KITCHEN HISTORIES IN MODERN NORTH AFRICA

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By

Ann M. Gaul, M.A.

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This dissertation is a comparative study of modern Egypt and Morocco from the turn of the twentieth century through the 1970s, narrated through the lens of the urban middle-class kitchen. Scholars of the region have paid increasing attention to domestic spaces and the politics of gender in the formation of national identity, but with a tendency to focus on written sources, nationalist movements, and formal concepts. I suggest that the notions of modern home and family that underpinned nationalist politics and cultures in Egypt and Morocco cannot be fully understood without an exploration of the kitchen as both a conceptual and material space. By tracing the histories of cooking stoves and cookware, cookbooks, and foods associated with “national cuisines,” I use the kitchen to tell a narrative that grounds abstract processes in everyday material, affective, and sensory contexts. I show how the home kitchen was crucial to the formation of modern national cultures as well as the figure of the middle-class housewife as a new kind of worker, and the concept of domestic happiness.

The dissertation uses literary analysis, archival data, and ethnography to explore relationships between dominant discourses and quotidian experiences. These methods bridge the seams that both connect and differentiate vernacular accounts from formal histories, domestic spaces from publics, and rationalizing tendencies from intuitive ones. By pursuing a comparative approach with examples from comparable yet distinct cases, I also highlight the historical contingencies entailed in the emergence of modern home kitchens. Why did Arabic cookbooks written for women emerge as a popular genre in Egypt in the 1950s and 60s, but not Morocco?
How did similar models of gas stoves become attached to different subjectivities, sensibilities, and cookware materials in each society? Why was middle-class refinement associated with urban dishes featuring cinnamon and saffron in Morocco, but hybrid dishes featuring béchamel or other European techniques in Egypt? In addressing these questions, I contend that everyday culinary practices and spaces were essential to forging new understandings of national identity, gender, and class—often in ways that elided or overwrote existing narratives and categories.
For my parents, John and Alicia,  
and for my godmother Tona.
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This dissertation was a collective effort, and in researching and writing it I have accumulated a large number of debts that I look forward to paying back and forward. (That said, of course I alone bear responsibility for the shortcomings of the finished product.)

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Over the course of the transition from student to scholar many of one’s mentors, teachers, supervisors, and discussants occupy an uneasy place between superior and colleague. Over the past decade I am fortunate to have learned from and looked up to a group of individuals who never felt the need to look down on me or make me feel the distinctions of conventional academic hierarchies. In that vein, in addition to my committee members and professors, I thank Michael Allan, Dima Ayoub, Karim Bejjit, Humphrey Davies, Samia Mehrez, Hicham Safieddine, Stacy Holden, Jennifer Dueck, Heather Sharkey, and Sherene Seikaly. It costs money to visit archives and buy old cookbooks and many, many funders have generously invested in this project. I am grateful for a Cherwell grant from the American Friends of the Oxford Food Symposium, a Pre-Dissertation Travel Grant from the American Research Center in Egypt, a Multi-Country Research Grant from the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, a Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council, a short-term research grant from the American Institute for Maghrib Studies, a research grant from Georgetown’s Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, and a Bibliographical Society of America-Pine Tree Foundation Fellowship in Culinary Bibliography. The Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship included a post-research workshop that was pivotal in the writeup phase of my process and I thank Daniella Sarnoff, faculty facilitators Daniel Purdy and Eduardo Elena, and each fellow present at that workshop; each participant enriched my work with your comments and interventions and their collegiality provided a much-needed burst of energy at a crucial stage in the writing process. Lastly, a graduate fellowship during the 2017-18 academic year provided through my home department at Georgetown, Arabic and Islamic Studies, gave me my dream job for a year: a stipend to do nothing but write up my research all day, every day, wherever I wanted to be, with no other obligations.

Many institutions hosted me for talks, workshops, and research over the past five years, each one an important step forward in my research and writing process. Talks at the Oxford Food Symposium in 2015 and 2018 bookended my research process and were wonderful ways to think through the big questions of my work with like-minded food scholars. Participating in gatherings convened by the Arab-German Young Academy in Beirut (2016) and Rabat (2018) were equally stimulating for thinking through questions of food, affect, and the body. In Cairo I thank the American Research Center in Egypt and particularly Djodi Deutsch, Mary Sadek, and Sally El Sabbahy, as well as the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, including Rudolf de Jong, Tine Lavent, Zakaria Elhoubba, and Azza Eltahawi. At Dar al-Watha’iq al-Qawmiyya, I thank Doctora Nevine, Madame Nadia, Madame Ragaa, and Madame Mervat. The library and publications of Cairo’s Women and Memory Forum were essential to my work, as was a week-
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I respectfully acknowledge that during that time, I wrote the majority of this dissertation on the traditional land of the Cherokee People, and that much of my other graduate work took place on the traditional land of the Piscataway People. A deeper engagement with the necessary work of decolonizing the content and contours of my scholarship will be a lifelong project; I intend this acknowledgement as a start.

The day I defended this dissertation my inimitable godmother Tona Bays died. It is impossible to overstate how much of her extraordinary life and her influence on my work are woven throughout this dissertation. I am deeply grieved that she did not get to read the finished product, and I regret that we never cooked through its pages together. But I am content knowing that she knew full well how much her love of food and respect for the diverse cultures that produce “good food” animated my work, transforming it into a vocation. I like to think that she would have appreciated the conclusion in particular.

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Blowing Rock, North Carolina
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I have followed a modified version of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)* system and rules for transliteration of Arabic words: ‘āyn and hamza are preserved but otherwise, full diacritics appear only in titles of publications and technical terms—a category interpreted here to include the names of dishes and culinary preparations. Hence, you will read *kuskus* rather than *couscous* and *fūl mudammas* rather than *ful medames*. Full diacritics are not used in personal names, place names, or the names of institutions or organizations. Where conventional local spellings of prominent historical or cultural figures exist they are used (e.g., Choumicha Chafay, Gamal ‘Abdel Nasser).
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**Introduction**  
**Writing Kitchen Histories**

This dissertation is not an attempt to write a comprehensive history of the modern North African kitchen. Instead it aims to write what I call “kitchen histories,” with examples largely drawn from middle-class homes in a handful of Egyptian and Moroccan cities and a focus on the early to mid-twentieth century. My central premise is that the modernization of kitchen technologies, the rise to prominence of the modern housewife as a new kind of worker, and the emergence of national cuisines have something new to tell us about the cultural histories and politics of modern Egypt and Morocco.

“Kitchen history” is a phrase modeled on the term “kitchen Arabic,” which is commonly invoked today by teachers of Arabic as a foreign language to refer to the language variety spoken by children of Arabic speakers who grow up in diaspora communities (sometimes referred to as “heritage speakers”). In this usage “kitchen Arabic” implies a form of spoken Arabic learned in the context of the kitchen or the home, associated with a mother’s speech and with practical use in a domestic space, not with literary production or formal instruction. That is to say, it is gendered, everyday, colloquial, informal, and intimate—all qualities that also characterize the kind of history I am writing in the following chapters.

The term “kitchen Arabic” also has a specific history in Egypt and Sudan that touches on themes of colonialism, gender, ethnicity, and class, themes that also recur throughout this dissertation. Heather Sharkey writes that when missionaries published a Bible translation in 1927 based on the Arabic they had learned from Sudanese women, Northern Sudanese men criticized it as “too much like ‘kitchen Arabic’ or ‘women’s Arabic.’”

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an American diplomat in Egypt identifies “kitchen Arabic” as a variety of Arabic spoken by both colonial women and their Nubian and Sudanese servants. In his memoir, Edward Said writes that the teaching philosophy of the prestigious American school he attended in the late 1940s in Cairo included teaching all of the school’s (mostly non-Arab) students Arabic—which in practical terms took place through a series of what he called “inane formulas” in a linguistic variety he referred to as “kitchen” Arabic. And as early as the 1930s in Malta, the local vernacular Maltese (a Semitic language heavily influenced by Arabic alongside Italian and English) was referred to as il-lingwa tal-kċina or “the language of the kitchen” in order to differentiate it from languages like Italian and English, which were perceived as more distinguished. In each of these instances, labeling a variety of Arabic as “kitchen Arabic” or “women’s Arabic” is less an assertion that only cooks or women speak it than it is a way to imply that a particular variety of Arabic is less prestigious or refined than another. The term frequently speaks to a fraught relationship between Arab or African and colonial cultures, with “kitchen Arabic” arising from interactions between servants and their colonial employers. In writing “kitchen histories,” I am building on some of these themes and using the kitchen to frame a reading of modern North African history and culture that is affective, vernacular, and intimate.

First, kitchen history is affective history: it includes the history of cultural material that is not necessarily written or even linguistically expressed, but rather is sensory, embodied, and felt. Inspired by Raymond Williams’ concept “structures of feeling,” the following chapters narrate the history and dynamics of kitchens as a way to describe “meanings and values as they are

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actively lived and felt.”5 This is not an attempt to prioritize the affective over the cognitive so much as to focus on the relationship between them—in Williams’ words, to view “not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought.”6 In the context of the home kitchen, I argue, we can read familiar concepts like modernity, middle-class culture, and national identity not merely as discourse, but as sensibilities with affective power that link sensation, emotion, and conceptual knowledge. It is the history of these sensibilities that explains how a dish that may have existed since the thirteenth century came to signify a national Moroccan taste, or how a casserole originating in Greece came to signify an Egyptian mother’s love in a Cairene home. They explain why to some, the modern concept of the nuclear family home smells like smoldering charcoal while to others it smells like the distinctive aroma of duck fat.

Kitchen history is also vernacular history. In practical terms this means that my source material includes both texts written in classical Arabic (al-ʿarbiyya al-fuṣḥā) and material in the colloquial varieties of Arabic spoken in Egypt and Morocco. Building on Benedict Anderson’s theory of “imagined communities,” I suggest that over the course of the twentieth century, cuisine became an important vernacular idiom through which Egyptians and Moroccans identified themselves as belonging to new national communities.7 Charles Smith has pointed out the limitations of Anderson’s theory in the Arab world, pointing to the resilience of classical (rather than vernacular) Arabic as a “vehicle of ontological truth” in Egyptian print culture as well as its relevance to supra-national communities.8 Meanwhile Nancy Reynolds argues that “the material structures of space and clothing offers a corrective to the more diffuse imaginaries

6 Ibid., 132. Emphasis mine.
of community formed by print capitalism and theorized by Benedict Anderson.” Building on these critiques, I read the material culture of the home and the texts of Arabic “print capitalism” against one another to suggest the emergence of national “culinary vernaculars” that took the form of vocabularies, kitchen tools, flavors, and recipes that were unique to Egypt and Morocco. During the period studied here, roughly the turn of the twentieth century through the 1970s, cooking was squarely at the heart of the relationship between print culture and everyday practice and thus offers unique insights into this complex nexus. Working in both classical and vernacular registers, and comparatively between Egypt and Morocco, allows me to balance between the transnational circulation of norms about modern kitchens, middle-class housewives, and refined cuisine that circulated in classical Arabic between Egypt and Morocco on one hand, and the striking divergences in the way these norms were translated into flavors, smells, textures, and gestures in urban home kitchens in each country on the other.

Finally, kitchen history is intimate history. This follows a premise held among scholars of colonialism that domestic space and intimate relationships are both integral and consequential to the formation of national communities and publics. Ann Laura Stoler’s work on Dutch colonial culture details how intimate and domestic arrangements were not mere metaphor; they were in fact central to maintaining colonial rule and the racial categories that defined it. Stoler writes that membership in a particular social category was a function not of their public behavior so much as “how they conducted their private lives—with whom they cohabited, where they lived, what they ate, how they raised their children, what language they chose to speak to servants and family at home.”10 This dissertation builds on Stoler’s insights to show how the intimate practices of the

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kitchen can illuminate processes of inclusion and exclusion that accompanied the formation of national identities in colonial and postcolonial North African societies. The chapters that follow explain how the production of certain kinds of homes and foods was key to “the creation of specific kinds of subjects and bodies” which in turn contributed to the formation of new bodies politic.11 Focusing on the realm of the domestic, the intimate, and the everyday also centers forms of culture largely dominated by women, and which are often excluded from dominant understandings of national culture and heritage, including literary canons.

The two terms “kitchen” and “history” sometimes work in concert and sometimes against one another. The chapters of this dissertation recount the way that acquisitions of stoves and refrigerators were remembered as occasions punctuating landmark events in national history in Egypt, and celebrate the role of women’s work in feeding the Moroccan resistance (Chapter One, Chapter Five). But they also show how Egyptian housewives refused state authority in matters of household management, confounding received historical narratives about the disciplinary power of the modern state in reshaping the private sphere (Chapter Three). Elsewhere I argue that dominant modes of culinary knowledge transmission in modern Morocco overwrote and erased complex historical trajectories as basfīla was recast as a national dish (Chapter Five). The kitchen thus emerges as a rich site for an analysis that tracks the dissonance and consonance between “prescription and practice,” as Stoler puts it, and between “feelings and thoughts” or “conceptual and bodily knowledge,” in the words of two historians of emotion.12 In the kitchen, these tensions may manifest through expressions of nostalgia for how food was provisioned or cooked in the past even as radical changes to recipes or shopping practices are introduced—for

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11 Ibid., 9.
instance, using less sugar or different cooking fats than one’s grandmother used. In certain instances, women might insist on the importance of performing all of the kitchen labor in the home themselves while paying a maid to perform most of the labor in seclusion so the hostess may entertain the American researcher. Thinking through the ways that these contradictions are justified or worked out offers rich insights into the relationship between norms and practice.

Working at the seams that connect and differentiate vernacular accounts from formal histories, domestic spaces from publics, and rationalizing tendencies from intuitive ones, the chapters that follow tack back and forth between prescriptive sources like curricula, advertisements selling an aspirational vision of the future, and cookbooks, and sources that describe or otherwise illuminate practices, including those associated with refusal and resistance. By pursuing a comparative approach with examples from parallel cases in Egypt and Morocco, I also highlight the historical contingencies entailed in the emergence of modern home kitchens—contending that the cultural differences in the “body politics” and “bodies politic” that emerged from the end of the colonial era at opposite ends of North Africa can be explained with the help of affective, vernacular, and intimate perspectives.

Contributions and Conversations

Broadly speaking, this dissertation is in conversation with three fields of academic literature: scholarship on nationalism in the Middle East and North Africa, the region’s modern gender history, and global food history. The common factor of my contributions to each of these fields is that my approach takes seriously the emotional and affective dimensions of nationalism, shifts in gender norms, and modern food cultures.\footnote{I use emotion and affect somewhat fluidly and interchangeably. I agree with Ruth Leys’ assertion that the distinction between the two cannot be sustained; I am not interested in exploring affect as “independent of...}
phenomena are merely understudied or important, but argue that they are in fact central to our understandings of them. The affective, in other words, must be taken into account in order to fully grasp and evaluate historical change and the production of cultural difference. A recurring framework throughout the dissertation is Daniel Wickberg’s approach to the history of sensibilities, which traces clusters of meaning in which the affective, moral, material, and discursive are inextricably linked. I use food to show how new ideas of domestic happiness created within the home, related ideas about food’s role in producing pleasure and belonging, and the creation of new kinds of desires all made the kitchen a space where public histories and identities were forged and changed.

