While her involvement in the case may have merely been meant to mask the objectives of the Khedive, her position, social class, and status as the Khedive’s mother made her a necessary party in the case. The court system served as a means to engage in economic transactions as well as represent herself in the public space as a pious Muslim woman who followed the parameters and protocol necessary for the sale and purchase of land according to Islamic law.

A similar case appeared in the civil court in 1899 when the seven daughters (Fatima, Hanim, Nabiya, ‘Awisha, Zaynab, Nafisa and Zahra) of the late Sayyid Bey Ali brought a case against their brothers, Muhammad, Ibrahim, and Ali, and their mother, Zahra, concerning inheritance and their rights to property. Sayyid Bey Ali left his wife and children 1045 fiddans of arable land plus a residence in Minufiyya. The case appeared in the court between 1890 and 1921 lasting for 32 years because of the tenacious nature of the plaintiffs. The initial plaintiff in the case was Zaynab who challenged her brothers’ authority over financial control of their late father’s estate. The boys and their mother had economic control of the estate. The

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527 BLA, Mahkamat Tanta, Hujjat Shari’yya b-Ism Walda Basha [Certification of ownership of (land) of the Khedive’s Mother], 4 February 1873.
528 This case was part of the larger body of land registrations of the Khedive’s family.
529 Judith Tucker, In the House of the Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000). This work looks asserts that women were active participants in the court system in Syria and Palestine. Her work challenges the dominant trend that asserts that women were mostly relegated to the private space with no legal recourse. In fact, as she shows, many women used Islamic law as a means to get their rightful share of inheritance.
530 Mahkamat Tanta, Mudhakara Muqadimma ila Mahkamat Tanta al-Ibtida’yya al-Ahliyya [An Introductory Study into the Civil Court of 1 Instance in Tanta] (Tanta: n.p., 1922).
plaintiff feared that her brothers could (and would) squander the girls’ inheritance and that they would never see their rightful share of the property. Over the course of the case all of the seven sisters’ husbands became plaintiffs against the brothers and their mother as well. The position of the sons and eventually their mother was that according to Shari’s law, land should be distributed in equal shares amongst the boys after the passing of their mother and then a remaining share to be distributed amongst the sisters. 531 From the perspective of the sisters, their father did not designate the girls’ inheritance and Islamic law should apply. Once their husbands joined the debate, the actual amount of land that each sister deserved continued to grow. The mother believed that it was her right and responsibility to uphold Islamic law. She did so by asserting that her sons were justified in their economic decisions about the estate.

Zaynab’s social class and position as the daughter of elite made her familiar with the legal recourse available to her and also gave her the means to bring the suit against her brothers. 532 Her mother, also named Zaynab, asserted her position about the land in terms of a Muslim and used the court as a way to admonish her daughters who seemed to be motivated by greed rather than an adherence to their religion and tradition. The nature of the case and the way it played out in court illustrated the gendered nature of the legal code that favored sons and promoted Islamic law in issues of probate. The daughters, seeking a more flexible interpretation of the law, eventually wore their brother down and the boys gave each of the sisters a portion of the land. Zaynab and her daughters were extraordinary women who benefited from their social class and ability to navigate within the court system. Their active engagement in financial matters that concerned their vast wealth illustrates that social class played a major role in the

531 Women receive half of the inheritance of their brothers. The implicit idea is that women would eventually marry and inherent land from their husbands so their brothers should receive a larger share because they will not inherit from any other source. Judith Tucker, In the House of Law, 15.
532 Judith Tucker notes that the court system was the space where women (elites and non-elites) believed that the court was there to serve them that it was “their institution.” Tucker, Women in Nineteenth Century Egypt, 13.
economic lives of women. These women participated in the legal process to secure their personal wealth and maintain their family’s status. Rather, the court served as an equalizing force in these cases because the marriage of law and social class, rather than their gender, dictated the outcome. The case of the family of Sayyid Bey Ali illustrates how social classes engaged the court, but also shows the complexity of intersection of gender and class among the elites. The mother, named by her daughters as a defendant, held a different position within her family. Because her husband was dead she needed to remain loyal to her sons to protect her economically. Her seven daughters, now members of other families, had economic protection and stability (most likely) from their husbands. For the mother, who was really fighting for her economic livelihood, losing the land to her daughters equaled financial ruin, but for the seven daughters, the case was about their right to the land rather than the need to keep it for economic reasons. In the end each of the sisters eventually received her share of the land and the case finally settled in 1923. In the case of the sisters and the Khedive’s mother, the court was a space where legal (and sometimes economic) rights of women were often protected. Rather, the civil court, a modern institution, provided women a space to engage with males on a more equal field.

From the perspective of a few, status and social clout dictated outcomes in the Egyptian court, particularly for those who were brought before the court on criminal charges. The perception was that elites worked together to maintain their social status in society. However, they had to participate within the legal system in order to model a system of progress and modernity. Evidence of legal corruption or a critique of the legal system was incredibly rare in Tanta, only a few sensational cases appear in the public record. On the 10th of April 1903, 

533 Because the eldest male heir was in control of the funds on behalf of these women, it is difficult to know if these women were coerced into appearing with these men to protect themselves. However, what was much more likely is that they did not see their gender as a social trapping in light of their elite status. For more on women and law, see Judith Tucker, Women in the 19th Century or In the House of Law.
Sayha, a local journal from Tanta announced that Ibrahim Abu Hamir was found innocent of all criminal charges against him. He was accused of killing a provincial aid and breaking his arm. He himself was a member of the army and became the prime suspect in the case because he shared sleeping quarters with the man who was beaten to death. Another soldier who slept just outside of the crime scene identified him as the killer. The author claimed that the Ibrahim Abu Hamir clearly committed the crime because the eye witness who heard the crime being committed blocked any path of escape. The author asserted that it was not justice that found the man innocent, but rather nepotism. The accused killer was the son of Ahmad Bey Abu Hamir (one of the most important characters in Tanta according to the author). This decision came only a week after the police captain Ali Bey Labib decided to not move forward against Ali Effendi Al-Sharif (another local notable). The case against him would not be turned over to the high court, but would remain in the hands of the local judges. In a rather sarcastic tone, the author implies that elite privilege rather than justice was the root cause for the strange outcomes in these two cases. The court system allowed for the elites to flaunt their privilege before their peers. Class and social status exonerated those who committed murder or other heinous crimes. Simultaneously, according to the journal’s editor the poor did not enjoy the same justice system and were often subject to quite harsh laws.

534 “Qadiyya,” 3 April 1903, al-Sayha and “Qadiyya,” al-Sayha, 10 April 1903. The editor of the journal had very little respect for the judicial process in Tanta at all and noted that it was marked by corruption at every level. He asserted that lawyers actually made things worse, they lived decadent lives and existed in a separate orbit from every day citizens. Interestingly, al-Sayha is written in a mixture of the local dialect and modern standard Arabic.

535 Muhammad al-Minshawi, a contributor to the Tanta Hospital that he founded with the Society of African Missions and also the man who saved Europeans from being killed by a riotous mob, was accused of killing one of his servants with a tarbush (hippo hair whip) and suffered no punishment for the crime. He also left 24 Egyptian pounds a year to buy bread to feed the dogs at the mulid. S.H. Leeder, Veiled Mysteries of Egypt and the Religion of Islam (New York: Charles Scriber, 1913), 107-108. However, he was later sentenced (24 April 1902) along with two servants and the police chief of Tanta by Cromer to a few months in jail for hiring thugs to help him catch the people who stole some cattle from him.
For some ordinary citizens, the Tanta court seemed like an ominous institution that served the needs of the government and their clients — the local elites. The court was also the space where class antagonism and the total domination of the poor and underrepresented appeared. The court reaffirmed their position as marginalized, by harshly sanctioning them legally and ordering them to face fines and prison. One example was the case between ‘Ibrahim Qaqu (30 year old fellah) and Abd al-Latif Bey Faid.\(^{536}\) On the 1\(^{st}\) of October 1899, Ibrahim Qaqu was charged with lying, along with his accomplice (and friend) Ibrahim Sharif.\(^{537}\) The issue started when the two men were walking along the street in Tanta and for some unknown reason, cursed at the plaintiff in the case. Two unnamed witnesses asserted that they saw the whole event. They were arrested and when the police questioned them, they lied. They were held accountable by the governor of the province who “heard” about the case. Word reached the governor and acting on behalf of the plaintiff in the case, the defendant was charged with a more egregious charge similar to perjury. The justification was that they lied to a government official, which aggravated the original crime. The attorney for the accused asked that the case be moved to a smaller court in Kafr Zayyat. He may have feared the outcome of the case or reprisal from the judges in Tanta who might decide in favor of the elites. The basis of the claim was that the men insulted Abd al-Latif Bey Faid. The official crime was perjury, but the real nature of the crime was that the two men did not defer to the notable in the public space. They insulted him on the street in front of witnesses and embarrassed him. Abd al-Latif Bey Faid used his social

\(^{536}\) (Record Number) 110, al-Huquq 15, no. 1 (Dec 1900): 539. The article mentioned his name and age because since he was not an elite, he was unknown and more information about him needed to be included in order to place the individual for the readers.

\(^{537}\) In a more serious crime that came before the court from a Kafr al-Sharqi a village in Gharbiyya, a group of local elites were also accused of lying in conjunction with the murder of two fellahin Ahmad Sayyid Hamuda and Muhammad Sulayman Bakr. The case will still be before the court in 1899, but the ‘Umda Sayyid Hamada, a fellah Abu Ghatim Muhammad Mustafa, three shuyukh al-balad, Yidawi Marayi, Mustafa Hamada and Ahmad Sulayman were accused along with the Shaykh al-Ghaffir (constable) Musa Muhammad al-Dib. (Record Number) 69, al-Huquq 15 (18 August 1900): 2121.
status and relationship with the governor of the province to teach the assailants about social order and the rule of law in Tanta. As class underlings, they should remain silent and allow elites to exercise their power in the public space.

The court system, like many aspects of the Egyptian government, replicated norms around social class and status. Elites participated in the legal system in a variety of ways. They brought cases before the court, served as judges and sometimes were named as defendants. The favor that the court showed to them helped to secure governmental ties to them. The government used them in a variety of venues to glean information, maintain local order and police the public space. Elites often times remained loyal to the government because their compliance with governmental efforts guaranteed them the ability to use the court as a space to engage in economic transactions, illustrate their wealth and let ordinary people know that the public space belonged to elites rather than to the poor and undesirable residents of Tanta. However, the court system also illustrates that local alliances were often times stronger than class ties with foreign Arabic speakers. The court system, like many aspects of the government, crafted a space in which local/governmental alliances facilitated larger governmental efforts around modernization and order.

