THE LONG 1890s IN EGYPT

Colonial Quiescence, Subterranean Resistance

EDITED BY
MARILYN BOOTH AND
ANTHONY GORMAN

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Paul Starkey was, until his retirement in 2012, Professor of Arabic and Head of the Arabic Department at Durham University, United Kingdom, and Co-Director of the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World. He is currently Vice-President of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies. Paul Starkey has published widely in the field of modern Arabic literature, as well as on Middle Eastern travel literature; he was co-editor of *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (1998) and author of *Modern Arabic Literature* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006). He has also translated several Arabic novels into English, including *Saladin and the Assassins* by Jurji Zaydan. He is currently working on a translation of *The Book of the Sultan's Seal* by Youssef Rakha and on a literary study of the Egyptian novelist Sun'Allah Ibrahim.

Introduction
The Long 1890s in Egypt: Colonial Quiescence, Subterranean Resistance

Marilyn Booth and Anthony Gorman

Whatever the setting, the 1890s – and its attendant label, *fin de siècle* – conjures bright hues and robust sensations, aesthetic daring, public discourses of fear, lassitude and possibility and, above all, manifold recognition of the New, from technologies to gendered behaviours to publishing. The capital cities of western Europe usually furnish the imagery we associate with the *fin de siècle*, but a distinguishing feature was the sense that, more than ever before, worlds were connected, if unevenly, and the appellation's resonance carries far. In Egypt, the 1890s were equally a time of expectation and anxiety, reordering and regrouping, though perhaps more quietly, for Egyptians were entering their second decade of occupation and British colonial rule.

In Cairo and Alexandria, cosmopolitan linkages were visually evident in new facades and broadened streets, while around them the older city remained home to most urban Egyptians. Emerging resistance to European political and economic dominance, but also a certain embracing of European lifestyles, were articulated through a newly vigorous press and an increasingly streamlined Arabic as an accessible language of public commentary, while periodicals in French, Italian and Greek – some of them bilingual – competed for the attention of readers. Technologies of communication and transportation offered greater mobility for some, and new industrial enterprises encouraged consumption, labour migration and, soon, activism for workers' rights.

Affiliations amongst members of Egypt's varied ethnic communities led to political and cultural collaborations and, at times, tensions, while a generation of elite sons trained in new government and foreign-run schools or in Europe formulated new ideas about family economies and national futures. Some women claimed new spaces, both physically and in print, while elite and middling-strata daughters were the focus of intense debate over the advisability and content of formal schooling for Egypt's female population. In novels, tracts and magazine articles, questions of marriage and divorce, child-raising and population management, gendered identity formation and intersecting dynamics of the family and the nation were defined, elaborated on and debated. Meanwhile, public officials and their colonial line managers grappled with how to order a large and diverse, still heavily rural, country, whose human margins were not always agreeably governable.

While Arab societies' *fin de siècle* – or at least that of its urbanised population and Mediterranean surrounds – has drawn scholars' attention, the last decade of the nineteenth century in Egypt remains something of an enigma, even as scholars have confronted understudied aspects of its history. Previous decades witnessed conflicting political responses to fluctuating economic, geopolitical, social and demographic conditions. Like Egypt's most recent *fin de siècle*, such ferment then presaged the more visible and politically eruptive developments of the new century's early decades, when elite and then popular resistance to colonial rule and great-power consensus burst onto the international scene, especially following World War I. In historical narratives, the 1890s often appear overshadowed by, or at least overly defined through the lens of, the more obviously momentous events of the decades that preceded and followed it, between the trauma of a foreign occupation and the stirrings of the national movement. But the subterranean cast of the 1890s was no less dynamic for that. In this volume, we collectively address the hidden dynamisms of a period recognised as pivotal for the formation of modern Egypt, if not always understood on its own merits.

Contemplating the public politics of the time, one might think that in 1890s Egypt little changed on the ground between the British occupation of 1882 and the early twentieth-century tide of anti-imperial sentiment and nationalist activism. However, we can think of the decade of the 1890s as a period when various individuals and groups resident in Egypt were regroup-

ing, questioning and constructing in the wake of European assumption of Egypt's debt management and the domestic political upheaval and foreign intervention that resulted in occupation. We search for these moments of rearrangement and contestation in places as varied as cemeteries, workplaces, newspapers, rural communities, 'outlying' districts, urban streets, theatres and within the pages of novels. We engage with questions of political engagement and colonial rule, social rearrangements, including shifting gender roles, geographical ambiguities, the unprecedented emergence of new media, community identity formation at a time of enormous population growth and influx, new diasporas and changing possibilities for cultural production.

With these rapid socio-economic, demographic and political changes came new articulations of political belonging and contestation, which in turn fed into the more visible institutional developments of the next decade and seeded the nationalist politics of the immediate pre-World War I era. All were underwritten by changes in technology and material culture – improvements in transport, urban planning, communications and access to information. For all of these reasons, the late nineteenth century is drawing increasing interest from scholars and students across disciplines and regional sub-areas within the Middle East and North Africa, broadly constituted. Long a relatively neglected period in scholarship, the decade attracts those re-evaluating cultural history and literary activity, as well as scholars of labour activism, oppositional political movements within a late colonial context, social networks and gender studies. Though we cannot address all facets of this dynamic decade, we hope to pull together many concerns and themes that repeatedly surface across seemingly diverse topics.

This volume emerged from a workshop that we convened at the University of Edinburgh in 2011, under the auspices of the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World, funded by the Language-Based Area Studies (LBAS) initiative of Research Councils UK and led by the Economic and Social Research Council. We are grateful for this support. Contributors to this volume, as well as other colleagues researching the period, came together for a conversation about this understudied moment in Egypt's modern history, and together we formulated key questions that have guided our work in varying ways. Evaluating the decade across a broad swathe of geographic, demographic and discursive sites and shifts, the chapters in this volume take

up different strands of articulation and activism that may have intersected or been mutually constitutive. Equally, we examine the roles of various communities and identity groups during the decade's conversations and consider transregional population flows into Egypt and the very borders of the state. Inevitably, pondering the impact of this decade, both synchronically and diachronically, and recognising that no period of time can be sealed off from antecedents or later events, contributors touch on the longer span of time arcing from the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 to the emergence of fiercer public debates and the formation of nationalist political parties in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Constructing the Narrative

Thus, while the 1890s is our focus, we range before and beyond the decade, defining the long 1890s as the period from the defeat of the 'Urabist movement and occupation of Egypt by Britain in 1882 until the galvanising events of Dinshawai (1906) and the establishment of political parties by local elites in 1907. Below we offer a brief narrative of political events to contextualise the contributions to this volume.