Food is especially apt for this approach as it connects the embodied aspects of these histories to specific material realities. My approach to the material is informed by the work of Eve Sedgwick, who draws our attention to the affinities “between textures and emotions,” noting the “double meaning, tactile plus emotional,” in words like touching and feeling. This dissertation assumes that the same can be said of tasting. Furthermore, this nexus of the sensory and the emotional is not unique to English; similar affinities exist in Arabic. The root ṭ-ī-b, for example, connotes both a delicious taste and a feeling of happiness or enjoyment. In Moroccan Arabic, ṭayyaba, from the same root, is the most common verb for “to cook.” Semantically, to cook and to please, or be pleased, are linked. As the women of this dissertation, both real and ideal, were increasingly expected to inhabit the norms of modern domesticity, they became held responsible for satisfying emotional needs that must be understood in tactile, tasteful, and

signification and meaning” 443 but rather look at its interactions with ideology and other forms of signification, meaning, and representation. How the two are enmeshed and tracing shifts in that relationship over time and in space. Ruth Leys, “The Turn to Affect: A Critique,” Critical Inquiry 37, no. 3 (2011): 443.


olfactory terms. Thus throughout the dissertation the kitchen is presented as a site where the material, sensory, affective, and intimate are brought to bear upon public and national life in significant and consequential, rather than epiphenomenal ways.

The dissertation engages with recent approaches to the study of nationalism as it relates to three main themes: the middle class, colonialism, and popular and consumer cultures. The middle class is both a useful concept and a problematic one. In the study of food cultures it is especially apt for explaining the rise of modern cuisines, for example, which indeed occupy a “middling” place between historic courtly cuisines and the humbler diets that most of the world’s population has eaten for most of history. Yet the “middle class” is difficult to define and varies widely in different places and times. This project draws on the insights of a number of scholars of middle class culture in the modern Middle East, in particular Lucie Ryzova and Akram Khater, who have charted the emergence of a new modern middle-class cultures within the context of national culture formation in Egypt and Lebanon, respectively. Khater traces how participation in new labor markets as well as migration impacted the mobility of certain rural Lebanese populations in ways that reconfigured the homes they built and their domestic life and desires—as well as the way they viewed themselves as modern citizens within their homeland. In particular Khater’s integration of oral histories and his attention to the way narratives modernity manifest in everyday lived experience have informed my approach. Lucie Ryzova’s study of the emergence of a class of Egyptians commonly referred to as the “efendiyya” as a

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18 Khater, *Inventing Home*. 
study of middle-class culture in the context of national culture formation. She focuses in particular on the personal trajectories of men who migrated to cities like Cairo to take up new lives as “self-consciously modern” members of Egypt’s new professional classes. Following Ryzova, I am defining “middle class” as plural, emergent and culturally constructed, often marked by a set of aspirational ideas rather than an extant, stable, or empirically defined socioeconomic group. I also take seriously Ryzova’s point that studies of middle-class cultures must take into account the “local dimensions” that informed their emergence.

At the same time, I disagree with Ryzova’s assertion that “the efendi has no female counterpart.” She argues that “in real life, most efendis married the bint al-balad…a daughter from among the groups labeled ‘traditional.’” My sources suggest that the identification of efendi wives with “traditional” origins is not a particularly useful approach, and that these women often explicitly self-identified as modern and experienced similar educational and personal trajectories that facilitated their identification with middle-class culture. In identifying and analyzing what counts as “middle-class,” I draw particular inspiration from Fatima Mernissi’s sociological studies of Moroccan family structures, much of which is interview-based. Her work offers a classic illustration of the shift in the “patriarchal bargain” described by Deniz Kandiyoti, in which processes of modernization entail a breakdown of the mother-in-law-son-wife triangle as society shifts more towards a nuclear family arrangement that is frequently associated with a set of middle-class ideals about an autonomous family unit. Mernissi’s data, which centers the

20 Ibid., 11–12.
21 Ibid., 15–16.
voices of the women she studies, highlights the fact that a family’s arrival into the middle classes or their shift to a nuclear family structure unfolds over years or even generations, such that multiple models of family structures might coexist within a single city, class, or even extended family at any one time. In other words, the emergence of “middle classes” and their cultures is an uneven process. My research method includes over twenty oral histories, through which I attempt to counter the tendency to assume the unity or even existence of a “middle class” by attending to life trajectory and generational differences. I try to approach middle-class cultures as in a state of emergence and flux.

Often middle-class culture is identified with national culture, and while the members of the middle classes often purport to speak for the nation or are called upon to do so, it is important not to take these claims at face value. In order to broaden the perspectives informing my study of national culture formation I draw on scholarship that considers multiple registers of cultural production, particularly the importance of orality. Walter Armbrust highlights the importance of popular forms of national culture in Egypt, from poetry to cinema to song, that often existed not in classical Arabic but in the vernacular Arabic of Cairo.24 In a slightly different vein, Jonathan Wyrtzen draws on oral Tamazight poetry as a counterpoint to archival sources in classical Arabic and French in his study of identity and nationalism in modern Morocco.25 While my study is chiefly concerned with terms of identity that are self-consciously middle-class, I endeavor to include cultural material from a broad range of registers, highlighting the importance of

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embodied and oral forms of expression in the formation of national culinary cultures in particular, following the work of Arjun Appadurai.\textsuperscript{26}

This dissertation is also in conversation with scholarship that considers the formation of national cultures in colonial and postcolonial contexts. This includes work in colonial studies by scholars like Bernard Cohn, Frederick Cooper, Ann Laura Stoler, and Edward Said, who are attentive to the ways that colonialism functioned as “a cultural project of control” that also met with creative and powerful forms of resistance.\textsuperscript{27} It responds to calls to consider how nationalism and colonialism are imbricated, particularly in the study of global domesticity that highlight the way that modern categories of gender, race, class, and ethnicity were formed in complex circuits and flows of people and ideas and objects between multiple colonial and metropolitan spaces.\textsuperscript{28} I seek to contribute to global histories of domesticity in particular by introducing multiple spheres of comparison: not only metropole and colony but multiple metropolitan cultures (France, Britain, Spain) and multiple colonial spaces (Egypt and Morocco).

At the same time, by focusing on the kitchen, I explore how national cultures were brought into being not only discursively or epistemologically but through material culture and practices of consumption. One important model is Nancy Reynolds’ exploration of gendered consumption patterns in twentieth-century Egypt.\textsuperscript{29} Stacy Holden’s work on the politics of meat

\textsuperscript{29} Reynolds, \textit{A City Consumed}. 

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and bread supply in colonial Fes is similarly important in its centering of economic and
environmental factors to challenge received notions about modernity in the Muslim world and
argue that material struggles over local resources like food were key drivers of Moroccan
history, particularly in the period of anticolonial struggle.30

The second major body of scholarship this dissertation contributes to is modern gender
history in the Middle East and North Africa. In particular, I am building on the work of scholars
who have described how modernization in the region, whether under the aegis of nationalist or
colonial governments, politicized gender roles and domestic spaces.31 This dynamic produced
discourses and pedagogies aimed specifically at girls and women as current and future mothers
of the nation.32 In particular, the “modern housewife,” an idealized figure, emerged in many
places worldwide in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—including the Middle East
and North Africa. Despite regional variations, she was distinguished by a number of widely
shared characteristics.

This dissertation explains how the concept of the modern housewife was translated into
prescriptive texts and curricula in Egypt and Morocco, as well as the various ways that these
norms were received, enacted, refused, and resisted. Tracing the relationship between prescribed
norms and historical practices, I explore how women’s culinary labor contributed to the

31 For example, see Ellen Fleischmann, The Nation and Its “New” Women: The Palestinian Women’s Movement,
1920-1948 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Omnia El Shakry, “Schooled Mothers and
Structured Play: Child Rearing in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt,” in Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in
Creating the New Egyptian Woman: Consumerism, Education, and National Identity, 1863-1922 (New York:
Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Lisa Pollard, Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing and
Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005); Margot Badran, Feminists,
a critique of this literature, see Marilyn Booth, “Wayward Subjects and Negotiated Disciplines: Body Politics and
the Boundaries of Egyptian Nationhood,” International Journal of Middle East Studies 45, no. 2 (May 2013): 353–
74.
formation of modern Egyptian and Moroccan society. I revisit the figure of the “modern housewife” in Egypt and Morocco, following her into the kitchen to trace how her practices there might align with or contradict current understandings. In doing so I am responding to Marilyn Booth’s observation that much of recent scholarly literature on gender and sexuality in modern Egypt tends to “focus more on narratives from the political center than on the human subjects who performed or eluded them.” I attempt to remedy this tendency in the scholarship in two related ways: through a focus on questions of practice and by attending to the emotional and affective dimensions of gendered modernity—specifically the emergence of the notion of domestic happiness that a housewife was expected to produce. Later in this introduction I address my theoretical approach to these interventions in further detail.

Finally, this dissertation is a contribution to the fields of global food history and food studies. It is informed in particular by the work of Rachel Laudan and in particular her narration of the rise of global “middling” cuisines at the nexus of global and cosmopolitan trends in food cultures and the rise of national cuisines, as well as her focus on the connections between the history of kitchen technology and changes in culinary cultures. In recent years a significant amount of work in food studies has emerged addressing various aspects of modern food history and cultures in the non-West, including Latin America, East Asia, and South Asia. While the Middle East and North Africa has seen increased interest in food studies recently, fewer edited

33 “Housewife” is translated in numerous ways in the sources, including rabbat al-dār, rabbat al-manzil, rabbat al-bayt, sitt bayt, and ménagère or bonne ménagère.
35 Laudan, Cuisine and Empire, 2013. See Chapters 7 and 8 for more about middling cuisines.
collections or monographs have appeared in contrast to other regions. Most of the books
published in the field of Middle East food studies focuses on the medieval and Ottoman worlds,
with the exception of a number of edited collections whose geographical and topical scopes are
length studies on food in the modern Middle East, most of which revolve around hummus.} While not offering a comprehensive history of the modern national
cuisines of Egypt or Morocco, this study is designed as a contribution to the growing subfield of
Middle East food studies through its partial charting of the histories of twentieth-century
domestic kitchens and the first century of Arabic print cookbooks.

Theory and Framing
This project builds on existing studies of gender in the modern Middle East and North Africa by
drawing on theoretical concepts and frameworks from scholarship on emotion and affect as well
as Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice. My study begins when educational officials, cultural
elites, and other participants in Arabic print culture began to promote new ideas about the kinds
of education and work appropriate for the “modern” woman (this process began at the turn of the
twentieth century in Egypt and somewhat later, in the 1930s, in Morocco). As a result the
housewife emerged as a pivotal figure whose newly visible labor was said to produce the nation
through the nuclear family. As the chapters of this dissertation explain, the housewife’s labor
was central to the “technologies of the self” that created the modern kitchen, to the production of
nutritional and pleasing food for her family, and to the creation of a national identity bound up in
the terms (and tastes, and textures) of bourgeois respectability and refinement. The norms dictated for the new housewife stemmed from a new ideology, modern domesticity, that circulated between and across metropolitan and colonial spheres beginning in the mid- to late nineteenth century. Educational officials and cultural elites in North Africa promoted it in various ways, including school curricula, the popular press, and cookbooks.

The terms of this ideology linked principles of rational order, standardization, efficiency and economy, and middle class respectability to the nuclear family organized around companionate marriage and the nation. A central element of this new social structure was the ideal of “separate spheres,” with men working outside the home and women working within it. While scholars have traced the implications of this split on various aspects of culture and politics, its impact on food culture has yet to be explored: what does it mean for a new kind of gendered labor to produce food to sustain both bodies and a new kind of body politic?

The principles of modern domesticity translated into a number of prescriptions for standardizing and changing culinary practice: the use of written recipes listing set amounts of ingredients (measured by weight or volume, not gauged by eye or taste), serving sizes, and cooking times; strategies to maximize efficiency and minimize costs; a new culinary aesthetic that emphasized refinement and sophistication; and a new model of domestic labor that required the housewife to take personal responsibility for as much work as possible within the home.

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38 My description and analysis of modern domesticity as an ideology follows Terry Eagleton’s suggestion that one constructive use for the concept of ideology approaches it as “the ways in which signs, meanings and values help to reproduce a dominant social power.” That is to say, in terming modern domesticity an ideology, I am concerned with how its tenets work to create, support, and legitimate dominant groups in Egyptian and Moroccan societies. This is in part because I wish to avoid assuming or implying that modern domesticity was a totalizing force in these societies, and in part to emphasize the distinction between what was said or prescribed about the domestic sphere by cultural elites, state officials, and other powerful actors and how the domestic sphere functioned and changed in practice (which I describe through the concept of habitus). Tracing both consonance and dissonance between these two is a central goal of this project. Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), 221.
closely monitor any servants she may have had rather than delegate important tasks to them, and nourish her family both materially and emotionally.\footnote{This was a departure from the norms articulated in classical and early modern Islamic law, whereby women were judged to be deserving of servants (or not) based on the social status to which they had been born. If a woman was raised with domestic servants, it was expected that her husband would provide her with one. Similarly, women of lower social status were expected to perform domestic tasks in their marital homes. See Judith E. Tucker, *Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 50-51.}

These prescriptions are only the tip of the iceberg, however, when it comes to the changes entailed in the emergence of a new kind of home kitchen. In order to explain the relationship between ideological manifestations of modern domesticity, such as educational policies and cookbooks, and the largely non-textual modes of knowledge transmission and labor that were fundamental to the kitchen, I draw on Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. Habitus arises from Bourdieu’s theory of practice, which offers a way to trace how ideology is embodied and materialized in order to account for both the structuring effects of dominant ideas as well as human agency in negotiating those ideas.\footnote{Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).} Habitus can be understood as a “practical sense,” a set of learned dispositions that “incline” agents to act in particular ways, and which “cannot be reduced to either a mechanical reaction or creative free will.”\footnote{Robert Paul Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 217; John Thompson, “Introduction,” in *Language and Symbolic Power*, by Pierre Bourdieu, ed. and trans. John Thompson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 12–14.} Because habitus as a concept attempts to account for theory and practice, structure and agency, norms and their reception, it is an apt framework for describing the relationship between how housewives were instructed to cook or to structure their kitchens, on one hand, and their culinary practices and reception of those instructions, on the other.

I find habitus especially useful for describing culinary practice because it allows for the discussion of the complex set of instincts, habits, strategies, and choices that inform everyday kitchen activities. These cannot be separated from the dominant ideology of modern domesticity,
but they cannot be fully explained or dictated through that ideology’s formal concepts, either. Habitus does not aim to describe the direct application of a principle or norm; rather, it is “in cahoots with the fuzzy and the vague.”

If state-sponsored books and domestic science lessons dictate that a woman create a refined French sauce, habitus explains how she does so using pungent clarified butter from her grandmother’s village rather than fresh butter from her refrigerator. Habitus illuminates why in a community cooking class in Morocco, a teacher instructs her students to weigh the ingredients for a pastry dough using a scale and a written recipe, but then shows them how to adjust the final amounts based on tactile and visual judgements. Along these lines, the following chapters attempt to make sense not only of the cookbooks produced by state employees and elites, but the splatters, marginalia, and memories that reveal how those cookbooks may have been used in the kitchen. Culinary habitus, and particularly the way it is inculcated and acquired, helps to explain stark differences in what constituted refined cuisine or national tastes in Egypt and Morocco over the course of the twentieth century, despite the fact that their ideological underpinnings, not to mention their culinary heritages, had much in common. Thus although a Fasi recipe for braised chicken cooked in a clay vessel and a Greek dish baked in a ceramic casserole have very little in common in culinary, aesthetic, or material terms, the chapters that follow explain how both came to express strongly held notions of what constituted modern, sophisticated, and national cooking styles in Morocco and Egypt, respectively.

The way I approach culinary habitus also owes much to Raymond Williams’ term “structures of feeling,” which he defines as distinct from formal ideology and instead “concerned

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43 “Fasi” is the standard adjective for something or someone from Fes.
with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt.”