Concluding Statement:

The Egyptian government established a number of institutions to assert its authority throughout the provinces and aid in its modernization project. The government accomplished this after acquiring knowledge about the land, people and geography of the provinces with the much-needed help of a number of local characters. This knowledge served as the basis for an elaborate and ever expanding bureaucratic system that brought members of the government into

538 DWQ, Majlis al-Ahkam, reel 376, 1286-1292 h. This was also true in another case. The foreigner Fatah Allah filed a complaint against two brothers Jirjis (Girgis) and Yusuf. Fatah Allah was found to be responsible for paying the fees to the court.
the provinces, but also co-opted elites who already enjoyed local prestige and power. For elites, the bureaucratic structure and their participation within it served as a theater for them to display their wealth, status and power. It was also a zone where elites could potentially influence the government. This was particularly true with the *Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab* and the regional councils. The *Majlis Shuwrat al-Nuwwab* gave elites a space to impact the trajectory of the Egyptian government’s modernization project. It also formalized their position socially by enshrining them in government bureaucratic positions. The court was another venue where the government and elites crafted an alliance to engage in economic and land transactions, but also strengthen ties with one another. For ordinary people, these bureaucratic structures were places of elite privilege, but that did not entirely bar them from participating in institutions. Rather, these institutions served as a place where individual ordinary people could assert their individual needs, desires and complaints. These institutions also served as a space of negotiation and discussion between the state and its citizens. This was also true amongst religious institutions in Tanta as well. Continuing with a discussion of modern institutions, chapter 5 will show that the state attempted to transform religious institutions in Tanta by incorporating the Ahmadi mosque and Sufi network into two Cairo-based institutions- al-Azhar and the High Council of Sufi Orders.
Chapter Five: Crafting Collaboration, Consent and Consensus: The Ahmadiyya Brotherhood and the Absorption of the Badawi Complex into the National Orbit

Introduction:

At the end of the nineteenth-century, al-Azhar, Egypt’s premier institution of Islamic learning, began incorporating preeminent Delta religious centers into a national system of education.\(^{539}\) This process transformed the mosque-schools in Alexandria (1904), Tanta (1914), Damietta (1914), and Dissuq (1914) into secondary schools that fed the institutional hub in Cairo.\(^{540}\) In the 1890s, this process began when these supporting institutes (\textit{ma’had/ ma’ahid}) adopted al-Azhar’s standardized testing, curriculum, and residency requirements. The use of the al-Azhar system began only two decades after al-Azhar started its dramatic restructuring (1878) that re-organized the curriculum and leadership.\(^{541}\) The resulting system demoted the Delta institutions from regional nodes of Islamic learning that competed with al-Azhar to homogenizing centers that groomed the brightest students for their eventual journey to al-Azhar’s main campus in Cairo.\(^{542}\) This new system that emerged created a group of professionally educated ‘ulama who shared similar training from early childhood to university.

\(^{539}\) Sayyid Wahbi, \textit{al-Mawsu’a al-Masiyya li-Muhafizat al-Dalta: al-Gharbiyya wa Kafir al-Shaykh} [Encyclopedia of the Delta Provinces al-Gharbiyya and Kafir al-Shaykh] vol. 2 (Tanta: Matba’a al-Ahram al-Tijariyya, 1997). This text is not entirely an encyclopedia, but a series of newspaper and historical clippings about the two provinces. The author has compiled primary sources from al-Jabarti to the present. Until his recent death, he was working on a text that focused on Tanta. This book was a gift from the author.

\(^{540}\) Da’irat Ma’arif ‘Umumiya li-Sanat 1916 [The Department of Public Knowledge for the Year 1916], \textit{Taqvim al-Sharg 1916 [The Almanac of 1916: The Eastern Calendar]} 2nd ed. (Cairo: al-Matba’a al-Hindiyya, 1916), 115. J. Scott Keltie and Francis Martin, \textit{The Statesman’s Yearbook 1907} (London: Royal Geographic Society, 1908), 1565. According to this source, in 1907, the Ahmadi Mosque had 70 teachers and over 5,161 students and al-Azhar had 317 teachers and 9,758 students. However, \textit{al-Hilal} reported that there were 70 teachers and 295 students studying Islamic sciences at the Ahmadi mosque in 1906. “Talaba fi-Jawami’ Misiyya [Students in Egyptian Mosques],” \textit{al-Hilal}, 25 January 1907. It appears that the number of teachers may have been correct, but there is a great disparity with the number of students.

\(^{541}\) Samira Haj, \textit{Reconfiguring Islamic tradition: Reform, Rationality, and Modernity} (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 99. These institutions were not referred to as institutes until they were incorporated. Before the process of incorporation, they were merely one aspect of the multi-functional mosque. In Tanta, around the same time that it became an institute, the school was physically moved out of the mosque and placed in a new building adjacent to the train station where it still sits today.

These ‘ulama adopted and promoted one legitimate form of Islam based on al-Azhar’s reformed approach to Islamic law and thought that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth-century. The incorporation of these mosque/schools was an institutional attempt at cleansing local and urban populations of heterodox religious thought associated with some Sufi Orders and popular religious practice (saint worship, self-flagellation, and baraka seeking) notorious throughout the Delta. The new al-Azhar system unified and homogenized a generation of religious leaders and scholars with the intention of transmitting a uniform and consistent modern religious practice and ideology to their followers and future students. The Ahmadi Mosque in Tanta posed a particular threat to the nationalizing efforts to establish Egyptian religious orthodoxy particularly because the leadership seemed to be allowing the space to be used for a variety of unorthodox practices.

The Ahmadi Sufi network (turuq al-Ahmadiyya) associated with the mosque and the saint Ahmad al-Badawi was the dominant social and religious institution in Tanta and much of the Delta. As the most influential religious institution in the Delta the diverse forms of popular

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543 Al-Waqa‘i’ al-Misriyya reported on 13 February 1872/ 3 Dhu al-Hijja 1277 that the Shaykh al-Azhar was given a public examination on a number of topics which included Arabic, Islamic Sciences and Jurisprudence and that he passed with flying colors. The judges were a number of shuyukh and government bureaucrats (one was the governor of Giza). His authority as the preeminent authority of Sunni Islam was solidified by this examination and was articulated as such by the Khedive and subsequent publishing of the article in the newspaper. There was no one school of Islamic law taught or promoted at al-Azhar all of the mudhahib were represented at one point or another. However, during much of the 19th century, the grand mufti was most often a Shafi‘i scholar. “Tarikh al-T‘alim fi Misr min Aqdam al-Tarikh ila Alan, [History of Education in Egypt from Ancient history to the Present],” al-Hilal, 1 December 1906. There was no one dominant madhab, but al-Hilal reported that in 1906 there were 100 Shafi‘i shuyukh, 77 Malaki, 72 Hanafi and 2 Hanbali shuyukh.

544 Isma‘il, Tibb al-Rukka, 89.


546 Rida, “al- Mawalid,” al-Manar 1, 1899. Some of the practices that occurred were dancing, cross dressing, gender mixing and the misuse of the water for ablutions.

547 Ibrahim Nur al-Din, Hayat Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi Bahth fi-l-Tarikh wa-l-Tassawuf al-Islami [The Life of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi, Research in History and Islamic Mysticism] (Cairo: al-Matba‘a Yusifiiyya: 1950). The study of the life of Ahmad al-Badawi and the miracles associated with him have been continuous and consistent for many centuries. Ibrahim Nur al-Din’s text represents a shift in focus from the Sufi Orders (turuq sufiyya) to Islamic Mysticism (al-tasawwuf al-islami) which began to dominate the study of Sufism in the middle of the 20th century in Egyptian historiography. For more on the subject see a similar text by Said ‘abd al-Fattah, Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi: Shaykh wa-Tariqa [Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi, Shaykh and Path]. Abd al-Fattah has similar objectives and
religious practices sanctioned by the ‘ulama at the mosque conflicted with al-Azhar’s mainstreaming practices in the 1890s. In the 1890s al-Azhar (under the leadership of Muhammad Abduh) crafted “Egyptian” reforms to cleanse the country (side) of the multiplicity of religious expression. The following discussion shows that after a large scale transformation to the existing educational system in place at al-Azhar, similar transformations occurred at the local level in Tanta. The bureaucratization of the Sufi orders and the placement of Delta grown Azhari trained intellectuals facilitated this process. The period(1890s-1907) under study witnessed increased elite collaboration and student consent to these mainstreaming efforts as al-Azhar became under the jurisdiction of the Egyptian government and subject to governmental reform. Similarly, this chapter will also show that as some members of the elites embraced the Cairo-based form of Islam, heterodox practices amongst locals and pilgrims remained a dominant form of religious practice both inside and around the mosque/tomb complex.

The process of incorporation was only accomplished with the continual expansion of governmental control over many other religious institutions. This is evident in an examination of how the two central religious institutions in Tanta, the shrine of Ahmad al-Badawi and his mosque became absorbed into the national orbit under spiritual control by two Cairo-based

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548 Daniel Crecelius, “Egyptian Ulema and Modernization,” in Saints, Sufis and Scholars: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East, 192. Crecelius argues that Muhammad Abduh’s reforms were largely responsible for the rise of the Mufti of al-Azhar’s position as the leader of the Sunni religious community in the Muslim world. 549 Samira Haj, Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition, Reform, Rationality and Modernity, 100. Haj seeks to reconsider Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab’s position within Western historiography. Furthermore, the central project is to locate these two intellectuals within an Islamic intellectual tradition rather than as respondents to modernity emanating outward from Europe. However, I would argue that this author still sees the locus of the discourse of modernity as being dictated by Europeanization rather than looking beyond the metropole to so other “local” influences on his reforms. Abduh believed that certain practices and the existence of heterodoxy weakened his authority over the ‘ulama.
institutions- the High Council of Sufi Orders (known popularly as al-Turuq al-Sufiyya) and al-Azhar, particularly in light of the fact that the Egyptian government gave each institution control of different aspects of Islamic knowledge. ‘Ilm (knowledge that could be learned and applied) was under al-Azhar’s jurisdiction and ma’rifa (spiritual knowledge) belonged to the realm of the Sufi Orders. 550 Both institutions must be considered in this discussion because many of al-Azhar’s students, educators and graduates also adhered to spiritual philosophies associated with the Sufi Orders. Over the course of the second half of the 19th century, the practice we call Sufism underwent a more serious transformation than ever before, as it simultaneously became a department (High Council of Sufi Orders) of the government and became beholden to al-Azhar’s brand of Sunni Islam simultaneously. The promulgation and the official recognition of the High Council of Sufi Orders provided the necessary apparatus to ensure a specific form of religious expression sanctioned by Cairo. In an effort to create a modern bureaucratic religious system, educators who promoted learned knowledge (‘ilm) sought to differentiate themselves from backward shuyukh who promoted spiritual knowledge (ma’rifa) through guidance and apprenticeship. Thus, the creation of the High Council of Sufi Orders and the incorporation of the Ahmadi mosque was an attempt to force the Delta institution to adhere to the new system of administration.

