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Occidentalisms. Images of 'the West' in Egypt

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CHAPTER II. A HISTORY OF OCCIDENTALISM IN EGYPT

1. Introduction

The sight of the people of Berlin chiselling away at the wall that had separated the German nation for nearly three decades provided the world with the most graphic display of the end of the Cold War. As the East-West conflict ceased to be, the concepts of 'East' and 'West' soon seemed to lose the meaning they had carried since the end of WW II. In the new uni-polar world some argued that the end of the Cold War was the definitive victory of liberal democracy as the sole credible system of government. In this view mankind had arrived at the end of history, after which there could be no major ideological rivalry.⁵⁴ Others pointed at the Islamic world where many appeared not to hail the universalization of the world after the image of the victorious West.⁵⁵

This latter point of view gained the upper hand and a new binary opposition has emerged in the worldview of many: an opposition between the West and Islam. From the framework of this dichotomy, people in the West have started to display an interest in what the Muslim Other thinks of the West. More precisely, the interest is focussed on why there is 'Muslim hatred' of the West. Especially the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001 were followed by the frantic search for an answer to the question 'why do they hate us?'⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Francis Fukuyama *The End of History and the Last Man* Free Press: New York etc. 1992.

⁵⁵ Lewis 1990 refers to a 'clash of civilizations', consequently adopted by Huntington in "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 72 Nr. 3 (1993), and later elaborated upon in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* Simon & Schuster: New York 1996.

⁵⁶ The question was first posed by US President Bush in his address to a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001: "Americans are asking 'Why do they hate us?' ", see:

The most popular answers to this question usually employ essentializations and fail to provide a proper insight into the history of appreciations of the West in the Islamic world. These answers relate that Islam has since its inception been a force consistently hostile to Christendom, Europe and the West. It is argued that when Europe did away with medieval misery to create the splendour of the Renaissance and fostered the Enlightenment, the Islamic world remained blissfully unaware, and fatally uninterested. It is suggested that this lack of curiosity is part of the Muslim worldview, where the realm of unbelief is regarded as naturally inferior by divine logic. Certainly the primary author of this point of view is Bernard Lewis. “[T]he Renaissance, the Reformation, the technological revolution passed virtually unnoticed in the lands of Islam, where they were still inclined to dismiss the denizens of the lands beyond the Western frontier as benighted barbarians.”⁵⁷

Apart from statements suggesting that the Islamic world has always rejected the West, there is also the idea that Islamic hatred of the West is essentially unrelated to actual policies of Western powers. Again, we can refer to Bernard Lewis, who grants that Western interference in Muslim countries may rightfully be criticized, but states that in the end “something deeper is involved than [such] specific grievances”, and he suggests it is “something in the religious culture of Islam which inspired (...) a dignity [which] in moments of upheaval and disruption, when the deeper passions are stirred, (...) can give way to an explosive mixture of rage and hatred (...).”⁵⁸ This idea that the key element nurturing the divide between the West and its Muslim critics, is essentially an irrational hatred against the

<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/>. (viewed June 13, 2006). See also: Peter Ford “‘Why do they hate us?’” *Christian Science Monitor* September 27, 2001; Fareed Zakaria, ‘The Politics of Rage: Why do they hate us?’ *Newsweek* October 15, 2001.

⁵⁷ Bernard Lewis *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* Oxford University Press: Oxford 2002, p. 7.

⁵⁸ Lewis 1990.

‘Infidel West’, has also been used recently by Margalit and Buruma in their publication on ‘Occidentalism’.⁵⁹

A third and related argument that aims to ‘explain’ Islamic animosity against the West is that Islam is simply incompatible with Western values such as democracy and human rights. This view is often illustrated by referring to how the Muslim world has supposedly reacted to the rising prominence of Europe in modern times. In this view, the Islamic world, particularly the Ottoman Empire, consistently selected only the material riches and techniques of the West, steering clear of adopting any immaterial, cultural and philosophical fruits of the European Renaissance.

The theory that the apparent confrontation between ‘Islam’ and ‘the West’ has more to do with an immutable Islam than with historical peculiarities, and that Muslim societies consistently held back any encroachment of Western influence (military and other technical matters excepted) is difficult to maintain when we review the historical reactions in the Muslim world to Europe rising. From various fields criticism has been directed at the idea that the Ottoman Empire and the wider Islamic world had closed itself off from Europe, reticent when confronted with Western ideas. Specialists in the field of Ottoman history have argued that the Ottoman Empire should be regarded much more as a European empire than is commonly the case,⁶⁰ and consider for instance the foundation of the Turkish Republic not to be as much a revolutionary break with the Ottoman past, as much as a completion of an internal Ottoman process of modernization.⁶¹ Other studies revealing that relations between the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean were more intense and mutually advantageous than previously believed, concern Arab travel literature dating

⁵⁹ Buruma & Margalit 2004 p. 8.

⁶⁰ Donald Quataert *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge etc. 2000.

⁶¹ Erik-Jan Zürcher *Turkey. A Modern History* Tauris: London etc. 1993.

back to the sixteenth century.⁶² Moreover, some recent publications recall attention to the theory that the European Renaissance could never have taken place without intensive cultural exchanges with the Southern Mediterranean.⁶³ While these publications imply that Arab appreciations of the West could not have been as monolithic as has been suggested, they do not focus on these appreciations or images. If we are to proceed beyond the observation that images of the West have been ‘ambiguous’, we should pay close attention to the descriptions of the West as they have come to us from the Arab world in recent history.

In this chapter I argue that the historical development of Egyptian appreciations of the West shows that the aforementioned preconceptions of how the West has been viewed from ‘the Islamic point of view’, are flawed, at least for as far Egypt is concerned. I argue that from the analysis of the history of constructing the West in Egypt emerge five ‘Occidentalisms’, or five typical ways in which the West is perceived and portrayed. These Occidentalisms are the ‘Benign West’ or the perception of the West as an exemplary region of which not only its science, technology and material wealth, but also its application of principles of justice, equality and democracy are admirable; the ‘Malign West’, or the West perceived as the oppressive and racist (neo-)colonial power; the ‘Weak West’, or the West as ‘paper tiger’ about to collapse because of its immoral culture and mindless materialism; the ‘Appropriated West’, or the representation of the admirable qualities of the West as having their origins in the (Islamic) Self, and lastly the ‘True West’, the image of the West in which negative qualifications (such as imperialism) are duly recognized but superseded by a belief that another, better, and ‘true’ West behind the negative façade exists.

⁶² E.g. Nabil Matar (ed. & tr.) *In the Land of the Christians. Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century* Routledge: New York, London 2003.

⁶³ E.g. Gerald MacLean (ed.) *Re-Orienting the Renaissance. Cultural Exchanges with the East* Palgrave MacMillan: Houndmills 2005.

2. Enchanté: *Al-Gabartî*

The French invasion of Egypt in 1798 is commonly accepted as a breaking point in Egyptian history and the beginning of Egypt's modern age.⁶⁴ This should however not be misunderstood to mean that prior to 1798 there were no contacts between Egypt and Europe. While thus not to be described as 'first contact', the French invasion of 1798 did herald a series of developments of great importance that were intimately linked to developments in Europe. As such it is suitable to start an investigation into Egyptian perceptions of the West with the reactions to this event and its aftermath. 'Abd Al-Rahmân Al-Gabartî's (1753-1825/6) *Chronicle of the Period of the French in Egypt*⁶⁵ is a remarkable eyewitness account of the French episode in Egypt. The first remarkable thing about the chronicle is its title. It refers to 'the French' (*faransîs*), not to 'the Franks'. In choosing this appellation Al-Gabartî shows himself aware and promotes the awareness amongst his readers of the differences between the various European nations. This befits the general precision with which Al-Gabartî has worked. The author shows himself to be very well aware of the wider political meaning of the French invasion and its strategic importance, witness the following exposé on how the British are involved in this matter:

⁶⁴ E.g. James Jankowski, *Egypt. A Short History* Oneworld: Oxford 2000; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1983; or in Arabic, Al-Sayyid Amin Shelby *Al-gharb fî kitâbât al-mufakkirîn al-Misriyyîn* Maktabah al-Usrah: Cairo 2003.

⁶⁵ Al-Gabartî wrote three accounts of the French occupation: *Târikh muddah al-Faransîs bi-Misr* contains his sketches of the first seven months of the French presence. In the chaotic period between the French' departure and the investiture of Muhammad 'Alî he rewrote these sketches into *Mazhar al-taqdîs bi-dhihâb dawlah al-Faransîs*. Finally, he fitted his final version of the events in his general, three-volume history of Egypt (*'Agâ'ib al-âthâr fî al-tarâgim wa al-akhbâr*), drafted after the installation of Muhammad 'Alî as governor. Unless indicated otherwise, this discussion makes use of Moreh's translation of *Târikh muddah*, the earliest account and the one most critical of the French: S. Moreh, *Al-Jabartî's chronicle of the first seven months of the French occupation of Egypt* E.J. Brill: Leiden 1975.

“The story of these English is that they are the enemies of the French people, and that the French, when they attacked the Venetians, at Venice and Leghorn and other places, also intended to attack the English but they could not reach them by land. So they fought them on the sea but were unable to withstand them, for the English are known for their strength and valour in sea battles, while the French are just the opposite. So the French knew that they could not achieve their ends against the English except through India, and (of course) there is passage to India only through the Red Sea, and the English are aware of this, and when they found that the French had taken possession of Alexandria and had crossed Egyptian territory, they were certain that the French would get to them afterwards from that direction and then they would undoubtedly be in constant need of supplies and soldiers (to India).”⁶⁶

Not only did Al-Gabartî dispense with the use of the term Franks, he doesn't even refer to the French as Christians. Napoleon pretended to be some sort of a near-Muslim, and tried to prove this by pointing at how the French had attacked Rome and conquered the Crusader kingdom of Malta. This was undeniable, but still no proof that Napoleon was Muslim. Al-Gabartî concluded that the French were neither Muslim nor Christian. They did not believe in God at all, or at least not in religion.⁶⁷ This was a new category to Al-Gabartî's audience, a new kind of unbelief. Al-Gabartî was among the first to try to make sense of this, and that he had to do so while facing the military superiority of these unbelievers, of course informed his description of them.

⁶⁶ Moreh 1975 p. 64.

⁶⁷ Op. cit. pp. 42, 47.

Al-Gabartî expresses shock at the fact that the French could have taken control of Egypt. In describing the French conquest, he portrays the Mamlukes as having been weaklings, whereas he likens the French to the brave fighters in the early days of Islam.⁶⁸ This should not be construed as some kind of self-criticism, for Al-Gabartî does not consider himself to be in any way connected to the Mamluke fighters. He does not share an identity with the Mamlukes. In a way, it could be construed as escapist: 'We Muslims were not served by a proper defence, we have been betrayed while those who have won were fighting like real Muslims.' Understood in this vain, the idea that Islam is superior remains valid, even in the face of unbelievers' victory over Muslims.

The difficult task of reconciling the dogma of Islamic superiority with the fact of French superiority treads a fine line between humiliation, admiration and contempt. On numerous occasions Al-Gabartî is very excited by what he is shown by the French scientists, and allows himself to be enlightened by them, yet when he is startled by some experiment, he is laughed at for his ignorance. Then in turn, when an experiment of the French team fails to deliver what was promised (an air-balloon would fly, but didn't), Al-Gabartî takes his revenge and ridicules the experiment.⁶⁹

It has been suggested that the Muslim world after it had achieved its heydays consistently failed to appreciate that beyond the Muslim world there could be beneficial knowledge and practices. Only in case of a military defeat did the Ottoman authorities think to adopt the enemies' devices that had facilitated its victory. In other words, only when it really had to, it adopted a 'thing'. The idea of obtaining knowledge from beyond the realm of Islam or the notion that it could be useful to learn from unbelieving peoples, was supposedly unacceptable because it went against the age old

⁶⁸ Op. cit. pp. 49f.

⁶⁹ Op. cit. pp. 112f. See also: Shmuel Moreh "Napoleon and the French Impact on Egyptian Society in the Eyes of al-Jabarti" Irene A. Bierman (ed.) *Napoleon in Egypt* Ithaca Press: Reading 2003, pp. 77-98, pp. 88f.

adage which said that Muslims are superior. This view is not corroborated by the contents of Al-Gabartî's account. Al-Gabartî not only displays a fascination with the content and method of French science, he also speaks favourably of the French way of dispensing justice. When he writes of the distinction between 'good justice' and 'bad justice', he provides a case of Mamluke justice (summary execution) as 'bad' whereas he praises the way the French dispensed justice on the murderer of Kleber (sentenced to death after a trial) as being a prime example of 'good justice'. In a later edition of the chronicle (*'Agâ'ib al-âthâr*) Al-Gabartî even includes the complete transcript of the court proceedings.⁷⁰ If the Muslim point of view was such that it was unthinkable that non-Muslims could have something of value to Muslims, we would never expect Al-Gabartî, a traditionally trained Azhar scholar, to write with such calm and balance about the French occupation of his country, even displaying admiration of certain aspects of the French ways of life.