This period of twenty-five years has been seen as dominated by two competing yet complementary processes or to use Donald Reid's characterisation, 'Imperial High Noon, Nationalist Dawn'.[1] The first – consolidation of British rule over the country following its occupation – was overseen by the towering figure of Lord Cromer (Evelyn Baring, 1841–1917). Cromer presided over an evolving British policy of financial and administrative reform, which maintained its presence and virtual colonial control over Egypt, despite statements to the contrary made by British officials throughout the period. The second consists in the fortunes of the nationalist movement, from the collective trauma of 1882 until the revival of a nationalist call for action in the early years of the new century, following a slow and uncertain incubation in the 1890s. The political unrest of 1881, led by Ahmad 'Urabi (1841–1911) and his fellow military officers, had by the beginning of the following year developed into a full confrontation between the constitutional movement that sought to curb foreign influence in the country and the authority of Khedive Tawfiq, supported by a conservative notability. The bombardment of Alexandria and landing of British troops

in Alexandria following civil disturbances set in train the events that led to the defeat of 'Urabist forces at Tel al-Kabir in September 1882, the restoration of Khedivial authority and British occupation. 'Urabi himself was sent into exile in Sri Lanka and his supporters, such as orator and journalist 'Abdallah Nadim (1845–96), religious scholar and civil servant Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905) and administrator and educator 'Ali Mubarak (1823–93), were cowed and scattered, with some going into hiding, while others were formally banished. In their place a compliant political elite, headed by Mustafa Fahmi (1840–1914), prime minister from 1891 to 1908 (with only a short break from 1893 to 1895), governed the country in name until the emergence, with the new century, of a coherent and articulate nationalist movement. At its head was the young Mustafa Kamil (1874–1908), who galvanised discontented locals with a fiery and pointed discourse that brought together inchoate expressions of nationalist longing.

Within this broader context, the 1890s stands as a critical period. If it took ten years for the British Government to establish control in Egypt (as Harry Boyle, Oriental Secretary in Cairo from 1899 to 1909, asserted), the next decade saw the consolidation of what became the 'veiled protectorate'.[2] The death in January 1892 of the acquiescent Khedive Tawfiq, scion of the dynasty founded by Muhammad 'Ali at the start of the nineteenth century, saw the accession of his son, 'Abbas Hilmi II. Over the next two years in the uneven contest of authority, 'Abbas was outmanoeuvred and humiliated by Cromer, who asserted his grip over Egyptian governance, in a process captured by some of the contributions to this book.

If British rule gave little ground in the area of political reform, it effectively addressed the national debt through its economic policies. By the beginning of the 1890s, Egyptian finances had been stabilised. The next decade-and-a-half witnessed an unprecedented, if unevenly enjoyed, period of economic prosperity, principally on the back of the cotton crop. The fellahin, since 1883 protected in law from the lash of the *kurbaj* and, by the early 1890s, the obligations of corvée, served as the agricultural workforce. Captains of industry took the helm, setting up bodies such as a series of Chambers of Commerce and a Cigarette Manufacturers' Federation to represent their collective interests in promoting increasing trade and nurturing an emerging industrial sector. In 1898 the newly-formed National Bank of

Egypt began the issue of banknotes that symbolised the new prosperity as the national revenue expanded until the slump of 1907.

British influence was manifest in both concrete and institutional form. The construction of the Aswan Dam (1898–1902), the Asyut Barrage (1898–1903), a new system of agricultural roads and an expanding network of railways powerfully testified to the extensive public works programme. The foundations of new public institutions were laid to accommodate the new quasi-colonial order. Adding to the already complex legal system of the Mixed Courts for cases involving non-Egyptians (est. 1876) and the National Courts (1884), a series of reforms restyled the judicial landscape that was underpinned by an extensive prison-building programme. In this volume, chapters by Mario Ruiz, Shane Minkin, Matthew Ellis and Aaron Jakes shed new light on how British administrators incorporated their new acquisition further into the institutions and processes of imperial rule, but also how local actors mounted strategies to contest and confuse them.

The Egyptian public education system, by contrast, was notoriously neglected. Existing institutions of higher education, such as Dar al-'Ulum (1871), the French Law School (1890) and the Medical School (1827), continued to operate and explore innovative curricula, as Hilary Kalmbach's chapter shows, but opportunities for talented youth remained limited in state education. Throughout the newly vigorous non-official press, from villages as well as cities, complaints were voiced about the state's failure to provide education for its subjects. By contrast, a series of private initiatives somewhat ameliorated the situation: in female education, the Saniyya School (1889) and a girls' section at 'Abbas Primary School (1895); and for the wider public, evening education at the Free Popular University (1901) and the nationalist Higher Schools Club (1905). It was not until the very end of the period that a group of Egyptian intellectuals and educators established the private Egyptian University (1908), which would lay the basis for the public university almost twenty years later.

Even if under the heavy-handed rule of Cromer, the 1890s witnessed an effective (albeit temporary) constriction of the nationalist movement and successfully co-opted elements of the Egyptian elite to the service of government; it saw toleration of both public and private expression on a more contained local level, among workers, women concerned about gender-specific poli-

cies and opportunities, nationalist intellectuals, both female and male, and social networks. The rising power of organised labour, the beginnings of self-directed women's activism, local municipal politics in Alexandria, the struggle within the Coptic community between church and laity (analysed in Vivian Ibrahim's chapter) and the constitution and operation of social networks, such as anarchists (as discussed by Anthony Gorman), offered arenas, frameworks and agency where activity emerged and even flourished. Indeed, the 1890s presided over the incipient development of energies and associations that flowered over the years leading up to 1914 and the later, more organised challenges to British control.

Egyptian society was growing in size, as well as diversity. From 1882 to 1907 the population of the country increased from 6.8 million to 11.2 million, including an expanding resident foreign presence, which by 1907 stood at just over 220,000.[3] Resident foreign communities – such as the Greeks, as we learn from Alexander Kazamias's chapter – proliferated not only in size but heterogeneity, with this growth generating institution-building within civil society and yet also intensifying conflicts within such communities. Expansion of public infrastructure continued apace in transport and building. While the significant urban developments of Garden City and Heliopolis would not be launched until 1905, the capital was nevertheless in an expansive phase during the 1890s, with the opening of the Cairo–Hilwan railway in November 1889 and its first electric tramway in 1896. The establishment of the Municipality of Alexandria in 1890 marked a new development in local administration.

Among workers, the first stirrings of labour unrest on the Suez Canal during the early 1880s developed into a more organised and militant workers' movement during the 1890s. This culminated in the cigarette workers' strike launched in December 1899, which itself provided an important inspiration – and organisational experience – to the following decade and a half of intensified industrial action.