Sufis saw their spiritual journey as an individual path (tariqa). 551 By the 18th century, a transformation in the organization and identity of Sufi practitioners promoted fraternal

550 Muhammad Ali attempted to garner control with the issuance of a firman in 1812 that separated ‘ilm from tasawwuf” or rational thought from mystical associations and made the al-Bakri family the supreme authority over the mystical orders and all of the institutions associated with them. This included shrines, mosques, the zawaya and takiyyat as well. The separation of the ‘ilm from the tasawwuf more importantly defined the power of al-Azhar as a separate institution with supreme intellectual authority which streamlined the intellectual tradition in Egypt and concurrently began the process of sidelining the religious and social authority of the Sufi orders. For more on this see De Jong, Turuq and Turuq Linked Institutions, (Leiden, Brill: 1978).
551 Sufism is defined as the esoteric, intimate and reciprocal relationship between an individual and the divine. For Sufis, the rituals of prayer, fasting during Ramadan and adherence to the Sunna is part of the exoteric expression of
brotherhoods as the dominant organizational force.\textsuperscript{552} Shifts in social organization and the decline of the guild system contributed to the transformation of the \textit{tariqa}. The term \textit{tariqa} that once defined the spiritual road of an individual mystic took on a multiplicity of meanings and including initiatory organizations or fraternal brotherhoods.\textsuperscript{553} The membership defined themselves and their journey in relationship to the philosophy of a Sufi master and quite often the defining practices of the \textit{tariqa} included the \textit{dhikr} or \textit{hadra} took place at the tomb of the master.\textsuperscript{554} Each \textit{tariqa} consisted of a leader or \textit{khalifa} with the authority to bestow membership and control the funds from the shrine. The dual use of the term \textit{tariqa/turuq} to refer to an individual adherent as well as fraternal order has thus created particular difficulty for historians who grapple with the social organization of Sufis.

Efforts to categorize the paths (\textit{turuq}) have resulted in confusion and an inappropriate separation of the Sufi orders from popular Islam. The practices of the brotherhoods were neither universal nor universalizing.\textsuperscript{555} There were (and are) a variety of models of social organizations of the Sufi orders. Orders-not centrally located in Cairo- such as the \textit{Bayumiyya} (part of the umbrella of brotherhoods that had Ahmad al-Badawi as their patron saint) did not necessarily adhere to strict group formations nor did they have a regimented style of prayer and

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\textsuperscript{554} Here I do not mean to claim that there was a “neo-Sufi movement” as was the dominant claim by scholars before the 1990s, but rather that there was a shift in organization. Anne d, \textit{Sufis and Scholars of the Sea, Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1925} (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 73.

\textsuperscript{555} Some orders, particularly the urban middle class orders based in Cairo, such as the \textit{Shadhiliyya} and the \textit{Naqshabandiyya} maintained clandestine fraternal ties amongst members who also shared social class or professional affiliation. For more on this see Spencer Trimingham, \textit{Sufi Orders in Islam} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 25.
These orders connected more fluidly into popular manifestations of Islam, particularly the central role of saint worship and a variety of practices that accompanied it. The codification of legitimate tariqa practices in the late 1890s separated acceptable religious practices associated with legally and publicly recognized orders from popular (unsanctioned) practices. The classification of legitimate tariqa practices has also shaped how the historian defines Sufism and popular religious practices as separate. Thus, the slippery terrain between the orders and popular Islam that has created a diverse cosmology in the Delta has neither been studied in great detail nor has it been understood historiographically as part of an intellectual continuum that defines aspects of Sufism as part of popular Islam rather than something separate and different.

**Ahmadiyya/Badawiyya: Order and Spiritual Identification**

The Ahmadiyya or Badawiyya (to avoid another tariqa with the same name) is the term used to refer to the devotees of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi as well as the administrators of his shrine in Tanta. In reality, it could connote anything related to the devotion of the saint. The Ahmadiyya/Badawiyya is also a fraternal order (tariqa) that shares a spiritual path dedicated to the philosophy of Ahmad al-Badawi and his miracles. Fractured and disparate tawa’if (sect or organization) associated with the Ahmadi tariqa exercised political and religious authority over Tanta and the many parts of the Nile Delta as well. The saint cult of Ahmad al-Badawi existed as part of the Ahmadiyya/Badawiyya, on the periphery of the brotherhood (tariqa), but...
also as part of a network of saint cults that shaped popular Islam throughout the Delta.\textsuperscript{560} Those who identified themselves as part of the Badawiyya “lacked any distinctive characteristics” associated with other Sufi orders such as the Shadhiliyya.\textsuperscript{561} Unlike other Sufi orders, the order did not have one tight ta’ifa, but was a large scale movement with which manifested in different ways at a variety of levels with Tanta as the center of the orders.\textsuperscript{562}

The Ahmadiyya/Badawiyya and Delta religious formations raise important questions for the study of the turuq in Egypt. The Ahmadiyya/Badawiyya tariqa was really an umbrella term that included a fraternal brotherhood, those who devoted themselves to Badawi (but not official members), and the litany of people who identified with the teachings of the saint. To participate within the Ahmadiyya religious sphere, official membership to a brotherhood was not required. Instead, devotion to the saint was the only requirement. Some argue that their unique character creates a “problematic phenomenon which to theorize.”\textsuperscript{563} This is an understandable response from a Cairo-based vantage point dictated by a construction of turuq based on official membership of the High Council of Sufi Orders and belief that the term tariqa only meant fraternal brotherhood. However, explorations of turuq outside of Cairo illustrate Cairo’s unique character in Egypt rather than its normative status. Further, imprisoning the turuq into national rather than regional or supra-national boundaries ignores the essential nature of movement and migration amongst many Sufi mystics. Importantly, with regard to the case of Delta religious organization, the Ahmadiyya was spiritually and physically located in the Egyptian Delta with a

\textsuperscript{560} Ibrahim Dissuqi, a native of the Delta, was the founder of a similar group of orders that were originally called the Ibrahamiyya, but later the Dissuqiyya. In the 19th century, the veneration of Ibrahim al-Dissuqi appeared almost as frequently as Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi. For example, Shaykha Sabah, at one time had a takiyya in Dissuq (the home-base of the Dissuqiyya) and identified as a devotee of both Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi and Ibrahim al-Dissuqi. This information is found both on display in her mosque above her grave (photographed by the author), but also in biographies as well.

\textsuperscript{561} Tringham, \textit{The Sufi Orders in Islam}, 79.

\textsuperscript{562} Winter, \textit{Society and Religion in Ottoman Egypt: The Writings of ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha’rani}, 80.

\textsuperscript{563} Edward Reeves, “Power, Resistance and the Cult of Muslim Saints in a Northern Delta Town,” \textit{American Ethnologists}. The Cairo-based Sufi orders adhered to a more formal structure than the Delta orders.
limited following beyond those geographic parameters. The *Ahmadiyya* was typical of the Egyptian Delta Sufi formation while dissimilar to Cairo-based Sufi Order that adhered to a regimented social structure that demarcated popular Islam from the Sufi orders.\(^{564}\) The *Ahmadiyya* and similar orders in the Delta challenge standard historiographical characterizations of the Egyptian *turuq* during the nineteenth-century by showing that membership in a fraternal order was not the dominant formation of Sufi practice. Rather, Popular Islam is best understood as gradations of Sufi practices operating in an overlapping sphere of saint worship and official membership to an order instead of something separate and distinct.

The worship of the second most venerated saint in the Delta, Ibrahim al-Dissuqi, often dove tailed with the worship of Ahmad al-Badawi.\(^{565}\) Ibrahim al-Dissuqi, a local from the town of Dissuq in the province of Gharbiyya, was a student and devotee of Ahmad al-Badawi during his lifetime as well as after his death.\(^{566}\) His *tariqa*, the *Burhamiyya* follows complex social and religious lines that span from an organized core of *muridin* (followers) to popular saint worship at his *mulid*.\(^{567}\) Although the *Burhamiyya* is a separate order and is largely dedicated to the spiritual path of Ibrahim Dissuqi, like Ibrahim Dissuqi many of his followers are also devotees of Ahmad al-Badawi. Keepers of the shrine of Ahmad al-Badawi, members of a particular *tariqa* associated with the dead saint and the saint veneration of Ibrahim al-Dissuqi and Ahmad al-Badawi comprised a particular brand of religious practice that permeated socially.\(^{568}\) Tanta was the center of this complex cosmology that defined this Delta religious system and the hub for a


\(^{568}\) De Jong, *Turuq and Turuq Linked Institutions*, 58-59. Shaykha Sabah whom I discussed in chapter two, the famed female saint from Tanta, considered herself a devotee of both saints. She initially opened a *takiyya* in Dissuq as well as Tanta, but she eventually settled in Tanta. and made it her home.
massive network of complex relationships with Ahmad al-Badawī at the top of a vast hierarchy of saints, devotees and scholars.

**High Council of Sufi Orders: Legitimating the Ahmadiyya/Badawiyya**

In 1892, the Egyptian viceroy ʿAbbas Hilmi II named Shaykh M. Tawfiq al-Bakri the leader (*mashayikh al-shuyukh*) of the Sufi Orders in an increased effort started by Muhammad Ali to assert authority over the brotherhoods.\(^{569}\) M. Tawfiq inherited this position from his father Ali al-Bakri and retained all titles bestowed upon his father.\(^{570}\) Abbas Hilmi II made al-Bakri’s position official by giving him the hereditary title of lead *shaykh* (*mashayikh al-shuyukh*), approved by the Ottoman Sultan himself.\(^{571}\) The newly created position gave the al-Bakri family legal and administrative authority over the Sufi Brotherhoods and resulted in the creation of the High Council of Sufi Orders as well as gave al-Bakri a position in parliament.\(^{572}\) The High Council of Sufi Orders consisted of a lead *shaykh* (initially occupied by the al-Bakri family) and a council of four *shuyukh* from the recognized Sufi Orders and was subject to report finances as well as anything related to the orders to the ministry of religious endowments.\(^{573}\) The resulting organization had a number of official functions.\(^{574}\) It mediated inter-order issues; controlled religious endowments associated with shrines and the *mawalid* and also regulated orthodoxy.\(^{575}\)

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\(^{569}\) UNL/DWQ, M.T. al-Bakri, Letter to M.T al-Bakri asserting the hereditary nature of his position as the head of the Sufi orders, Reel 287.

\(^{570}\) UNL/DWQ, M.T. al-Bakri, Reel 287. in 1884/1303 h., the appellate court recognized the hereditary nature of Ali al-Bakri’s title “aga al-habashi” and bestowed the title onto his son M. Tawfiq al-Bakri.