3. A promise is born: Al-Tahtâwî

Governor Muhammad 'Alî (ca. 1768-1849), practically the independent ruler of Egypt as of 1805, sought to 'modernize' his army and his administration. Students were sent to Paris to learn the secrets of European strength. In 1826, the first group of forty-four students were sent off to Paris, among these the group's imam, the 24 year-old Egyptian Rifâ'ah Râfî' al-Tahtâwî.

Al-Tahtâwî (1801-1873) is a crucial figure in the intellectual phase which Hourani has labelled the 'first generation' of Arab thinkers engaging

⁷⁰ As noted in op. cit. p. 91.

with modern Europe, or the generation between 1830 and 1870.⁷¹ In this period Arab exposés of Europe were intended to inform the Arab populations of modern science and progress. Al-Tahtâwî and others of his generation such as the Tunisian Khayr al-Dîn and the Maronite Butrus al-Bustânî, had knowledge of the scientific and societal achievements of Europe, and wrote to inform a public that was largely ignorant of this.

Al-Tahtâwî was a student of Hasan al-‘Attâr, who had consorted with the French during their presence in Egypt. In particular, Al-‘Attâr had visited the scientific centres, where he first caught a glimpse of the advances in European knowledge. Thus to Al-Tahtâwî, the notion that Europe had something important to offer, was not revolutionary. Al-Tahtâwî’s account of his stay in Paris was an important book, for it provided the Egyptian reader with a first hand report of what Europe and France in particular had to offer. Also, it provided a posture to adopt in the face of European supremacy in so many fields. *Takhlîs al-ibrîz fi talkhîs Barîs*,⁷² which could be loosely translated as ‘The Extraction of the finest lessons from a summary account of Paris’ was intended to educate a wide and diverse Egyptian readership. The students were sent off by Muhammad ‘Alî himself, with the assignment to learn as much as possible of all that could benefit Egypt.⁷³

The Extraction begins with the description of leaving Cairo for Alexandria. Although Al-Tahtâwî had never been to Europe, Alexandria strikes him as European. Not only are there many foreigners and do the people speak a kind of Italian (then the Mediterranean *lingua franca*), also the buildings are to him quite unlike anything anywhere else in Egypt. Why would Al-Tahtâwî write this? We know from a passage further up that the

⁷¹ Hourani 1983 vi.

⁷² Available in translation as: Daniel L. Newman *An Imam in Paris. Al-Tahtawi’s visit to France (1826-31)* Saqi Books: London 2004. Page references are to Newman.

⁷³ They went to study administration, political science, military and navy courses, natural history, chemistry, metallurgy, mechanics and typography. In addition, Al-Tahtâwî was responsible for tending to his colleagues’ religious needs.

Europeanness of Alexandria he considers a good thing, which suggests that this is a way of telling the readers that Egypt is capable of becoming like Europe, and that it probably should.

On numerous occasions, Al-Tahtâwî puts great effort in explaining why he and his group were sent to Paris. Apparently, he feels the need to justify his presence in an infidel land. His justifications are derived from religious precepts, explaining that knowledge knows no religion, but that Islam urges Muslims to acquire knowledge. Al-Tahtâwî refers to the hadith ‘Acquire knowledge, even if it be in China’, and reminds his readers that China is an infidel land. Acquiring knowledge from beyond the lands of Islam is thus permitted.

Al-Tahtâwî provides two divisions of the world, one based on civilization and another on Islam. The first division is an explanation of the differences between the societies that are barbarian and the societies that are highly civilized and those societies that are in between these. Here, Al-Tahtâwî expresses the idea of progress, and surprisingly, he suggests progress is made through manmade knowledge. God does not come into play in his division between barbarity and civilization. For instance, the first step from barbarity to a higher form of human organization is made when a cave man notices how a falling rock falls on another rock, creates a spark and causes fire. If the man then understands that he can use this knowledge to his advantage and make his own fire, advancement has been made in his society. Similarly, higher stages are reached, apparently without God ever doing anything. The second division of the world is based on Islam. The Asian continent ranks highest, because here Islam has its roots and its largest group of followers. Second is Africa, because all of North Africa is Muslim and even some regions further south are inhabited by Muslims. Third is Europe, because its Eastern regions form part of the Ottoman Empire, even though most of the people there are not themselves Muslim. America ranks last, for there, there are no Muslims at all. If the intention

was merely to list the four continents according to the number of its Muslims, it would have been a rather pointless exercise. But the real point of this listing is made when Al-Tahtâwî illustrates what this list does *not* mean: “The above has been established from the point of view of Islam One cannot say that most of this relies on superiority, since by itself it (that is, ‘Islam’ RW) does not lead to excellence and virtue.”⁷⁴ The listing was thus intended to tell the readers that Islam and ‘excellence and virtue’ do not necessarily go together.

In general, Al-Tahtâwî is very pleased with what he sees in Paris. First and foremost, he is taken in with the scientific advances, and states unequivocally that “The best of science is in the land of the Franks”.⁷⁵ Also, people are very clean (to which observation he adds that people in Holland are reported to be even cleaner⁷⁶), transport and the mailing system are incredibly effective, and people strive to improve their work constantly. Al-Tahtâwî praises the benefits of newspapers to educate the people, the intelligence of the people, and after a visit to a royal palace he concludes that “The basic principle with the French is that everything is done for the sake of beauty and elegance, rather than for [excessive] ornamentation, the outward show of wealth or vainglory.”⁷⁷

As for the negative qualifications Al-Tahtâwî applies, they are few and far between. The search for profit may have beneficial effects, it also leads to greed. In general, the French are not generous, but Al-Tahtâwî adds a few things that could explain this: “Admittedly, generosity is quite rare in civilized countries. (..) Also, they believe that giving something to someone who is capable of working induces him not to concern himself with earning

⁷⁴ Op. cit. p. 125.

⁷⁵ Op. cit. p. 99 Unlike Al-Gabartî, Al-Tahtâwî uses the term ‘Franks’. Possibly he preferred to use a term with which his audience was familiar.

⁷⁶ Op. cit. p. 219.

⁷⁷ Op. cit. p. 218.

a living”.⁷⁸ Elsewhere, Al-Tahtâwî explains the French lack of generosity by saying that “generosity is peculiar to Arabs”.⁷⁹ The way the French treat ‘their women’ is also not to Al-Tahtâwî’s liking, as the men are like slaves to their women, and he quotes a French source saying that “The French treat [women] like spoilt children”. Yet the lack of jealousy means not lack of honour, for indeed “when their women misbehave, they are the most malicious of men against themselves and against those who have betrayed them with their women”.⁸⁰ Of course there was also the general flaw in the French in that they were no Muslims. This inspired Al-Tahtâwî to compose the following verses:

*Is there another place like Paris
where the suns of knowledge never set
where the night of unbelief has no morning?
Forsooth, is this not the strangest of things?*⁸¹

The fact that at first sight supremacy went hand in hand with unbelief could lead to the conclusion that unbelief leads to supremacy. Perhaps it was in order to prevent people from coming to this conclusion, that Al-Tahtâwî regularly contrasts the French with the Copts. The French are intelligent, “unlike the Copts, who have an inclination for ignorance”, and the French are clean, “as opposed to Copts”.⁸² It may be that these references were not so much intended to spite the Copts, as much as it was intended to demonstrate that the superiority of the French had nothing to do with the fact that they were unbelievers.

⁷⁸ Op. cit. pp. 238f.

⁷⁹ Op. cit. p. 175.

⁸⁰ Op. cit. p. 362.

⁸¹ Op. cit. p. 252.

⁸² Op. cit. pp. 139, 173 & 219.

Perhaps the only serious problem Al-Tahtâwî had with his Parisian experience was that some of the finest minds in Paris believed that there was no God at all, and considered religion a dangerous figment of the imagination. These are ‘extreme rationalists’ who believe that scientists are more useful than prophets.⁸³ As much as Al-Tahtâwî appears to have been enthralled with the rationalist approach to science, he could not allow for atheism.

That *The Extraction* was not only intended to educate, but also to instruct, is evident. One of the most remarkable parts of the book is the inclusion of a translation of the entire French constitutional Charter, the central French code of law of 1814, amended in 1830. Even more so than Al-Gabartî, Al-Tahtâwî is concerned with the concept of justice, and clearly believes that Europe may hold important keys to a new judicial system in Egypt. That the inclusion of the Charter was intended as instruction becomes the more clear when we see that in one passage Al-Tahtâwî added to the text. Where the Charter states that Ministers cannot be accused except *pour fait de trahison ou de concussion*, Al-Tahtâwî’s translation speaks of “treason, corruption or misappropriation of funds”⁸⁴ Apparently, Al-Tahtâwî felt the need to ‘complete’ this particular article of the Charter. Such a need would not arise unless he thought of the Charter as a model for Egypt.

The Extraction is a message to Egypt, saying among other things that if anyone still thought that Europeans hated Muslims, they were wrong, for the French are free to enjoy the religion they choose, including Islam. If anyone still thought that the Europeans were ferocious Crusaders, they were wrong, because most of the French people do not believe in the church anymore. (Indeed, what is seriously wrong with some of them is that they

⁸³ Op. cit. p. 180.

⁸⁴ Op. cit. p. 202. “bi-khiyânah fi tadbîr bi-al-rashwah aw bi-ikhtilâs al-amwâl”, Rifâ‘ah Râfi‘ al-Tahtâwî *Takhlîs al-ibrîz fi talkhîs Bârîs Al-Hay’ah al-Misriyyah al-‘âmmah li al-kitâb*: Cairo 1993, p. 178.

believe in nothing at all.) In sum, Tahtâwî's appreciation of Europe cannot be squared with the theory that Muslims found it hard to learn from infidels. Neither does Tahtâwî limit his recommendations of Western culture to material things. Rather, Tahtâwî is quite open-minded and enthusiastic about both material and immaterial elements of European life. In *The Extraction* we mainly find images of a good West, where Egypt can and should learn from. In the fields of education, science, public administration and the judiciary, Egypt should look to Europe.

4. Two ugly truths meet

As time progressed, Egyptian intellectuals no longer needed to inform people of modern Europe, for in many ways Europe was simply brought to Egypt. Much of this had been the work of Khedive Isma'îl, who wanted to modernise not only the military, public administration and the education system, but also society, the urban fabric (architecture and public spaces), the economy, and his own life-style. Cairo and Alexandria acquired enormous new areas, built according to Parisian models with neo-classical apartment buildings. Foreign investors and the local bourgeoisie established splendid ware houses. French, Italians, English and other Europeans were training officers and ran schools. Architects from Italy, France and Belgium were contracted to fill the *allées* and *piazas*. The spectacular Opera House was built and the derelict Mosque of Al-Husayn, sanctuary of the saint's head, was replaced by a mosque in neo-Gothic style. Cairo came to be called 'Paris on the Nile'.

As is well-known, Egypt could not afford all this, at least not in the way in which Isma'îl arranged the finances. France and Britain stepped in when Egypt proved bankrupt. Henceforth all Egyptian government spending would be subject to approval by foreign commissioners charged with

satisfying international creditors to the Egyptian state. Not long after, opposition forces rallied behind the slogan ‘Egypt for the Egyptians’, establishing an early form of nationalism in Egypt. Fearful of this development (which became famous as the ‘Urâbî rebellion) and out of concern over access to the Suez Canal, the British occupied Egypt in 1882.

This new situation called for a new approach to understanding Europe. Al-Tahtâwî’s call for modernization was argued on the basis of an understanding of modernization as something Egyptian authorities would develop. After 1882, this was no longer the case. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, it transpired that those who stood most to gain from modernization were the foreigners and the Turkish elite, and that on the losing side were the ulema and the Egyptian masses, who – contrary to the promise of modernity – had no say in how they were ruled. From a religious perspective, it could not be sustained that modernization was unproblematic, because the position of the Muslim authorities (the ulema and the religious schooling system) had been fundamentally changed. Social conventions had changed, too. The way people dressed, the language they were speaking, the manner in which the sexes interacted, these were cultural elements closely associated with religion, and these manners had now changed, and they changed after what was the European fashion. In the eyes of some people, there was no good reason for the people of Egypt to change in these respects. Substituting the turban for the hat did not increase a man’s intellectual ability, and though it was useful to know French, there was no reason why this language would have to be preferred to Arabic. In other words, although Europe still contained the promises held out by Al-Tahtâwî, it could now also be seen as a political menace as well as a danger to the cultural integrity of Arabs and Islam.