Debate on the appropriate roles of women in society and, indeed, the emerging public roles of women themselves came to the fore in the 1890s. While the notoriously contentious works of Qasim Amin, *The Emancipation of Women* [*Tahrir al-mar'a*, 1899], and its 1900 sequel *The New Woman* [*al-Mar'a al-jadida*] and the furious responses of Tal'at Harb and others appeared at the end of the decade, women were already speaking for themselves. Hind

Nawfal's *al-Fatat* (November 1892–4) was the first in a series of periodicals dedicated to the specific interests of women; 'A'isha Taymur had already begun publishing her work in the 1880s, while Zaynab Fawwaz and others wrote for the press, as well as publishing novels and tracts. As they had long done, women composed poetry that circulated both orally and in print and founded charitable and educational associations that called for more educational openings for girls.

As had been the case since the time of Muhammad 'Ali, male members of the Egyptian elite were able to take advantage of educational opportunities abroad. During the 1880s and 1890s, Husayn Rushdi, Qasim Amin, 'Ali Abu al-Futuh, Mustafa Kamil and others returned from studies in France to pursue distinguished careers in politics, law and the cultural sphere. Intellectual life was also invigorated by the arrival of immigrants from Ottoman Syria, who founded journals and wrote in others. Among them were Farah Antun, Zaynab Fawwaz, Labiba Hashim, Rashid Rida, Shibli Shumayyil and Jurji Zaydan. The return of Muhammad 'Abduh to Egypt in 1889 spurred activity in education, religious reform and debate on the relationship between Islamic doctrine, *shari'a,* governance and everyday life.

In historical scholarship, the period saw the emergence of new styles and genres. 'Ali Mubarak's twenty-volume work, *al-Khitat al-tawfiqiyya*, which was published in the late 1880s, employed a traditional mode of topographical description of the city of Cairo as part of a broader mapping of physical and human geography of Egypt;[4] however, over the next decade, a number of works new in both form and purpose appeared. Rising nationalist leaders Mustafa Kamil[5] and Muhammad Farid[6] authored histories of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire as early forays into political life. Jurji Zaydan,[7] Isma'il Sarhank[8] and Mikha'il Sharubim[9] provided accounts less invested with a specific political project, but nevertheless significant for their expression of historical breadth and imagination. The professional academic historian would not appear in Egypt until after the First World War, but a new, engaged scholarship had already begun to construct and reconfigure Egypt's place in history. Meanwhile, as Marilyn Booth shows in her chapter, history writing in the 1890s could be used in the service of reconfigured agendas and emerging issues, such as gender. Others wrote on the period in their personal memoirs, whether intended for publication or not, as discussed by Hussein Omar.[10]

These individuals and many others engaged with the challenging political, social and cultural issues of the day in a lively public debate made possible by the unprecedented flourishing of newspaper and book publishing in the 1890s. The question of national independence, the relationship of Egypt with the Ottoman Empire and the future of its relations with Britain may have loomed large, but in the 1890s many of the new insights of socialism, feminism and workers' rights also began to gain currency and were applied to the local context in myriad and sophisticated ways. Works in translation, such as *Self-Help* by Samuel Smiles, Edmond Desmolins's *A quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?* and the works of Gustave Le Bon (the latter two translated by Ahmad Fathi Zaghlul), energised intellectual exchange.[11]

Those active in translating polemics and scholarship from Europe were joined by translators of imaginative literature, who in turn contributed to the emergence of Arabic fiction, as Paul Starkey outlines in this volume, as well as to early Arabic drama. New publishing opportunities afforded aspiring writers a range of venues and many experimented, producing hybrid texts that were part novel, part political tract or part translation and part 'original', while the continuation of long-familiar habits of oral dissemination of texts created a different kind of hybridity.

A vigorous press was both a cause and a symptom of this efflorescence of activity in word and deed, an outlet for the energies of newly educated young men and women seeking a role in their society and a by-line on the page. Private newspapers, already a feature of the pre-1882 period, would proliferate during the long 1890s. Some, such as *al-Ahram*, were already well-established, while new titles of diverse orientation and tone emerged, assisted by a relatively lenient application of the 1883 press law. In 1889 two significant dailies appeared: the pro-British *al-Muqattam* and the oppositionist *al-Mu'ayyad*, edited by Shaykh 'Ali Yusuf, which served as an emerging voice of nationalism. These two dailies were joined in January 1900 by *al-Liwa'*, edited by Mustafa Kamil, who used it as a vehicle to become the young spokesperson and symbol of nationalist hopes. Other newspapers appeared and flourished and sometimes disappeared; the leap in the number of titles published by mid-decade, as well as the appearance of provincial presses, indicates how crucial the 1890s were in the history of Egyptian journalism. The magazine sector exhibited a similar vitality. *Al-Muqtataf* (est. 1876),

relocated from Beirut in 1884, was joined by *al-Hilal*, founded by Jurji Zaydan, from September 1892 to further invigorate readers with a miscellany of literature, biography and science. *Al-Jami'a* (est. 1899), edited by Farah Antun, provided an early forum for socialist ideas. The progressive Coptic *Misr* (est. 1895) challenged the Christian religious establishment.[12] This robust development was as true for European-language periodicals as it was for the Arabic-language press: the mainstream English *Egyptian Gazette* (est. 1880), the French language *Le Progrès Égyptien* (est. 1893), the Greek *Tachidrómos* (est. 1880) and the Italian *il Corriere Egiziano* (est. 1872) were joined by more specialist titles dedicated to culture, economics and radical politics. The proliferation of the press offered a robust – and often rambunctious – vehicle for the propagation of diverse voices and the sustained presence of political, cultural and economic debate. Yet it is important to remember that literacy remained limited, estimated in 1907 at 7 per cent of the population overall (13 per cent men; 1 per cent women).[13]

The long 1890s came to end with the events that followed the Dinshawai Affair in 1906. The brutal reaction of the British administration in hanging a number of Egyptian peasants, who had sought to prevent British officers that were intent on shooting pigeons, spurred on the nascent nationalist movement. By the end of 1907 the Watani Party, led by Mustafa Kamil, and the 'Umma Party, headed by Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, were formed and framed degrees of opposition to British rule. The subsequent issue of a new press law and the reorganisation of the security services narrowed the public space as it intensified the political and social struggle. If the first decade of the twentieth century was one of explicit nationalist organisation, the decade before was one in which the ideas and affects behind it were aired, argued over, thought through and tested.