Culinary habitus allows a conceptualization of culinary knowledge as something that is felt as much as it is thought, and whose meaning therefore is never fully captured in language. Perhaps most importantly, culinary habitus suggests that through cooking, women did not only reflect preexisting social conventions and norms: they participated in generating them as well. Shaped by ideology but not dictated by it, culinary habitus links the practices of everyday life to the emergence of a new middle class and ultimately the terms through which family and nation were not only articulated and legislated but felt, understood, and created.

_Habitus in the Kitchen_

On paper, the terms of modern domesticity were broadly similar across colony and metropole as well as throughout the Arabic-speaking world. Egyptian and Moroccan writers alike exhorted housewives to be devoted mothers, efficient household managers, and founts of culture and refinement for their families. But the transformation of local culinary styles into modern, national cuisines produced significant variations across North Africa. As one Egyptian woman wrote in 1948, although “laundry-work, housewifery, psychology, education, science and other college subjects are the same everywhere,” cooking varies widely from place to place. Her remarks suggest there is something about cuisine that is irreducible to the rationalizing impulses of domestic science—or at the very least more difficult to transplant and replicate.

Adopting this premise, I study the emergence of national cuisines as what Eric Hobsbawm referred to as “invented traditions,” forged through the interplay of discursive and

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44 Williams, _Marxism and Literature_, 132.
embodied practices as described by Arjun Appadurai in the case of Indian cuisine. Comparing how certain tenets of modern domesticity played out in the kitchens of Egypt and Morocco highlights how contingent the terms of their application are. This is partly because foodways tend to be highly specific and localized, tied to the landscapes and spaces that produce them. It may also be explained by the fact that for most of human history, culinary knowledge has been produced, practiced, and transmitted in haptic, sensory, embodied terms—to borrow again from Raymond Williams, in a mode of “thought as felt and feeling as thought.” Such practices, materialized through countless bodies in myriad places and moments, lend themselves to a broad range of possibilities of variation.

In considering culinary knowledge and practice beyond the realm of formal concepts and ideology, I also extend the analysis into the emotional and affective dimensions of domestic labor. The notion that women were responsible not only for the progress of the nation but for its happiness was a common refrain of modern domesticity discourse. This emphasis on happiness was intrinsic to new understandings of domesticity, including its import beyond the private sphere: for instance, Anne McClintock explains how in Victorian England, happiness became newly identified with “rational order” and a new set of “precise rules not only for assembling the public sphere but also for assembling domestic space.” Accordingly, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, discussions of domestic happiness in North Africa (and beyond) frequently invoked culinary practice. Housewives were instructed to provide enticing home-cooked meals in the private sphere to ensure their husbands returned directly home after work, rather than linger in public eating spaces like restaurants and bars. This dissertation analyzes a range of

sources that connect the quality of a woman’s cooking to the happiness of her home and society: one cookbook author explains, for example, that all women should master the art of cooking to ensure that their marital home is one of “comfort and happiness (al-rāḥa wa-l-saʿāda).” My analysis shows that across Egyptian and Moroccan societies, particularly in Arabic-language expression, this theme of domestic happiness is the strongest recurring refrain.

Feelings of happiness and contentment were (and are) central to the ideology of modern domesticity; that they are both ephemeral and intangible did not hinder their significance and in ways forms a part of their social power. Sara Ahmed observes that happiness is difficult to pin down by its very nature; it functions as a promise that directs action without necessarily ever being fulfilled. What she calls the “promising nature of happiness” orients and guides us towards particular futures and visions of the good life to come, “a question of following rather than finding.” But as Ahmed points out, this was not always the meaning of happiness: the English word “happy,” from the Middle English hap, or “chance,” was once a matter of fortune or luck, not the direct consequence of one’s actions.

In the North African context, this shift can also be seen in the changing meanings of the Arabic root s-ʿ-d, from which the modern term used to refer to happiness, the verbal noun al-saʿāda, is derived. In usage prior to the modern period, derivatives of the root are typically linked to fate or divine will: happiness and good fortune stem from God. In the thirteenth-century Lisān al-ʿArab, the root connotes luck or fortune, as in the noun al-saʿd, the opposite of bad fortune (al-nahs). Edward Lane defines the related verb asʿaḍa/yusʿid through examples such

51 Ibid., 29–32.
52 Ibid., 22.
as “God rendered him prosperous, fortunate, happy, or in a state of felicity.” The twentieth-century authors discussed throughout the dissertation use the term *al-saʿāda* to refer to a form of happiness that is the direct result of a housewife’s everyday domestic labor—to be enjoyed by her family and by extension, her nation. The housewife, not God, is the subject of the verb *asʿada*, and the agent of happiness. Given this new configuration of individual agency, practice, and happiness, cooking offers a way to trace the varying ways that North African women sought to produce the right kind of happiness for their families.

Scholars of gender in the Middle East and North Africa have acknowledged the importance of happiness to the politics of modern domesticity, but without critically engaging happiness as a historical category. But emotions themselves have histories and merit serious historical inquiry: following Bourdieu, Monique Scheer proposes analyzing emotions not as effects of practices, but as practices themselves. Understood this way, the study of an emotion like happiness offers insight into changes both in “norms, expectations, words, and concepts that shape experience” as well as “the practices in which they are embodied, and bodies themselves.” For example, the modern concept of happiness consists of not merely a discursive and moral shift but also a new set of gendered expectations and practices that women began to learn and practice—from owning cookbooks to swapping recipes with their neighbors to mastering a gas stove. The chapters of this dissertation use culinary habitus as examples of practices that can be used to trace the history of domestic happiness in North Africa. Culinary habitus includes everything from the “practical sense” entailed in the material aspects of food

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54 *Arabic-English Lexicon*, s.v. “s-‘d,” Edward William Lane and Stanley Lane-Poole.
55 For example, Lisa Pollard and Mona Russell document the inclusion of domestic happiness as a goal of modern domesticity rhetoric in Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but do not specifically explore how happiness was defined, understood, produced, or experienced in this context. Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*; Russell, *New Egyptian Woman*.
preparation, such measuring by eye or by smell or taste how much cumin or cinnamon to add to a dish to make it taste pleasing, to the feelings of happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction that serving the “right” kinds of foods at a modern middle-class wedding is intended to produce.

While discussions of affective modes like happiness, comfort, or refinement serve methodologically as “signposts,” the process of exploring the cooking techniques or ingredients thought to produce those modes—the material underpinnings of their affective power—provides access to the much more complex learned repertoires that tend to work according to habitus, rather than the dictates of ideology.\(^57\) I argue that culinary habitus produced not only changes in prescriptive discourses espoused by elites, but also shifts in the tastes, feelings, and experiences through which Egyptians and Moroccans understood concepts like family and nation.\(^58\) In this sense, I am arguing that culinary habitus does not merely reflect social conditions like class divisions and the kinds of labor that constitute them; also, importantly, it generates these conditions as concepts and as modes of experience.

*Why (and Whose) Happiness Matters: Affect and Social Formations*

Conceptualizing culinary practice in terms of its affective dimensions illustrates how it structured or generated social formations, situating domesticity within broader histories of social class. Consequently, the modern housewife must be understood through the lens of class. Although often presented as a class-neutral figure, the modern housewife is nearly always implicitly middle-class, occupying a middle ground between elites and the working classes. She is often explicitly identified against one or both. Karen Tranberg Hansen emphasizes that in colonial and metropolitan spaces alike, the ideology of modern domesticity imposed not only a new axis of


\(^{58}\) This point draws on Wickberg, “History of Sensibilities.”
public and private, but one of “upstairs” and “downstairs.” The category of the modern housewife, in other words, cannot be understood separately from the men and women who provided domestic labor for middle- and upper-class homes, and of a new kind of relationship between them. Hansen also points out that those distinctions frequently map onto other forms of difference: historically, domestic workers have frequently come from different socioeconomic, regional, ethnic or racial backgrounds from their employers. This is as true in North Africa as it was in the European colonial contexts Hansen describes.

This means we can read the practices of the middle-class housewife in North Africa as contributing to forms of difference in which class, gender, and race intersected, and often in new ways. As she was articulated and understood by dominant segments of society, the modern housewife—and consequently the nation that she was thought to produce—entailed a number of exclusionary logics that functioned along lines of geography, ethnicity, race, and social class. The adoption of urban Arab dishes over rural Amazigh ones in the writing of Moroccan cookbooks, for example, and the adoption of cooking techniques that relied upon costly ingredients, complex techniques, or the newest kitchen technologies in Egypt, served to create new parameters for the inclusion or exclusion of certain individuals from national, class, and other social groups. I draw on examples related to the kitchen to argue that those exclusions in the private sphere had implications for the way national communities were defined, particularly during the crucial periods of anticolonial resistance and the early decades of postcolonial independence. In other words, kitchen histories help us to better understand national histories, explaining the ways that national differences, preferences, and tastes were generated on an everyday and domestic level.

59 Hansen, African Encounters with Domesticity, 4.
60 Ibid., 4.
Related to this is the question of who speaks for the nation and who participates in the formation of its national culture. Once again, happiness plays a role. Sara Ahmed highlights how modern happiness has contributed specifically to processes of exclusion. “To consider happiness as a form of world making is to consider how happiness makes the world cohere around, as it were, the right people,” she writes, highlighting how feminist, black, and queer scholars have articulated critiques of happiness as applying more to some kinds of people than to others.61 “Happiness is associated with some life choices and not others,” she points out, accruing particularly to the right kinds of marriage and family.62 In the context of the Arab world, Sherene Seikaly writes that in mandate Palestine, the figures of the peasant, the Bedouin, the worker, and the maid were all perceived as threats to the social order promoted and upheld by a minority group of families seeking to establish themselves as part of a new middle class.63

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that central to both the ideology of modern domesticity and to evolving forms of culinary habitus in Egypt and Morocco was their relationship to new and evolving forms of labor—which in turn made possible the establishment of a new kind of nuclear family unit. The slave trade was formally abolished in 1877 in Egypt and in 1923 in Morocco, and debates about the importance of domestic education for girls emerged soon thereafter in each place—often making reference to the demise of slavery as a source of labor in elite households. Although the end of the slave trade did not amount to an immediate end to slavery in practice, it was the beginning of the end of slavery as a reliable source for domestic labor—and formed a part of a drive to create a new local servant class to take the place of the enslaved. In England and Egypt alike, early proponents of domestic education in the late

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62 Ibid., 2.
nineteenth century expressed a need within the upper classes for appropriately trained domestic help from among the rural and working classes. And in the 1920s and 30s in Morocco, French colonial records noted the need for new forms of women’s education to address a gap left by the enslaved labor that had once helped run elite bourgeois Moroccan households: “The Moroccan man can no longer have the luxury of multiple women in his gynécée, where he is served by many slaves,” one 1929 memo read. Formal education in domestic subjects eventually became a strategy for state educational systems seeking to create middle-class housewives, but in its initial iterations, it was intended as a means to replace slavery with new forms of domestic servitude.

As the manager of the modern home, the “upstairs” figure of the housewife also represented a new kind of labor wherever the tenets of modern domesticity were being promoted. As middle-class women were increasingly targeted by forms of domestic education like school lessons and cookbooks, they were called upon to do “emotion work.” This term was coined by Arlie Russell Hochschild, who distinguishes emotion work from “emotional labor,” which is paid. Marjorie DeVault argues that emotion work arose historically in the context of the modern “nuclear family ideal,” which formalized the separation between paid work and housework. The resulting expectation was that housewives should perform both emotional and material work within the home—strands of domestic labor that are frequently “braided” together. She points to tasks related to food preparation as one example of the way that material

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64 Note sur l’état de l’enseignement des indigènes musulmans, January 1, 1929, F-107, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco.
67 Ibid., 55–56.
practices “give emotional weight to caretaking activities.”\textsuperscript{68} Within this framework, middle-class women are called upon to be productive in new ways: to produce not merely food, but domestic happiness, compensated not in wages but in kind—the benefits of living in a “happy” home. Crucially, the ideal form of this arrangement relies on “separate spheres,” precluding women from performing paid labor outside the home, implying that the only economic sphere they should be participating in is a domestic one understood in terms of emotional rather than material currency.

In practice, this ideal was financially impractical or impossible for the vast majority of Egyptian and Moroccan families. But DeVault’s research, conducted in North America in the 1980s, indicates that even in households that did not conform to the ideal model of a male breadwinner and a conventional housewife, the emotional ideal of a “soothing and supportive housewife” strongly informed patterns of emotion work in many cases regardless.\textsuperscript{69} This dissertation tells a similar story: even in the context of household structures that departed from the “separate spheres” ideal and after dominant ideologies evolved beyond that ideal, the inextricability of emotion work from housewives’ domestic labor remained one of the most durable and resilient aspects of modern domesticity in North African households.

Sources and Fieldwork

The idea for this dissertation emerged from a trip to Cairo’s Azbakiyya book market in 2013 where I purchased the first of what is now an ever-expanding collection of early printed Arabic cookbooks. It is based on twenty months of archival and field research in Egypt, Morocco, France, and the United Kingdom. I conducted preliminary research in Egypt during my year as a

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 56.
fellow at the Center for Arabic Study Abroad (2013-14). In summer 2015 I spent two months doing preliminary research in Egypt and the UK funded by a Cherwell Studentship grant from the American Friends of the Oxford Food Symposium. From September through December 2016 I worked in Egypt with funding from the American Research Center in Egypt, a Multi-Country Research Grant from the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, and a Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council. The latter two fellowships also funded research in Morocco, the United Kingdom, and France from January through August 2017. I returned to Morocco from September 2018 through January 2019 with funding from the Georgetown Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and a short-term research grant from the American Institute for Maghrib Studies. Brief follow-up research trips to the UK and Egypt in 2018 and 2019 were funded through a Bibliographical Society of America-Pine Tree Foundation Culinary Bibliography Grant.

Sara Ahmed writes that “Our archives are assembled out of encounters, taking form as a memory trace of where we have been.”70 This is perhaps especially true when the material we seek is the stuff of everyday life. While conducting research in Egypt or Morocco I was always “on the clock,” discussing my work and constantly learning new things from Egyptians and Moroccans in taxis, at restaurants, and at parties. My sources fall into roughly four categories. The first category is documents from state and other conventional archives (including the national archives of Egypt and Morocco, colonial archives in England and France, smaller local archives such as those holding the records of British domestic science institutions where Egyptian women trained, and special collections at institutions like the American University in Cairo, which holds the personal papers of figures like Huda Sha’rawi and Sayed Karim). Second

are sources from unofficial archives consisting chiefly of printed material (magazines, cookbooks, ephemera) purchased from used book markets in Cairo, Alexandria, Rabat, Chefchaouen, and Marrakesh. Next are literary and popular texts, from poems cited in magazines to novels and short stories. Finally there is my ethnographic material: I took copious ethnographic fieldnotes in homes, restaurants, stove repair shops and everywhere in between, and conducted twenty-one oral histories with several generations of Egyptian and Moroccan women. In all I visited over twenty archives and libraries and crossed international borders more than a dozen times over five years, consulting sources in Egypt, Morocco, England, France, and the United States. Many crucial texts and missing pieces were provided by friends and colleagues who generously passed on references, archival documents, and picked up obscure out-of-print cookbooks whenever they came across them. Between the boundless work and support of archivists and librarians, the generosity of the women who opened up their kitchens and memories to me, and the collaborative spirit of my friends and colleagues, the methodology that produced the following chapters was a above all collective.