Gamâl al-Dîn al-Afghânî

Perhaps the first to articulate this two-sided appreciation of Europe was the enigmatic Gamâl al-Dîn al-Afghânî. Gamâl al-Dîn, born in Persia, pretended to be an Afghan in order to mask his Shiite background.⁸⁵ Referred to as a fundamentalist *avant la lettre*, but also claimed by Arab nationalists as well as Muslim reformers, Al-Afghânî is a difficult character to understand. Nikki Keddie's *An Islamic Response to Imperialism* is the only work to date that provides a thorough overview of Al-Afghânî's thoughts based on his Arabic as well as his Persian and French writings.

From Keddie's study it appears that what Al-Afghânî said or wrote depended very much on what kind of public he envisioned. A casual reading of his works would then lead to the conclusion that he was extremely opportunistic. When speaking in Istanbul he extolled the ambitions of the reforms (*tanzimat*) that were being implemented. When directing himself to an uneducated Muslim public he would speak of the glory of Islam and the dangers of foreign encroachment. In Paris, he wrote a letter to the Orientalist Ernest Renan, in which he commends Renan for his analysis that the *Muslim religion* is a disaster for science and development, yet adds that this does not mean that *Islam* in itself is hostile to science and development (this distinction will be dealt with below). In Egypt he encouraged Egyptians to take pride in their pre-Islamic, pharaonic heritage. When addressing Muslim youth in India, he stresses that these youth are part and parcel of the great Indian history, whose *vedas* and *sastras* (both Hindu religious texts) were at the root of the *Code Romain*, which in turn spawned all the modern European law codes. It seems impossible to reconcile these stances, except if we understand it in light of Al-Afghânî's overall concern: foreign political domination. There are doubts about whether Al-Afghânî

⁸⁵ Nikki R. Keddie *An Islamic Response to Imperialism – Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani"* University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles 1968, pp. 5-8.

himself was a devoted Muslim.⁸⁶ It appears that Islam to Al-Afghânî was a rallying call, a political instrument which could serve to bind masses of people together to fight (mainly British) imperialism. That is also how we should understand the contents of his letter to Renan.⁸⁷ When referring to ‘the Muslim religion’ Al-Afghânî meant the current state of affairs in the Muslim world and the dominant religious practices. This ‘Muslim religion’ Al-Afghânî deemed a disaster, yet ‘Islam’ as an ideal (as an ideology more than a religion) has been of service when it first lifted the Arabs out of a state of barbarism, then grew to become the most powerful and advanced culture in the world. For Islam to be able to do so once more, it had to be transformed into both a modern anti-imperialist ideology as well as a civilizational project. Seeking this transformation of Islam into a political device and a civilizational concept, Al-Afghânî created the beginning of a new Islamic discourse that was informed not only by religious arguments, but by political arguments, and aimed at developing an image of a Muslim anti-imperialist Self and an infidel imperialist Other. Because Al-Afghânî also sought to modernise the Muslim world, and since the Western, European, imperialist Other was ‘modern’ and advanced in science and public administration, a blind rejection of the West was unfeasible. The conflict between a desire to Westernise or modernise and a need to avoid identification with the West was one of the roots of the contradictions in Al-Afghânî’s writings.⁸⁸ To resolve this conflict, modernisation was couched in religious terms, something which we already saw in Al-Tahtâwî’s *Extraction*. For Al-Afghânî, the religious couching of the call to modernisation lay in his promoting the rehabilitation of Muslim medieval philosophy, which put reason over literalist revelation, and would enable modernization in an ‘authentic’ fashion. This much sought after

⁸⁶ Op. cit. p. 45.

⁸⁷ Op. cit. pp. 84-95.

⁸⁸ Op. cit. p. 43.

‘authenticity’ would continue to be of primary importance in the modernisation processes in the Muslim world and later in the developing world in general.⁸⁹

Muhammad ‘Abduh

During his Egyptian sojourn, Al-Afghânî had no student more talented than Muhammad Abduh. ‘Abduh was to become the first great Muslim reformer of modern times, and played a central role in Egypt from the late 1870s until his death in 1905. As Al-Afghânî, ‘Abduh felt that the pace and manner of modernization was a danger to the religious, cultural and moral integrity of Muslim societies, which already had strayed from the path of ‘true Islam’.

In 1869, when ‘Abduh was twenty years old, Al-Afghânî first visited Cairo. ‘Abduh went to see him and was enthralled. When in 1871 Al-Afghânî came to Cairo to settle, ‘Abduh became his most devoted student. Soon after, Abduh began to study Arab philosophy, and started writing on social and political topics. After graduation he became a teacher at Al-Azhar and at Dar al-‘Ulum, a school for Azhari’s wishing to add modern sciences to their education. His journalistic writings earned him the position of editor-in-chief of the official newspaper *Al-Waqâ’i‘ al-Misriyyah*. At the time, Egyptian politics was characterized by a power struggle between the British, the royalists and the Egyptian nationalists. Opposition forces were varied. There was a military wing of Egyptian officers and soldiers who sought to break through the Turco-Circassian control over the top positions, there were the religious conservatives who opposed the modernization process infringing on their traditions and status, and there were those who out of nationalist or religious sentiment opposed the British assumption of power in Egypt. Only when the British bombarded Alexandria and occupied

⁸⁹ One could think of Tanzania’s ‘African socialism’, Nasser’s ‘Arab socialism’, Iran’s Islamic revolution or Al-Qadhdhâfi’s ‘Arab democracy’, as later manifestations of the ideal of authentic or alternative modernization.

Egypt in 1882 did the opposition unite. Because ‘Abduh was one of the leaders of the nationalist wing of the opposition, he was arrested, tortured and eventually exiled for three years. Through his writings as a journalist and his private and public teachings, he had become a well-known, respected and influential figure. Upon his return he was made a judge, and in 1899 became mufti of Egypt.

‘Abduh simultaneously aimed at making Islam compatible with the changed and changing world and making the process of change conditional to precepts of ‘true Islam’. This meant that Islam had to be released from the shackles of tradition and stagnation (*taqlîd* and *gumûd*) and that society and its modernization had to be made subject to a set of as yet to be formed Islamic principles. To do so, ‘Abduh did not shy away from being inspired by European sources, and went to Europe as often as he could ‘to renew himself’.⁹⁰ From this we may infer that ‘Abduh perceived Europe to be an indispensable source for his work. Yet contrary to Al-Tahtâwî, he is very much aware of the inherent dangers of the increasing trend of Europeanization. He perceived a gap between ‘old Egypt’ and ‘new Egypt’. Justice was one of ‘Abduh’s main concerns, as it was to Al-Gabartî and Al-Tahtâwî before him. But ‘Abduh stressed that there could be no salvation in importing European laws to Egypt, because specific laws are based on specific historic trajectories and principles commonly understood by those who are governed under these specific laws. In other words, societies must engender their own laws if they are to be just societies.

In *The message of unity*, one of ‘Abduh’s main publications, we find an interesting reference to the West. Abduh mentions the Crusader period, and asks “why did they come, and with what they leave?” Abduh tells of how the Westerners were initially filled with hatred of Islam, indoctrinated as they had been by religious leaders in Europe. Yet as the Westerners dwelled

⁹⁰ Hourani 1983 p. 135.

in the Levant, surrounded by Muslims, they found that reality did not correspond to their prejudices. The Westerners found Islam to go hand in hand with freedom of religion, science, justice and art. They discovered that freedom of thought and the quest for knowledge were means of the religion, rather than incompatible with it. They learned from the Muslims and not long after, their ideas changed and the desire to learn grew among the Westerners. The desire to break the chains of tradition emerged. Subsequently, Protestantism emerged, along with various smaller sects. These schools of religious thought, Abduh stresses, were either very similar to Islam or even identical to it except for the acceptance of the role of Mohammed.⁹¹ In this small discussion of the Crusader episode, there is much of relevance to our study of Occidentalism. Abduh suggests that Westerners, before they came into contact with Islam, were rather uncivilized, hatemongering fanatics. Only when they got into contact with the refined culture of Islam, did their minds open to freedom, science and arts. Here, Abduh essentially presents Western civilization as a civilization that was spawned by Islam: it is the Occidentalism of the Appropriated West.⁹² By constructing this image of the West Abduh clears the way for Muslims to freely adopt and adapt from the West. In a way, by locating the origin of Western civilization in Islam, Abduh makes the West 'halal'.

Al-Muwaylihî

Someone who worked with both Al-Afghânî and Muhammad 'Abduh, was Muhammad al-Muwaylihî (1868-1930). Al-Muwaylihî was of a distinguished family which had suffered the negative consequences of

⁹¹ Muhammad 'Abduh *Risâlah al-tawhîd* s.n.: Cairo 1953, pp. 193f.

⁹² 'Abduh does not actually use the term 'crusaders', rather he refers to *al-Gharb* and *al-Gharbiyyûn*. This use is clarified by Muhammad Rashîd Ridâ, editor of the 1953 edition, in a note: "This refers to the Crusader wars [that aimed] at driving out Islam (..). It is necessary for every Muslim to know of its details and of how the Europeans profited from [experiencing] the virtues of Islam which led them to reform the affairs of their religion and their state. Most Muslims are ignorant of this." (Op. cit. p.192, n.2).

Muhammad ‘Alī’s modernization schemes. Al-Muwaylihî was a nationalist and was exiled after the quashing of the ‘Urâbî rebellion. He went to Italy where his father was working for the abdicated Khedive Isma‘îl who was living in exile with his son prince Ahmad Fu’âd. Al-Muwaylihî learned some Italian, Latin and French, travelled to Paris, London and Istanbul and collaborated with his father in setting up newspapers. In Paris, Al-Muwaylihî and his father met up with Muhammad ‘Abduh and Gamâl al-Dîn al-Afghânî, and worked together to create the periodical *Al-‘Urwah al-Wuthqâ*. This newspaper is the primary source for the writings of Al-Afghânî, and was in its time of great influence in the Middle East. A final characterisation of *Al-‘Urwah al-wuthqâ* awaits a more comprehensive study of all its editions, but from what Nikki Keddie has unearthed in her study of Afghânî’s contributions to the journal we may surmise that its stance was anti-colonialist, more specifically anti-British, as well as pan-Islamic. In 1887 Al-Muwaylihî returned to Cairo to work as a journalist. In 1898 he was one of those responsible for the launch of the newspaper *Misbâh al-sharq*. In this newspaper Al-Muwaylihî published articles under the title *A period of time* (Fatrah min al-zamân) between November 1898 and June 1900. Collectively, the articles of *A period of time* were published as a book in 1907 under the title *The Story of Isa bin Hisham* (Hadîth ‘Îsâ ibn Hishâm).⁹³ *The Story* was written in a genre that was new to Arabic literature. Partly rhyme, partly prose, it combined the classic Arabic genre of the *maqâmah* with the European genre of the novel. As such, it was the stepping stone to the writing of Arabic novels and therein lies much of its importance.⁹⁴ For this research however, its content is of greater concern.

The story is told from the perspective of ‘Îsâ ibn Hishâm (a fictional character), who relates of how he encountered a basha crawling from his

⁹³ In translation by Roger Allen *A Period of Time* Ithaca Press: Reading 1992. Page references are to Allen.

⁹⁴ Sabry Hafez *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse. A Study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature* Saqi Books: London 1993, p. 132.

grave. The basha served under Muhammad ‘Alî and wrongfully assumes that life will have remained the same. ‘Îsâ is the basha's guide in this world, which has changed so much since the basha passed away. The story takes place around the same time as the articles under the title *A period of time* were published, between 1898 and 1900. By providing ‘Îsâ with a companion from the past, ignorant of modern times, Al-Muwaylihî creates a meeting point between past and present, which makes it possible to criticize modern times from the perspective of tradition. Yet Al-Muwaylihî's world is not nostalgic, for the picture the basha draws of his own time is not very alluring either.