Studying the 1890s

Western scholarship on Egypt in the 1890s has predominantly focused on the political narrative of British control and Egyptian occupation following the invasion of 1882, often with Lord Cromer cast centre stage,[14] or more broadly addressed the implementation and consolidation of British imperial policy in its reorganisation of the Egyptian economy, administration and political system.[15] Another approach, generally more favoured by Egyptian

historians, has emphasised the national fortunes of Egypt during the 1890s, from the humiliation of the consequences of occupation to the steady re-emergence of the national movement at the end of the century. This narrative was most apparent in the work of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi'i, whose book on the period was framed explicitly around the rise of Mustafa Kamil, his rousing call to the nationalist cause, the establishment of the Watani Party and early death soon after.[16] For others less wedded to this specific agenda, the decade was one of relative political quiescence, even apathy, as Muhammad Rifaat put forward in the late 1940s:

> . . . at the beginning of the Occupation the people as a whole were dejected, downhearted and ashamed of their defeat. They were atoning for their sins by a complete resignation to their fate. Soon they became so absorbed in their material uplifting that they gave no time to politics.[17]

In time, Egyptian scholars expanded their work on the late nineteenth century in scope, emphasis and detail. The socialist historians of the 1950s stressed the accelerated penetration of the Egyptian economy by the forces of colonialism.[18] In the 1960s a generation of new historians influenced by Marxist ideas produced detailed studies, often based on the extensive use of archives, exploring the interplay between economic and social forces. Ra'uf 'Abbas's pioneering work on the Egyptian labour movement (which dated its genesis to 1899) and his follow-up study on large landownership, along with that of 'Ali Barakat, laid down important landmarks in our understanding of the period.[19] Though published later, Latifa Salim's work on early women's activism emerged from the concerns and foci of the 1960s as well.[20] Nevertheless, the standard narrative of the 1890s continued to be framed by the contest for power between the young Khedive and Cromer in the early 1890s, the rising star of Mustafa Kamil at the beginning of the new century, the appearance of *al-Liwa'* as the standard of the nationalist movement, the Dinshawai Affair (1906) and the establishment of the formal political parties in 1907. While undoubtedly a major theme in the history of the period, the preoccupation with the clash between imperial will and nationalist aspiration tended to obscure much else that happened in the decade that would qualify or challenge this picture.

Partly in response to this state of affairs, recent scholarship has taken up

more specific issues, both local and internationalist in perspective, and focused on particular sectors of society: a partial list would include monographs on gender, nationalism and the state (Badran, Booth, Hatem, Jacob and others), peasants (Gasper), labour (Chalcraft), radical politics (Khuri-Makdisi), scholarship, science and new cultural institutions (Reid, El Shakry), and literature and translation (Booth, Fahmy, Starkey, Tageldin, Selim, Noorani).[21] From Egyptian scholars, historians such as ʻAbd al-Munʻim Ibrahim al-Jumayʻi and Hilmi Ahmad Shalabi have continued to add to our knowledge of the period.[22] Even if many of these works span longer historical periods, they all highlight significant developments and movements of the 1890s and join an ever-growing body of scholarship that recognises the dynamism of the Egyptian *fin de siècle*.

There is scope for much more work on the period: local and urban histories, cultural and environmental studies, biographies, studies on architecture, science and technology, law, education and so on. The sources for such are not lacking. While the British National Archives and particularly Cromer's annual reports have been well-trawled and much use has been made of the works and memoirs of British officials,[23] as this collection shows, the 1890s offers much greater source material than this: a great range of press and periodical literature across a number of languages, the personal memoirs of public and private figures, conduct books, novels, plays, broadsheets and tracts. Of state records, the Egyptian National Archives continue to yield results from the laborious efforts of scholars, while Greek, Italian, French and other national collections remain significantly untapped. Our volume contributes to this ongoing project of recuperation and analysis by offering a series of microstudies that open up new avenues in the social, cultural, institutional and economic history of 1890s Egypt and in particular the ways that local actors drew upon, resisted and creatively reworked the myriad impingements on Egyptian society wrought by imperial politics, international economic forces, transnational and translingual cultural flows and new technologies. What are the guiding questions that led and arose from our research?

Guiding Questions

Some key clusters of questions and issues underlay our collective (if not always agreed on) assessments of what distinguishes the 1890s from periods

before and after, why the decade is important and how the developments of these years help us to begin to understand the decade and its significance for the events of the subsequent period. Questions become part of responses, and these remain salient for ongoing work. If we have not been able to answer all of these questions or cover certain important sectors of activity in the 1890s, such as the peasantry, the full diversity of the labour movement and developments in technology, consumerism and architecture, we have highlighted their significance.

First, events and discourses of the decade had to negotiate *competing and changing jurisdictions*. How might we even define these jurisdictions and how did they function? What sets of regulations became particular points of contestation and how? How did those very regulations act to define or set apart different individual or collective social actors or communities? Was the Capitulatory regime (which gave European subjects preferential legal and economic treatment), censorship or personal status law seen locally as the province of certain jurisdictional bodies or communities? Or as matters of 'distant' colonial regulation (or attempted regulation)? Did claims of Ottoman jurisdiction, for example, counter European colonial claims in this period? And if so, did they possess any efficacy?

Indeed, if we think about colonial jurisdiction, how might we evaluate the nature and efficacy of colonial rule in the 1890s? How were the colonial authorities able to extend their regulatory reach and what kinds of responses did this engender? How were projects initiated by the colonial regime viewed, used, contested and negotiated by various local interests and population groups?

How do questions of rule and matters of jurisdiction interact with practices of exclusion and inclusion, ideas about sovereign territory and physical as well as other kinds of boundaries? How did the coming-into-being of various regulatory regimes shape people's notions of themselves, family and larger communities? What relationships between legislation and practice can we identify? How uniform were certain regulatory practices across 'Egyptian' territory? Can the state be regarded as a 'unified' actor?

Second, this was a time of *accelerated cross-cultural contacts and fluid identities*. Was the cultural and linguistic pluralism of Egypt distinctive for this period? What did this pluralistic milieu make possible or impossible?

What did that pluralism look like from various local vantage points? To what extent did people perceive – and perhaps cross – social boundaries marked by linguistic or geographic difference? What did the words 'Egyptian' and 'foreigner' actually mean to various individuals in everyday interactions? And how do practices of identity formation or naming intersect with practices of a (possibly) expanding state? Is the concept of 'fluid identity' a useful one in capturing the historical richness of this decade? Is it more useful for this decade than others, before or after? Is identity any more 'fluid' at the *fin de siècle* than it always and ever is?

Given that formations of travel, whether physical or discursive, inform many of the microhistories we elaborate on here, can we elicit new elements in cross-cultural contact, transmission and translation in this decade in reference both to Egyptians (and their ideas) travelling to Europe and Europeans (and their ideas) travelling to Egypt and circulating in various, often cosmopolitan, contexts? Did the intellectual and artistic cross-currents of the European *fin de siècle* generate ripples at the other end of the Mediterranean? Did increasing knowledge of, or contact with, Egyptian scholars and their works provoke new thought, reconsideration and reflection among a Western public?

Third – and arising from these questions – what can we say more generally about *social identities* during the 1890s? Do new identity rubrics and their associations with certain patterns or visibilities of behaviour emerge in this decade and, if so, how and why? To what extent is there a qualitative shift in terms of the roles that Egypt plays for European migrants (political or economic) and their activities and aspirations in Egypt? Or, given the dense commentary on gender roles, gendered boundaries of comportment (and their transgression) of women and young men, to what extent can we see issues of sexuality and gender-role assignment, as well as discourses on the family, as expressing new, or intensifying, social and political anxieties? If the 1890s was a transitional period, what roles did discourses on the gendered organisation of society play in articulating a particular set of transitions?