Outline of the Dissertation
The dissertation begins with a chapter on the material history of the home kitchen, focusing in particular on the 1920s through the 1970s. Specific examples concentrate on a cultural history of stove technology and the cookware that was used with it. Chapter Two explains the history of domestic science education in Egypt, culminating in the writing of the most famous cookbook in modern Egyptian history, popularly known as Kitāb Abla Naẓīra. Chapter Three shifts gears and focuses on the reception of this cookbook and the domestic ideology that underpinned it, showing how it was both embraced and refused by Egyptian women learning to cook at home.
Chapter Four tells the history of domestic education in Morocco, arguing that narratives of colonial and postcolonial education in Morocco must be studied not only in terms of an axis of exchange between colony and metropole but also between the eastern Arab world, particularly Egypt, and Morocco. Tracing the history of domestic education along these two axes brings to light two important concepts, tradition and authenticity, that were brought to bear on the Moroccan kitchen. Chapter Five takes up these concepts and shows how they were translated into Moroccan cookbooks as well as a set of culinary practices that gave rise to the notion of a modern Moroccan cuisine based on the elite cuisines of Fes (and to a lesser extent Rabat and Tetouan). Chapter Six focuses on the way that notions of a refined culinary sensibility played out in the modernization of cooking sauces in Egypt and Morocco in ways that shared much conceptually but very little in material, sensory or gustatory terms.

In all of these instances, the kitchen emerges as a site where we can revisit familiar themes like authenticity, nationalism, and modernity not as abstract concepts but rather concepts whose power and consequence lies in their affective force. The implication is that the forms of difference and hierarchy that underpin categories of race, class, and gender must be understood not merely in terms of representation or material determinism but through the “modes of perception and feeling” (to draw on Wickberg again) that make these categories not just legible but affective—in the sense not only of being felt but having the power to affect, having consequence and weight in the world. A kitchen, in other words, is not only a material space in a house but a formative place where feelings (and tastes) of belonging are created and consumed. The work of a housewife in a nuclear family unit must be accounted for not only in terms of the productive potential of her husband and children, but of the affective labor she performs and the way it establishes certain traditions as national culture. A sauce is not only reflective of a
particular historical cuisine, but generates affective force through combinations of its texture and flavors that themselves convey modes of modernity or tradition. Kitchen histories help explain that differences in contemporary Egyptian and Moroccan cuisines are the function not of any unchanging cultural essence, but a series of historical contingencies. Kitchen histories, in sum, capture the affective, the vernacular, and the intimate, connecting them to larger social formations in order to provoke us to reconsider our understandings of how they come to be and how they function.
Chapter 1  
What’s in a Kitchen?

In 1888 in Alexandria, Egypt, Shaykh Futuh Shihab died. To his heirs he left behind miscellaneous property valued at 1,148 piasters. None of his personal wealth included real estate or cash. Over a third of his estate’s value was held in the form of copper that had been forged into an assortment of household items: a kettle, two pots, a small brazier (mangad), a tray for a water jug (qulla), a large dinner tray, a small dinner tray, a “very small” coffee tray, two mortars with their pestles, three candlesticks, five washing basins with two pitchers, two teapots (bakārij), and two Turkish coffee makers (kanakāt). The shaykh apparently enjoyed kuskus from time to time: he also left behind a clay kiskās along with ten wooden spoons.¹

These details from the probate records of the Egyptian sharīʿa courts can be read at face value: i.e., the reduction of the deceased’s personal property to a series of monetary values in order to ensure the division of assets in accordance with Islamic law. Read another way, however, this list of objects offers a window into the life of the person who left them behind; as Sara Ahmed writes, “the biography of a person is intimately bound up with objects.”² These objects also offer a glimpse of the material culture of everyday life in urban Egypt towards the end of the nineteenth century, most particularly the way food was prepared and consumed. Most probate inventories of urban Egyptian households during this period include significant numbers of kitchen utensils, making them useful for understanding what pre-industrial home kitchens in

¹ Tarakāt Shaykh Shihab Futuh, Sijil Aylūlāt bi-Maḥkamat al-Iskandariyya al-Shaʿriyya, 1888, Dar al-Wathaʾiq al-Qawmiyya, Cairo, Egypt, 1029-002676.
² Ahmed, The Promise of Happiness, 27.
Egypt looked like and how they functioned, as well as the larger economic and social worlds of which these kitchens formed a part.3

Shaykh Shihab’s probate record invites us to imagine the daily rhythms and sensations of a kitchen not yet subject to the modernizing impulses of domestic science, the mechanized production of everyday objects, the rise of a cash economy, or other effects of colonial modernity. The majority of his wealth was stored in objects that saw everyday use. His water jug and tray evoke water poured not from faucets but gathered from a central source and carried from place to place. The brazier implies stews simmering over bright coals close to the ground, probably not far from where garlic and herbs were pounded by hand with a copper mortar and pestle. Evening meals were likely enjoyed by candlelight. The particular vessels used to prepare food and drink conjure the broader world to which Shihab belonged, scented with imported coffee and tea and flavored with Maghrebi-style kuskus.4 Reading this probate alongside those of Egyptians from other social classes and genders offers additional insight: women and less wealthy men frequently owned only a handful of copper items and assorted clothing and linens. Wealthier individuals had significant cash and real estate assets and their household items feature a greater range of imported objects, including new technologies like modern clocks and the occasional asbirtū, or alcohol stove, which occasionally appear in Egyptian probate records in the 1880s.5

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3 For an example of the use of probate records in a study of material culture elsewhere in the Arab world, see James P. Grehan, Everyday Life and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century Damascus (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2007).
4 Nawal Nasrallah suggests that kuskus was likely brought to Egypt by Moroccans during the Fatimid era. Nawal Nasrallah, trans., Treasure Trove of Benefits and Variety at the Table: A Fourteenth-Century Egyptian Cookbook, (Boston: Brill, 2018), 49; For more about the Moroccan community in Egypt and their influence on social practice, see Hossam Muhammad ʿAbd al-Muʿat, Al-Maghāriba fī Misr khlāl al-qurn al-thāmin ʿashar (Alexandria, Egypt: Biblioteca Alexandrina, 2015), chap. 5.
5 These observations are based on a sampling of 37 probate records from 1881-1894 from the sharʿa courts Alexandria and Damietta (Dimyāṭ). The records I studied are an incomplete sample due to the availability of records in the Egyptian archives and the challenges of accessing them (probate records from Cairo, or dating to after 1900,
This chapter tells the history of a handful of kitchen tools—namely, cookstoves and the pots and pans used with them—in order to explain how home kitchens in North Africa transformed from the model suggested by Shaykh Shihab’s possessions into something entirely different by the mid-1970s. Focusing on the kitchens of the growing middle classes in a handful of Moroccan and Egyptian cities, I suggest that the histories of these kitchen technologies are a scaffold for explaining broader cultural shifts. Like the items in the probate record described above, Butagaz⁶ stoves and clay ṭawājin speak to more than the material: they can also generate new kinds of feelings, attachments, and judgements connected to larger social formations, from national cooking styles to domestic happiness. “Objects not only embody good feeling,” Sara Ahmed points out, “they come to embody the good life.”⁷

Objects can also be read as a set of scripts for a set of practices that Ann Laura Stoler calls “the choreography of the everyday.”⁸ Stoler argues that the modernization of this “choreography” through domestic science and other frameworks that sought to re-order domestic space were essential to creating new categories of identity and hierarchies of power—and that they worked not only on symbolic or metaphorical, but visceral and material levels. Therefore I begin with kitchen objects and the practices they orchestrated and afforded in order to build an argument about the kitchen’s role in broader structures of feeling: the terms through which

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⁶ Butagaz is the brand name of a company founded in 1930, but it is also the most common term used to refer to a specific type of butane stove in speech and in print (transliterated in Egypt as būtājāz and in Morocco as būṭagāz). For this reason here I use the term Butagaz throughout this chapter, but leave it capitalized to acknowledge that it is also a proper noun.
⁸ Stoler, Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power, 17.
Egyptians and Moroccans not only thought but tasted and felt the formations of middle-class culture, gendered modernities, and national belonging.

A Tale of Two Kitchens: Modernizing Cooking Spaces in Egypt and Morocco

At the turn of the twentieth century, urban home kitchens in Egypt and Morocco had much in common. Cooking was performed over coals or open flame on a brazier of clay or brass (a *majmar* or *manqad*) or on a stove called a *kānūn* consisting of stones or bricks encasing combustible material. Pots and pans, including the nesting pot and steaming basket used to make *kuskus*, were handmade, usually from copper or clay. Both Egyptian and Moroccan kitchens would have had a clay vessel called a *ṭājīn* or *ṭājin*. The shelf life of fresh foods was extended not through refrigeration but through pickling, drying, and preserving. In Cairo and Fes alike, home cooks clarified their butter, pickled their lemons, and preserved apricots and other fruits as jam. Bread and certain specific dishes were sent to a communal oven to be baked. Much of the labor entailed in food preparation was performed outside the home by professionals who sold prepared foods from their places of business or as ambulant vendors. In all but the wealthiest households, “kitchen” was less a comprehensive set of equipment and space dedicated to preparing all of a family’s meals than it was a moveable collection of objects that was sometimes configured for food preparation. The homes of the wealthy could likely boast dedicated kitchens with ventilation and a built-in charcoal or wood-burning cooking apparatus that food historians refer to as a “raised stove,” meaning its cooking surfaces are at waist height. At mealtimes

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9 There is no definitive data or study on the question of dedicated kitchen spaces in urban Egyptian homes in the early modern and modern eras preceding the evidence presented here. However, Nelly Hanna’s study of medium-sized homes in early modern (17th and 18th century) Cairo is suggestive: she estimates that only 14 percent of these homes had kitchens and observes that often multiple households likely shared grills and other cooking equipment. Nelly Hanna, *Habiter au Caire: la maison moyenne et ses habitants aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1991), 142.
families gathered around communal dishes whose round shape was mirrored in circular serving trays or tables.  

By the mid-1970s, however, the average middle-class urban kitchen in North Africa had transformed completely. Urban kitchens were designed, built, and used as permanent spaces in the home. Sinks, stoves, and refrigerators plugged into water and electrical grids and gas supply chains. Most featured semi-permanent gas-powered cooking ranges with burners at waist height and attached ovens; communal ovens were increasingly rare in urban neighborhoods, particularly in areas that were middle-class or affluent. Pots, pans, and other utensils were mass-manufactured from aluminum or other metals, ceramics, and new industrial materials.

Despite these broad similarities, however, differences between Egyptian and Moroccan kitchens also emerged over the course of the twentieth century. The kiskās, once hand-crafted from clay or copper, was now widely mass-manufactured in Morocco but not in Egypt, where it became scarcer. The imported French cocotte (pressure cooker) was popularized in Morocco, where it sat alongside a specific kind of clay ṭājin topped with a conical lid. Meanwhile its cousin, the Egyptian ṭājin [or ṭāgin] remained largely reserved for oven use and for the preparation of special or specific dishes more than an everyday cooking vessel. Cooking over coals remained an important component of modern culinary habitus in Morocco, where cooking gas had not been widely accessible until the 1960s. Meanwhile urban Egyptians were routinely

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10 These observations are based on a number of sources, including studies of kitchens based on Arabic cookbooks from the late medieval period, accounts of Western travelers to North Africa in the nineteenth century that describe interiors of Egyptian and Moroccan homes, the sampling of Egyptian probate records described above, and ethnographic visits to historic Moroccan homes that have been preserved as museums, including the seventeenth-century Riad Belghazi in Fes and the nineteenth-century Dar El Oddi in Tetouan. For premodern kitchens as depicted in cookbook manuscripts see Manuela Marín, “Pots and Fire: The Cooking Processes in the Cookbooks of Al-Andalus and the Maghreb,” in Patterns of Everyday Life, ed. David Waines (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2002); Treasure Trove of Benefits and Variety at the Table: A Fourteenth-Century Egyptian Cookbook, trans. Nawal Nasrallah (Leiden: Brill, 2018); for travelers’ accounts see C.B. Klunzinger, Upper Egypt: Its People and Its Products (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, 1878); Glorvina Fort, Coos-Coo-Soo; or, Letters from Tangier, in Africa (Philadelphia: J. S. M’Calla, 1859).
cooking with gas stoves by the 1930s and typically only ate charcoal-roasted foods when eating out at specialized restaurants. As kitchens modernized and diverged over the course of the twentieth century, so did cuisines. A North African medieval and early modern culinary heritage that had included shared humble dishes like *kuskus* and *bayṣara* as well as similar high cuisines flavored with scented waters, complex spice blends, and mixtures of sweet and savory gave way to two national culinary styles that could never be mistaken for one another.

The relationship between changes in culinary styles and the material evolution of kitchen spaces and technologies is a well-established theme in food history scholarship: the English word for *cuisine*, after all, comes from the French for *kitchen*. The English word for *cuisine*, after all, comes from the French for *kitchen*. A prominent example in the literature is the link between the invention of the raised stove in seventeenth-century Europe and the development of techniques that are today characteristic of French *haute cuisine*, developed in part because the new stove design afforded cooks greater control over their heat source and a better view of their ingredients. Approaching modern North African food culture first through the framework of kitchen technology and the material kitchen, I build on these insights in food history as well as recent work in the history of science and technology in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

In the wake of the cultural turn, historians of science and technology have increasingly critiqued teleological narratives in which colonial societies are described as following a predetermined progression of scientific and technological development, moving instead towards

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11 Sidney Mintz (among other food historians) points this out, explaining the connection between cooking spaces and cooking styles in the etymology of the word kitchen in a number of Western European languages. Food studies scholars continue to debate the definition of “cuisine,” but I adopt Rachel Laudan’s practical definition of a cuisine as a specific style of cooking, not necessarily a “high” cuisine, to which a specific culinary philosophy is intrinsic. Sidney Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Power, and the Past* (Boston: Beacon, 1997), 94; Rachel Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 421. 
“histories of multiple interactions, and a preference for nonlinear, nonprescriptive descriptions dealing with historically contingent practices of communication and exchange.”

Francesca Bray critiques in particular conventional approaches that narrate the history of technology as the expansion of human control over natural processes, and which blame essentialist cultural factors when certain populations do not advance technologically according to an assumed narrative or progression. By considering “technology as culture,” she argues for a history of technology that acknowledges that technology might do different things in different societies, one that “makes space for the cosmic, ritual, or symbolic dimensions of technologies or for their role in stabilizing and maintaining social systems.”

By comparing the histories of kitchen technology in Egypt and Morocco to one another, rather than to a European “center,” this chapter is designed to be open to the range of cultural meanings and values that spring from similar kitchen objects and tools without implying that one of the cases is paradigmatic. It also responds to Bray’s call for a view of technologies as “specific to a society, embodiments of its visions of the world and of its struggles over social order.”

As kitchens in both Egypt and Morocco became increasingly industrialized, home cooks both embraced and resisted new technologies in distinct ways. In nearly identical kitchens circa 1965, a Moroccan woman might cook a stew in a clay ṭājīn on a Butagaz flame, while an Egyptian might cook fūl mudammas in a manufactured qidra suspended over an old-fashioned wābūr instead of her newer model stove. Both operating in spaces designed to be permanent, modern, and well-ordered, their negotiations of the tools available to them would have been

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motivated by different values and attachments. In one kitchen, cooking with gas represented participating in the progress of the Egyptian nation, while in the other, cooking in clay vessels was an important way to maintain one’s cooking as authentically Moroccan.

And these narratives were often unpredictable: in her classic book *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*, Ruth Schwartz Cowan argues that household tools “have a life of their own” and have historically produced new limits, ironies, and “surprises” as much as they have facilitated women’s domestic labor.\(^{17}\) Toufoul Abou-Hodeib writes in a similar vein in her analysis of domestic material culture in late Ottoman Beirut. She highlights the openness of the material, demonstrating how everyday objects have the potential not only to represent or support social norms or class boundaries, but to contest and reshape them as well.\(^{18}\) Building on these insights, I argue that the kitchen is an especially rich site for studying domestic culture in twentieth-century North Africa.