\(^{571}\) UNL/DWQ, M.T. al-Bakri, Reel 287, Letter from the Majlis al-Ahkam to M. Tawfiq al-Bakri, date unknown. - Abbas Hilmi II bestowed him with the title *aga al-khanbashi*, passing the title to Muhammad Tawfiq with the same title as his father. The document was signed by a Muhammad Bakbashi and witnessed by four men.

\(^{572}\) UNL/DWQ, M.T. al-Bakri, Reel 287, Letter written to M.Tawfiq al-Bakri, 1892.

\(^{573}\) UNL/DWQ, M.T. al-Bakri, Reel 287, personal notes regarding the structure of the High Council found among his personal papers, date unknown.

\(^{574}\) *La’hiat al-Turuq al-Sufiyya [Laws of the Sufi Orders],”* 17 June 1895, *al-Wafa’i al-Misriyya*.

\(^{575}\) Religious orthodoxy increasingly became defined by what aspects of Islam should be excluded rather than a set group of definitions that asserted what was permissible. A series of rules and regulations mapped out by the High Council and the law making bodies at al-Azhar became the authority to define orthodoxy by the end of the 19th century.
The greatest success of the High Council was that socially, the Sufi Orders recognized Bakri’s authority to mediate disputes between them. Only a select group of legally recognized orders could join the High Council. The High Council only invited orders with economic and social power to participate. Orders joined mostly because of the loss of economic power that took away financial control from the orders and put the funds under the control of department of religious endowments. For the Ahmadiyya, their rich economic power came from a number of sources. The mulid and alms from pilgrims created revenue for the upkeep of the mosque and institutions associated with it. Consumers travelling from throughout the region brought revenue by spending money at the merchants’ stalls as well. Income also came from long existing religious endowments and donations from pilgrims visiting the shrine throughout the year.

Still, their acceptance into the High Council was essential to their survival. By joining the High Council, the Ahmadiyya enjoyed economic benefits that strengthened their economic and social power on the ground. One of the major benefits of joining the council and recognizing the supreme authority of the al-Bakri family was that all officially recognized orders received funding for the mawalid. For the Ahmadiyya, the additional funds would help to expand the prosperity of the lucrative event. By accepting their position as part of a group of legally recognized orders and promoting a legally recognized form of practice, the Ahmadiyya could expand their economic base in Tanta.

By 1895 and a few years after its official creation, the High Council of Sufi Orders enacted laws that clearly defined the practice of the orders. In 1905, the council revised the initial bi-laws that established the legally sanctioned practices of the orders and inter-order

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576 UNL/DWQ, M.T. al-Bakri, Reel 287, Official Document marked with the seal of the Khedive Abbas Hilmi II recognizing the al-Bakri’s title as hereditary, 1892.

577 “Mulid al-Ahmadi [The Ahmadi Mulid],” al-Sayha, 10 April 1903. The article discusses the particular devastation that accompanied the periodic banning of the mulid because of Cholera outbreaks.
relations. These regulations were known as *al-la’iha al-dakhiliyya li-l-turuq sufiyya* [The Internal List/Set of laws the Sufi Brotherhoods].\(^{578}\) This set of laws clearly defined all legal and illegal practices of the member orders and demanded that the *khalifa* of any given order, monitor and maintain regular relations with the membership.\(^{579}\) The orders were also required to ensure that no unsanctioned practices occur at the *mawalid*. These provisions for members, rituals and guidelines crafted a universalizing brand of Sufi practices that specifically diminished individual *shuyukh*’s power and the individual autonomy of each order. The official enactment of laws that provided a legal definition of what the orders could do followed by the reissuing of these laws illustrated that unsanctioned practices continued to exist. As a result, the High Council attempted to also control the orders at the administrative level.

The new laws not only controlled the Sufi orders at a national administrative level, but also shaped and dictated the devotional aspects of the order. The laws banned self-flagellation and walking on coals (long associated with the Ahmadi Orders) as well as proselytizing to young men and women.\(^{580}\) By designating what practices could be done and who was allowed to become members of individual orders, the High Council could fundamentally change the position of the orders within society. The *khalifa* of a given order no longer wielded ultimate control over admission to the order. Admission was based on adherence to a body of law that governed all of the orders and any *khalifa* who was found to be promoting or engaging in unsanctioned practices could be removed by the council. These new parameters determined when a male was of the appropriate age and mental stature to join the order. Women and young

\(^{578}\) De Jong, *Turuq and Turuq Linked Institutions*, appendix, IV. The translated appendices largely come from the private papers of M. Tawfiq al-Bakri. UNL/DWQ, M.T. al-Bakri, Reel 287, for the Prime Minister from the Minister of War, Mustafa Fahmi 16 June 1895/ 23 Dhu al-Hijja...  


\(^{580}\) ULD/DWQ, M.T. al-Bakri, Reel 287, for the Prime Minister from the Minister of War, Mustafa Fahmi 16 June 1895/ 23 Dhu al-Hijja.
boys could no longer participate officially in Sufi practice. By banning specific people and demarcating the mosque/shrine as orthodox space, the High Council of Sufi orders attempted to disentangle unsanctioned popular Islam from the Sufi orders and turn a self-regulating body into a centrally controlled entity. However, the fluid, highly eclectic religious system that revolved physically around the mosque in Tanta was the dominant form of both religious and social formation in the Egyptian Delta. By no means was it the only form of religious practice, but it was the most represented in the public space. The existence of this elaborate system and its persistence illustrates that the Cairo-based institutions were only partially successful in incorporating Delta institutions.

**Al-Azhar and the Cairo ‘Ulama**

Egyptian ‘ulama occupied an important religious and social position in society. Socially, the ‘ulama acted as moral purveyors and dictated the parameters of ethical public behavior. Thus, merely attempting to control the Ahmadiyya Sufi Order alone was not enough to guarantee a transformation in religious practice in Tanta. By enlisting those with a pedigree that was sealed with an al-Azhar education, a more comprehensive system of incorporation was possible. Imposing individuals who were actively engaged in reforming Islamic law, education and practice could aid in Tanta’s religious transformation. Increasingly, by the end of the nineteenth-century, al-Azhar’s ‘ulama positioned themselves as the ethical barometer by which propriety of practices and teachings was measure. In the late 1890s as al-Azhar established itself as the beacon of Islam and began to transform Delta religious institutions into satellites.

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581 It is clear that women and young boys continued to participate with and engage with the orders, but not as official members. Muhammad ‘abd al-Jawad, *Hayat Mujawir fi-l-Jami’ al-Ahmadi [(Student) Life around the Ahmadi Mosque]* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, 1947). Implied in the title is “student” life around the Ahmadi mosque. According to Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic 4th edition*, ed. J. Milton Cowen (Ithaca: Spoken Languages Services, 1994) the word mujawir implies student life around the mosque. He gives the example of students “in the vicinity of al-Azhar, 174.” ‘Abd al-Jawad reported that an unnamed woman who was a Sufi singer (munshid) was meeting with a shaykh and he heard her singing verses in Quran through a curtain.

Historically, al-Azhar enjoyed relative autonomy and remained free of Egyptian governmental intervention until the mid-nineteenth century when Khedive Isma'il linked it to the Egyptian government. Previously, the institution had exercised control in religious matters, but the legitimacy of the leadership sometimes came into question. Between the 1870s and 1890s, there were a number of debates about the legitimacy of the authority of al-Azhar. In 1872, the grand mufti of al-Azhar was subjected to a public examination and questioned regarding his knowledge. Four shuyukh and two representatives from the government administered and judged the examination. They concluded that he passed that he had the legitimate authority over al-Azhar and al-Azhar had legitimate authority over Egypt’s ‘ulama.

The public examination of the shaykh illustrated that the position of the mufti of al-Azhar increasingly became a government position. The judges who examined the shaykh illustrated that the government attempted to craft consensus among the shuyukh at al-Azhar and that government attempted to assert the legitimacy of the position of the shaykh al-Azhar by publically making him take an examination to assert his authority. By identifying a supreme shaykh and by having the ‘ulama at al-Azhar espouse a specific form of orthodoxy that controlled the rabble in the public space, the government in conjunction with members of al-Azhar were able to establish that the institution was the center of Islamic learning in Egypt. However, al-Azhar’s position did not remain unquestioned or unchanged. In 1890, Shaykh

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583 In 1882, the Ministry of Interior acknowledged and sanctioned the employment of Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Imbabi, the Shafi‘i scholar, as the grand mufti and member of the ‘ulamaal-azhar. The position was sanctioned and recognized by the Egyptian government and like other bureaucracies in the government; Imbabi became a government employee (albeit with relative autonomy). BLA, The private papers of Shaykh Hussaynan Muhammad Ali al-Makhluf al-Abawi al-Azhari, Correspondence between the ministry of interior and al-Azhar, recieved by the Ministry of Interior, 2 Rabi‘ al-Thani, 1304/ 10 January 1885. Hussaynan Muhammad Ali al-Makhluf al-Abawi al-Azhari was born in Bab al-Fatuh in 1890 and studied at the Ahmadi Mosque in Tanta, he learned the Quran at age ten, he received an al-Azhar degree and by 1916 he was a Shari‘a court judge in Qina.


585 Al-Azhar enjoyed periods during the 19th century where it was the supreme authority of Islam, but based on the public examination, a discussion about the role of the Zaytun mosque in Tunisia and competing regional institutions, it seems that al-Azhar’s authority waxed and waned.
Hussaynan al-Makhlufi noted in his memoir that there was a serious internal debate amongst the shuyukh as to whether the Zaytun mosque in Tunisia was in fact more influential in the region than al-Azhar.\textsuperscript{586} Thus, al-Azhar’s status was not merely guaranteed, but solidified by the fame of their graduates and ‘ulama who became increasingly engaged with notion of modern articulations of Islam versus “backwardness.”

The desire to create and disseminate an Azhar (rather than a diverse and conflicting) education resulted from both external and internal forces.\textsuperscript{587} Discussions about the nature of Islam and its relationship to modernity spawned debate, particularly the union between Sufism and popular Islam represented the core issue that created problems for Muslim countries.\textsuperscript{588} As Sufism came under attack, the legitimacy of ‘ulama at al-Azhar who had been actively engaged in “questionable Sufi practices” also came into question. A backlash against Sufism began to appear just as reformist tendencies in Islam took hold amongst the ‘ulama from al-Azhar. These intellectual trends occurred shortly after al-Azhar began to formalize its educational system in 1872. The university mosque became heavily influenced by the emerging modernist teachings of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, who taught there from 1871 to 1878. By the 1890s, a central library was established along with an infirmary and clinic for the students while intellectual trends pushed the university to adopt and disseminate one form of Islam.