True to his mentor ‘Abduh, Al-Muwaylihî is not pleased with the established religious centres of knowledge, in particular Al-Azhar. Already at the beginning of the book, ‘Îsâ explains his presence at the graveyard as follows: “I am an author and I came here (to the graveyard) to find inspiration by visiting the tombs. *I find it more effective than listening to sermons from pulpits*”.⁹⁵ Having established his position vis-à-vis tradition, most of the rest of the story is devoted to criticizing those elements of society in which ‘Îsâ's time differs from the basha's. Those elements combined could best be termed modernity or Westernization. We find that Al-Muwaylihî advocates a critical view to both blind imitation of the traditions and blind imitation of Europe.

To Al-Muwaylihî, justice and equality are key concepts. The book shows very clearly how Egyptians are taking the back seat to Turks and foreigners in the military, trade and public administration. Notably, Copts are not singled out, contrary to what we saw in the writings of Al-Gabartî and Al-Tahtâwî. This could be explained by Al-Muwaylihî's nationalist convictions, which entailed an understanding of Egypt as undivided by religious differences. A confrontation between the basha and a man tending

⁹⁵ Allen 1992, p. 108 emphasis added.

to a donkey shows Al-Muwaylihî's understanding of the problem with equality in Egypt. The donkey man is playing a trick on 'Îsâ and the basha, by forcing his services upon them without them wishing it. The basha is outraged and wants the donkey man beaten up for his insolence. The donkey man reacts by saying "Oh begging your pardon sir! Who do you think you are .. anyway? We're living in an age of freedom when there is no difference between great and small men, amir or donkey man." ⁹⁶ Here, Al-Muwaylihî's presentation of equality in Egypt – one of the results of European influence – gives a mixed message. On the one hand, the reader is pleased that the basha is not getting his way: his insisting on beating up the donkey man reminds of the way in which the elite used to be able to quash the common people. Yet the donkey man is not a pleasant character. He is a nuisance, and the reader can understand why the basha is annoyed. When the donkey man says there is no difference between him and an amir, the reader most probably does not agree that this is just, although he knows that technically speaking, the donkey man is right. Al-Muwaylihî seems to suggest that this problem of a just principle having adverse effects is caused by blind imitation of the West. The principle of *égalité* in itself is valuable, but if simply imported, it leads to misunderstanding and not to justice. The changes are pushed through too fast, and they are not made suitable for Egyptian society. We see an analogy in the way a doctor explains to 'Îsâ and the basha how and when modern medicine can be beneficial, and when it leads to disaster:

“[Good doctors], [w]hen they practise medicine [in Egypt], ... only use medicaments which suit the inhabitants of hot countries, not those which suit people in cold climates. They carefully avoid medicines

⁹⁶ Op. cit. p. 111.

prepared to suit the disposition of Western peoples which don't suit the constitution of Oriental races ...

I've been told by learned men in the profession that doctors in Egypt must choose medicines and other medicaments of the most gentle potency, so as not to cause any discomfort to the Egyptians' constitution (...) as a result of taking them. They shouldn't risk using all the medicine listed in Western manuals on medicine, since most of them are designed for bodies with a strong build and vigorous stamina, as opposed to what is usually the case with Egyptians. Doctors should select only the gentlest of [medicaments, and] lessen the dose.”⁹⁷

In other words, innovations from abroad should be made to fit the situation at home, rather than blindly imitated, as Al-Muwaylihî sees happening in Egypt of his time. Al-Muwaylihî conjures a friend of 'Îsâ and the basha explain why things have gone wrong in Egypt:

“The major cause for all this change is the rapid penetration of Western civilization into Eastern countries and the way in which people in the East are behaving like the blind, emulating Western people in every conceivable aspect of their lives. In so doing, they're not enlightened by research, nor do they use analogy or consider issues in a sensible fashion. They pay no attention to incompatibility of temperament, differences in taste, or variation in climates and customs We've destroyed our houses with our own hands. We're like Western people living in the East, even though in different ways of life we're as far apart as East is from West.

Basha: -That may all be true (...) [b]ut I can't understand why Eastern people (...) haven't (...) given a moment's thought to

⁹⁷ Op. cit. pp. 208f.

the idea of returning to their authentic classical heritage, the old way of life? In that sphere they're pre-eminent; they don't have to adopt foreign customs and spend every single moment imitating other people the way they do now.

Friend: -(...) The only reason I know to explain that is that they are utterly arrogant and dismissive, something that stems from their attitude to the glorious past and the long period of negligence, indifference, slackness and feebleness that it engendered. They chose to ignore the past, neglect the present and take no interest whatsoever in the future. (...) Instead, they were happy to take over this veneer of Western civilization which was readily available to them without any bother or effort.”⁹⁸

The above quotation shows part of the solution of Egypt's problems, which according to Al-Muwaylihî consists of a reformulation of the core values of the endogenous heritage. In 'Îsâ's words, what is needed is a reassessment of the sharia, in order to make it compatible to the new Egypt. Because those traditionally responsible for justice (the ulama of Al-Azhar) failed in answering the changing situations, the child (endogenous justice) was thrown away with the bath water (the old-fashioned and corrupted judiciary), so to speak, and European secular laws were consequently imported.

But a reassessment of the endogenous Islamic sources was not enough to solve the problems. The book ends on a surprising note:

“Basha: How I wish I could visit Western countries, learn about the bases of Western culture in both their external and internal aspects,

⁹⁸ Op. cit. pp. 378f.

and investigate things in detail. But that's a big project, one that would involve a lot of trouble.

‘Îsâ: My dear amir don't despair! One day, you may achieve your wish. I've still got it in my mind to take you on a journey to Western countries so that we can gather the fruits of knowledge and research. If that is what you'd like to do, then I'll make some preparations. Friend: God willing, I'll be able to come with you.”⁹⁹

And so the West is still a crucial source to Al-Muwaylihî. The problems of Egypt are twofold: first, a crisis of Arab Muslim culture and second, the poor grasp of modernity, understood to be a Western-born phenomenon. To solve the first problem, one needs to go to the Arab Muslim sources, and to solve the second, one needs to go to Europe. And such is the view of the West. The West is Europe, and in particular Paris and London. It is the indispensable source for an undeniably needed modernization. It has spawned political and philosophical thought the fruits of which need to be reaped. Yet it is also contemptuous of the Oriental races, and is oppressive wherever it is allowed to oppress, such as is the case in Egypt.

If we take the above three authors to be representative for Egyptian thought between 1870 and 1900,¹⁰⁰ we see that the West in this second time frame is understood to be European, advanced, alluring but also dangerous. It cannot be said that the West is only accepted as a source for technical knowledge and material wealth, and as a danger to all matters of culture and religion. The ambiguity in the appreciation of the West cannot be described in such a clear-cut manner. Rather, the West is considered a source for both the

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ This interval is derived from Hourani, who discerned three generations of Arab intellectuals engaging with modern Europe: 1830 - 1870, when news of modern Europe was first made widely available; 1870 -1900, when 'Europe had become the adversary as well as the model' and 1900 - 1939, when various trends of thought started to crystallize on the Arab intellectual scene (Hourani 2004 p. vi).

material and the immaterial renaissance of Egypt, while it is also recognized as a threat to those Egyptians so enthralled by the West that they fail to appreciate the riches of their own heritage, renounce these riches and consequently become copies of Europeans. In addition, the West as a set of political entities is perceived as a danger to the aspirations of the Egyptian people. The British occupation of Egypt and the French occupation of Algeria made clear that European states act according to their own economic logic, and peoples in the Arab world were subject to the scheming of these European states. The European facts on the ground told a story of occupation that could not be reconciled with the stories told by the European philosophers and their concepts of freedom and justice. Contrary to Al-Tahtâwî, who viewed Europe as little less than a promise, the authors of the second generation were aware that their plans for a material and immaterial renaissance would have to take Europe into account not only as a source, but also as a political obstacle. In addition to that, they perceived a danger in those Egyptians who were ignorant of their own heritage and thought all they could need was in Europe.

Intellectual thought in the period between 1870 and 1900 was full of confusion. Just as the British invasion had brought together all sorts of opposition groups in an alliance against King Tawfiq and the English, also intellectually speaking various streams of thought were articulated as if they were one. With hindsight, we can say that religious nationalism and Egyptian nationalism were an impossible combination. But in that time, both were calling for independence from the English, and both were arguing for modernisation of education and judicial reforms. We can see how various ideas and intellectual motifs that were to emerge in later times, had simply not yet fully crystallized in this earlier period. That is the only way we can understand for instance that the Egyptian nationalist Al-Muwaylihî allows ‘Îsâ to ridicule the Egyptomania that had resulted in the establishment of Egyptological museums. ‘Îsâ mocks these and says that not

Ibis and Isis should be on display, but rather copies of the works of Al-Gâhiz, Al-Farâbî, Ibn Rushd and Ibn al-Rûmî.¹⁰¹ We would not expect this from later Egyptian nationalists from the early twentieth century, who had developed a taste for ancient Egypt as a central binding element between the nation's Copts and Muslims.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the various streams of thought that we can see in the works of Abduh and Al-Muwaylihî, split up into separate intellectual currents, each developing its own relation vis-à-vis the West. Most prominent of these were, as we will see, Islamic reformism (or fundamentalism, Islamism) and liberal Egyptian nationalism. A major cause of worsening relations between the West and the Arab world was the First World War and the subsequent developments, specifically the Sykes-Picot Agreement. For Arab intellectuals it became difficult to remain enthusiastic about Europe. Muhammad Rashîd Ridâ, a key figure in early Islamism described this disenchantment in no uncertain terms: "Europe has destroyed all the good reputation it had in the East ... Nobody believes the word of the Europeans anymore, nor does anybody trust them or even perceive them to be qualified to exercise justice and virtue."¹⁰²

5. Intellectual centrifuge

Al-Wafd and the liberal modernizers

At the outbreak of war in 1914, the Ottoman Empire chose to side with the Central powers. England responded quickly and reasserted its control over Egypt, replacing 'Abbâs Helmî II for the more malleable Husayn Kâmil (who was given the title 'sultan', to spite the sultan in Istanbul); Egypt was declared a British protectorate. Following the armistice, a group of Egyptian

¹⁰¹ Op. cit. p. 367.

¹⁰² Quoted in Emad Eldin Shahin *Through Muslim Eyes* International Institute of Islamic Thought: Herndon 1993, p. 85.

nationalist politicians led by Sa‘d Zaghlûl (1859-1927), a former Azhar student and disciple of Al-Afghânî and ‘Abduh, requested to send a delegation to London to discuss the future of Egypt. Their request was denied and promptly the situation escalated into resignations of Egyptian ministers, riots and the arrest and banishment of Zaghlûl. Notably, this 1919 Revolution, as it is called, specifically targeted British establishments, not generally European or ‘Western’ targets.¹⁰³ In Zaghlûl’s absence, the British ceded independence to Egypt, or more in particular, to Sultan Fu’âd (who had succeeded Husayn Kâmil upon the latter’s death in 1917), who crowned himself king of an Egyptian parliamentary democracy in 1923. When Zaghlûl returned to Egypt in the same year, he transformed his activist circle into a political party: the *Wafd* (the ‘delegation’). For decades to come, the Wafd would be the most popular political party in Egypt.

The men who established the Wafd were typically prominent aristocrats, members of the urban bourgeoisie. Theirs was a middle-class attitude, moderate, conservative.¹⁰⁴ The Wafd was a thoroughly nationalist party, its explicit party line consisting first and foremost of the call to remove the British from Egyptian politics. For although the protectorate had formally ended, so-called ‘capitulations’ were still in place, meaning that foreigners had economic advantages over Egyptians and enjoyed a favourable legal position. In addition, British ‘advisers’ to the palace and several ministries remained in place, not to mention the military control the British still enjoyed. Consequently, there was ample reason for a nationalist party to focus on the foreign, British presence. In addition, the Wafd’s nationalist stance fitted in well with the time, the world witnessing a general rise in nationalism partly as a consequence of Allied war time propaganda for self-determination. In particular, US President Wilson’s Fourteen Points

¹⁰³ Janice Terry *The Wafd 1919-1952: cornerstone of Egyptian political power* Third World Centre: London 1982, pp. 98f.

¹⁰⁴ Op cit. p. 71.

had had a massive impact in Egypt.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the Egyptian delegation to the peace talks in Paris in 1919 valued the Fourteen Points and the US in general as a useful ally in its demands for national independence.¹⁰⁶

The constitution of 1923 was largely based on the Belgian model, entailing two elected parliamentary chambers (with some royal privileges). Although claiming to speak for the entire Egyptian nation, and although indeed it enjoyed broad support until the late forties, the Wafd cadres never ceased to be aloof from the common peoples' daily concerns. It always remained a rather elitist organization. For most intellectuals of the time, and for the people of the Wafd, 'the West' was not a very foreign entity. Europe was the world in which Egyptian politicians operated, England was merely a political adversary. To the bulk of the Egyptian people the culture of the Wafd and the culture of the British were perhaps equally challenging. The difference was that the British were non-Muslim foreigners, where the men of the Wafd were (Muslim or Coptic) Egyptians.