What kinds of institutionalised hierarchies were being weakened or were breaking down in this era and what replaced them, if anything? What impact did they have on social identities? Were certain hierarchies perceived differently in this decade by various constituents or population groups than they

had been in previous decades? What kinds of affiliations to, or sense of separation from, the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman subjecthood might be posed for this decade? What did 'allegiance' mean to people in a political sense? Which people? How did native Egyptians 'see' other Ottoman subjects?

Fourth, we know that this was a time of unprecedented growth in formal *media of exchange*. What roles did various media play in suggesting and sustaining social identities and defining political categories – and who listened and how? How did the changing presence of the technology and institutionalisation of print media during the long 1890s affect or shape the nature and extent of conversations to be had? Was the increase in periodical and book publishing in this period significant enough to be considered a qualitative change? Beyond the fact that this meant more people could access information and listen in on running debates or respond to them, did these media signify a qualitative shift in the articulation of issues? (And how could we possibly measure that?) What kinds of public spaces take on particular resonance as sites of collective response or negotiation? Is there any way we can get at the question of audiences and readerships in this era?

Fifth – and related to questions of media – how do we *appraise our sources*? While this is, of course, always an issue, when assessing a period of marked change in the availability of circulating print sources, one must be particularly wary. If we as scholars see new things happening in the 1890s – new energies, new networks and topics or heightened debate – is it because they are novel or is it because the media change and proliferate, offering us a new set of reflections? Is it perhaps more a matter of a shift in venues of debate than a shift in debates themselves? If we cannot answer these questions, we must at least remain mindful of them.

At the same time, a significantly larger circulation of periodicals and books from the middle of the decade onwards becomes in itself a qualitative, as well as a quantitative, change. The presence of these new media and the participation of new writers create a new reality; novel discursive possibilities make possible, and are part of, emerging activisms. But what, then, are the effects of the new media on activisms (or their 'subterranean' preludes) on the ground? Does the advent of a non-official press and robust book publishing sector change the nature of the discourse? Does it succeed in creating or sustaining new conversations? New groupings? New political energies?

This Volume

We have grouped our chapters into overlapping thematic foci, as outlined above. In Part I, 'Institutionalising Authority, Claiming Jurisdiction and Space', contributors evaluate the capabilities of state institutions and jurisdictional bodies more loosely associated with the state to institute and maintain authority over particular sites of regulation, 'development' and training. In 'Documenting Death: Inquests, Governance and Belonging in 1890s Alexandria', Shane Minkin draws on the inquest reports of the British Consulate of Alexandria to study the role of death in creating, negotiating and maintaining the socio-political categories of the living in *fin de siècle* Egypt. Such post-mortem investigations highlight fractured affiliations that characterised the lived experiences of many British subjects, while by contrast demonstrating how lived complexities were flattened in death into arbitrary patterns of belonging. Minkin complicates our understanding of colonialism as a regulatory mechanism by reminding us that everyday interactions defined and redefined colonial rule, despite, and around, jurisdictional anxieties.

'The Scales of Public Utility: Agricultural Roads and State Space in the Era of the British Occupation', by Aaron George Jakes, takes up the question of infrastructure provision as another site on which various interests and constituencies crystallised to show the advancement of state aims as anything but smooth, even as this arena of ambitious government activity suggested how the state was working to solidify and extend its jurisdiction. Jakes traces the rural road-building campaign as a project that had to negotiate a quagmire: if such technological and construction projects facilitated communications and commercial flows, they also challenged – and needed – the authority of local officials and others. This chapter reanimates forgotten struggles that were central in shaping the state and its nationalist interlocutors, as Jakes illustrates vividly by wondering how the presence of new agricultural routes made the crucial events of Dinshawai possible.

The 1890s were a crucial decade for the development of Egyptian pedagogical thought, argues Hilary Kalmbach in 'Training Teachers How to Teach: Transnational Exchange and the Introduction of Social-Scientific Pedagogy in 1890s Egypt'. Emphasising concepts of pedagogy and curricula development as hybrid products of exchange between Egyptian and European institutions

and individuals, Kalmbach scrutinises the fruits of this 'translation' in the changing curriculum of Dar al-'Ulum, Egypt's first teacher-training institution, finding in particular a new emphasis on pedagogical methods.

Like Kalmbach, Vivian Ibrahim highlights the role of certain individuals in maintaining, reshaping and also challenging the institutions through which modern Egyptian subjectivities were fostered and formed. In 'Legitimising Lay and State Authority: Challenging the Coptic Church in Late Nineteenth-Century Egypt', Ibrahim traces an emerging lay Coptic elite whose promotion of a community lay council signalled a new perspective on their role in the Coptic community and the nation. Like other groups in Egypt, this elite established charitable, benevolent and philanthropic societies, but their activities also challenged the longstanding authority of the clerical establishment, for these activities had political and economic implications. Within a longer process, the 1890s constituted a transitional period for the Coptic Church and community; within its interstices, claiming and contesting jurisdiction over population groups were signs of emerging nationalist concerns amongst a heterogeneous elite that was not necessarily aligned with either central government institutions or those that served these groups specifically.

Mario Ruiz's chapter, 'Criminal Statistics in the Long 1890s', brings the focus back to the British-run administration and those who worked – and argued – with its representatives. Ruiz surveys the technologies that facilitated surveillance of perceived criminal populations; specifically the use of criminal statistics in the government's published annual reports, which represented both a quantitative and qualitative shift in the ways the state accessed and organised information. Why and how did statistical thinking, in the form of auditing rural populations, affect governmental practices and official conversations on crime? How did the British deploy their figures to justify certain policies and mark out sites of perceived danger? What effects did this have on the direction of policy through the 1890s?

These chapters show attempts at jurisdictional reach, even as they also outline challenges to state authority. Our second section, 'Challenging Authority in Contested Spaces', takes up this theme. In 'Anomalous Egypt? Rethinking Egyptian Sovereignty at the Western Periphery', Matthew H. Ellis shifts attention away from the predominantly Cairo-centric historiography of modern Egypt and towards the Egyptian West: the Libyan Desert,

Western oases and Mediterranean coastline west of Alexandria. Ellis studies Egyptian sovereignty and administration in the West, in order to think about the colonial nation-state as comprising borderlands that tested the centre's political and administrative mechanisms. Drawing on specific encounters between local concerns and centralising bureaucracies, Ellis focuses on the Oasis of Siwa as a site that elucidates the aims and pitfalls of Egyptian state administration in a far-off, marginal area.