This is due in part to the fact that the practices entailed in creating a meal are rehearsed so frequently—multiple times daily—the tools and objects involved are particularly relevant to understanding the experiences of everyday life. Daniel Miller makes an argument for the “humility of things,” arguing that the more quotidian and ordinary objects are, the greater their power: “the less we are aware of them, the more powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behavior.”\(^{19}\) Cowan similarly argues that “in many ways housework is more characteristic of [a] society than market work is because even those who do not necessarily perform it are continuously exposed to it.”\(^{20}\)


This dissertation therefore starts with the material space and tools of the kitchen to begin explaining the distinct flavors of national cuisines, middle-class cultures, and gendered modernities in Egypt and Morocco. One of its central premises is that creating a modern kitchen was key to the process by which Moroccans and Egyptians aspired to participate in a new middle-class culture and embody its ideals in their everyday lives. I also use examples from the kitchen to show how practices often diverged from the ideals promoted in cookbooks, state media, and advertisements, and how similar technologies produced different social meanings in Egyptian and Moroccan contexts. In doing so, my aim is to provide a qualified narrative of modernization and modernity based on contingency rather than inevitability, grounded in and made possible by the affordances of the material but not determined by it.

This chapter draws on a number of different kinds of sources, including advertisements and articles in magazines (many of which are either state-owned or -affiliated), textbooks, probate records, state archival documents from both the colonial and postcolonial states, oral histories, and short stories and novels. In selecting sources I have made an effort to balance prescriptive sources—such as advertisements promoting new kitchen technology and/as visions of domestic happiness and the good life—with sources that speak more directly to practice, like probate records or documents that indicate what objects indeed did make their way into kitchens. In doing so I am responding to Miller’s call for scholars of the material to attend to the “link between the practical engagement with materiality and the beliefs or philosophy that emerged” in a given context.

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21 It must be pointed out that even records like probate inventories which seem straightforward and objective on the surface present problems as well: the series of records preserved in the archive are incomplete and are certainly not perfectly representative, and the specific records I reference are largely from Islamic courts and therefore do not reflect the estates of Jewish or Christian Egyptians. There is also the challenge of uneven balances of sources, because detailed inventories like the probate records are far less accessible or available for Morocco.

Tying these types of sources together are oral histories recounting memories of key periods of transition in cooking technology in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, as well as readings of a small number of works of fiction. I read neither of these as objective representations of how home kitchens looked at any given point in time, but rather as sources of narratives that help distinguish the social and cultural meanings of similar kitchen items (gas stoves, manufactured pots) in contrasting contexts. C. Nadia Seremetakis’s work shows how memories, narrated here in the form of oral histories, offer a means to study material history, suggesting that “the senses defer the material world by changing substance into memory.”23 In analyzing fictional narratives I take seriously Lauren Berlant’s contention that “the aesthetic or formal rendition of affective experience”—in this case, values and attachments associated with particular kinds of kitchen tools—“provides evidence of historical processes.”24 Both help me explain material histories of the home kitchen not only as sets of dates and objects arranged chronologically but as narratives that have their own arcs, values, and particularities.

What’s in a Modern Kitchen?

“Huge discounts on dining table sets! Up to 30% off our annual inventory:

- China dish for serving soup at the table
- Porcelain coffee cups
- Aluminum baking pan
- German coffee and spice grinder
- Aluminum ḥil stewing pot
- Chrome spoons and forks for eating
- Simons chandelier with five bulbs”

— Advertisement in al-Muṣawwar, Egypt, 195425

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This list of kitchen items attests to the many ways that the kitchen had changed over the intervening seven decades: it has nothing in common with the objects left behind by Shaykh Futuh Shihab in 1888 Alexandria. These items are marketed to a family with an oven in their home and a formal dining table where soup is served in porcelain, food is eaten with forks by electric light, and whose members drink coffee and prepare ful mudammas at home.

This section describes the idealized modern North African kitchen for which these items were intended, focusing in particular on the 1930s through the 1970s. My goal in describing the “ideal” kitchen first is both to build a picture of what I later refer to simply as a “modern kitchen,” in order to avoid taking the phrase for granted, and to establish a basis for comparing the ideal kitchen and the kitchen in practice. I draw upon Webb Keane’s argument that the meaning of a given quality “must be embodied in something in particular,” which is connected to his assertion that materiality is “integral, not subservient” to signification and meaning.26 To do this I lay out some of the key qualities that were attributed to modern kitchens in ways that were, generally speaking, shared across Egyptian and Moroccan contexts: stability, industrialization, and order. I aim to demonstrate that broadly similar kitchens were prescribed in both places by states, industries, and builders, among others.

The Stable Kitchen: A Dedicated, Permanent Cooking Space

First and foremost, the modern kitchen was supposed to be a stable place: a permanent space within the home, dedicated to preparing food. In the thirteenth-century Lisān al-ʿArab, the word mitbakh, derived from the root related to cooking, was an instrument for cooking and not a space with specific qualities or materials.27 In modern Arabic usage, by contrast, the same root is

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26 Miller, Materiality, 31.
commonly used to form a noun of place, *maṭbakh*, which did not appear in earlier lexicons. This chapter explains how and when this understanding of a kitchen as a permanent space emerged.

Naguib Mahfouz’s novel *Bayn al-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), published in 1956, opens with a portrayal of the daily rhythms of a Cairene household from an earlier era, the home of the ‘Abd al-Jawwad family. Likely based on Mahfouz’s own childhood home and set in the years leading up to Egypt’s 1919 revolution, the fictional family home stands in for an older way of living contrasted with the changes of modern life that are gradually ushered into the family’s world (the fuller and later expressions of which would have surrounded Mahfouz at the time of the novel’s writing). The home’s cooking facilities include an oven room (*ḥujrat al-furn*) where bread is baked daily. The narrator also refers to this room using the word *maṭbakh*, but using an adverbial form: the room was not “a kitchen” but used “as a kitchen” (*maṭbakhan*). Mahfouz is depicting an era before the modernization of the kitchen, when a kitchen could theoretically be any place with a charcoal brazier or a bowl of dough being kneaded. This fictionalized narration of a household’s routine illustrates that before the transformation of the kitchen, cooking entailed the use of specific instruments but not necessarily a dedicated and permanent space.

Arabic textual descriptions of new ways of organizing kitchen space can be read most explicitly in household management (*tadbīr al-manzil*) manuals, magazine columns, and textbooks published in Egypt and Lebanon starting in the 1910s. Although published in Beirut and Cairo, at least three books of this era and genre were acquired by the national library of the French protectorate in Rabat, suggesting some broader circulation throughout the Arab world (although I have been unable to ascertain at precisely what point these volumes traveled to Morocco). These books promoted a new vision for the kitchen as part of a household with

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29 Ibid., 19. Emphasis added.
dedicated spaces for different activities. A 1915 manual, *Rabbat al-dār* (Mistress of the House), stresses the importance of the kitchen and dining room spaces within a marital context: namely, if these domestic spaces are sufficiently attractive, they will prevent men from eating and drinking in less desirable public places like bars and cafés.\(^{30}\) A 1939 home economics textbook published by the Egyptian Ministry of Education provides even more detail. “The kitchen is a place designated for cooking, and it must be well-ventilated and exposed to sunshine, as this helps the cook [al-tabākha, gendered female] to excel in her work,” the author writes.\(^{31}\) “It is best if the floor is marble and its walls are covered in glazed tiles to facilitate cleaning.” Among the kitchen’s most essential utensils are permanent sink and stove fixtures: “these are stable items (al-ashyā’ al-thābita) that should be permanent fixtures of the room, and are a part of the kitchen’s very structure (juz’ min binā’ al-maṭbakh).”\(^{32}\) In Egypt, the notion of a kitchen with permanent features featured prominently in floor plans for apartments and villas in *al-‘Imāra*, a magazine of contemporary architecture published from 1939-1959. In one typical floor plan for an apartment from 1940, the kitchens have designated spaces for a refrigerator, cabinets, sink, and stove.\(^{33}\) Although such homes were largely aspirational at first, accessible only to a small fraction of the population, the directories in *al-‘Imāra* indicate that businesses specializing in plumbing, electrical wiring, and tiling, among other construction tasks essential to the modern kitchen, steadily increased in number in major cities like Cairo, Alexandria and Port Said throughout the 1940s and 50s, a rough indicator of steadily increasing demand and construction practices.\(^{34}\)


\(^{32}\) Ibid., 1:3.


\(^{34}\) Based on a sampling of the trade directory pages in issues of *Majallat al-‘Imāra* issues from 1941 through 1954.
This new way of defining a kitchen conveyed permanence and stability both materially and conceptually. Materially, a sink with running water and a stove that cannot be moved like a pitcher or brazier, and floor and wall materials that do not absorb food particles, smoke, or smells and can be wiped clean to their original state. These were further linked to a conceptual stability rooted in the emerging nuclear family ideal according to which marriage was cast in new moral terms emphasizing marriage for life; this new ideal linked the stability of the nuclear family unit to the stability of the nation.\textsuperscript{35} New kinds of housing units came to the fore that went hand-in-hand with these new ideals.\textsuperscript{36}

The connection between these specific new configurations of the kitchen and the nuclear family ideal is dramatized in Latifa al-Zayyat’s 1960 novel \textit{al-Bāb al-maftūḥ} (The Open Door).\textsuperscript{37} The novel tells the story of Layla, a young middle-class Egyptian woman attending government schools in the late 1940s and early 1950s, where she might have read the kinds of domestic science textbooks quoted above. Layla and her friends live in single-family apartments; when her friend Jamila receives a marriage proposal, the prospects of the comfortable and stable life he can provide her are punctuated by the mention of a specific kind of dwelling and kitchen. Although the suitor is older, vulgar, and generally unattractive, he owns a villa and a car and has the means to furnish the entire marital home—including a fully equipped kitchen with a


\textsuperscript{36} Mohamed Elshahed argues that from the 1920s onward, “the most potent architectural manifestation of Egyptian bourgeois modernity was the private dwelling, or villa.” Mohamed Elshahed, “Revolutionary Modernism? Architecture and the Politics of Transition in Egypt 1936-1967” (Ph.D., New York University, 2015), 319. While the villa remained out of reach to all but a very small number of families it was nevertheless the ideal form of a broader category of modern nuclear-family homes.

Frigidaire and a Butagaz stove (al-māṭbakh bi-kull al-muʿaddāt bi-mā fiḥā al-frījidayr wa-l-būtāgāz). 38 These permanent kitchen fixtures represent the stability of a lifestyle held up as newly desirable, concrete items that also reassure Jamila of a stable living situation. The mothers and aunts in the novel impress upon the girls that a happy marriage (zawāj saʿīd) is not love (al-ḥubb) but rather financial stability (al-istiqrār al-mālī). 39 The novel’s subsequent storylines can be read as a critique of this ideal, but Jamila’s choices attest to its power in midcentury Egypt.

In Morocco the widespread emergence of modern single-family dwellings with permanent kitchens as spaces that resonated with the permanence of the family unit took place slightly later, largely after 1956. Although modernist villas and apartment buildings with kitchens like these were constructed along similar lines in Morocco during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, they were largely built for French and Spanish populations. Their construction is still significant, however, as many of these structures came into the public domain upon political independence in 1956 and were subsequently rented or sold to Moroccan civil servants (a process that will be discussed in further detail below).

The Industrialized Kitchen: Electric Appliances and Mass-Produced Pots

The ideal modern kitchen was also industrialized. Writing about the industrialization of the American home kitchen, Cowan points out that although typically industrialization is thought of as something taking place outside the home, “kitchens are as much a locus for industrialized work as factories and coal mines are.” Mass-produced manufactured home kitchen appliances, she writes, are “as much a product of industrialization as are automobiles and pocket

38 Ibid., 59.
39 Ibid.
The modernization of North African kitchens in the period studied here was tied to the industrialization of Egyptian society, from the establishment of factories that manufactured kitchen appliances to the expansion of urban infrastructure dependent upon electrical grids and modern power sources. Through an array of kitchen technologies, urban households became linked to national systems of infrastructure as differences between urban and rural kitchens grew. While the emergence of a new consumer culture drove individuals to acquire new types of kitchen objects, the industrialization of the kitchen was also fueled by state planning and development. New infrastructure enabled a vision of the modern kitchen lit and powered by electricity and advertised as modern, prestigious, convenient, healthy, and bright.

In North Africa, this process was facilitated by different kinds of local political actors. In Egypt, the modernization of Cairo’s urban infrastructure took off with the public works projects of Khedive Ismail. In Morocco significant infrastructure development took place under the aegis of the French and Spanish protectorates. The industrialization of the North African kitchen also entailed the expansion of Western corporations manufacturing domestic appliances into markets like Egypt and Morocco, particularly starting in the 1930s and 40s. A 1944 industry brochure printed by the Edison General Electric Appliance company, designed for Egyptian architects and builders, proclaimed that “kitchens have passed beyond “the Dark Ages”—to an era of light!” The industrialized kitchen, according to these companies, was defined by a set of three key spaces, or “work centers,” with fixtures that dictated specific forms of culinary labor. Each of these also speaks to the industrialization of the kitchen in a different way.

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40 Cowan, More Work For Mother, 4.
42 Edison General Electric Appliance Company brochure, 1944, Box 47, Sayed Karim Collection, American University in Cairo Special Collections and Rare Books Library, Cairo, Egypt, 13.
43 Ibid., 2; 3.
According to this standard of kitchen design, all three work spaces should be near one another for maximum ease and efficiency of use. The first was a cooking surface powered by gas or electricity, linked to gas supply chains or electrical grids, that promised more efficient and cleaner ways to cook: “since there’s no combustion dirt, walls stay clean.”\textsuperscript{44} The second, a “storage and food mixing center,” included an electric refrigerator. The final work center was a “dishwashing center,” complete with kitchen sink, eliminating the difficult task of carrying water. One Moroccan importer used the kitchens of the royal palace as a selling point, boasting in an advertisement in the nationalist magazine \textit{Majallat al-Maghrib} that the palace kitchens featured the modern fixtures of the “amazing electric kitchen” (\textit{al-muṭbakh al-kahrābā‘ī al-‘ajīb}).\textsuperscript{45} According to the advertisement these fixtures boasted “cleanliness, speed, and economy” (\textit{al-nāḍāfa wa-l-sur‘a wa-l-iqtiṣād}).

Akram Khater and Sherene Seikaly have explained how these rationalizing principles of economy and efficiency cut across private and public spheres, shaping both the modernization of emerging state economies and daily domestic practices.\textsuperscript{46} Mona Russell similarly highlights the connections between the modernization of Cairo’s public spaces and infrastructure and shifts in the way that middle-class women were educated and instructed to work within the home.\textsuperscript{47} The kitchen’s gradual networking into electric, water, and gas supply systems and grids shows how material changes made possible new commitments to economy, efficiency, and standardization in culinary labor.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 3
\textsuperscript{45} Advertisement for al-Sharika al-kahraba‘iyya bi-l-Maghrib, \textit{Majallat al-Maghrib}, February 1933.
\textsuperscript{46} Khater, \textit{Inventing Home}, 145; Seikaly, \textit{Men of Capital}, 53-76.
The Well-Ordered Kitchen: Domesticating the Natural World

The final essential quality of the ideal modern kitchen in twentieth-century North Africa was order. A key consequence of a well-ordered kitchen was its separation from both public space and from the vicissitudes of the natural world. Maria Kaika contrasts the “ideological/conceptual construction of the home as independent from nature and society” with the “heavy dependence of the material construction of the same space on social and natural processes.”\(^{48}\) She uses the example of water piped into the home to deconstruct the notion that the home and the natural world are in fact divided; after all, as discussed above, the modern kitchen is by definition linked to outside economies and infrastructures. The modern kitchen thus does not separate cooking from the forces of nature so much as it domesticates nature. I suggest that the labor of the housewife is essential to this work of re-ordering and domesticating.