\textsuperscript{587} BLA, The Private papers of Shaykh Hussaynan Muhammad Ali al-Makhluf al-Abawi al-Azhari, Memoir, “Qahira fi-1890 [Cairo in 1890].” The shaykh asserted in his memoir that the influx of English and French language schools had a major impact on the ‘ulama and propelled their desire to reform the institution and cleanse it of backward elements.
\textsuperscript{588} One of the greatest attacks against Sufism and its association with backwardness came from Muhammad abd-al Wahhab and the movement that became known as Wahhabism. The attack on the orders by a variety of sources all resembled each other in that they always asserted that the orders had an incredible stronghold over the population. Most often it came from people in positions of authority or those seeking authority over the masses. For more on the writings of Muhammad abd-al Wahhab, see Ahmad Dallal’s “The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought 1750-1850,” The Journal of American Orientalist Society 113, no.3 (1993): 341-359.
Historians and contemporaries attributed Al-Azhar’s transformation into Egypt’s sole center of Sunni Islam to the grand mufti Muhammad Abduh. The assumption that he was significant to the process is based on his role in bureaucratizing al-Azhar’s educational system. In 1895, Abduh helped to write a statute that created an administrative council of five *shuyukh* that included the grand Mufti of al-Azhar along with four advisory *shuyukh*. This council had administrative and advisory powers that established al-Azhar as the highest educational institution of Islam in Egypt. The government added two representatives to the council and defined the bond between al-Azhar and the Egyptian government in a new way. The legislation made the *‘ulama* and Egyptian government recognize the Shaykh of al-Azhar as the head of al-Azhar and the al-Azhar educational system. By al-Azhar relinquishing some of its autonomy, it was able to use its influence as part of the government to extend its authority outward from Cairo. In that same year (1895), the Ahmadi mosque as well as the *madaris* in Dumyat and Dissuq became linked to the al-Azhar system.

The incorporation of the Delta institutions dovetailed al-Azhar’s economic relationship with the Egyptian government. With the decline of private contributions and the rise of government assistance, al-Azhar in many ways became financially dependent on the government.

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590 "Tala’ab fi-Jawami’ Misriyya [Students in Egyptian Mosques],” *al-Hilal*, 25 January 1907.
591 *al-Hilal* reported that a council was created in 1312/ 1894 to assert al-Azhar’s supreme authority (Majlis al-Idara al-Azhar), 139.
592 This was not a process that was entirely easy. In 1895, there was an intense battle over al-Azhar’s authority and it centered on whether or not al-Azhar was more influential than the Zaytun mosque in Tunisia. Rather, it wasn’t inherently true or readily accepted that al-Azhar was the supreme authority on Sunni Islam. BLA, Private Papers of Hussaynan al-Makhluf, “The Battle Over al-Azhar’s Authority,” in his memoir. Edward Reeves has made the argument that Tanta is ruled by a Hidden Government, one that is dictated by saint worship and the keepers of these shrines. For more on this topic please see Edward Reeves, *The Hidden Government*.
593 This is very well known and has been discussed in both primary and secondary sources. For more on this topic see Wahbi’s *Encyclopedia of the Delta*, 574; or for a first-hand account of a student see Muhammad ‘abd al-Jawad, *Hayat Mujawir fi al-Jami` al-Ahmadi [Life around the Ahmadi Mosque]*. This autobiography figures prominently in the chapter because it is the first hand account of a student who attended the mosque in the 1890s. This memoir recounts his experience and the experience of his friends as poor rural boys coming to Tanta and studying at the mosque.
for support. In 1895, the Egyptian government officially put the ‘ulama of al-Azhar on their payroll and doled out a salary to the shuyukh of the institution. The incorporation of the al-Azhar ‘ulama into the Egyptian governmental payroll coincided with the first real push to incorporate the Delta institutions into the educational system. The economic strength of the Ahmadi mosque would provide al-Azhar with much needed funds. Furthermore, the Egyptian government’s new control over al-Azhar could serve as a proxy to gain more administrative control over Tanta. Economic factors weighed heavily on the merger between the two institutions, but intellectual trends also played an important role.

Al-Azhar’s interest in establishing satellite institutions, particularly incorporating the Ahmadi institute into the al-Azhar system was not merely a function of changing intellectual currents in Egypt, but based in many ways on the personal experience of people like Muhammad Abduh. He came from the Egyptian Delta and had an intimate intellectual connection with the Ahmadi mosque. Abduh hailed from the Delta village of Mahallat Nasr in the district of Shubrakhut in the province of Buhayra. Similar to many boys of his time, Abduh started his religious education in his village amongst his father and mother and local ‘ulama who taught him to recite the Quran. Muhammad Abduh took the train with his father and moved to Tanta to

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595 The closer economic and administrative ties to the government did not necessarily make the shuyukh of al-Azhar fast friends with the government. In the 1890s, a member of the ‘ulama resigned because the Khedive demanded that he tell Muslims not to make Hajj because of the threat of cholera. He refused and resigned angrily believing that the government had no right to exert this type of political pressure on the shuyukh of al-Azhar. The ‘ulama also protested the government’s transformation of the court system that quite often sidelined Shari’a courts and the ‘ulama who oversaw the Islamic courts. Rifaat Abdul-Reda Dika, “Islamic Traditions in Modern Politics: The Case of al-Azhar in Egypt: A Historical study of Culture and Social Structure” (PhD Dissertation, Wayne State University, 1990).
597 Rida, *Tarikh al-Ustadh al-Imam al-Shaykh Muhammad Abduh 1849, 21*. Rida’s representation of Abduh’s experience reflects his great disdain for Delta articulations of Islam, particularly his belief in its backwardness and limited value in terms of education. As with many of Rida’s writings, his representation of what Muhammad Abduh experienced is largely based on his own experience and it is difficult to truly know what Muhammad Abduh believed about the Ahmadi mosque and his education there from this source.
be educated at the mosque in 1279 h/1862. Within three years at the mosque, he was placed on the track to become a religious scholar. He left this position to return to his village and marry in 1282 h/1865. After finally completing his studies, he then moved to Tripoli, (today) Lebanon for a brief period of time and studied with Shaykh Muhammad Madani (a local and influential Shadhili shaykh). Muhammad Abduh was merely one of many students who would was trained in both Tanta and al-Azhar and would go on to serve in the government.

Another individual was the politician, intellectual and jurist ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Fahmi also attended the Ahmadi mosque in Tanta (1870-3 to 1951). He was part of the family of the ‘umda of the village of Kafr al-Masayliha. He attended a kuttab in his village and then began secondary education at the Ahmadi Institute. He transferred to a Khedival school in 1885 and eventually earned a certificate from the School of Administration. He became part of the Egyptian bureaucracy and worked as part of the Niyaba in a number of provincial cities including Tanta and Naj al-Hamati (Nagahamati). Like many bright rural boys he came to the Ahmadi mosque after attending a local kuttab and then ended his intellectual career al-Azhar (1869-1877). Abduh and Fahmi shared an education experience that dominated during the 19th century- early education in a kuttab followed by my regimented training in a regional mosque. Both of these students benefitted from education in a variety of venues. When the Ahmadi mosque became linked to al-Azhar the educational experiences of Abduh and Fahmi gave way to a more homogenous system.

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600 Goldschmidt, Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt, 49.
601 Abd al-‘Aziz Fahmi, Hadhihi Hayati [This is My Life] (Cairo, Kitab al-Hilal, 1963).
602 Goldschmidt, Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt, 38.
The Ahmadi Mosque in the Age of Azhar transformations

The Ahmadi mosque was the “greatest center of religious culture in Egypt outside of al-Azhar” and underwent physical and intellectual transformations during the second half of the 19th century. Abbas Hilmi I expanded Ali Bey’s renovation projects and transformed the mosque. Understanding the significance of the saint in the identity of the city, he used the renovation of the mosque to ingratiate himself into the cultural and social life of Tanta. During the reign of his successor, Khedive Isma’il recognized the mosque’s significance as the most influential institution in the Delta and continued previous attempts to link it to al-Azhar. By incorporating the mosque and Ahmadi system into al-Azhar, the Egyptian government could transform how the masses used public spaces in Tanta and further promote the government’s efforts to modernize the city. Furthermore, having the patron saint, his administration and the elites associated with the mosque comply with governmental efforts would make modernization easier.

In an effort to further link the two institutions Abbas Hilmi II officially established the Ahmadi Institute as a section of al-Azhar in 1913. The khedive’s family dedicated the land to move the center of education from the actual mosque to a separate building adjacent to the train

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604 Ali Bey was born to a Christian family in Western Georgia and taken hostage by the Ottomans who converted him to Islam in 1741 and sold into slavery in 1743 in Cairo. He joined the Mamluk corps and rose to the position of Shaykh al-Balad in 1760. He deposed the Ottoman governor in 1768 and engaged in military campaigns against the Hijaz and Bilad al-Sham (Modern day Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and parts of Jordan) and attempted to recreate the Egyptian Mamluk dynasty of the 16th century first created by the slaves of Genghis Khan. Some of his military refused to fight against the Ottomans and as a result he lost his position and was killed in Cairo in 1772. Most of what we know about him and Egypt in his period generally comes from the very famous and widely cited al-Jabarti’s Chronicles. For more on the Mamluks see Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Cairo of the Mamluks (New York: AUC Press, 2008), 230; also Afaf Lufti Sayyid Marsot, A History of Egypt from Arab Conquest to the Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 57-59.
605 Amin, Taqvim al-Nil, vol. 3, 45. This text is a group of compiled primary sources from each of Egypt’s leaders during the 19th century. This volume covers the reign of Abbas Hilmi I.
606 Mubarak, al-Khitat, 76.
station. The move of the institute physically separated potential scholars from the unsanctioned and religiously dangerous events at the mosque. However, between the 1890s and 1910s, when the education of boys remained part of the mosque, the institute remained part of the mosque, but underwent a period of change and absorption into the al-Azhar system.

**Under the Rectorship of Zawahiri**

In the 1890s, the rector of the Ahmadi mosque, Ibrahim al-Zawahiri was greatly influential in facilitating the transition to an Azhar system. His greatest contribution to this process was the transformation of the educational wing of the mosque. The school witnessed an overall transformation in curriculum (1896-1908/ 1312-1325h.). He was an al-Azhar trained Shadhili ‘alim from an elite landed family of planters from the Sharqiyya province. Like so many ‘ulama that started their education in the Egyptian Delta, Zawahiri memorized the Quran at a kuttab in his home town and then transferred to the Ahmadi mosque after he had mastered memorization and recitation. He ended his academic career at al-Azhar. In 1865, he received an ijaza that granted him permission to teach and transmit knowledge.