Even if nationalist articulations were uncertain and uneven during this decade, spaces of contestation between the state and Egyptian elites helped to define some of the concerns around which these articulations would develop. Hanan Hammad's chapter, 'Regulating Sexuality: The Colonial–National Struggle over Prostitution after the British Invasion of Egypt', asks how illicit sexuality – specifically, prostitution – in the early years of the British occupation became a touchstone for competing notions of public morality and its regulation. Hammad argues that contentions about prostitutes' alleged uncontrolled sexuality were used by Egyptian nationalists to dramatise the British occupation and European privileges and influence generally. British policies to regulate health inspections and register prostitutes symbolised the debasement of occupation; concomitantly, prostitutes were never seen as working women, but only as a symbol, metaphor and symptom of broad socio-political concerns.

In 'Internationalist Thought, Local Practice: Life and Death in the Anarchist Movement in 1890s Egypt', Anthony Gorman traces the late nineteenth-century revival of a movement that previously surfaced in Egypt amongst Italian workers several decades before. Remaining largely international in its membership and imagination, in the 1890s the movement adopted a more local strategy of engagement with the 'social question' and emerged as an important voice on questions of labour militancy, secularism and radical thought in general. In taking up local issues, such as public health, employment and education, anarchists sought to promote an alternative discourse that challenged the domination of imperialist and religious frameworks for social justice and equally the chauvinism of nationalist perspectives and local ethnic communities. In so doing, they both stimulated public debate and provoked state authority and power.

The internationalist and local ethnic frameworks within which Egyptian

politics played out are also at stake in Alexander Kazamias's chapter, 'Cromer's Assault on "Internationalism": British Colonialism and the Greeks of Egypt, 1882–1907'. Kazamias explores the relationship between the British colonial authorities and Egypt's largest foreign ethnic group by arguing two novel theses: first, that despite the Capitulatory privileges enjoyed by most of them, Egypt's Greeks also turned into colonial subjects after 1882; and second, that British colonialism posed a greater threat to Egypt's cosmopolitan urban life than did Egyptian nationalism. As Cromer attempted to restrict the Capitulatory privileges of Egypt's foreign communities, the chapter argues, Egypt's Greeks responded with three main strategies: collaboration, attentism and resistance. The last yielded a surprising cooperation between Greek rivals of British colonialism and the emerging Egyptian nationalist movement.

Earlier, we called attention to the importance of a rapidly expanding print culture as a qualitative shift in the 1890s that made possible a more inclusive public conversation, at least amongst elements of the urban populace. The chapters in our first two sections demonstrate this by highlighting the significance of the press in making and contesting state policies. New opportunities to publish fostered the spread of new genres of imaginative and persuasive writing, and it is to this arena that we now turn in our third section, 'Probing Authority with the Written Word'. In '"And I Saw No Reason To Chronicle My Life": Tensions of Nationalist Modernity in the Memoirs of Fathallah Pasha Barakat', Hussein Omar analyses the depiction of the 'long 1890s' in the unpublished autobiography (c.1932) of a well-known Egyptian nationalist politician, Fathallah Barakat Pasha, focusing especially on the years of his coming of age, 1882 to 1910, under the occupation. A sardonic corrective to triumphalist nationalist narratives produced in the 1920s, Barakat's text undoes the historical amnesia that he saw promoted by the new Egyptian National Archive. In these accounts, the late nineteenth century was an embarrassing blip in the state's narrative of unswerving progress. Nationalism's heroes look decidedly less heroic in Barakat's narrative, as they collaborated with their colonial overlords. As he unpacks Barakat's own sense of self and estrangement and considers the 'clashing ethical systems' at issue, Omar also challenges recent scholarship on the 'effendi class' by arguing that a more complex and variable self-image governed individuals who were in

some senses members of the Egyptian elite, yet who felt themselves to be excluded, by choice or not, from the ranks of the decision-makers.

In her chapter, Orit Bashkin analyses approaches to the Jewish question, as articulated through the pluralistic Egyptian public sphere of the 1890s. 'My Sister Esther: Reflections on Judaism, Ottomanism and Empire in the Works of Farah Antun' considers how Arab Christian intellectuals residing in Egypt wrote about Jews in Europe as a way to explore the ethics of social justice and a means to demand citizenship rights not based on religion. The chapter theorises fluid meanings ascribed to the term 'other' by examining media through which this 'otherness' was negotiated and diffused: the newspaper article, cultural magazine and historical novel. New means of communication shaped new ideas about Islamic, Jewish and Christian histories relevant to the political moment. But this was juxtaposed with local writers' knowledge of orientalist views of their societies and the sharp dissonance that these perspectives posed for such writers.

Paul Starkey focuses on one of these media. 'Romances of History: Jurji Zaydan and the Rise of the Historical Novel' considers the earliest historical novels, published in the 1890s, by the energetic polymath Jurji Zaydan. Zaydan's series of novels, based on Arab and Islamic history, were immediately popular. But why the 1890s? And why the historical novel? Starkey's answers to these questions shed light on not only a key moment in Egypt's literary tradition, but also the state of education in Egypt at the time.

In our final chapter, Marilyn Booth considers some little-known treatises from the decade to argue that debates on 'the woman question' strongly structured the book publishing sector as well as the periodical press throughout the decade. 'Before Qasim Amin: Writing Women's History in 1890s Egypt' highlights the use of historical narratives in debating contemporary gendered practices and argues that their authors were writing for both a local audience and a transnational set of interlocutors, for their arguments are deployed within a context of homosocial male conversations about gender as a marker of historical progress, where European sources could act as both proof and foil for debates carried on locally. What, Booth asks, might be the purchase of a scare-discourse on the 'New Woman' in Europe's capitals on intellectuals in Egypt? The tenor of this 'conversation', she argues, was specific to the 1890s as a moment when later defensiveness on gender politics vis-à-vis Europe was

as yet fluidly marked and when the 'virgin territory' of women's history had not yet become embattled terrain.

Connections and Circulations

Above all, perhaps, our volume speaks to the fact that the 1890s saw accelerated contact amongst people of varying origins in Egypt and through Egyptians' travels abroad. Of course, the European *fin de siècle* was most ineluctably present in the forms of British colonial officials, as we see particularly in the chapters by Ruiz, Ellis and Hammad, as well as British and other European subjects resident in Egypt for shorter or longer periods: scientists, missionaries, teachers, travellers, builders, entrepreneurs and so on. This cosmopolitanism is particularly evident in Minkin's chapter and has been the focus of previous works cited above. In this volume, Kalmbach shows the circulation of European educationists through their texts in Egypt's recently formed teacher-training school, while Booth finds contact with European orientalists in locally produced treatises on gender. Bashkin addresses local awareness of the 1896 Dreyfus case in France and more broadly of the treatment of Jews and Muslims in Europe. Local communities of European ethnic origin and their ties to compatriots based elsewhere, through political and economic ties, are the foci of Gorman's and Kazamias's contributions. In other words, the international cast of 1890s Egypt is ubiquitous and should leave us with recognition of the coeval patterns and concerns of the *fin de siècle*, both there and elsewhere.