The nationalist ideology of Egypt in this era specifically means Egyptian nationalism, as opposed to Arab nationalism. With the splendid riches of the pharaonic past scattered throughout the country, and marvelled at *in situ* or in museums worldwide by scores of Europeans and Americans, Egyptian nationalism adopted the pharaonic past as a constitutive element of the Egyptian national identity. Historical novels were written, set in the pharaonic past, architecture freely adopted elements from ancient Egyptian temples, and the 'Blue Shirts', the short-lived paramilitary youth wing of the Wafd, were telling themselves that their organization was modelled on the traditions of Ancient Egypt.¹⁰⁷ In doing so, Egyptian nationalists were not only setting Egypt apart from the Arab and Islamic world, they also underscored their demands for self-rule: the pyramids of Giza were

¹⁰⁵ Op cit. p. 72.

¹⁰⁶ Mahmūd Abū al-Fath *Ma'a al-Wafd al-Misri* s.n.: Cairo s.d., pp. 152ff.

¹⁰⁷ James P. Jankowski "The Egyptian Blue Shirts and the Egyptian Wafd, 1935-1938" *Middle Eastern Studies* Cassirer: London Vol. 6 Nr. 1 (Jan. 1970) pp. 77-95.

sufficient proof that the people of Egypt were capable of governing themselves. Yet simultaneously, by adopting the pharaonic charm the Egyptian nationalists were also following the fashion of contemporary Europe: Egyptomania.

The politics of the Wafd, although executed by men taught by Muhammad ‘Abduh and well versed in the writings of Al-Afghânî, differed from their religious teachers in that religion was simply not their concern. As they perceived it, there was no problem with European cultural influence, there was simply a problem with the presence of the British in Egypt: ¹⁰⁸ they were occupying seats belonging to Egyptians. In other words, there was no conflict of cultures or ‘moralities’ between the Egyptian nationalists and the Europeans. If there was a cultural conflict, it was between the Egyptian masses and the Egyptian modernizers, most of whom were liberal nationalists. Already in 1899 and 1900, Qasim Amin, again an associate of Muhammad ‘Abduh, published *The Liberation of Women* and *The New Woman*. These two publications, the first of their kind, are illustrative of the manner in which a separation of minds was forced upon the Egyptian intelligentsia. In *The Liberation of Women*, Amin advances the cause of female ‘emancipation’ ¹⁰⁹ by using arguments drawn from Koran and Sunna. The harsh criticisms from religious circles which befell him after publication led him to write *The New Woman*, again arguing for female emancipation, but this time basing his arguments on Western models. Apparently, Amin figured that while his religious arguments were not accepted, his arguments based on the strength of Western nations could not be denied. Perhaps the apex of such Europe-centred literature was achieved in 1938 by Taha Husayn, who in that year finished writing *The*

¹⁰⁸ Terry pp. 98f.

¹⁰⁹ Quotation marks are in order because it is questionable whether Amin’s position qualifies to be seen as one of female emancipation, as argued most forcefully by Leila Ahmed *Women and Gender in Islam* Yale University Press: New Haven etc. 1992, chapter 8.

Future of Culture in Egypt. As an exponent of the 'liberal age', Husayn advocated civil rights and liberties and a democratic form of government, and was concerned with education and social justice. Husayn was no stranger to Islamic traditions (he had enjoyed a thorough and successful training at various institutions of religious training, among which Al-Azhar), but in *The Future* he does not set Islam apart as an element which divides Egypt from the non-Muslim world. Rather, he brings Muslim Egypt and Europe together. Egypt as a Mediterranean country is part of the Mediterranean culture, and shares ties with Greece, in particular. As such, "the Egyptian mind is not Oriental", ¹¹⁰ and Egypt in general is not part of the East. Similarly, Husayn argues that Islam is very close to Christianity. Consequently, Egypt is in essence a European country, and therefore it need not surprise that "the Egyptian ideal in practical life is the European ideal" and that its "spiritual life in its various manifestations is purely European". ¹¹¹ Of course, also in *The Future* we find references to the European borrowings from Islamic/Egyptian civilization in the Middle Ages. In other words, Husayn in fact denies the West exists as an entity different from Egypt, thereby removing the possible concerns as to losing one's identity. If anything, Europeanization will help the Egyptians regain their identity. Although his arguments are different, Husayn essentially adopts the same strategy as Abduh: he draws the West into the sphere of the Self, appropriating the West by redefining the Egyptian identity and Western alterity in order for them to merge into one unit.

But when Taha Husayn wrote *The Future*, his views had already passed their peak of popularity. Most people associated Europe with imperialist exploitation. There was still an English presence in Egypt, and people started to be tired of the gradual approach taken by the Wafd. In addition, there were those who did not believe at all that Europe had a

¹¹⁰ Taha Hussein, *The Future of Culture in Egypt* Palm Press: Cairo 1998, pp. xiv; 4.

¹¹¹ Op. cit. pp. xv; 11.

praiseworthy culture. To some, Europe was a cultural danger to a Muslim nation such as Egypt. These criticisms had been voiced as early as the 1920s by people such as Muhammad Rashîd Ridâ, and by the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1929. In the 1930s religion became an important topic in political debates, but there was a sharp difference between these voices and those earlier heard of Muhammad Abduh and Al-Afghânî. The Muslim nationalists and the Egyptian nationalists had parted ways, and they both changed along the way.

Muhammad Rashîd Ridâ

‘Abduh and Al-Afghânî would probably not have approved of how their views were stretched to advance a wholly secular politics, where Islam is a personal matter of small consequence or made subservient to the interest of society. Yet other students stretched their views to propose religious and political developments that were no less distant from their original masters. One of Muhammad Abduh’s students later in life was Muhammad Rashîd Ridâ (1865-1935). Born in Syria, educated in arguably reformist religious circles, he was greatly moved when he first acquired copies of *Al-‘Urwah al-Wuthqâ*, the Islamic reformist publication produced by Al-Afghânî and Abduh in Paris.¹¹² In 1897, Rashîd Ridâ moved to Cairo to become a student of Abduh, who died eight years later. Al-Afghânî died in the same year Rashîd Ridâ arrived in Cairo. Immediately upon arrival, Ridâ started publishing *Al-Manâr*, the periodical that shows most clearly his views down through to the end of his life (upon which also *Al-Manâr* expired).

Ridâ is perceived as the link between the early reformist message of Al-Afghânî, ‘Abduh and others on the one hand, and the beginnings of ‘political Islam’ or ‘fundamentalism’ in the 1930s, most notably the Muslim

¹¹² Hourani, p. 226.

Brothers, on the other.¹¹³ The difference between these two ideologies suggests that Rashîd Ridâ is a crucial figure in the transformation from reformism to fundamentalism. Strangely, much of the literature fails to appreciate the role of Rashîd Ridâ in this development.¹¹⁴

As were ‘Abduh and Al-Afghânî, Ridâ was concerned with the matter of Muslim weakness and stagnation versus European strength and progress. In order for the Muslim world to regain its strength, reform was necessary. In order to begin a reform one first needs to have a clear idea of what has gone wrong. Whereas Al-Afghânî and Abduh appear not to have put so much effort in analysing in what historical period the Muslim world ‘strayed from the right path’, Rashîd Ridâ pinpoints the start of decay with clarity: after the first four rightly guided caliphs, things went downhill. Now, in order to once again flourish as a truly Muslim nation, Muslims had to emulate the ways of that pristine time of glory. The *salaf*, to Ridâ, were the first few generations of Muslims. After 661 (the year Mu‘âwiyyah of the Omayyads gained control of the *ummah*), only a handful of brave Muslim scholars (Al-Ghazzâlî, Ibn Taymiyyah) every now and then achieved the clarity of mind to write something down which may be of use to Muslims of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. This was however in contrast to ‘Abduh, who understood the *salaf* to include also the ulama of later times.

The core working material for the Muslim reformist was thus Quran, hadith and the *igâmâ‘* (consensus) of the early *salaf*. In his proposals for

¹¹³ E. D. Shahin “Rashid Rida, Muhammad” in John L. Esposito (ed.) *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* Oxford University Press: Oxford etc. 2001 (1995).

¹¹⁴ Hourani presents Ridâ mainly as the ‘keeper’ of ‘Abduh’s legacy, Shahin (1993) considers Ridâ’s own input to be an elaboration of ‘Abduh’s work, not a departure. See also: Emad Eldin Shahin “Muhammad Rashid Rida’s Perspectives on the West as Reflected in *Al-Manar*” *The Muslim World* Vol. 79, Nr. 2 (Apr. 1989), pp. 113-132. The most recent extensive research on Ridâ however, shows that there is a stronger link between Ridâ and Hassan al-Bannâ (founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, see further) than previously assumed: Umar Ryad has found documentation showing that Hassan al-Bannâ’s father and Ridâ were close friends, and that al-Bannâ was close to Ridâ as well, see: *Islamic Reformism and Christianity. A Critical Reading of the Works of Muhammad Rashîd Ridâ and his Associates (1898-1935)* Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis Leiden University 2008, pp. 5f.

reform, Rashîd Ridâ pointed at the difference between man-God relations and man-man relations. The regulations concerning the first relationship are fixed and cannot be changed. The relations between human beings however, are subject to the times. Thus different times will pose different challenges in this respect. To solve these, one first had to go and see if Quran and hadith had anything to say about them. Only if Quran and hadith were silent on the topic, only then could *igtihâd* be employed, provided that it is guided by the principle of *maslahah* (well-being, advantageousness) to the Muslim ummah. Here, again, Rashîd Ridâ narrows the confines within which Islamic reform should – in his view – take place.

The ideological difference between Ridâ and ‘Abduh has been consistently downplayed (see previous note). In part this may be because ‘Abduh is best known by many in the Arab world (and beyond) through the biography written by Rashîd Ridâ, in which Ridâ of course does not focus on the issues where ‘Abduh’s views were inconsistent with his own.¹¹⁵ In turn, the biography of Rashîd Ridâ was written by his friend Shakîb Arslân,¹¹⁶ who as a nationalist did not stress the differences between Ridâ’s religious revivalism and the secular modernist thought inherent in his nationalism. This may explain why Abduh’s progressive outlook is underestimated, while Ridâ’s compatibility with secular modernism is overestimated, and thus why Abduh and Ridâ are perceived to be more similar than they really were.

A very useful study of Rashîd Ridâ for the purposes of this research has been made by Shahin.¹¹⁷ Shahin distinguishes three phases in the development of Ridâ’s thought, in particular concerning his relation to the West. Initially, Ridâ is greatly influenced by the copies of *Al-‘Urwah al-Wuthqâ*, and is particularly impressed by the writings of Al-Afghânî. Ridâ

¹¹⁵ Ryad 2008, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ Shakîb Arslân *Al-Sayyid Rashîd Ridâ wa ikhâ’ arba’în sanah* s.n.: Damascus 1937.

¹¹⁷ Shahin 1989; 1993.

adopts Al-Afghânî's vigorous anti-imperialism and starts thinking of the ways in which the Islamic world should regain its strength. Yet when Ridâ comes to Cairo, he submits to Abduh's conviction that it is better to gradually arrange for improvements in the Muslim world, and that one should work with the British and steadily regain control of the country. Ridâ conforms to this approach, and even backs the quasi-feminist writings of Qâsim Amîn, allowing Amin space in various editions of *Al-Manâr*.¹¹⁸ He is also explicit in that British colonialism is not as bad as other colonialisms: The French and the Dutch are particularly cruel, as opposed to the British, who are more sensitive, and in some ways better rulers than some of the rulers Egypt had before colonialism.¹¹⁹ For as far as there is criticism of the West and Westernization, it is phrased in much the same terms as we have found in Al-Muwaylihî: criticism of blind imitation, disrespect for one's own heritage, etc. The third phase sets in with the First World War. The inconceivable brutalities committed in Europe changed the image of Europeans. It turned out that Europe was not the bastion of civilization, despite its scientific advances and appealing political philosophies. Additionally, the Anglo-French betrayal of the agreement with the Arabs had significantly soured relations. These developments led Ridâ to turn away from the gradualist approach, and thence he espoused an ardent, even violent stance against foreign rule of Muslim lands. Modernization and reform were still goals, but Ridâ allowed much less that these should be inspired by Western examples.