Debates about the nature and role of the ‘ulama at the Ahmadi mosque and their responsibility to force one particular brand of Islam in the mosque resulted in a major split amongst the leadership of the Ahmadi mosque and the subsequent appointment of Ibrahim al-Zawahiri. In 1896, after the death of Shaykh Muhammad Muhammad al-Imam al-Qasabi, Ibrahim Zawahiri ascended to the position of rector of the mosque (displacing the local rectors’

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607 Amin, *Taqwim al-Nil*, vol. 3, 47.
608 Wahbi, *Encyclopedia of the Delta*, 578-579. In 1913, his son Muhammad al-Zawahiri al-Ahmadi took the leadership of the mosque (he eventually became the rector of al-Azhar in 1929). Ibrahim is also the great-grandfather of Ayman Zawahiri of recent infamy. Muhammad ‘abd al-Jawad, *Hayat Mujawir fi-l-Jami’ al-Ahmadi [Life around the Ahmadi Mosque]*, 97. This text is both central and seminal to this chapter because this large volume is a biography written as an adult by a former student of the Ahmadi mosque during its period of incorporation into the al-Azhar system at the end of the 19th century.
son) which he held until his death in 1908. Many of the ‘ulama stood behind the candidacy of the local shaykh Muhammad al-Qasabi, but others who desired a union with al-Azhar backed Zawahiri. The feud between the two parties was so heated that Abbas Hilmi II stepped in and through the council of al-Azhar appointed Zawahiri. The government and al-Azhar joined forces to impose al-Zawahiri to achieve their individual aims. The former rector al-Qasibi was a known nationalist and very outspoken against the British occupation and the Egyptian government. Zawahiri’s placement guaranteed stronger ties with al-Azhar.

The position granted Zawahiri economic power and he became the supervisor of the sunduq al-nudhur in accordance with the laws that separated the Sufi order from administration of the mosque, put forward by the High Council of Sufi Orders. The newly established laws removed economic control of the mosque from the khalifa of the order and gave it to the new rector. In 1898, he clearly mapped out how the mosque’s collected funds would be dispersed. A large portion of the money went to education. Only 18% of the total funds went to the khalifa, 33% to the institute, 20% to the teachers of the Quran and 20% to the employees of the mosque, and 9% for upkeep. Over 50% of the money received by the mosque went to education. The boys earned money by baking bread and selling it to the pilgrims to supplement costs and contribute economically to their education. Shifting administrative economic authority to Zawahiri instead of the khalifa was an important step in incorporating the educational branch

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611 Abd al-Jawad, Hayat Mujawir fi-l-Jami’ al-Ahmadi [Life around the Ahmadi Mosque], 97.
614 Wahbi notes the former rector shared a close relationship with Saad Zaghloul, the famous Egyptian nationalist. A mosque was built for the former rector al-Qasabi and his family and his tomb became a site of visiting and pilgrimage.
615 De Jong asserts that this was done without the consent of the leadership of the shrine and led to conflict between the rector of the mosque and the keepers of the shrine.
616 Wahbi, Encyclopedia of the Delta, 575.
617 BLA, Diwan al-Mahasibiyaa, Sunduq al-Nudhur bi-Masjid al-Ahmadi [The Purse (funds) of the Ahmadi Mosque], 1898. The percentages remained the same for 30 years according to the source.
618 Abd al-Jawad, Hayat Mujawir fi-al-Jami’ al-Ahmadi.
into al-Azhar and displaced the *khalifa* and Sufi order’s economic control of the institution. Placing control of the funds in the hands of the rector provided the economic basis to transform the educational system. Incorporating the mosque into the al-Azhar system would guarantee control of the minds and the funds of the mosque. It was of so much importance that on 8 May 1890, *al-Ahram* reported that Muhammad Abduh met with shuyukh from al-Azhar to discuss the shrines, brotherhood and mosque as well as the funds associated with them.\(^{619}\) Bringing the Ahmadi mosque into the fold of al-Azhar would provide substantial funds and therefore the interest in the mosque was not merely theological, but economic as well.

The principle way to incorporate the mosque into al-Azhar’s educational system and mindset was through the curriculum. Zawahiri implemented a specific curriculum and transformed the educational experience to include a more regimented program. He used his family’s wealth and local prestige to establish an educational library with nearly 9,000 books and approximately 3500 manuscripts.\(^{620}\) Subjects of the texts included Hadith (in both Arabic and Persian), literature, Islamic Jurisprudence (Hanafi and Shafi’i schools), grammar, and religious commentary.\(^{621}\) The focus on Hanafi and Shafi’i jurisprudence was similar to al-Azhar’s focus since the vast majority of its scholars at the time were part of these two *madhabin*. The students learned *fiqh*, Sufi philosophies and the teachings of prominent scholars such as Hassan al-Attar and Shaykh Ahmad al-Darda.\(^{622}\) Again, by promoting the teaching of al-Attar, a former mufti of al-Azhar, students were for their potential future as university students at al-Azhar. The non-religious curriculum at the Ahmadi mosque included arithmetic, calligraphy or geography.

\(^{619}\) “Tanta,” *al-Ahram*, 8 May 1890.  
\(^{620}\) Yusuf Zaydan, *Fihris Makhtutat Dar al-Kutub bi-Tanta* [Index of the manuscripts of Dar al-Kutub in Tanta], (Ma’had Makhtutat Arabiyya: Cairo, 2001). Zaydan catalogued the books and manuscripts once housed in the Ahmadi Institute’s Library before they were moved to the main library at al-Azhar.  
However, many of the students also went to the zawiya of Shaykh al-Qasabi to learn calligraphy and attended the government school to learn arithmetic. The shuyukh of the Ahmadi mosque crafted a religious education based on an apprenticeship model that privileged intimate exchanges of dialogue and discussion. This remained close to the dominant way in which Sufi institutions functioned as apprenticeship programs with a variety of learned scholars in various fields to make a more holistic education. The al-Azhar riwaq model fit in nicely with the apprenticeship style of education which continued to promote intimate exchanges between shuyukh and students. The boys educational experience was based on the idea that they remained closely associated to one shaykh initially. The final step in the student’s educational relationship with the shaykh was the issuance of an ijaza or certificate to authenticate the student’s knowledge.

During the 19th century, the ijaza reflected a period of incorporation, while maintaining individual poetic and artistic style. For example, the Ahmadi ijaza of 1873 named and authenticated the recognized leader of the Ahmadi tariqa and reflected early manifestations of the bureaucratic turn of the late 19th century. Authentication seals accompanied witness signatures and publicly asserted the new authority of the individual. Stylistically the Ahmadi ijaza reflects the regional character of the Ahmadi order and the unique nature of each order that existed prior

\[\text{\textsuperscript{623}}\] Shaykh al-Qasabi was a relative of the former rector of the mosque. Shaykh Sayyid Muhammad Muhammad al-Imam al-Qasabi (1883-1895), Wahbi, Encyclopedia of the Delta, 579. Qasabi’s biography also appears in Ali Mubarak’s al-Khitat, 74.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{624}}\] “Talaba fi-Jawam’ Misriyya [Students in Egyptian Mosques],” al-Hilal, 25 January 1907.

to the period of homogenization of the late nineteenth century. The nearly thirty foot long document, hand painted in orange, green and blue, depicted a number of images throughout that reflected the geographic and spiritual nature of the *Ahmadiyya*. The first image depicts the tomb of the late saint and asserts the Muslim declaration of faith (*shahada*). Three orange spheres transformed from blue depicted the cycle of night to day. Painted within the three circles are the words, “May God protect this order” followed by “by the authority of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi,” and finally “the presence of God envelops him.” The second image is of the pulpit in the mosque and hanging from the pulpit are two flags that assert that Muhammad is the messenger of God. The dual images intentionally illustrated the fundamental beliefs of the order, the declaration of Muhammad as prophet and the sanctity and spiritual significance of Ahmad al-Badawi. The final image that introduces the document is an abstract image of the Nile Delta set above the ninety-nine names of God. The Nile’s tributaries sit amidst green fields. The imagery illustrated the close connection between the land, the order and the saint.

Intellectually the *ijaza* established the legitimacy of the path and spiritual knowledge associated with Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi as legitimate spiritual lineage from the time of the prophet Muhammad. Ahmad al-Badawi is listed as a descendant of Ali ibn Abi Talib with the necessary ancestral chain that connects him and designates him as a member of the *Ashraf*. In order to establish the intellectual legitimacy of the saint, the *ijaza* asserted that Ahmad al-

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626 Michael Chamberlain notes that during medieval times, the *ijaza* took on a variety of forms and was not necessarily written down, but was rather, “the sign of authority that was transmitted within temporary social networks bound together by loyalties of service and love.” See Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 89. He cites and challenges the very famous article by George Makdisi which asserted a relationship between the *ijaza* system and European university system for more on this see George Makdisi, “Madrasa and University in the Middle Ages,” *Studia Islamica* 32 (1970): 255–264.

627 UNL, *Ijaza* bestowed upon the Shaykh Khalil Hamdi by the Shaykh Ahmad Effendi ibn Hajj ’abd al-Rahman (Shaykh and *fuqaha* of the *Wafa’iyya* Order) witnessed by six and dated 1858.

628 These highly individualized forms of *ijaza* would become a novelty and largely disappear around the end of the nineteenth-century. Rather, stamped documents that could be mass produced became the dominant form of certification and replaced the earlier art form of the *ijaza*. 
Badawi’s intellectual lineage traces back to al-Andalus (Andalusia) and the thinker Ibn-Arabi. Ibn-Arabi’s appearance on the *ijaza* provides spiritual and intellectual legitimacy of Ahmad al-Badawi as a *wali* or friend of God. Ibn Arabi famously coined the term *wali* to connote a contemplative saint and devotee of God, but never an intermediary. The spiritual link of Ahmad al-Badawi to the prophet’s family and the intellectual link to ‘ibn Arabi gave the saint and those who received an *ijaza* in his name legitimacy in matters of philosophy and religion. The saint’s association with these important figures was the basis for the special position of the recipients in Egyptian/Tanta society.

The intellectual and spiritual references to the prophet Muhammad and ‘ibn Arabi reflected a public acknowledgement of the necessary parameters to legitimate the practice and leadership of the Ahmadi brotherhoods. The existence of these parameters nearly forty-years before the modernist movement that would be led by Muhammad Abduh’s educational reform of Delta religious institutions problematizes the notion that Islamic modernism emerged out of a particular historical moment in which European colonialism pushed Muslims to reflect on the state of their religious affairs. Rather, this documents and the *ijaza* system generally illustrates that the Ahmadi (as well as other Sufi orders) had a sophisticated educational system that was co-opted in some regards and eradicated in others under the guise of creating a modern orthodox religious system during the 1890s. The new Ahmadi educational system masked the larger goal of streamlining power from Cairo and away from long established competing visions of

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629 Claude Addas, *Ibn Arabi: The Voyage of No Return* (London: Islamic Society Texts, 2000). This text traces ibn Arabi’s thought from his lifetime to the 19th century and shows how he made a resurgence as an intellectual in the 19th century. According to Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition* (New York-Suny Press, 1999), 21. The resurgence was part of a large movement of respect for great Islamic texts which also included the work of ibn Tamiyya.