If, in Great Britain, the 1890s were a time of 'collision between the old and the new . . . [which] marks it as an excitingly volatile and transitional period . . . a time fraught with anxiety and with an exhilarating sense of possibility',[24] this is but one way in which developments across Egypt were coeval with those in Europe and where the specificity of local events and processes was not isolated from those elsewhere. It is important to keep in mind how processes – mental and material, engendered partly by empire, distinct and unevenly distributed – were nevertheless present in Cairo as they were in London (but less so in the hinterlands of both, and everywhere mediated by understandings and material striations of class). In both, if only for a relative few, a 'cultural and political landscape . . . lit up by a constellation of new formations' could offer a sense of possibility and generate anxiety and fear – a

'highly specific moment . . . of experiencing the *ambivalence of modernity*'.[25] In both, massive internal migration from rural areas to urban spaces engendered worries, left to us in print, about changes to the occupation and use of public spaces and concerns about health and security. In both, statistical mapping of crime and population distribution took on particular urgency, as Ruiz suggests here for colonial Egypt. In Britain, popular cultural fantasies of exoticised threats circulating at the *fin de siècle* invoked Egyptians and other Others at a moment when fears were circulating that Britain's 'New Imperialist' gains might be fragile at best. Voices contesting the validity of the imperial adventure were beginning to be heard more loudly; at the same time, masculine romances and the popular press advanced ideas of heroism and sacrifice for the Empire, constructing and reiterating notions of strictly gendered contributions to the nation at home – just as historical novels in Egypt were offering blueprints for a local future, as we can see in Starkey's discussion of Zaydan's oeuvre.[26]

In Egypt, as in Britain, France and Germany, notions of societal and individual 'degeneration' – popularised by Max Nordau's dark portrayal in his 1892 tract *Degeneration* (translated from the German into French in 1893 and into English in 1895) – were undergirded by understandings of Darwinian evolutionary theory, as well as concepts of race hierarchy. If some in Europe were sobered by Nordau's warning that '[t]here is a sound of rending in every tradition, and it is as though the morrow would not link itself with to-day',[27] then others in Egypt may not have felt so differently about this so-called 'Dusk of Nations', though they might have assigned the blame differently. Warnings and theories could be circulated amongst readers in Britain and France more comprehensively than ever, for as in Egypt the 1890s saw a particular proliferation of mass media, though Egypt did not yet have the sensationalist press of France and England – the association, as Eugene Weber puts it, of 'high thinking and low reporting'.[28] In Egypt as in Europe, intellectuals read and cited Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd*, either in French or (from 1909 onwards) in Arabic translation. They kept up-to-date with political events, scientific breakthroughs and technological advances elsewhere (and at home) through the daily Egyptian press and popularising journals that circulated throughout the cities of the Arab world. As anarchist-inspired incidents in Britain, France and elsewhere, magnified by the popular

press into a pervasive security threat, fed into *fin de siècle* apocalyptic imaginings, Egypt had its own cosmopolitan anarchist collectives. Labour activists in Egypt had deep ties of affiliation with their peers throughout Europe. As the emerging profession of medical psychology warned against 'hysteria' in housewives and the young, medical students in Egypt wrote accessible narratives warning their compatriots against treating *al-rih* (glossed as hysteria) through folk medicine, rather than going to consult trained professionals.[29]

Weber reminds us that in France, amidst the scandal-sheets and verbalised worries, the perceptions of rising crime rates and accelerating social divisions, the sense of political fragility and economic uncertainty, we must also remember that technological advances, increased numbers of schools, mass production and new kinds of access made life better, if not much better, for many (and much better for a few, though they could no longer claim as much distinction from the rest). The same is likely true in Egypt, though perhaps more incrementally and less broadly. For one thing, education at higher levels was slowly becoming available to more (mostly male and at least somewhat economically and socially privileged) young people, who would form the backbone of the anti-colonial nationalist movement over the next few decades. Weber reminds us as well that most French people in the 1890s, both in provincial cities and towns as well as rural settings, faced basic daily challenges in procuring water, sanitation and foodstuffs; women queued at public fountains before dawn.[30] And understandings of where women belonged, in private settings and public spaces, were not so different in France than they were in Egypt: distinctions are perhaps as much a matter of class belonging as of any other marker of experience and identity. At any rate, as we contemplate Egypt's *fin de siècle*, it is well to remember that the term resonates partly because it connotes mutual concerns and supra-national pressures that had their own particular formations and effects in and upon specific national sites.

Marilyn Booth and Anthony Gorman
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Notes

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26. Ledger and Luckhurst, 'Introduction', p. xvi; 'The New Imperialism', pp. 133–4. Ross G. Forman, 'Empire', in Gail Marshall (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 91–111.
27. From Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (1895), excerpted in Ledger and Luckhurst (eds), *The Fin de Siècle*, pp. 13–17; for the quotation, see p. 13.
28. Gail Marshall, 'Introduction', in Gail Marshall (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 3–4. There are studies, too numerous to mention here, on the late-Victorian press in Britain. On France, for a useful overview of the role of the press at the *fin de siècle* and its generative role in communicating anxieties, see Eugene Weber, *France, Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 240, but see also pp. 3, 42, 114. On the similarity of press reports in France to those in Egypt's 1890s press, see Marilyn Booth, 'Disruptions of the Local, Eruptions of the Feminine: Local Reportage and National Anxieties in Egypt's 1890s', in Anthony Gorman and Didier Monciaud (eds), *Between Politics, Society and Culture: The Press in the Middle East before Independence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming).
29. Jenny Bourne Taylor, 'Psychology at the Fin de Siècle', in Marshall (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, pp. 13–30. For a contemporary

discussion of this, see, for example, H. B. Donkin, 'Hysteria', in *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* (1892), excerpted in Ledger and Luckhurst (eds), *The Fin de Siècle*, pp. 245–50. On Egypt, see Marilyn Booth, 'Liberal Thought and the "Problem" of Women', in Max Weiss and Jens Hanssen (eds), *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age, 1780s–1940s: Towards a Liberal History of the Nahda* (forthcoming).

30. Weber, *France*, pp. 55–6.

I

INSTITUTIONALISING AUTHORITY, CLAIMING JURISDICTION AND SPACE

1

Documenting Death: Inquests, Governance and Belonging in 1890s Alexandria

Shane Minkin

Lilian Irlam, a thirty-year-old British governess for a wealthy, indigenous Jewish family in Alexandria, often bathed at the Mediterranean beach at San Stefano with her friend Fotini Margaritu. One afternoon in August 1903, Lilian and her friend swam out to some rocks. Once there, Lilian removed her swim floats and waded out further. Splashing in the water at a depth she could easily stand in, she was suddenly pulled out by an undercurrent and could not fight the waves. Fotini was caught in the same riptide when she endeavoured to come to Lilian's aid. Eugene Rosenzweig, a sunbather watching the women, ran to find the lifeguard, Bisheer Hassan Chaouich. Bisheer swam out to the women and threw a lifebuoy over Fotini. Lilian had already drowned.