Because the differences in the mindsets of 'Abduh and Rashîd Ridâ have been downplayed, little effort has been put in explaining these differences. One might suggest that it was the shock of the abolition of the caliphate in 1923 that made Rashîd Ridâ turn to an idealism of a revival of the caliphate: a significant departure from 'Abduh's approach. However,

¹¹⁸ Shahin 1993, p. 11.

¹¹⁹ Op. cit. p. 12.

Ridâ already finished writing his work on the caliphate (in which he calls for a united Islamic state) *before* the existing caliphate had been abolished. Shahin seems to suggest it was the war and Europe's betrayal of the Arab revolt that made Ridâ change his mind.¹²⁰ Possibly, but if we look at the oath that Ridâ drafted for the leaders of the Arab revolt we can see that the text is already laden with thoroughly religious idiom: there is hardly any nationalist sentiment to be found.¹²¹

Interestingly, Ridâ was a great admirer of Japan, because in Ridâ's view the Japanese were doing exactly what the Muslim world should do: adopt the technology of Europe, but leave all that is immaterial. The Egyptians were doing exactly the opposite, Ridâ complained: when in Paris or London to study, they take courses in theoretical and social sciences (and misbehave terribly), while the Japanese students specialize in practical and applied sciences. In Ridâ's view, the Japanese were truly modernizing, while the Egyptians were merely Westernizing. The Japanese victory over the Russians in 1905, and the current state of affairs in Egypt, showed clearly which approach was the more beneficial.¹²²

This is not the place to dedicate page after page to analysing what moved Rashîd Ridâ to advance a religious and political programme different from what one would expect from a student of 'Abduh. It is merely noted that Ridâ, after the death of Muhammad 'Abduh, took a turn for a more conservative line of Islamic reformism in which there was a stronger emphasis on Islamic purity rather than on adaptation to the modern world. This conviction was also to be found in the mother of Muslim fundamentalist organizations, the Muslim brotherhood, founded in 1929.

¹²⁰ Op. cit. pp. 128f.

¹²¹ Eliezer Tauber "Rashid Rida as Pan-Arabist before World War I" *The Muslim World* Vol. 79, Nr. 2 (Apr. 1989), pp. 102-112, p. 107

¹²² Shahin 1989 pp. 123f. Following the Japanese victory over the Russians, Japan became an icon of Oriental strength. Already in 1904, Mustafâ Kâmil, the Egyptian nationalist leader, wrote *al-Shams al-Mushriqah* [The Radiant Sun] (Matba'ah al-Liwâ': s.l. 1904), in which Japan is made into an exemplary Oriental success.

The Muslim Brotherhood

Mitchell, in his work on the Muslim Brothers, shows how the Brothers' worldview revolved around three pillars: Islam, Egypt and the West. Mitchell points out that the Brotherhood's image of the West was twofold: the view from within and the view from without. Western civilization as viewed from within was a rather impressive, well-arranged and commendable civilization. Respect for individual freedoms, workers' rights, and effective democratic institutions were admired, as was the manner in which the authorities were accountable to their peoples, and again, the level of justice and equality was described as being superior to what was found in some Muslim countries. Yet such was the view as one would adopt when residing within the West. Egypt, as indeed all the world outside the Western metropolises, but within its economic and military reach, experienced a wholly different West, where the commendable principles were not applied.¹²³

Geographically, the West to the Brothers consisted of both the capitalist and the communist world, their common denominator being that they were both materialist. But for Egypt, the capitalist and particularly Anglo-Saxon West was the more relevant. The positive aspects of the West alluded to above were mainly in relation to this capitalist West: the virtues of the communist world were perceived to be mainly a matter of outward appearance. From a strictly ideological point of view, one could say that the Brothers were less far removed from the capitalist West than from communism, but the Brothers' focussed their criticism on the capitalist West, because it was this West that had invaded their daily lives and was

¹²³ Richard P. Mitchell *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* Oxford University Press: Oxford etc. 1993, pp. 224f.

transforming their society. This West, ‘thrown at the East’,¹²⁴ became the quintessential enemy. Then we find an interesting development in publications of the Brotherhood and its members: the return of the Crusaders.

Although authors such as Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) and Hasan al-Bannâ (1906-1949) would readily admit that European countries were no longer being ruled by the church, they insisted that when the West moves out of its own European (or American) confines and into the Muslim world, in the words of Qutb “the Crusader spirit which runs in the blood of all Westerners”¹²⁵ resurfaces. This development was new. Ever since at least the French invasion of 1798 Egyptian authors had recognized that Europe had fundamentally changed since the times of the Crusades. Since the first written reactions to the European advance over the Muslim world, there had been a dualistic element in the appreciation of this new Europe, but Al-Gabartî, and after him Al-Tahtâwî, Al-Afghânî and certainly not Muhammad ‘Abduh, had ever perceived such a deep-seated hatred against Islam on the part of the West, and never had such a hatred against the West been displayed as in these anachronistically phrased writings of the Muslim Brothers.

Already in early Brotherhood discourse we come across the Occidentalist stereotype I would call the Weak West: the West understood as being at the point of collapse. Mitchell quotes Al-Bannâ as saying in 1936 “‘The civilization of the West’, proudly strong in its science, and for a period able to subjugate the world, is now ‘in bankruptcy and decline’, its political fundamentals destroyed by dictatorship, its economic systems racked by crisis, its social order decaying. (...) The time has come for the East to rise again””¹²⁶ Al-Bannâ was of course not quite original in saying

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Qutb, quoted in op. cit. p. 230.

¹²⁶ Al-Bannâ, quoted in op. cit. pp. 226f.

this, for both Marxist ideology and Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes*¹²⁷ had propounded similar messages of the West as a spent force.

Rashîd Ridâ had had little contact with Europeans, and he was never as keen as 'Abduh on travelling to Europe. Yet despite this and his inability to read French or English, he still had knowledge of European writings, through translations which were being published at an ever increasing rate in his time.¹²⁸ Hasan al-Bannâ never went to Europe, but did profess to have read Spengler, Spencer and Toynbee during his studies. Yet the most influential writer of the Brotherhood was Sayyid Qutb. Perhaps indicative of the fact that America had superseded Britain and France as the supreme Western power, Qutb spent two years studying educational methods in the United States of America, from 1948 to 1950. On his way back to Egypt he visited England, Switzerland and Italy. In the 1930s Qutb had written poetry, fiction and literary criticism, associated with liberal modernists such as Taha Husayn and 'Abbâs al-'Aqqâd, and joined the Wafd party. Yet gradually he became more critical of secular politics and liberal intellectuals, and it has been suggested that for this reason he was sent off (by the Ministry of Education) to America: so that he would see for himself and be convinced of the wonders of the West.¹²⁹ If this indeed was the objective, it backfired. Upon his return from abroad, Qutb intensified his association with the Muslim Brothers, started contributing to the Brothers' weekly *Al-Ikhwân al-Muslimûn*, and took charge of the propaganda section. Clearly, his American experience had not agreed with him, for in America he saw mainly immorality, sinfulness and licentiousness.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ München 1918.

¹²⁸ Ryad pp. 19ff.

¹²⁹ Suggested in Pieter Smoor "The Mental World of Sayyid Qutb. Seedbed for the Muslim Brothers" in Manfred Woidich (ed.) *Amsterdam Middle Eastern Studies* Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag: Wiesbaden 1990, pp. 197-215: 199.

¹³⁰ John Calvert "The World is an undutiful boy! Sayyid Qutb's American Experience" *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* Vol. 11, Nr. 1 (2000) pp. 87-103; Sayyid Qutb/'Abd

The writings of Sayyid Qutb that in the long run were to have the most influence were not those he wrote in his early Brotherhood years. His most popular works were those he wrote in prison, some years after the revolution of 1952, when the Revolutionary Guard and the Muslim Brotherhood had become sworn enemies. The most popular discourse of those days however, was not that of jailed Muslim Brothers, nor that of Wafdist liberal intellectuals, but that of Gamal Abdel Nasser. Before proceeding with Qutb's views of the West, we should therefore pay attention to the West according to Nasser.

6. The West according to Nasser

Even though unmistakably a dictator, Gamal Abdel Nasser was perhaps the only Egyptian leader in modern history who could for many years rightfully claim to be speaking for the Egyptian masses. The Nasserist discourse furthermore enthralled people throughout the Arab world, as it became the primary manifestation of the ideology of pan-Arabism. Because of its strong socialist leanings it was embraced by sections of European left-wing activism and it could count in general on support from revolutionary anti-imperialist circles all over the world.

The characterization of the Cold War as a struggle between East and West seems confusing in our days. When thinking of East and West, the association most likely to come to mind today is 'the clash of civilizations', in which 'Islam' and 'the West' are perceived to be two colliding civilizations. During the Cold War, however, civilizations were not considered useful political concepts. When we listen to the Nasserist discourse today, it does not strike us as anti-Western, because the discourse

al-Fattâh al-Khâlîdî (ed.) *Amrîkâ min al-dâkhil bi-mandhâr Sayyid Qutb* Dâr al-Manârah: Djeddah/Dâr al-Wafâ': Mansura 1986.

consists of idiom common to Western politics: nationalism, socialism, development, independence, freedom.

*The Philosophy of the Revolution*¹³¹ by Nasser is the primary document for the early stages of Nasserist thought. Written shortly after the revolution, the document does not enter into specifics of the political practice. It is intended as a general outline, as ‘landmarks on the road’,¹³² as a collection of principles and ideological guidelines that are aimed at informing the reader as to what the revolution hopes to achieve and how it believes it may succeed in achieving those objectives. *The Philosophy* is a fascinating document full of remarkable passages and equally remarkable omissions. Some of the choices Nasser made while composing the document can be clearly related to his military background, such as the motto he gives to the revolution: Discipline, Unity and Work.¹³³ On several occasions we can discern a profound concern with social matters, most clearly when the revolution is characterized as being twofold: a political revolution and a social revolution. Religious invocations are scant: merely a handful of references to God are scattered in passing. Indeed, the author does not insert religion even where it would be most logical: the document is not preceded by the common invocation *bi-smillâh al-rahmân al-rahîm*, and on page 29 we read: “[All this] was not my will ... it was the will of *fate*, the will of *our people’s history* and a stage through which they are passing today”.¹³⁴ This ‘stage’ Nasser refers to, is an indication of his belief in progress, which is also clear in passages such as: “the national struggle is a process, steadily accumulating the works of each generation.” Nasser places the beginning of this history in the reign of Muhammad ‘Alî. With the coming of Muhammad ‘Alî Egypt’s ‘modern awakening’ began, but

¹³¹ Gamal Abd el-Nasser *The Philosophy of the Revolution* Dar al-Ma‘aref: Cairo 1954. Page references are to this English edition.

¹³² Op. cit. p. 45.

¹³³ Op. cit. p. 22.

¹³⁴ Italics mine.

modernization proceeded at a pace impossible for the people of Egypt to keep up with. In Nasser's words, when Egypt desperately needed a breath of fresh air after having been suffocated for centuries, "a raging hurricane assailed him, and [consequently] fever began to devour his feeble body."¹³⁵ This characterisation of Egypt as a feeble body unfit to consume all of modernity (in itself a blessing) at once, reminds one of the doctor in Al-Muwaylihî's *Hadîth 'Îsâ ibn Hishâm* (see above).

Long before the revolution, Europe or 'the West' had become a common concept that featured in political discourse in Egypt. European powers had been so influential in Egyptian politics and in Middle-Eastern politics in general, that it was difficult to maintain a political discourse which ignored these powers, in particular the power of England. In *The Philosophy* however, the West is given little attention. Where Nasser discusses the powers opposing the revolution, he mentions three groups, all internal: the big landowners, the 'old politicians', and a large number of government officials. In fact, nowhere in *The Philosophy* Nasser chooses to discuss specific Western countries. Instead, only a short reference to imperialism points out that the revolution has enemies abroad.¹³⁶

When listening to a speech Nasser gave in front of a crowd on the Square of the Republic in 1962, we find that relatively little had changed in his discourse.¹³⁷ The speech, occasioned by the tenth anniversary of the revolution, focuses on development, progress and the future. There are practically no religious incantations. By far most of the speech is dedicated to either internal matters of economy or inter-Arab relations. The speech is filled with exhortations to 'this generation', which is presumed to be uniquely placed by the providence of history to build a strong, united Arab

¹³⁵ Op. cit. p. 42.

¹³⁶ Op. cit. p. 65.