631 For example, in the *ijaza* of Khalil Hamdi, it was said that he “sat on the rug” and essentially earned the right to be a member of the *tariqa* as his father had done before him.
Islamic orthodoxy. Further, the *ijaza* became an important way to establish that an ‘*alim* was truly a scholar with the credentials to support the claim.\(^{632}\)

The informal network of education included the transmission of knowledge (both *ma’rifah* and *’ilm*) as well as the physical space in which ideas were transmitted from teacher to student. Scholars, by the nature of their familiarity with specific topics and literacy, transmitted knowledge in a multitude of ways in multifaceted educational spaces. There were a number of educational spaces: the mosque, the *zawiya, takiyya, ribat* or *khanqa*.\(^{633}\) These institutions were not entirely easy to distinguish from one another because every space for Sufi practitioners was multi-functional as a spiritual, religious, social, living and educational space.\(^{634}\) With that said, each space had its own architectural and intellectual character based on the individuals who frequented the space and shaped the experience within the physical boundaries of that space.\(^{635}\) Within these spaces, ideas were transmitted from one intellectual to another through hours of recitation of the Quran, discussion, meditation and prayer. Once that student had mastered the materials proposed by his master, he was issued an *ijaza* which certified him as a legitimate transmitter of a particular body of knowledge. This system was generally informal, but widely practiced and the *ijaza* served as a way to legitimate the student as a scholar in a specific field.

At the Ahmadi mosque, there was a similar model for educating students, but in the late 19\(^{th}\) century, under Zawahiri, the educational model was amended to more closely resemble al-Azhar. Regular qualifying examinations and residence with a *shaykh* who was the primary

\(^{632}\) Abd al-Jawad notes in his autobiography that the *ijaza* became very important during his time at the mosque because some of the *shuyukh* did not have any form of documentation to assert their authority to teach others. ‘Abd al-Jawad, *Hayat Mujawir fi-l-Jami’ al-Ahmadi*, 34.

\(^{633}\) Sara Nimis “Scholars and Social Change: Education in the Zawiya in the 19\(^{th}\) Century,” presented at the Middle East Studies Annual Conference, November, 2010. For example, in the *ijaza* of Khalil Hamdi, it was said that he “sat on the rug” and essentially earned the right to be a member of the *tariqa* as his father had done before him. Julian Johansen, *Sufism and Islamic Reform in Egypt: The Battle for Islamic Tradition*, 246.


\(^{635}\) De Jong, *Turuq and Turuq Linked Institutions*, 125.
educator accompanied curriculum changes. Zawahiri appointed ‘ulama with a similar socio-economic and educational background as his own. Many of the ‘ulama that he appointed also graduated with degrees in religious sciences from al-Azhar. These Azhar trained elites held the highest positions within the institute. Wealthier, Azhar educated teachers worked with the students with the greatest promise of eventually attending al-Azhar. Those ‘ulama influenced by and within the same social class as Zawahiri created a system in which the students who came from the Tanta mosque had already been exposed to and embraced an al-Azhar educational style and curriculum.

After the reforms, shuyukh oversaw specific riwaq (residential college). These shuyukh were responsible for the students’ education, moral guidance and served as residential advisors to the boys who lived, studied and ate with these shuyukh. Individual shuyukh oversaw students in groups based on their hometown. According the Muhammad ‘Abd al-Jawad, a student from 1899-1909, students from each province remained together and studied under the supervision of one shaykh. Sayyid Muhammad ‘abd al-Rahim taught students from Gharbiyya, Shaykh Bayumi Abu Raya taught the boys from Minufiyya, Shaykh Santir Yusi for Sharqiyya and Shaykh Mursi Ali-Tabil for Bahayra and historically money came from each of the provinces to pay for and employ these teachers. Geographic boundaries also defined their intellectual boundaries as boys remained with others from the same province. With the funds of the mosque under the authority of Zawahiri, students could potentially reap the rewards of the

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637 Wahbi, Encyclopedia of the Delta, 574.
638 Residential College defines the function of the actual space, but a closer translation of the meaning of riwaq would be an arcade. Al-Jabarti, the great chronicler of Egyptian history during the Mamluk period and rise of Muhammad Ali, was one of these shuyukh in Cairo. In the translation of the Chronicle, the translator provides a brief biography of the scholar. For more on this topic see Al-Jabarti’s History of Egypt, ed. Jane Hathaway (Markus Princeton: Wiener, 2009), xix.
639 Abd al-Jawad, Hayat Mujawir fi-l-Jami’ al-Ahmadi, 23.
new designation of the money. Because, the High Council of Sufi Orders gave control of the funds to Zawahiri, he decided how individual students would benefit from the money. More pertinently, students who pleased him or adhered to his prescribed brand of Islam could reap the most economic rewards.

The academic school year started during the Muslim month of Shawwal and began with an inaugural lecture on *tafsir* by Shaykh Zawahiri who then proceeded to read the *Fataha* prayer in front of the tomb of Ahmad al-Badawi. The academic year did not end so clearly. Weather and the *mulid* often times interrupted the academic year with blistering heat in the summer and cold damp marshy winters. The *Rifa‘iyya, Shadhiliyya, Bayumiyya* and other *Ahmadiyya* orders used the space for *dhikr* and throughout the year for various festivals. The grand *mulid* which occurred at the end of October took up a period of about three to four weeks because of the concentration of pilgrims that camped both inside and outside of the mosque. When there was no holiday or special event that interrupted studies, the sun and five prayers set the order of the subjects studied. The most advanced or most zealous students woke up two hours before dawn. After dawn prayer advanced students studied *tafsir, hadith* and *tawhid*. The morning started off with *fiqh* and the afternoon ended with rhetoric and grammar. The afternoon was devoted to beginners and in the evening many boys joined the Sufis and participated in the *dhikr*. Although boys were not officially allowed to join the orders, they still remained within the orbit of the saint and his devotees. The mosque continued to function as a multifunctional space where diversity reigned rather than the streamline orthodox version of Islam promoted in Cairo.

The mosque was poorly lit, only by candle light and filled with commotion. There was a large staff that was in charge of the mosque’s upkeep: the *muezzin*, supervisors, housekeepers

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and a person in charge of refilling the oil lamps and cleaning the chandeliers. Several tombs flanked the large tomb of Ahmad al-Badawi and a constant stream of pilgrims visited the graves of the patron saint and pantheon of saints that surrounded him. These areas were not in any way separated from the educational space in which the boys studied.\textsuperscript{643} Constant commotion and movement occurred while the boys studied. In 1907, after the death of Zawahiri a wooden partition was placed to designate learning space. The physical separation of space was a further attempt by the Azhari minded leadership to create a separate orthodox sphere against the backdrop of heretical chaos in the mosque. These efforts were clearly not enough and eventually (1923) a free standing building was built next to the train station for the sole purpose of the Ahmadi institute which further separated the education of the students from the popular saint worship that dominated the mosque.\textsuperscript{644} The incorporation of the Ahmadi mosque into the Azhar system was not a minor event in the Delta. The process of integrating the mosque changed and shaped the cosmology of the entire Delta. By displacing the leadership that allowed the mosque to be used in multiple ways for many functions, the mosque lost many of the aspects that made it a region center of Islamic thought visited by scholars from throughout the region.

The Ahmadi Institute that became a satellite of al-Azhar in 1914 started off as a specially designated section for students of the mosque. The students bore a heavy burden for their families in their local villages because their education and the prestige associated with becoming an ‘alim brought local pride to the village or town as well as the individual family. These boys represented the best and brightest of the Egyptian Delta. Coming to Tanta for the first time was a shock for many boys who had never left their villages and certainly had never traveled to the big city by train. ‘Abd al-Jawad notes in his autobiography how he felt about Tanta when he

first arrived in 1899. He mentioned the foreign Society of African Missions and Sisters of Notre Dame who lived along the Ga’fariyyah province near the elder shuyukh of the Ahmadi mosque along with the gas and kerosene lamps and the existence of running water in most locations. He emphasized the constant stream of pilgrims that seemed to always be in the city and culminated during the great mulid. His alienation, social status and peasant rural upbringing also struck him as he and his father entered the mosque for the first time. He had never owned shoes before that day and had to use the front entrance for people who had to remove their shoes. Tanta stood in stark contrast to his village as a bustling urban center with literate and educated elites gathering to make use of the mosque. 645 Muhammad ‘abd al-Jawad’s depiction of his experience illustrated the migratory practices of people from the rural provinces and Tanta’s position as the hub for a diversity of religious practice.

The boys who entered the mosque-school received certification from the ‘umda of their town that proved mastery of the Quran - the minimum requirement to attend the mosque. This certificate was then presented to the Shaykh of the province of Gharbiyya who registered the boys’ names officially as students of the third degree in the mosque. After they had been officially registered with the governorate, they were educated and grouped according to their home of origin again in the mosque.646 The governmental bureaucracy that would come to dominate education began at the local level. All officials whether they be a rural ‘umda or a regional provincial bureaucrat were part of the system that tracked the movement of these peasant boys from their hometowns into the city.

The educational system replicated the experience of the rural kuttab because boys remained with students from their own province under the leadership of a mentoring shaykh.

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645 Abd al-Jawad, Hayat Mujawir fi-l-Jami’ al-Ahmadi, 35.
646 Abd al-Jawad, Hayat Mujawir fi-l-Jami’ al-Ahmadi, 98.
‘Abd-Jawad notes in his memoir that nearly every surrounding town and village was represented amongst the incoming class of new recruits. The boys were then expected to appear before the governorate annually to re-register and continue their education. If they did not appear, their names would be stricken from the record.\textsuperscript{647} The students ranged in age from 10 to 40 or 50 with most of them being poor teenage boys. The efforts to register every student and their birth place were part of the national effort to increase collaboration of institutions for religious education with the state’s efforts to track the general population. Students who may have remained relatively anonymous at the village level became part of a national educational system and entered an educational tract that would end with al-Azhar in Cairo. For the first time in their lives, their names and identities became property of the province. This information was then sent to Cairo and housed as part of the deluge of data collected by local bureaucrats.