Edward Gould, British Consul in Alexandria, convened a three-man jury to join him in an inquest into Lilian's death. The jury interviewed Fotini, Eugene and Bisheer and ordered a post-mortem to be performed by Arthur Morrison, Consular Surgeon to the British. Dr Morrison examined Lilian's body in the mortuary at the German/British Deaconesses Hospital in Alexandria.[1] Her organs were healthy and her body normal, he noted, aside from the presence of water in her lungs and multiple scratches and contusions, suggesting she had been dragged across the rocks. The inquest concluded with a verdict of accidental death by drowning; the jury included a plea for more lifeguards at San Stefano.[2]

In 1903, the year Lilian died, the British Consulate followed the same procedure in processing her death that had been in place long before the 1882 occupation. Lilian died a British subject, and the British Consular Surgeon examined her. A team of British men collected the data for the inquest reports and processed her for burial.[3] But by 1903, although the procedures remained the same, Lilian's death as a British subject resonated differently than it would have done in previous years. Over the course of the 1890s, as the British colonial authorities consolidated their rule in Egypt, inquests became part of the sharpening of a colonial power structure that was undergirded by the British need both to classify the Egyptians over whom they had assumed control and similarly to categorise the foreign communities who resided in Egypt.

Lilian's death and subsequent post-mortem help us to navigate the 1890s as a crucial decade, one in which the structures of British rule in Egypt were solidified and vague categories such as 'foreign', 'local' and 'British' were made more concrete. However, even in an era when the British were most decisive about stamping this category on the bodies of their dead, the process by which they did so worked against their purpose, leaving traces of the diverse, complex lives of British subjects far beyond the singular identification of the term 'British'. In these records of afterlives, one can see contrasts between British authority and everyday, lived experience. Whereas the British officials were interested in claiming – and thus defining – a body as British, the lived experiences of British peoples in Egypt suggested that 'British' was just one of many identifications and not necessarily a limiting or exclusive one.

This chapter aims to use the inquest reports of the British Consulate of Alexandria to delineate the notion of 'British' in the 1890s by showing that it is death that facilitates the formation of categories for the living. The people classified as British lived lives of religious and geographic diversity, suggesting that the term 'British' was a broad, inclusive grouping. The fact of empire and the consolidation of British military and political strength meant that a wide berth of imperial subjects could claim to be British when abroad; indeed, the British of Egypt included a large percentage of the Maltese residents in Egypt (approximately 33 per cent in 1897), as well as the occasional Indian or other colonial subject.[4] Thus, those identified as British often lived far from – and

without access to – the privileges of colonial officials, only to be claimed by the British community – and thus relegated to that category – in death.

In this chapter I explore the lives and deaths of British subjects throughout the long 1890s. I show that they lived complex, messy lives that defied bounded national categories, but that the process of inquest forced them into those very same classifications. The use of these inquests to ask questions of the lives and deaths of British subjects reveals to us the importance of change and continuity within colonial rule. The change, brought about by the solidification of categories and the expansion of the colonial project, rested on the continuity of practices inherited by the British colonial authorities and put to new use in 1890s Egypt. Thus, this exploration will allow us to ask broader questions about the unevenness of colonial rule, as well as about historical continuity and change. In the first part of this chapter, the reforms and transformations of 1890s British Egypt take centre stage, and I ask how categories emerged to become such a fundamental aspect of British colonial rule. In the second part, I begin by thinking of the unique history of Alexandria that opened up the necessary space for urban experiences beyond national divisions. Focusing on the British community of Alexandria provides a route for exploring the categories used in the management of death. The history of inquests and autopsies forms the bulk of the third section, which explores the legal basis for the British processing of their dead. Why does death matter, and how might we both quantify and qualify a death? Finally, individual stories of inquests, of the myriad British peoples of Alexandria who met their death in the city and were claimed by the British Consulate as theirs, demonstrates that the processing of the dead helped to flatten complicated lives into manageable categories for the living – categories that, as of the 1890s, enabled the British colonial government to organise and classify the Egyptian state.

British Rule in 1890s Egypt

At the beginning of the 1890s, the British occupation of Egypt was nearly a decade old. The transition to a colonial possession was a slow one, beginning with a 'veiled protectorate' in which the British stayed mainly in the background, but moving progressively towards open British rule, wherein the British were the ultimate authorities in Egypt, overruling both the Khedive and the Sublime Porte. It was not until 1914 that the British declared an

official protectorate, although by 1891, the British had consolidated their hold over Egypt, despite its technically remaining an Ottoman colony.[5] Although existing in a complicated relationship with the Ottomans and the Egyptian National Government, the British rapidly emerged as the primary voice in decision-making regarding Egyptian infrastructure, law, security and public health.[6] As other chapters in this volume demonstrate, changes in public works were evident in the 1890s, as the British state-building system was in full swing throughout Egypt, with a specific focus on rural areas.[7] The British worked to delineate boundaries in the Western Desert,[8] to create what they saw to be a functioning bureaucracy and to implement a series of projects determined to expand and solidify the colonial state.[9] As part of this process, the British colonial government worked to define Egypt, translating it into statistics and categories that could be managed and controlled.[10] While a small cadre of officials worked with him, Lord Cromer, through personal force and political authority, was the sole authority atop the government.[11]

The annual reports, collaboratively written by the various governing officials and submitted by Lord Cromer to the British Parliament, documented the evolution of government policy in Egypt. Designed specifically to convince the British Government that the Egyptian occupation was a worthwhile endeavour, the reports are notable for their attention to details and numbers.[12] Alongside all of the statistics for infrastructure, slavery, fiscal concerns, agricultural input and output, prisons, education and the like, those writing the annual reports glossed over the heterogeneity of Egypt's populace, naming and categorising groups and individuals with seeming ease. Cromer was concerned about the prevalence of other Europeans in Egypt and spoke of the need to increase English language instruction and general British cultural and societal influence in order to rule effectively.[13] He evoked national categories without defining them, as he presented the British, the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Europeans and others as self-contained, axiomatic categories that needed no explanation.[14] Moreover, while Cromer's concern with European residents is evident in other documents, in these reports only the indigenous Egyptian people appear as concerns of the British colonial government; the foreign communities are not listed as beneficiaries of the burgeoning colonial state.[15] For example, Cromer reported yearly on the government hospitals and their benefits to the 'native' population; the other hos-