Khater explains how in Lebanon the reconfiguration of the home kitchen from a system of portable braziers and outside ovens to a dedicated private kitchen space also reorganized expectations about gender and class to highlight companionate marriage and the nuclear family.\(^{49}\) In Lebanon as well as in Morocco and Egypt, cooking gradually became less of a homosocial behavior routinely performed in groups of women working communally (to roll kuskus in Morocco, for instance, or stuff qaṭāyif or maḥāshi in Egypt) and more a matter of a housewife’s individual labor. Working within a new kind of space—with permanent and unmovable work stations less conducive to communal labor—shifted the modern housewife towards a new mode of food production that was increasingly abstracted from the natural world, as Kaika describes. Refrigerators and eventually deep freezers allowed women to shop weekly

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\(^{49}\) Khater, *Inventing Home*, 121.
rather than daily and preserve meat for lengthy periods of time and eat vegetables out of season, rather than rotate foods seasonally or devote significant time to preservation methods like pickling and salting. Treated and commodified water replaced systems of public fountains or wells. And the enclosing of kitchen spaces went hand-in-hand with the installation of gas cooking systems, which combusted more cleanly than coal and fire and left little trace of the natural processes involved. An older system of nutrition predicated on the humors and a specific understanding of foods that cooled or warmed the body was gradually replaced by ways of cooking regulated differently, through the calorie, a new measure of heat, and the modern raised stove, which was thought to better preserve food’s nutritional value. It was the combination of a newly configured material space and the newly individualized labor of home cooks and housewives that made a new kind of well-ordered modern kitchen possible.

These ideas were translated into Arabic in prescriptive textbooks and cookbooks in both Egypt and Morocco. Fatima al-Rahuni, who published the first modern printed Moroccan cookbook written in Arabic in 1973, wrote the volume using Egyptian cookbooks as models. She begins her book by highlighting the importance of cooking in establishing marital happiness (al-saʾāda al-zawjiyya) and explaining that no matter its size, “the kitchen is order itself…system and order are the practical tools of the kitchen.” Her phrasing illustrates how the modern, well-ordered kitchen, with the housewife at its helm, combined new kitchen tools with what Foucault called “technologies of the self,” producing happiness as well as nutritious and pleasurable food. By the 1960s, print advertisements in both countries, like those pictured here, featured

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50 This idea that cooking over a modern gas or electric range was better for nutrition was promoted in industry brochures like the Edison General Electric pamphlet quoted above as well as domestic science textbooks and cookbooks from this period.
51 Interview conducted by author, December 29, 2018.
53 The affective dimension of this labor will be explored in more depth in Chapters Two through Five.
not only images of machines (which had dominated advertisements a few decades earlier) but the figure of the smiling housewife—again highlighting the importance of happiness to the labor performed in this particular sort of kitchen.

Figure 1. Butagaz advertisement in Ḥawwā’ (Egypt) No. 145, July 4, 1959.

Figure 2. Butagaz advertisement in al-Mashāhīr (Morocco) No. 52, February 15, 1961.
And yet the women who cooked in these kitchens and the meals they created were informed by a far more complex range of factors than the ideals outlined in these cookbooks. Autochthonous food traditions and recipes meant older local utensils were brought into modern kitchens: Moroccan women kept their clay ṭawājin and kuskus steamers and Egyptian women continued to prepare their mulūkhiyya with a makhraṭa even if they owned an electric blender. The political economy of fuel and the politics of the built environment meant that the movement towards the stable, industrialized, and well-ordered kitchen did not happen all at once or in a predictable fashion. Keane points out that any given quality tends to be “copresent” or “bundled” with other qualities. The following sections explain how between the 1920s and the 1960s, the stable, industrial, and well-ordered qualities of Egyptian and Moroccan kitchens—in particular stoves and cookware—came to be bundled with a range of additional and often divergent qualities and values.

Egypt: Gas Stoves for Cooking the Nation’s Future

Two parallel and connected shifts dominate the cultural history of kitchen technology in twentieth-century Egypt. The first was a shift from cooking directly over a flame or coals to cooking with gas stoves. The second was a transition from handmade clay and copper cookware to mass-manufactured pots and pans, initially made from aluminum and later from other manufactured materials. While the later technologies never completely displaced the earlier ones, they did become dominant in everyday practice and in popular culture.

The introduction of the wābūr, or Primus-style kerosene stove, was the first step towards the modernization of the Egyptian kitchen. The Egyptian Arabic word wābūr (also colloquially

pronounced *bābūr* or *bāgūr*) comes from the Italian *vapore* ("steam") and refers to a variety of devices that run on steam engines or fossil fuels including trains, steamer ships, and pressurized gas stoves. The Primus stove, invented in Sweden in 1892, pressurizes the kerosene that fuels it, which is vaporized before it burns—resulting in a cleaner burn with no smoke or soot—hence the name in Arabic.\(^5\) This stove’s predecessors in Egypt were spirit stoves (*asbīrū* or *sibīrāya*), fueled by alcohol rather than pressurized gas. Most likely first introduced by European travelers, expatriates, and archaeologists, these appear occasionally in the probate inventories of wealthy urban Egyptians by the 1880s.\(^6\) By the early 1920s, the household inventories of European and wealthier Egyptian households included kerosene lamps and stoves, and advertisements began to appear for them in Egyptian popular periodicals.\(^7\)

A Primus advertisement in the popular magazine *al-Muṣawwar* in 1925 boasts that the brand is the oldest and original of its kind and exhorts consumers to trust the reliability of the manufacturer—suggesting that by this point competitors were common.\(^8\) We can read the introduction of the mass-manufactured *wābūr* as a key first step in the transformation of the Egyptian home kitchen into an industrialized one. Prior to this the primary stove in most Egyptian kitchens would have been either a *manqad*, a brazier made of copper or clay, or a *kānūn*, a set of bricks or stones, and fueled by wood, charcoal, or miscellaneous household

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6. For example, an *asbīrū* or spirit stove appears in the probate inventory of a wealthy resident of Damietta who died in 1881. Tarakāt Muṣṭafā Afandī Qabrawān al-Murshidi, Siğil Aylūlāt bi-Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ al-Sha’riyya, 1881, Dar al-Wathā’iq al-Qawmiyya, Cairo, Egypt, 1032-0003062.
7. Early probate records mentioning urban households in Egypt containing kerosene lamps and/or cookstoves include those of Tom Dale, 5 May 1915, FO 841/151, Habiba Sharkasiyya, FO 841/206/20, 20 February 1922, and John McDonald, 1 January 1923, FO 841/219/70, British National Archives, London, England. These are not enough for a representative sample but suggest that by the late 1910s and early 1920s, British subjects living in Egypt, whether the wives of wealthy local protégés or expatriate men, had kerosene-fueled devices in their homes.
waste. A \textit{wābūr} was not a permanent fixture, but it did provide Egyptians with a way to cook indoors without producing smoke or soot, inching kitchens towards the modern ideal.

The British government, which exercised significant control over Egyptian affairs despite the country’s \textit{de jure} independence in 1922, viewed increases in Egyptians’ cost of living as a serious threat to their control over the country (and the strategically significant Suez Canal) and established a system to subsidize kerosene for household use in the form of a stabilization fund to ensure prices stayed low.\footnote{For British archival documents concerning the stabilization funds, see Treasury (T) 236/6794, 1952, British National Archives, London, England.} In the early 1930s, British officials wrote that kerosene was cheaper in Egypt than in most places in the world, noting that Egyptian taxes on kerosene were lower than those in Palestine and a number of European countries.\footnote{Memorandum: Effect of Recent Increase in Prices of Petrol and Kerosene, 11 October 1932, Foreign Office (FO) 141/768, British National Archives, London, England. The indispensability of kerosene to the poorer classes in Egypt was mentioned in subsequent colonial correspondence, for example, “Memorandum: Oil Situation in Egypt,” 1933, FO 141/721, British National Archives, London, England.} A British government report on Egypt’s cost of living in 1942 listed a Primus stove as a standard item among other key commodities.\footnote{Report on cost of living in Egypt, 29 April 1942, FO 371/31572, British National Archives, London, England.} Following the 1952 military coup the subsidy arrangement fell into disarray and the Shell and Socony oil companies threatened to stop importing kerosene into the country; in 1954 Gamal ʿAbdel Nasser personally brokered an agreement with Shell Oil to ensure its continued supply to the Egyptian market.\footnote{In a confidential memo from Cairo to the British Foreign Office, February 12, 1954: “That the Shell Company was able to achieve such a satisfactory settlement was largely due to the personal intervention of Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser, who presided over the final four-hour meeting on February 9.” Confidential letter from Ralph Skrine Stevenson, British Embassy, Cairo, to Anthony Eden, 12 February 1954, T 236/6794, British National Archives, London, England.} All this suggests that by the 1950s significant numbers of Egyptians were cooking with kerosene gas stoves. During this decade the \textit{wābūr} also became more prominent in popular culture, with advertisements and other illustrations of the...
stove featuring images of housewives—an indication of its role in the emergence of a well-ordered kitchen as described above.

If the wābūr was the first step towards a modern kitchen with mechanically produced (rather than handmade) appliances, the Butagaz stove was frequently the first fixture of a “stable” kitchen in Egyptian homes. These stoves were fueled by heavy canisters of butane gas, usually had multiple burners (in contrast to the one-burner wābūr) and frequently incorporated an oven unit. They were therefore far more permanent fixtures than their one-burner kerosene predecessors had been. Their multiple burners at waist height also expanded a cook’s potential culinary repertoire, facilitating the preparation of roux-based French sauces like the soon-to-be-ubiquitous béchamel sauce (discussed in further detail in Chapters Three and Six). Butagaz stoves connoted stability in other ways, too—particularly after 1952, when Egyptian state discourse presented these stoves as well as the state-regulated supply of the gas that fueled them as links between the stable, modern family home and a stable, modern, independent Egypt.

While Butagaz had been introduced to the Egyptian market as early as the 1940s, it became more widely available in the 1950s—in large part because after 1952 Butagaz stoves and ovens were manufactured by state-owned companies like Ideal, making them both more accessible for local purchase and more affordable. Mona Abaza writes that when Ideal’s parent company was nationalized in the 1950s its products became widespread phenomena; they included “complete metal kitchens, stoves, fridges, metal cupboards, beds and desks and even toys.” Following his personal involvement in efforts to stabilize the cost of kerosene in 1954, ‘Abdel Nasser

63 Butagaz is mentioned alongside kerosene as a household fuel, for example, in a cost of living report from 1942 written by Shell Company of Egypt. Report on cost of living in Egypt, 29 April 1942, FO 371/31572, British National Archives, London, England (see page 6 of the report). Shell also ran Butagaz ads in Majallat al-ʿImāra as early as 1940, suggesting that by the early 1940s it was marketed to Egyptians as well as Europeans living in Egypt. Advertisements for Shell Butagaz, Majallat al-ʿImāra, vol. 2, no. 3-4, 1940, 270.
64 Mona Abaza, Changing Consumer Cultures of Modern Egypt: Cairo’s Urban Reshaping (Boston: Brill, 2005), 90–92.
frequently appeared in the state-owned press visiting factories that produced items like gas stoves, which articles connected directly to both happy marriages and the progress of the nation. In one 1959 article in *al-Mušawwar* titled “If you want to get married!,” ‘Abdel Nasser is pictured visiting an Ideal facility.\(^{65}\) The article begins:

> We are proceeding along the path to a great tomorrow. We were once forced to remain an agrarian state; our house was walled-in and built by colonialism. But when we became liberated, we gained the knowledge to manufacture and the glory that comes with it. On this basis our president Gamal ʿAbdel Nasser has laid down the foundations of a happy future (*al-muštaqbal al-saʿīd*).

The article explains the difficulties facing young couples who wish to marry but cannot afford to furnish a marital home.\(^{66}\) The state’s manufacturing of household appliances is framed as lessening the burden on Egypt’s people so that they can afford to marry; ‘Abdel Nasser’s personal intervention in both Egypt’s marital homes and its industry is made clear in the text. The same year, the magazine featured images of ‘Abdel Nasser inspecting Butagaz stoves and petroleum facilities, always connecting the personality of the leader, the availability of the material elements of a modern middle-class family home, and the industrial advancement of Egypt.\(^{67}\) An advertisement in the women’s magazine *Ḥawwā‘*, also from 1959 (and pictured above) features not ‘Abdel Nasser but a smiling housewife gesturing towards a stove, proclaiming it an “excellent oven with three burners,” “the pride of Egyptian manufacturing,” “economic,” and “easy to use.”\(^{68}\)

By the end of the 1950s, the Butagaz stove and oven were bundled with the progress of the Egyptian state and the stability provided by its import substitution policies as well as its nuclear...


\(^{66}\) The idea that the high costs of living and furnishing a marital home was a major factor causing a nationwide “marriage crisis” was a recurring theme in modern Egypt. For a detailed account of the way that marriage crises in Egypt became a proxy for discussing other social and political anxieties see Kholoussy, *For Better, for Worse*.


\(^{68}\) Advertisement for al-Jamʿiyya al-Taʿāwwuniyya li-l-Bitrūl, *Ḥawwā‘*, 4 July 1959, 43.
family units. Hanan, an Egyptian woman born in 1940 in a village outside of Minya, recalls cooking on a Butagaz stove for the first time in 1955, just a few years before she married a judge and moved to Alexandria. Once she was married, she says, “I used to spend all my days in front of the Butagaz. In those days, the housewife stayed in the home; that was her workplace.”

Multiple women I interviewed from her generation remembered the appearance of Butagaz in their kitchens coinciding (within a year or two) of major dates in nationalist history, from the 1952 Free Officers’ coup to the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956—further cementing the association in Egypt’s collective historical memory between the modern industrial Egyptian state, the figure of ‘Abdel Nasser, the nuclear family home, and the Butagaz stove. More than any other household appliance, the Butagaz stove appears to have been the most commonly acquired among Egyptian urban households, likely thanks in large part to government production schemes like those advertised here. A 1968 survey of domestic technology in a broad cross-section of Cairo households showed that Butagaz was by far the most common of all the devices in the survey. Even households that only had one household appliance had a Butagaz; many homes that did not have a refrigerator or television did feature a Butagaz stove.

At the same time, oral history narratives regarding stove use in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s offer a counterpoint to the neat narrative tying stove to family to state. In the home kitchens of this era, Butagaz and wābūr stoves coexisted side by side for years or even decades. With the introduction of the Butagaz, the wābūr began to occupy a range of more specialized functions. Because kerosene remained both cheaper and more reliably available than butane well into the 1960s, the wābūr often served as a backup stove or as the preferred appliance for tasks requiring

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69 Interview conducted by author, October 21, 2016.
lengthy heating times, from the annual process of clarifying butter in large batches to time-intensive dishes like duck. One acquaintance told me her mother would cook *fül mudammas* by suspending an aluminum pot over a *wābūr*’s flame overnight because the flame could be adjusted to burn at such a low and steady heat. One of the most common uses for the *wābūr* in the 1950s and 60s was to heat water for laundry, as electric washing machines were not yet widespread.

One interviewee, Sofia, remembers when her family moved into an apartment in the neighborhood of Zamalek in 1960. It featured an Ideal kitchen straight out of an advertisement, complete with red Formica countertops and built-in cabinets, an electric refrigerator, and a Butagaz stove and oven. Although her grandmother’s apartment in Heliopolis also featured a Butagaz stove by the time Sofia was old enough to remember, it was otherwise vastly different from her mother’s kitchen, to her memory: it had a balcony where poultry and rabbits were raised, an icebox, and—of course—a *wābūr*. She remembers it was used as a backup heat source, but also for burning incense. “There was a weekly ritual of burning *bakhur*,” she said, “you would have to pass over the *wābūr* with the incense lit seven times, and they would read things from the Qur’an and so forth.” In that kitchen the Butagaz was not the herald of order, but an interloper in a space configured for other things—including the multipurpose *wābūr*, which held the potential to reenchant the modernity ushered in by the secular industrial state.