Once the boys were registered, and grouped geographically they became students of the third degree. These boys received no privileges, one loaf of bread a day and had very little access to the revenues from the \textit{sunduq al-nudhur}.\textsuperscript{648} Students of the second degree received two loaves of bread, more revenues and students of the first degree enjoyed the largest ration of bread, the most access to revenues, the best housing and also a study space in the mosque. The degree system was based on a student’s time of study at the mosque, level of education, their academic achievement and adherence to will of the individual \textit{shaykh} who was designated to teach them. This system had major implications for the shaping of the intellect of each of these students because many of them were quite poor and alienated in Tanta. Urban elite residents sneered at the boys, mocked their clothing and were unsympathetic to their loneliness and

\textsuperscript{647} ‘Abd al-Jawad, \textit{Hayat Mujawir fi l-Jami’ al-Ahmadi}, 87.
\textsuperscript{648} De Jong, \textit{Turuq and Turuq Linked Institutions}, 86n. This fund referred to all of the money donated by the pilgrims to the shrine. Much of this money was discretionary and because the boys of the third degree were the lowest priority, they had little or no access to this money.
alienation. The boys slept on hard mats in the same space with their teacher. They had very little clothing, light and social activities and latrines were outside. Some boys attended the public baths. ‘Abd-Jawad noted that the son of the local elite Minshawi family verbally abused the students regularly. Boys who lived close enough or who came from more privileged families coped by returning home and bringing food from their mother to eat throughout the week. The students although mocked and abused in Tanta were loved and respected by locals in their towns and villages. These boys straddled a difficult terrain that confused and contradicted their early life experience. Their placement at the Ahmadi mosque resulted from their exceptional knowledge of the Quran, but when they arrived, elites merely saw them as poor, dirty and without shoes.

These boys were also subject to the will of the leadership of the mosque. The ‘ulama capitalized on the boys’ sense of morality and extended their duties beyond education. Boys were expected to police the mulid, reprimand pilgrims engaged in unacceptable practices and report them to the proper authorities. Students of the first degree were expected to morally patrol the mulid of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi alongside the provincial police force and monitor behavior of mulid goers who participated in unorthodox practices such as drinking, cross dressing, and dancing in the mosque. The students of the mosque increasingly became indoctrinated into a specific mindset that privileged a modernist interpretation of Islam that emanated out of al-Azhar and sanctioned and criticized local religious and social practice. Further, they began to internalize that the Ahmadi mosque needed reformation and the pilgrims who desecrated the space needed to be sanctioned. Policing the mulid, standing side-by-side with the police, the boys became proxies of the local bureaucracy whose supreme objective was to make the unruly rabble adhere to modernizing trends or abandon the public space altogether.
Policing the mosque and surrounding environment was an extension of the educational model that dominated during instruction.\textsuperscript{649} Tanta’s police department had been a presence at the \textit{mulid} since the 1880s.\textsuperscript{650} Their official function was to maintain order and not monitor the way that attendees used the space. Boys who were more impressionable were shielded from the \textit{bida’} (innovation) that took place during the days of the \textit{mulid} for fear that they would be intrigue[d] or (in the worst cases) participate in these unsanctioned practices. Pressure from the religious authority in Cairo to force the population to adhere to orthodox practices propelled the leadership of the mosque to use the students to show their piety and loyalty by reprimanding those that continued to use the mosque in both heretical and unorthodox ways. Thus, policing the \textit{mulid} became one of the many ways that the new Azhar inspired system displaced local practices and elites in favor of more bureaucratic control emanating out from the palace and al-Azhar mosque.

\textbf{Concluding Statements:}

Between the 1890s and the official annexation into al-Azhar system in 1914, the Ahmadi mosque (and eventually institute) witnessed massive attempts to streamline the curriculum and follow an al-Azhar dictated system. This process upset the existing elaborate educational system in the Delta that privileged the provincial urban mosque as the core of a web of educational and religious institutions. The intention of incorporating the Delta institutes into the al-Azhar system reflected the efforts to create a national Egyptian orthodox version of Islam that in many ways abandoned the Sufi Orders networking system generally. The intended outcome of this reform and the strengthening of the High Council of Sufi Orders reflected a general governmental effort to assert social authority over the population. The second or subsidiary motivation was to

\textsuperscript{650} "Tanta," \textit{al-Ahram}, 15 March 1882. The newspaper article asserted that the \textit{mulid} was celebrated in relative harmony even with the inaugural appearance of the police.
diminish the local/regional character of religious education, religious systems and erase the authority of local *shuyukh* who were both social and religious elites. The incorporation of the Ahmadî Institute into the Azhar system should be seen not only as the reform of a small regional education center on the periphery of Egyptian national education policy, but as central to a necessary historiographical shift which includes and privileges the role of the provincial cities and towns in shaping and informing educational reform. Shifting the intellectual and geographic paradigm which dominates Egyptian history in the 19th and early 20th century elucidates a more nuanced and rich representation of Egypt’s history. Focusing on provincial capitals and surrounding sub-urban and rural areas as nodes of inquiry enrich the history of the elaborate intellectual network system that informed, shaped and created Cairo’s position as a national and regional intellectual epicenter.
Conclusion: Tanta, the World and the Middle East

“The Delta is the heart of Egypt. It contains the bulk of the population. It has the most land, the richest soil and the biggest crops. It is more thickly settled than any other part of the world and it yields more per acre than any other part of the world.”651 The statement by Frank Carpenter, an American traveler in the Delta during 1907 rings true even now and most aptly articulates the significance of this study. Tanta was the largest provincial city in the most densely populated part of the Egyptian Delta in the most densely populated part of Egypt. Yet, until this study, this city has gone largely unnoted as a unit of study by historians in Egypt, the United States and Europe.

This dissertation has investigated the ways that individuals engaged one another in the public space in Tanta. It has argued that modernization and urbanization in Tanta accompanied similar efforts in Cairo and Alexandria. State interest in Tanta coincided with the global identification of Tanta as an epicenter of cholera. This reputation brought westerners into the city to help the afflicted looking for blessings from Ahmad al-Badawi-Tanta’s patron saint. Locally, Tanta had a complicated reputation that included both order and danger. The Egyptian-based press represented the city as a safe and ordered space where elite ideas about science and religion flourished, but in the pages of al-Ahram and al-Manar, the complex nature of social relationships emerged through a few sensational stories about Greeks, thieves and people who inappropriately participated in the mulid. Both the government and local elites worked together to combat Tanta’s dangerous elements through the establishment and expansion of modern institutions such as al-Azhar and the High Council of Sufi Orders.

Tanta and Transformations

This project has proposed shifting the core/periphery paradigm and has emphasized that Tanta rests amidst gradations of urban and rural space rather than a firmly planted provincial town in the midst of the rural Delta. I have shown that by exploring elite and governmental institutions that Tanta’s trajectory of modernization can enrich the study of Egypt by complicating Egyptian national histories that focus only on Cairo and Alexandria as urban zones and relegate the Delta and the South as rural spaces. Provincial elites (spiritual and landed) perceived themselves as part of a larger class of urban modern engaged intellectuals who actively participated in transforming their city into a place that reflected elite sensibilities. This dissertation has shown that the story of modern Egypt is multi-faceted and the history from the provinces complicates the national histories in many ways.

The study of Tanta also enriches the study of elite networks and shows how they engaged and related to one another. Elite alliances extended beyond the major cities and Tanta’s elites had strong ties with other members of their class outside of the city and throughout the region. Land equaled power and authority in Tanta and gave the landed elites access to engage and participate with the government in Cairo. The role of religious elites transformed over this period of modernization. The definition of religious orthodoxy mattered for the development of a consensus about the state of Islam and the role of Islamic education during the period under study. Elites also engaged with those outside of their social class. The story of modernization in Tanta was marked by a complicated terrain that sometimes resulted in class antagonism, but at other times collaboration.

**Historicizing Tanta in the Context of National History in Egypt**

The discussion of Tanta in its period of urban transformation will potentially transform the dominant national historical paradigm that has plagued Egyptian urban historiography.
Cairo-centricity in Egypt’s national history stems from a variety of sources. The way that the materials are collected and archived in (Cairo) Egypt means that most of the sources used for the crafting of history are about Cairo. Furthermore, the sheer lack of sources about many of provinces housed at the National Archive coupled with the difficulty in gaining access to the provincial archive has greatly shaped how Egypt’s modern history has been written.

Simultaneously, historians who seek to write histories about Egypt are faced with the mammoth task of selecting sources that are pertinent, most often the result is that sources from Cairo and Alexandria are used to speak about Egypt generally. Looking at Egypt’s history from the perspective of the provinces can only enrich and complicate Egyptian history. Furthermore, by using sources beyond Egypt and incorporating a global component, the history of Tanta will hopefully change the way in historians approach Egyptian history generally. Along those same lines, this dissertation sheds light on urban Middle Eastern history. The study of the city in the Middle East is quite often limited to a few urban centers and very few histories show the larger economic, social and cultural implications of smaller cities and their relationships to larger cities in the region. This dissertation asserts that Tanta rests in the midst of Egypt’s complicated geographic terrain and represents a contentious competing narrative from the one driven by Cairo-centric histories.

**Tanta and World History**

This dissertation has hopefully illustrated the importance of the macro/micro historical engagement in the field of World History. As this dissertation has shown, the world, particularly the global process of modernity, impacted each location in different ways, but more importantly that local particularities helped to create a unique brand of modernity. Furthermore, along these same lines, it has shown that the study of empire and capitalism emanating from Europe has
diminished the importance of local particularities in shaping the experience of westerners living in the empire. As this study has shown, Europeans and westerners had to negotiate on the ground in Tanta in an effort to gain entry with the city’s residents. This dissertation has shown that by looking at the experience of global western empire from the vantage point of Tanta, the British (military) occupation of Egypt was minimally experienced in Tanta. People in Tanta did not experience occupation through rank-and-file military personnel, but through Catholic and Protestant missionaries who were able to establish themselves because of the creation of a hospitable climate for westerners as a result of the occupation. It has shown (by shifting the periodization to focus on Tanta’s period of transformation) that the British occupation in many ways illustrates continuity in the experience of the residents of Tanta rather than modernization and incorporation projects existed well before the British came.

**Perspectives and Players**

This dissertation has approached the study of Tanta from a variety of perspectives in an effort to provide a portrait of social life in the city from 1856-1907. It looked at modern institutions, actors in those institutions, and the way that these actors and institutions engaged with the government and society in Tanta. The state and its efforts to include Tanta in its nationalization project have been central features to this study. Its allies and collaborators on the ground in Tanta and their engagement have also shaped the story of Tanta. Religious elites and local healers attempted to negotiate through this difficult terrain and carve out a zone where local traditions remained in conjunction with modernization projects. Finally, people who came to Tanta such as American and French Missionaries, Greek, Italian and Syrian small business owners and Egyptians from other parts of Egypt helped to shape and color the social landscape in Tanta.
Concluding Statements:

This dissertation has attempted to shift the perspective of Middle Eastern urban history and World history by looking at Egypt’s national history and position in the world through the lens of a provincial city. It has sought to inform the field of World History by using a micro/macrohistorical engagement model to illustrate the pervasiveness of global forces at the local level as well as showing how individual locations impact global factors such as the media and medical community. It has looked at a variety of ways in the global force of modernity engaged with local factors and shows that elites and the governments forged an alliance through the establishment and expansion of bureaucratic institutions. This dissertation has looked through bureaucratic institutions to understand how individuals both elite and ordinary shaped Tanta’s trajectory. Finally, this project has carved a small space for the city of Tanta within the larger framework of Egyptian history.
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