¹³⁷ "Khitâb al-ra'is Gamâl 'Abd al-Nâsir fî ihtifâl al-sha'bî min maydân al-gumhûriyyah bi al-'îd al-'âshirah li al-thawrah" Cairo, July 22, 1962. The speech can be played through the website www.nasser.org where many documents, speeches and images from the Nasserist period are available.

nation. To the extent that foreign powers are addressed, the focus lies – unsurprisingly – on England, France and Israel. These three countries had invaded Egypt in 1956 over the Suez conflict. Israel is treated separately from these three, and is associated with imperialism. (Yet Nasser also mentions that Israel first received weapons from the Soviet Union). France is given relatively little attention, as most of the attention goes to England. Nasser states that England and France have not accepted that Egypt has broken out of their spheres of influence: “we declare that independence is independence, that freedom means freedom and that in no circumstance will we be in a sphere of influence”. Notably, in the whole speech, the term ‘the West’ is not mentioned at all. America is mentioned twice in passing, which is surprising because at the time of the speech it was clear to all that the United States was ‘the leader of the free West’. One more interesting feature of the speech is that Nasser appropriates the concept of democracy: “[Our successes] are built on the basis of true social justice and true democracy, not on false democracy, or reactionary democracy.” As will be discussed later, this distinction between ‘true’ manifestations and ‘false’ manifestations of a concept is a recurring feature in Occidentalist discourses.

When looking at the way in which the West was represented in Nasserist discourse, it should be noted that generalized references to ‘the West’ were not as numerous as references to specific countries, to a large extent informed by disappointment and anger over political decisions by the countries in question (in particular England, France and the United States). The image of the West in general was twofold. On the one hand the West was seen as the better alternative in light of the so-called East-West conflict, because the capitalist democracies of the West allowed for nationalism and religion as corner stones of society, whereas the communism of the East was

fixated on materialism.¹³⁸ On the other hand, the West was the harbourer of classical imperialism, 'neo-colonialism' and lastly, the primary force behind Israel.¹³⁹ In conclusion, one could say that from a post-Cold War point of view the Nasserist discourse was to a large extent congruent with left-wing discourses in the West, except for that Western leftwing (in particular European leftwing) discourse generally had less problems with communism's anti-nationalist and anti-religious message. Additionally, Western leftist circles could be quite supportive of Israel, perceiving Zionism as a kindred socialist ideology.

7. Sadat

The state without ideology

The government of Sadat was a major departure from the politics Egypt had followed since the revolution. Political liberalization (later withdrawn), the dramatic severing of ties with the Soviet Union (1972), economic reforms in the direction of a free-market economy (from 1974 onwards) and eventually the US-assisted unilateral peace deal with Israel in 1979 (prompting Egypt's isolation from the rest of the Arab world and the inflow of American financial assistance) changed the face of Egypt internally and externally: even the name changed from the United Arab Republic to the Arab Republic of Egypt.

In the Nasser years dissenting opinions were effectively smothered. Islamist protagonists were simply repressed, but the liberal current suffered a perhaps more detrimental fate. The economic policies of the revolution involved the nationalization of much of the economy, the expulsion of

¹³⁸ Mohamed Heikal *Nasser, The Cairo Documents* Doubleday & Co.: New York 1973, p. 13.

¹³⁹ This dualism was paralleled in the position taken by American administrations toward Egypt during the Nasser years. See: David Lesch "Abd al-Nasser and the United States" Elie Podeh & Ann Winckler *Revisiting Nasserism. Revolution and Historical Memory in Modern Egypt* University of Florida: Gainesville etc. 2004. (pp. 205-229).

foreign (trading) communities, and made foreign investment practically impossible. These policies amounted to a near complete destruction of the class of society most inclined to liberalism: the small but influential middle class of shopkeepers, traders and entrepreneurs.¹⁴⁰ In other words, the ‘natural habitat’ of liberalism had vanished in Egypt, and consequently liberalism waned. Another contender for the sympathy of the Egyptian people, the Islamic current, made its comeback under Sadat. Sadat, fearful of the left, encouraged in particular the Muslim Brothers to re-emerge in public life. Seen from this angle, Sadat formulated a liberal Western-allied policy which would best fit and most appeal to a class which had been dismantled by his predecessor, and while pursuing these policies, he encouraged the strengthening of the Muslim Brothers, even though they had an ideology which was fundamentally opposed to Sadat’s foreign policy.

In contrast with the Nasser period, Sadat rule was more a question of *Realpolitik* than of ideology. This has had its effects on the content of opposition discourse. With regard to constructions of the West in the discourses of the opposition, these were influenced by the relations the regime had with Western powers. Those relations changed drastically under Sadat and have remained stable since: to this day Egypt is a major ally of the United States in the region.

The Islamic revival

The most important opposition discourse that emerged since Sadat took control of government was that of the re-emerging Islamists. For that reason we should return to Sayyid Qutb. Qutb was hanged in 1966, but when Sadat allowed the Muslim Brothers to gain prominence, Qutb’s writings also re-emerged. As we have seen above, Qutb had turned to the Muslim Brothers

¹⁴⁰ R. Baker *Egypt’s uncertain revolution under Nasser and Sadat* Harvard University Press: Cambridge Mass., London 1978, pp. 34, 61.

after his return from the United States. Probably his most important work was *Milestones on the road*.¹⁴¹

Milestones is a pamphlet, an Islamist manifesto intended to show the course of action to the *avant-garde* of ‘true’ Islam. The world, according to Qutb’s analysis, has not witnessed true Islam for over a thousand years. In all history there was only one short period in time when Islam truly existed, and that period was the period of the prophet himself and the four rightly guided caliphs who succeeded him. Since then, the Islamic sources were mixed with Greek philosophy and logic, Persian thought, Jewish traditions and Christian theology. Subsequent generations of Muslims tapped from these diluted, tampered sources and therefore did not constitute true Islamic civilization. Qutb concluded that at present the world, including the so-called Islamic world, is in a state of *gâhiliyya* (heathenism; ‘age of ignorance’; the pre-Islamic era of barbarism).

Qutb argues that the world is in dire need of new guidance. Communism has been defeated: the atheist ideology has been tried, but at present there is not a single country left in the world that is truly Marxist. Qutb is not surprised, because in his words, the Marxist system goes against human nature.¹⁴² Similarly, the West is at the end of its tether. “This is most clear in the Western world [itself], which no longer has ‘values’ to give to humanity, and which is no longer convinced in its heart, that it deserves to exist.”¹⁴³ And so, Qutb concludes: “It is essential for humanity to have a new leadership!”¹⁴⁴

The idea that the West is suffering from moral bankruptcy reminds of what Al-Banna wrote: that the West is in decline. But the difference is crucial. Qutb does not say that the West will crumble and be on its knees

¹⁴¹ Sayyid Qutb *Ma ‘âlim fî al-tarîq* Dâr al-Shurûq: Beirut etc. s.d.

¹⁴² Qutb pp. 3f.

¹⁴³ Op. cit. p. 3. We’ll see later on that it is noteworthy that Qutb argues for the weakness of the West through (supposedly) Western sources.

¹⁴⁴ Op. cit. p. 4.

any time soon. Qutb exclusively refers to a moral deficit of the Western world, and does not foresee that this shall impact the material and technological riches of the West in any way. Quite to the contrary, he foresees a continuing material strength in the West: “The present ummah is not capable of extraordinary performance in material creativity, [of the kind] that would make onlookers turn their heads, and establish her world leadership in this respect. The European ingenuity is much ahead [of us] in this field, and [our] material superiority over [the West] is not to be expected – for at least the first coming centuries!”.¹⁴⁵

A number of things here are particularly interesting. Qutb’s assertion – in 1964 – that communism has been defeated is striking. In his time, this must have appeared as wishful thinking, but after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 it became part of a wider point of view in the Arab world. The defeat suffered by the Arab armies was a blow to the regimes that had sent them: in particular Nasser’s Arab socialist regime and Syria’s Soviet-allied Ba’ath regime. Pan-Arab nationalism and socialism had been defeated in 1967, and consequently the left-wing secular parties in the Arab world entered a period of crisis.¹⁴⁶ And so left-wing ideologies had been discredited in the Arab world long before the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

What Qutb has to say about the Western alternative is remarkable in a different way. His statement that ‘the West itself knows that something essential is missing from it’ was never part of a general Arab or Egyptian understanding of the West. Rather, it appears to be connected to the kind of romantic or spiritualist thinking one could encounter in Western thought as of the 19th century, that regrets the *Entzauberung der Welt* and seeks spiritual solace in the face of mind-numbing materialism. Often, people

¹⁴⁵ Op. cit. p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ For this view, see a.o. Abu-Rabi‘ 2004.

have turned to the exotic, especially the East for this spiritual rescue.¹⁴⁷ This idea of a dichotomy between Western material knowledge and Eastern spiritual wisdom we could perhaps connect to Qutb's expectations regarding the Muslims' incapacity to compete with 'the Western creative mind'. Qutb almost seems to encourage the idea of a division of labour between East and West: one will deliver spiritual and moral guidance, the other will continue to enrich the world with material riches and scientific advances.¹⁴⁸

When Sadat allowed the Islamists to re-emerge into Egyptian society, it was in order for them to combat the leftist opposition. Yet the Islamists were never exclusively anti-leftist. Islamist thought had always spoken out against both rightwing and leftwing secularism. When Sadat proceeded on a pro-Western course, and closed a unilateral peace with Israel, the Islamist opposition recognized that it was little use to continue criticizing their fellow opposition on the left. Their main concern was how Egypt had 'sold out' on the cause in Palestine and how it was opening up to Western political and economic influence. Simply put, when the president was socialist (Nasser), the Islamist opposition was actively anti-socialist and passively anti-Western, and when the president became a Western allied liberal (Sadat), the Islamists became actively anti-Western liberal and passively anti-socialist.

¹⁴⁷ One could think of the contemporary New Age fascination with freely adapted Hindu or Buddhist philosophies, or one could go back to the notion of the Noble Savage which, was first coined in English in 1672 by John Dryden in his play *The Conquest of Granada*, where the Moorish (!) hero exclaims: "I am as free as Nature first made man – 'Ere the base laws of Servitude began – When wild in woods the noble Savage ran".

¹⁴⁸ The earliest elaboration on the theme (of the East as spiritual and the West as an abode of science) in Arabic is to my knowledge A.K. Mahmud *Ithâf al-mulûk al-alibbâ' bi taqaddum al-gam'iyât bi bilâd Urubbâ* (Cairo, 1841), who writes "God honored Asia with the pride of the message, of prophethood, generosity and chivalry ... then he bestowed on Europe the pride of the utilitarian sciences and the arts of brilliant education.". Cited in: Ibrahim Abu-Lughod *Arab rediscovery of Europe. A study in cultural encounters*, Princeton University Press: Princeton N.J. 1963 p. 154.

8. Five Occidentalisms

The views of the West as we have seen above, were formed on the basis of multiple sources. Often partly informed by ideological necessities and dogmatic rigour, partly constructed to fit propagandist rhetoric, the perceptions of the West are always also shaped by realities on the ground involving an 'actual West'. In most cases, the ingredients are mixed and come into play in various guises. So we find Al-Gabartî struggling with French scientific superiority: he departs from his traditional view of the world in order to praise the French knowledge and judicial system, but he is also faced with humiliation by French scientists, and when the possibility arises where he can ridicule the French, he does not hesitate. In Al-Tahtâwî's *Extraction* we find the first major case in which a portrait of the West is provided not merely in order to inform, but also in order to instruct. Interestingly, we find a hint that Al-Tahtâwî deliberately altered his picture of Europe in order to suit the political needs he perceived in Egypt. In so doing, Tahtâwî establishes a rhetorical practice in which images of the West are instrumentalized discursively. In this beginning, it was an image of how things should be done. We see that another, distinctly negative image of the West emerges gradually, as Western imperialist forces find their way into the Arab world. The claim that the negative image of the West is practically unrelated to the actual West should therefore be discarded.¹⁴⁹ Historical events where European or Western powers intervened in Middle Eastern politics to the detriment of Arab peoples (those most important in Egypt would be British *de facto* rule between 1882-1923, Sykes-Picot, the Suez War of 1956, Baghdad Pact) have played a substantial role in the formation of Occidentalisms in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world.

¹⁴⁹ See e.g. Lewis 1990; Thomas Friedman, "The Core of Muslim Rage" *The New York Times* March 6, 2002; Barry Rubin, "The Real Roots of Arab Anti-Americanism" *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 81 Nr. 6 (Nov./Dec. 2002); Margalit & Buruma 2004.