As Ian Hodder writes, however, it is not only people who depend upon things, but things that become entangled with and dependent upon other things. He writes, “things are connected by the fact that they work together,” in a combination of affordances and constraints.

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71 Interview conducted by author, November 1, 2016.
which work in concert with pots and pans, are no different: thus the history of the latter is bound up with the history of the former. The industrialization of the kitchen in Egypt also entailed the introduction of aluminum cookware, which in turn was best suited to use on gas stoves. Despite aluminum’s numerous advantages over nuḥās, or copper, aluminum cookware would burn and warp when placed over coals or direct flame; and when cooking over a wābūr, aluminum pans were considered superior to clay or copper. As a result the parallel shifts to aluminum cookware and gas stoves were connected in ways that mattered in terms of material affordances and dependences. But because of the rich symbolic and conceptual meaning of copper in particular, the shift to aluminum brought additional layers of meaning to the cultural narrative of the Egyptian kitchen as a whole.

As discussed above, in the late nineteenth century copper formed a significant proportion of the material wealth of Egyptians of all social classes—but particularly women and men without significant cash or real estate holdings. Practical items like copper pots, kettles, and basins and pitchers for bathing formed the bulk of most urban Egyptians’ estates. They were especially significant possessions for women because in addition to their practical uses, as precious metals they could be melted down resold; thus they provided some insurance in the case of divorce. When used in cooking, however, copper pots require significant maintenance and upkeep. Unless lined with tin, the copper can react with food with toxic results. Before copper

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73 A 1915 household management manual by an Egyptian author recommends exclusively raised and gas stoves and aluminum pans. This would have been largely aspirational, not practical advice, for most Egyptian kitchens at the time but indicates how early the notion took hold that modern Egyptian kitchens should feature specific configurations of stoves and cookware. A 1927 cookbook by a British author living in Egypt more practically mentions a wider range of stove and cookware options, but directs other colonial housewives to cook with aluminum only over gas stoves, as “coal stoves are apt to burn these.” Sa’d, Rabbat al-dār; Thora Stowell, The Anglo-Egyptian Cookery Book (Alexandria, Cairo & London: Whitehead Morris, 1923), 10.

74 According to the Islamic legal provisions that underpin the personal status code for Muslims in modern Egypt, marriage does not create a joint estate and a woman’s property remains her own even after she marries. This provides her with a form of security in the case of divorce, as she retains any property she brought into the marriage. See Tucker, Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law, 46–50.
cookware fell out of common use in Egypt an entire trade, that of the *mubayyad*, existed for the purpose of routinely re-tinning pots and pans. The significant history and legacy of copper in Egyptian domestic material history meant that its qualities were at one time bundled with notions of purity and respectability, particularly as a part of a woman’s trousseau. But copper’s practical limitations brought these qualities into conflict with the new values of economy, efficiency, and modernity in the twentieth century.

Ihsan ʿAbd al-Quddus’s satirical short story “The Discovery of Aluminum,” which dramatizes the transition from copper to aluminum in an unnamed village in the Egyptian delta, captures these tensions perfectly. Written and set in the late 1960s, the story centers on a young man, Jumʿa, who grows up in a village but moves to the nearby provincial capital as a young man to apprentice with his uncle, who is the personal chef to the local governor. Over the course of a decade he takes over his uncle’s position and grows to consider himself an enlightened member of the efendiyya, Egypt’s “self-consciously modern” professional classes. When he prepares to marry Bahiya, a girl from his village, however tensions arise over what kinds of pots and wash basins will equip the kitchen of their marital home.

Having never heard of aluminum, Bahiya and her family presume that these items will be copper, which they perceived as both a sound investment and a mark that the marriage is a respectable one. Jumʿa, however, as a chef in a professional kitchen that switched to aluminum years prior, rejects the idea as outdated and impractical. He excitedly explains to Bahiya why aluminum is superior to copper, drawing on the aspects of the ideal modern kitchen explained above, particularly standardization, efficiency, permanence, and cleanliness. “It’s lighter, and cheaper, and it never turns green,” he says. “And you don’t have to deal with the headache of

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getting it re-tinned, like you do with copper." He also points out that aluminum is a way of signaling social distinction and even upward mobility: he explains that the governor only uses aluminum, that “the best people” use aluminum now, and he wants to be like “civilized people.”

Bahiya and her family, however, are scandalized. “To marry without copper, Jumʿa…what would people say about us?” Bahiya implores. The young couple’s parents eventually get involved and the dispute revives a latent feud between the two families. Violence breaks out and men on both sides meet untimely and tragic ends over what began as a disagreement over cookware. Not long after, however, the women of the village see the practical advantages of aluminum and adopt it of their own volition. Because the village has no running water they must carry water themselves, making the lightness of the aluminum particularly attractive. The women excitedly praise aluminum’s imperviousness to rust, how easy it is to maintain compared to copper, and how affordable it is. Even Bahiya, when she marries, marries with aluminum pots.

The story encapsulates the transition from one set of values associated with an ideal kitchen—the weight, inherent value, and respectability inherent to copper—to a new set of valued qualities bundled with aluminum: affordability, convenience, and lightness. The story can also be read as a selective critique of teleological narratives that associate the modernization of technology with the culturally weighted values of progress, advancement, refinement, or upward mobility. The transition to aluminum is depicted as inevitable; yet the women who eventually adopt it do so not to signal distinction or prove their enlightenment, but rather for purely

78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
practical reasons that override an existing system of respectability, purity, and honor. The story suggests that it is material dependencies rather than the ideologies attached to them that ultimately drive the changes in the material histories of the kitchen.

Advertisements for aluminum cookware from the 1950s and 60s are less subtle, though their creators were clearly aware of the cultural narratives in ʿAbd al-Quddus’s story. Two examples from the Pural company demonstrate attempts to capitalize on the qualities once valued in copper by implying that they also applied to aluminum cookware. One of their 1955 advertisements for aluminum pots and pans in Rūz al-Yūsuf, for example, includes a list of qualities that rebundle the qualities associated with copper with those of aluminum: it describes their cookware as solid, durable, and “made of Pure” aluminum, all qualities that might once have been attributed to copper. But the advertisement also boasts that the aluminum pots and pans are safe, easy to clean, reasonably priced, and facilitate “economic fuel consumption;” each of these points functions as both a quality associated with aluminum and an implicit critique of copper pots.

Another advertisement for Pural aluminum cookware in al-Muṣawwar magazine nearly a decade later in 1964 makes similar associations while linking aluminum pans—like Butagaz stoves—to a modern and independent Egypt. The advertisement announces a special line of Pural cookware produced by what are described literally as “Egyptian copper factories” (maṣāniʿ al-nuḥās al-Miṣrī) even though the products depicted are clearly aluminum—effectively eliding the two categories of metal, if in name only. The occasion for the special line is the completion of the Aswan High Dam, which is pictured along with images of pots, pans, a tray and a kettle, and ʿAbdel Nasser’s face. A bright red background gestures towards the Soviet cooperation,

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80 Pural advertisement, Ruz al-Yūsuf, 23 March 1955.
81 Pural advertisement, al-Muṣawwar, 22 May 1964, 23.
financing, and technical expertise that helped build the dam. Laurels frame the image of the dam and Lake Nasser, highlighting its status as a crowning achievement of the regime while subtly linking the personality of the president with the technical mastery of Egyptian territory and the local manufacture of everyday cookware.

Oral histories reveal that in practice, the choice between copper and aluminum was of course not a matter of conflation between the two categories nor an absolute choice of either/or; many middle-class Egyptian kitchens included both kinds of cookware. Women who, like the fictional Bahiya, were born into the provincial elite and married into the professional classes in the 1950s and 60s, remember marrying with trousseaus that included both aluminum and copper pots. Few recalled actually using their copper cookware, which served a more symbolic function in their wedding arrangements by the time they married in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Women from the subsequent generation recalled large copper pots that they associated with specific places and household types—usually the multi-generational homes of their grandmothers, whether village homes or urban villas. They contrasted these with the smaller and lighter aluminum pots and pans their mothers used to cook for their nuclear family unit, in the context of smaller city apartments. Nadia remembers the mubayyad coming to tin the pots in her grandmother’s sprawling Zamalek villa, but never saw one at work in Mohandessin where her mother raised her in a middle-class apartment. Sofia described her grandmother’s many large copper pots and pans. “She had much bigger pots and pans than my mother had because they cooked for a bigger family. Whereas with my mother it was no longer the case; it was just us.”

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82 All three women from this generation I interviewed who married in Egypt and were born into families with some means had the same narrative of marrying “with both.”
83 Interview conducted by author, October 14, 2016.
84 Interview conducted by author, November 1, 2016.
Both cases illustrate how aluminum cookware came to be associated with a new kind of marital home.

In summary, the cultural history of gas stoves and aluminum cookware in Egypt demonstrates how the kitchen became a place where narratives about the relationship between the modern family and the independent nation were forged, but with qualities unique to the Egyptian context. These kitchen technologies can be described as associated with various bundlings of lightness, convenience, stability, economy, progress, industry, and national pride—as well, of course, with the personality of ŦAbdel Nasser. The choice of specific cookware items in the local manufacture of aluminum objects also speaks to the way that the industrialization of cookware production feeds into the creation of national cuisines: aluminum cookware lines in Egypt often featured a *dammāsa* designed for cooking *fūl mudammas*, but not a *kiskās* for making *kuskus*—contributing to a further differentiation between Egyptian and Moroccan kitchens and cuisines.

**Cooking Moroccan with Clay and Coal**

Historians of Morocco do not have the luxury of the copious recordkeeping practices of the Ottoman and khedival Egyptian states to draw upon; the only probate inventories I was able to locate for Moroccan households dated to after the establishment of the colonial protectorates, and even those reflected the estates of British subjects, which were settled in consular courts whose records are preserved in the British National Archives in London. My conclusions about preindustrial Moroccan kitchens are informed in part by these selective consular records as well as the study of objects in antique shops and museums as well as a handful of aristocratic homes which have themselves been transformed into museums—and travel literature written by
Europeans and Americans living in or visiting Morocco. These, like the Egyptian probate records referenced above, have their limitations but offer a general picture and a set of data points with which to make some informed, if tentative, inferences. One of the most detailed descriptions of nineteenth-century Moroccan kitchens comes from the letters of Glorvina Fort, the daughter of the American consul in Tangier. In a collection of letters she published in 1859, she writes:

The kitchen in a first-class Moorish house is very clean and very simple in its arrangements. At one end of it there is built a large furnace, which contains several places for burning charcoal. The furnace is built of bricks, clay, and mortar, then nicely whitewashed...The preparations of the food for cooking are made by the cook, (while in a sitting posture on the floor,) upon a low stool which is not more than ten or twelve inches high...A dish-rack or two or three shelves for holding the cooking utensils, and the few dishes they use complete the furnishing of the culinary establishment...The ceiling and walls are plastered and are kept very white by frequent whitewashings...The supply of water for drinking and cooking is brought by the servants from the public fountains, of which there are several in Tangier...  

Fort goes on to describe what kitchens are like in successively less wealthy homes, eventually arriving at “fourth-class houses,” which

have no regular kitchen, but the family cooking is done on portable clay furnaces, either in one of the rooms or in the yard, according to the state of the weather.  

These descriptions paint a general picture of Moroccan home kitchens as broadly similar to contemporaneous Egyptian ones. Perhaps the most striking difference conveyed by this and other accounts is the less prominent place accorded to copper cookware. While it certainly did exist—enormous kasākis made of copper can still be seen in the antique shops of Fes, Rabat, and Marrakesh—copper was neither as ubiquitous nor as symbolically value-laden in Morocco as in Egypt. If anything silver was (and remains) the more prominent precious metal in Morocco, but it is more likely to be found in a ceremonial tea tray or women’s jewelry than everyday pots and pans.

85 Fort, Coos-coo-soo, 152-3.
86 Ibid., 158.
A century later, in the mid-1970s, the average middle-class urban home kitchen in Morocco was also similar to its Egyptian counterpart: it likely featured a Butagaz stove, an electric refrigerator, a kitchen sink in a permanent, dedicated room. But significant differences in the economic, political, and cultural histories in the intervening decades meant that the history of Moroccan kitchen technology was bundled with a vastly different set of values and qualities than its Egyptian equivalent. Rather than the purity of metals, the progress of the industrially independent nation-state, and the importance of economy, the fixtures of the modern Moroccan kitchen were bundled with the values of authenticity, adaptability, and connections to the natural landscape. Stability was achieved by placing older forms of clay cookware next to new ones, modern appliances were tempered by the maintenance of embodied knowledge pertaining to older technologies, and residual attitudes to the natural world rather than technocratic mastery of it informed the ties between the kitchen and the land.

This last point was expressed in oral history narratives in particular through women’s preferences for kitchen technologies and techniques that were in various ways less alienated from the natural world: water from local wells and springs (whether in Fes or in the countryside), handmade clay cookware, and cooking and baking over wood fires and charcoal were repeatedly held up as superior to more modern version of any of these technologies. This was not simply an expression of nostalgia for an earlier way, either, but reflected in the incorporation of these older technologies into the repertoires of the contemporary kitchen. One possible and partial explanation for how this difference emerged stems from the reasons behind the later adoption of gas stoves in Morocco as compared to Egypt.
As in Egypt, foreign travelers, merchants, and missionaries brought portable stoves and kerosene lamps to Morocco in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The pressurized Primus-style stove appears in advertisements and probate records in the 1920s and 30s in both the Spanish and French Protectorate zones—mostly reflecting foreign markets and households. And yet due to a number of factors, the technology did not catch on as swiftly or as extensively as it had in Egypt. The most significant factor is likely the relative availability of various cooking fuels: unlike Egypt, in Morocco wood and charcoal were far more accessible than petroleum products like kerosene. By the 1940s, even periodicals written primarily for European populations in Morocco advertised “split firewood for economic kitchens” and featured advice for readers on stretching their household charcoal supplies.

This was in large part due to economic factors limiting French and Spanish capacities to export petroleum to their colonies, particularly during the two world wars, and environmental factors facilitating the local supply of charcoal in Morocco. The country is home to considerable forested areas, meaning that it could furnish its own supply of wood and charcoal even as settler and local populations grew. Even so, adjustments had to be made to supply adequate amounts of charcoal to expanding urban areas during the early years of the French administration. In

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90 French colonial documents distinguish between charbon du bois, charcoal that is locally made in Morocco from timber and sold for domestic use (cooking, heating, etc.), and charbon du terre, bituminous coal more commonly used for industrial purposes.

91 By 1919 by some accounts the charcoal markets of major cities like Fes, Rabat, and Salé were often scenes of desperation with Moroccans and settlers alike crowding to obtain the charcoal they needed for heating their homes and cooking. F. de Merimée, “Rabat: Toujours le Charbon,” Presse marocaine, 10 January 1919.
1919 French officials put a system into place regulating separate sales points for European and Moroccan populations. In 1920, when kerosene lamps and stoves were gaining popularity in Egypt, charcoal was listed in French memos about prices of household items in major Moroccan cities. By the late 1930s, schemes to promote charcoal production and use were developed within the context of French colonial forestry policies, which established cooperatives in the Middle Atlas to produce charcoal for domestic consumption.