Analysis of the historical attitudes towards Europe or the West also shows that it is rather simplistic to argue that the negative image of the West comes from feelings of resentment among Arabs (or even more generally: Muslims), who supposedly have never gotten over the shock that Muslims were surpassed by non-Muslims.¹⁵⁰ The idea that Arabs, out of a misplaced sense of cultural and religious superiority, never accepted the idea that it may be imperative to adopt knowledge and practices from so-called unbelievers, belies history as glanced through the texts analysed above. We have seen that at the first sight of Western supremacy, Al-Gabartî praises the sophistication of the French men of knowledge, acknowledges the bravery of the French soldiers and refers to the French judicial system as an example of good justice. Later, Al-Tahtâwî (again, a religious scholar) paints a picture of Europe as being a great example for the people of Egypt. Only when Egypt is under British domination, when European Christian missionary workers are found throughout the country, when common Egyptians find themselves to be fourth rate citizens, coming only after the British administrators, the foreign trading communities and the old Turkish elite, only then do negative images of Europeanization appear, and even then these are mostly confined to the British presence. More 'sweeping' anti-Westernism, where negative qualities are applied and criticism is levelled not against specific governments but rather to 'the West' as a whole, we only encounter in the second half of the twentieth century, when Arab nationalism reaches its apex under the leadership of Nasser. Yet Nasser reproached the West from an anti-imperialist perspective not uncommon in the West itself. Only after the demise of Arab nationalism do we see the rising popularity of protagonists of the Islamist persuasion who forward the perception of the West as not merely a political, but also a cultural, even religious adversary. For anyone to suggest that these negative

¹⁵⁰ See previous note.

images of the West are the result of Muslims being unable to accept Western superiority would be simplistic. At least the historical development of the Egyptian perception of the West since 1798 suggests that Occidentalisms in Egypt are not formed by anything typically Arab or Islamic. Neither are they cut off from the reality of the West.

It has been argued that the Arab-Islamic world – out of the sense of superiority alluded to above – has limited its borrowings from the West to material import, or the adoption of the use of ‘things’. European philosophical wealth was ignored, but modern weaponry, factories and engines were readily imported.¹⁵¹ From the analysis of the historical texts we can see that this view is mistaken. Again we could begin with Al-Gabartî and Al-Tahtâwî, both of whom pointed at the French legal procedures as an inspiration for modernizing justice in Egypt, despite the fact that matters of justice are highly related to immaterial culture and specifically religion. This reference to Europe as a model for one’s judicial system continued: when Egypt gained independence in 1923, it adopted a constitution based on that of Belgium. Also in the arts, the political elite and intelligentsia in Egypt as elsewhere in the Arab world, were in tune with the European fashions in music (Verdi’s *Aida* was commissioned by the khedive himself), architecture (see Cairo’s downtown area, Heliopolis, Garden City, or the Corniche of Alexandria), philosophy (Arab intellectuals of the early twentieth century would normally have read such works as those of Rousseau, Comte, Spencer and Mill, among others¹⁵²) and literature.¹⁵³

The historical overview of Occidentalisms in Egyptian thought makes it clear that there have been various kinds of Occidentalisms, depending both on the period in which an Occidentalism was constructed as

¹⁵¹ Lewis 2002.

¹⁵² Hourani 1983 p. 171

¹⁵³ Authors such as Al-Muwaylihî, Muhammad Husayn Haykal and Tawfiq al-Hakîm let themselves be inspired by European themes and genres such as the novel and the play. Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel. An historical and critical introduction* Syracuse University Press: New York 1982.

well as depending on the ideological outlook of who is creating the image. Yet in all their diversity, some characterizations belong together, and so we can distinguish certain kinds of Occidentalisms. The first such Occidentalism to appear historically is one that is filled with admiration for the West, or what I would call the 'Benign West'.

The Benign West is the West often found in Al-Tahtâwî's *Extraction*.¹⁵⁴ It is the West, (*in casu* Europe) of both material and immaterial progress. In this West humanity comes to fruition like nowhere else. Not only its science, technology and material wealth, but also its application of principles of justice, equality and democracy are admirable. It is the West where responsible governments uphold both personal freedoms as well as a communal spirit among their well-mannered peoples.

Although Al-Tahtâwî's *Extraction* is one of the primary texts to locate this Occidentalist type, we also find the Benign West presented elsewhere. Al-Gabartî praises Western justice and valour in warfare and in the twentieth century, more than anyone else Taha Husayn made use of the idea of the Benign West. This image of the West is often used (certainly by Al-Tahtâwî and Husayn) to criticize and/or instruct one's own society.

In opposition to the Benign West is the image of the 'Malign West'.¹⁵⁵ It is the West as seen from the perspective of Egyptians under English-dominated rule. It is the West of the French occupation of Algeria, the West of the Sykes-Picot agreement. These representations of the West as wicked do not necessarily preclude the positive typifications found in the Benign West: in the West one may still see the admirable side described above. But that Benign West is – if recognized – only seen in the 'metropolises', not in the colonies and protectorates. The image of the Malign West emerges when

¹⁵⁴ Cf. the notion of the 'idealized West' in El-Husseini pp. 65-97.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. the notion of the 'rejected West' in El-Husseini pp. 101-133.

the West ceases to be a civilization at a distance. When representatives of Western civilization force their way by political interference and military occupation, when the British in Egypt withhold the admired qualities of the West from the people of Egypt, then the notion emerges of a West of double standards. It is the imperialist West, the West as enemy. Yet the image of a wicked West did not emerge all of a sudden. It took a long time before the icon of an evil West was formulated. Throughout the period between 1888 and 1923, when Egypt was a British protectorate, animosity was mostly directed against England, not against the West or Europe in general. Only when Western countries came together in a political alliance – because of the Cold War – did it become feasible to think of the West as a unified political unit. As El-Husseini has also remarked, the ‘rejected West’ (El-Husseini’s term) is not exclusively to be found in Islamist writings.¹⁵⁶ Images of the West as evil in the second half of the twentieth century came from two ideological currents: the secular (state, official) Nasserist discourse (dominant until 1967) spoke of an imperialist, capitalist West intent on subjugating the Arab world, whereas the Islamist (opposition) discourse (gaining prominence as of the 1970s) spoke of an infidel West seeking cultural imperialism, a racist West dominated by Zionists, and/or a fanatical anti-Islamic West of Crusaders.

Both the Benign and the Malign West are majestic. They are both a picture of a towering entity, be it a great ideal to aspire to, or a formidable enemy. The third Occidentalism or the ‘Weak West’ counters this notion of Western supremacy. It is first found in Hasan al-Bannâ’s description of the West as being in decline. From there on, it has returned time and time again. It is the West as a ‘paper tiger’, an image that aims to take away the awe with which the West is often regarded. The Weak West is a comforting image, for it can

¹⁵⁶ See previous note. El-Husseini focuses on the writings of Michel Aflaq.

take away the unpleasant thought that the other is superior to oneself. Interestingly, it is often found in Islamist discourse that also speaks of the Malign West. In other words, while in a text the West may on the one hand be portrayed as close to collapse, it may simultaneously be portrayed as ‘the Great Satan’, responsible for virtually all that is going wrong in the Islamic world. So the notion of an almost all-powerful West is coupled with the notion of a Weak West. Sayyid Qutb found a way to harmonize these two contradicting images for he presented a Weak West in a different way. Qutb presented a West yearning for an Eastern spiritual rescue, a West ‘at the point of collapse’ and in need of moral help. Yet this morally bankrupt West was still seen to be strong in the material sense.

While there have been times when the political and economic reality suggested that Western civilization had come to a halt or had even collapsed (WWI, 1920s), there have been other times when the argument for a Weak West was much less convincing. In such times another Occidentalism can be of service: the ‘Appropriated West’. The Appropriated West is the representation of the admirable qualities of the West as hailing from the Self, which often involves an historical argument. Often, this means that the West is presented as being Islamic (or Arabic) in origin, or as being a part of Islam as practiced by non-Muslims. We find it often in topics dealing with Islam and science, where the general conclusion is that all Western science can eventually also be found in the Quran, or that all Western science is an outgrowth of medieval Islamic input. Also the commendable aspects of democracy, capitalism and communism may in this vein be claimed as Islamic: Islam simply unites the best aspects of these concepts. The message in this Occidentalism is that one need not lose oneself in admiring the West, for that which is good in the West is not foreign to oneself: it is to be found in Islam, and often it is even extracted from Islam. The underlying message is of course that those aspects of the West that are claimed as ‘Islamic’ are

deemed 'good'. In Al-Tahtâwî's *Extraction* we find an appropriated West as being not Islamic, but Arab: Al-Tahtâwî refers to the French insisting on their *liberté* and explains that already a long time ago the Arabs displayed a high estimation for freedom. In order to substantiate this claim, he quotes lengthily from a story of a (pre-Islamic) Arab Lakhmid king having a discussion with the king of Persia. In this discussion the Arab king boasts of the Arab refusal to submit to a central leadership. Additionally, a story from the early Islamic period is cited, in which 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb punishes 'Amr ibn al-'Âs for having enslaved free men. "From this" Al-Tahtâwî concludes, "it becomes clear that the love for freedom has also been part of the Arab character from ancient times."¹⁵⁷ So here Al-Tahtâwî aims to prove that the French propensity towards freedom is not foreign to the Arabs, but rather a shared value. Finally, to illustrate the Occidentalism of the Appropriated West, one could also think of Muhammad Abduh's remark on Islam and the West: 'In the Arab World, I see Muslims without Islam, in Europe I saw Islam without Muslims'.¹⁵⁸

Where the Benign, the Malign and the Weak West are the most straightforward and stereotypical of the Occidentalisms mentioned here, the Appropriated West mentioned above is more complex in that it denies that any identity-alterity logic is at play in the Self's relation towards the West. It does not allow pointing at the West as an Other. Equally complicated is the fifth and final Occidentalism to be mentioned here, the 'True West'.

The 'True West' recognizes negative aspects of the West such as imperialism, but evokes the image of a 'real' West beyond this negative façade. That West behind the façade is portrayed as the True West, and consists of the appealing writings of French philosophers, constitutionalism,

¹⁵⁷ Newman pp. 365-370

¹⁵⁸ I have been unable to locate the original source for this remark. Regardless, it is still regularly quoted, e.g. Faysal Al-Sub'î "Islâm bi-lâ Muslimîn ... wa Muslimîn bi-lâ Islâm" <http://www.alarabiya.net/Articles/2005/07/26/15275.htm>. (viewed 14 June 2006).

progress and the ideal of democracy and equality. It is the desired West that one would like to see come to fruition. In Egypt, the notion of such an idealized West – despite its ill-boding exterior – was particularly strong in the British period, when people opposed the British presence in Egypt, but still clung to the ideals of progress and development which were associated with Europe. As put by Hourani: “while the nationalists condemned British or French policy, the conclusion they drew was *not that England or France was intrinsically bad but that they were being untrue to themselves*. The appeal was to the ‘true’ England and France, and the expectation was that sooner or later they would reassert themselves and understand that their interests were in harmony with those of the Arabs.”¹⁵⁹ The True West is a sort of ideal, often expressive of a hope that the true face of this powerful outside force is friendly. In more recent times we find this notion of the True West expressed after the fall of the Berlin Wall. With the communist threat gone, some argued, the West can finally be a truly honest broker in the conflict between Israeli’s and Palestinians.¹⁶⁰ This expression of hope implies that the West is essentially in favour of the Palestinians, but was never in the position to force (or even make known) its true will. This is to be discussed in the next chapter.

The Occidentalisms listed above do not exclusively belong to particular political modes of thought, and they do not mutually exclude one another. In one and the same discourse one can find examples of both the Appropriated West and the Benign West (such as in Al-Tahtâwî and ‘Abduh), and the concept of the Malign West can be found among Islamist as well as among nationalist or left-wing authors. Neither do specific Occidentalisms exclusively belong to a specific period in time. Though the Benign West

¹⁵⁹ Hourani 1983 p. 298, emphasis added.

¹⁶⁰ Ahmad Shawqî, “Al-‘Arab awwal al-mustafidîn min al-tahawwulât al-gadîdah” *Al-Masâ’* November 18, 1989.

was clearly dominant from the early nineteenth century roughly until the 1920s, it did not disappear afterwards. Similarly, the Weak West never left the scene of intellectual imagination since it first emerged in the 1930s. The only clear limit to the applicability of the Occidentalisms is that there was a time when they did not exist *yet*. But when they emerged, they stayed on. The question is whether the five Occidentalisms described above continue to be present in Egyptian writings today. That is one of the questions that the following chapters seek to provide an answer to.