In addition to these material incentives for cooking with charcoal, French associationist policies that sought to “preserve ethnic difference” incentivized the Moroccan practice of cooking over charcoal in a number of ways that may have also encouraged, or at least facilitated, the continued practice of cooking over coal among the Moroccan population— in contrast to the ready adoption of gas by Egyptians in Egypt. Associationism, as distinct from the policy of assimilationism the French pursued in Algeria, sought to define and preserve aspects of Moroccan culture and social structures and actively maintain them as separate from French or European ones— insofar as they supported and facilitated French rule. French archival documents about the provision and regulation of charcoal for domestic use illustrate how this policy might have influenced French opinions regarding Moroccan culinary practice: one French bureaucrat writing in 1916 highlights how important it is to ensure Moroccans’ access to charcoal, pronouncing (as though he is an expert on the intricacies of Moroccan domestic life)

93 Mesures contre la vie chère: Combustibles Carburants, 30 November 1920, A-1185, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco.
that Moroccans have never taken to cooking with gas and that for them, it is clear, “nothing can ever replace charcoal.”

The influence of attitudes like these on the built environment, including home kitchens in which Moroccans cooked, is reflected in French-designed urban housing designated for Moroccan workers in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. Unlike housing designed for French inhabitants, units intended for Moroccans routinely included patios, courtyards, and outdoor covered cooking spaces (“abris cuisine”), one per family, rather than the enclosed kitchens built for French colonials. Modernist housing projects for Moroccans in the 1930s and 40s also frequently included a “café maure” (“Moorish-style café”) and a community oven; and while new housing developments were connected to updated sewer systems and equipped with modern plumbing, the bathrooms built for Moroccans were built with squat toilets (siegès à la turque). All of these details implied that the choreography of Moroccans’ everyday lives, from preparing food to the evacuation of bodily waste, was not expected to change—or that it should not change—simply because they were living in cities and in nuclear family units in housing built with industrialized materials like cement. By contrast, all of the plans I encountered for public housing for French inhabitants during the protectorate, even those constructed in rural areas of Morocco, included enclosed modern-style kitchens—a fact that would become doubly significant.

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96 Memo from Le Contrôleur Civil Chef des Services Municipaux de Rabat a Monsieur le Secrétaire Général du Protectorat, 13 October 1916, A-950, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco.


98 The oven and “Moorish café” of a housing project for Moroccans in Rabat are mentioned Douar Debbagh, Construction Habous, Demande de fers ronds, memo to the Director General of Public Works, Rabat, 21 May 1940, A-1641, Archives du Maroc, Rabat Morocco. The toilet and specifics of plumbing materials are described in the document Construction de 16 logements indigènes au Douar-Dabagh, n.d., A-1641, Archives du Maroc, Rabat Morocco. These arrangements are similar to those described in the 1936 housing project in Casablanca cited in the previous footnote.
when a new class of Moroccan civil servants began to move into these homes after the French and Spanish vacated them in 1956.\textsuperscript{99}

Although the colonial state’s construction efforts were significantly interrupted by World War II they picked up again in the 1950s along the same lines. According to a 1956 article published in \textit{Construire}, the monthly trade magazine for the building and construction industry during the French protectorate, in 1955 alone over 7,000 housing units were built for Muslim Moroccans and nearly 100 for Jewish Moroccans in cities throughout the country.\textsuperscript{100} The article explains the “traditional” aspects of the construction of the housing units for Muslims, including a “terra cotta patio on a reinforced concrete slab” with “a kitchen shelter covered with a light slab of reinforced concrete.”\textsuperscript{101} Right up to the point of independence, the built environment even in new housing for urban Moroccans was designed to both reflect and maintain cultural differences through everyday spaces and practices. As Chapter Four will discuss, a similar attitude is reflected in the household management lessons given to Moroccan girls during the early decades of the French administration, which assumed Moroccan girls were managing a traditional Moroccan home and made no attempt to introduce new recipes or cooking techniques.

It was only after independence, in the late 1950s and 60s, that a combination of economic, industrial, and housing patterns shifted in a way that facilitated significant numbers of Moroccans cooking with gas stoves in modern enclosed, industrialized kitchens with permanent fixtures—and that these kitchens began to be associated with the “well-ordered” nuclear family household with a prototypical housewife at its helm. In the 1950s, when gas stoves and other

\textsuperscript{99} One example of this standard is the brochure by architect A. Michaud, “La Maison du Bled: Construction économique en ciment armé,” Casablanca, A-1413, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco. It describes and presents floor plans for a family home designed for French officials and their families posted to rural locations in Morocco and includes an enclosed kitchen. Numerous other examples can be found in various documents describing housing for French officials in the Fonds du Protectorat located in the Archives du Maroc.


\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 114
kitchen appliances were being manufactured locally in Egypt for the first time, they were still being imported to Morocco. A 1960 report published by Morocco’s *Division de la coordination économique et du plan* indicated that by that point factories within Morocco were manufacturing refrigerators and miscellaneous household items—but not yet gas-powered stoves and water heaters, which were identified as targets for future investment, presumably so that Morocco would begin producing their own stoves in the coming years.

It was not until the late 1960s and 70s that the ideal of the modern housewife within the modern nuclear family was represented in Morocco through attachments to kitchen appliances—the kinds of attachments that so many Egyptian women recalled as linked to the independent and industrializing Egyptian state in the early 1950s. Oral history interviews with Moroccan women from a range of urban middle-class backgrounds indicate that most of their households began cooking with Butagaz stoves in the 1960s and early 70s, with a small number of families acquiring such stoves as early as the late 1950s. By the early 1970s, a cost of living index for eight major Moroccan cities produced by the Moroccan government included both kitchen tools (*ustensils de cuisine*) and household appliances (*appareils ménagers*) alongside staple foods and utilities including heat, electricity, and water.

In 1970 an article in the first issue of the Moroccan women’s magazine *Aicha* (the publication of the state-affiliated *Union Nationale des Femmes Marocaines*) featured an article

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102 Advertisements in a range of publications in Morocco from the mid-1950s through the early 1960s feature advertisements for stoves manufactured by American or European companies. Coleman stoves and water heaters are advertised in *Construire*, 25 February 1956, Arthur Martin (later Electrolux) appliances are advertised in *Le Petit Marocain*, 1 May 1962, and FAR stoves are advertised in *Courrier du Maroc*, 23 March, 1956. While these advertisements appear in publications directed largely towards settler markets, the introduction of them to the Moroccan market was a key first step towards their spread to the Moroccan population.

103 Memento des objectifs de l’industrie, Division de la Coordination Économique et du Plan, Plan Quinquennal, 1960-64, F-80, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco, 11.

104 Indice du cout de la vie, Direction de la Statistique, 1975, F-80, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco. While this was published in 1975 the index includes prices for these items dating back to 1972.
highlighting the importance of family planning in which the importance of contraception was tied to an idealized vision of a nuclear family home.\textsuperscript{105} The article opens with a description of a middle-class Moroccan couple, Ahmed and Fatima, described as the “model couple in their neighborhood.” Ahmed does not earn a large salary, but he does earn enough that Fatima does not need to work outside the home—enough that he always has enough to feed his family and pay his rent, water, and electric bills on time. Their home is furnished “as it should be,” with a kitchen that includes “a small stove,” and the couple is even “thinking of buying a Frigidaire.”

The gist of the article is to emphasize that in order for the couple to provide the proper life for their two children, they have elected to practice birth control and maintain the family at its current ideal size and condition. The rhetoric sounds a great deal like contemporaneous rhetoric from Egypt, where a national family planning program had been established in 1966.\textsuperscript{106} There is one key difference, however: the article emphasizes that Fatima receives frequent invitations to circumcisions, naming ceremonies, and other traditional life rituals, and that despite their modest means, she has a number of fine traditional outfits including caftans and other silk garments as well as traditional jewelry of silver and gold and precious stones—which she wears on such social and cultural occasions. That this paragon of a modern housewife is highlighted as maintaining her traditional Moroccan dress, including items made from precious metals that hark to an older property value system, is striking. It is difficult to imagine an equivalent detail in a popular magazine in post-1952 Egypt. This balancing of traditional and modernizing


\textsuperscript{106} Laura Bier, \textit{Revolutionary Womanhood: Feminisms, Modernity, and the State in Nasser’s Egypt} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 122–23. Bier describes the Egyptian population control program in connection with the Nasserist state’s commitments to providing “the accoutrements of social and material well-being—clean water, sufficient food, sanitary houses, better health care—to all Egyptian citizens,” 127.
“technologies of the self” was replicated in the post-independence Moroccan kitchen as well, where modern appliances were integrated but existed alongside older ones.

What did the transition to a “modern” kitchen look like from the vantage point of the Moroccan families who were the first to make the transition in the late 1950s? Whereas many Egyptian families recounted the gradual introduction of modern appliances into domestic spaces during this period—introducing a Butagaz stove to a kitchen that already had a wābūr, for example, or squeezing a refrigerator into a dining room because the kitchen was too crowded—the most significant Moroccan cultural narrative of this transition was different. Many Moroccans recalled moving directly into already-assembled modern kitchen spaces that contrasted with the kitchens of their former homes. This narrative stems from the phenomenon by which Moroccan civil servants moved directly into the homes formerly inhabited by colonial officials, which began in the wake of political independence in 1956. Often this narrative entailed memories of bringing a set of Moroccan cooking utensils (a clay tawājin, a kiskās, etc.) into an already-established modern, stable, industrialized kitchen.

After 1956, a major expansion of the modern middle classes of Morocco was prompted by the need for civil servants to staff ministries and public offices that had been run by French and Spanish officials. The creation of a significant Moroccan-staffed public sector created what André Adam terms a new “bourgeoisie of the diploma,” whereby Moroccans whose parents had little or no education entered the new urban professional classes. Many if not most European employees of the colonial administrations had lived in public housing units built specifically for them, and upon their departure, the new members of Morocco’s civil servant class moved into them. While this was not a universal experience it was nevertheless a common and commonly

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repeated one—remembered among numerous interviewees I spoke with and dramatized in Leila Abouzeid’s 1983 novel ʿĀm al-fīl (Year of the Elephant). As a cultural narrative it provides useful context for understanding the cultural significance of the modern kitchen in Morocco as compared to Egypt.

One interviewee, Fatima, remembers her family’s move from their riyāḍ (traditional courtyard home) in the medina or old city of Fes to a nuclear family home in an apartment building in the ville nouvelle in 1971 when she was ten years old.108 Remembering the old city kitchen, she recalled, “there was no faucet in that kitchen, it was bildī (traditional)...and everything was cooked over charcoal; our kiskās was made from copper, and the other pots were made from clay. My grandmother lived with us and she and my mother would cook together.”

When I asked her in succession about various industrial kitchen appliances, she associated them with the new kitchen. “I never saw the pressure cocotte (pressure cooker) until I was ten years old, in the ville nouvelle,” she explained. She described the ville nouvelle kitchen as moderne (using the French word although we spoke primarily in Moroccan Arabic) and explained that it had a kitchen sink, a Butagaz stove, and an electric mixer (rather than the copper mortar and pestle that had been used in the traditional kitchen). When I asked for specifics about what made that kitchen “modern,” she explained how it fit into the scheme of the house differently: “the whole apartment was modern: the kitchen is in one room, the bathroom by itself, and the bedrooms separate too.” But this arrangement did not mean that the new kitchen tools displaced the old ones. In the new kitchen, she explained, “we would cook on charcoal or gas depending on how much time we had.” She clarified however that cooking on charcoal was always presumed to produce healthier and more delicious food.

108 Interview conducted by author, August 7, 2017.
Similar narratives unfolded in the former Spanish zone of Morocco, and continued for decades after independence. ‘Aziza, who was born in 1957 to a family that has lived in Tetouan for many generations, prides herself on her maintenance of local traditional (taqlidi) practices in her everyday life, from her madani Tetouani dialect to her recipes. In 1987, she and her husband of five years, an employee in the Ministry of Finance, moved into the Pabellones housing complex, which had originally been built for Spanish civil servants. She described the various homes she had lived in based on the kind of family unit they were suited to: her husband’s family owned a large home just outside the city with much land and enough room for multiple generations, and the small apartment she lived in with her husband when they were first married was big enough only for a couple. But the former colonial apartment they moved into was suitable for a nuclear family, an usra, she said, and it was where they had raised their two children. This was the first home in which ‘Aziza’s kitchen had a built-in gas range with an oven attached, meaning she stopped sending bread, sweets, sweet potatoes, and certain fish dishes to be baked in a community oven. Whereas Egyptian women’s oral narratives of this transition associated certain older kitchen tools and practices with separate generations or geographical spaces (their grandmothers, the village), Moroccan women’s narratives far more commonly described transitions within their own lifetimes from one type of kitchen to another.

Leila Abouzeid’s 1983 novel ‘Ām al-fīl dramatizes the moment when a couple involved in Morocco’s armed anticolonial resistance make the transition into the middle-class world of post-independence civil servants. For the protagonist, Zahra, the move into what she calls “the government house” (bayt al-hukūma) marks the beginning of the end of her marriage, as her husband places increasingly intractable demands on her to entertain like a French housewife,

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109 Interview conducted by author, October 5, 2018.
managing servants and serving food in the European style. “The first time I entered [that house],
it was like a dream,” Zahra recalls. At first sight, she compares the villa’s spacious kitchen to
the Casablanca bus station and its built-in cabinets to the “vaults of Solomon,” shocked that the
French could possibly have left something so grand behind. (But of course, given the
permanence of the modern kitchen fixtures, how could they have brought them along?) In the
novel the modern kitchen and everything it is associated with are cast in a distinctly negative
light, symbolizing a betrayal of the nationalist resistance movement and in particular the
contributions of the women who played integral roles in it.

Abouzeid explained to me that she based this part of the novel in part on her own
family’s experience moving into an apartment in Rabat shortly after independence; its kitchen
already had a refrigerator and a Butagaz stove in it, because, as she recalled, “the French left it.
When they left they left everything behind.”

The novel can be read as a cautionary tale of the
way that when the material elements of colonial culture are dragged into the present, they can
drag other values with them: the fictional Zahra, exasperated with her husband’s behavior,
argues with him at the dinner table, where he glares at her for eating with her fingers. “You don’t
like it when I eat with my fingers?” she exclaims, “This is independence? You don’t like me
sitting with the servants? It was in their name that we fought the colonizers, and now you are
acting just like them!”

Zahra finds her own path to liberation in spite of the modern middle-
class kitchen and the version of modern domestic practices her husband expects within it—-not
because of these things.

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111 Interview conducted by author, April 12, 2017.
112 Abouzeid, ʿĀm al-fīl, 90.
In practice, Moroccan women I spoke with who suddenly found themselves in these new and modern kitchens brought their clay tagines, braziers, and mortars and pestles with them, pursuing a strategic approach to the modern kitchen that one scholar described to me as a kind of duality—izdiwājiyya—in which value is placed not on owning and using “modern” or “traditional” kitchen implements, but owning and using both as a means to maintaining a properly Moroccan culinary repertoire.¹¹³ This played out in multiple oral history narratives.

Aida told the story of her grandmother, who grew up in a village in the Rif region in the 1920s and 30s and eventually moved to her son’s (Aida’s father’s) city apartment in Nador. Growing up in that apartment in the 1960s and early 1970s, Aida remembers how her grandmother insisted on having a traditional oven (furn taqlidī) built on the roof of the apartment building, where she also kept chickens. In that oven she continued to bake her traditional large flatbread over a wood fire for the family, “even though we were in the middle of the city,” Aida recalled. Although Aida remembers the family kitchen featuring a Butagaz stove and a cocotte from the time she was about 8 years old, in 1972, her grandmother never used them. “She would get up early to cook, and even though the buta was in the kitchen she’d cook on the majmar. She’d set everything up over the coals and go do laundry, and come back to check on it from time to time. Everything was cooked in local olive oil (zayt bildiyya), and she used nothing that was made in a factory or canned.” Even after she was moved by her family into the heart of a city with a modern kitchen, Aida’s grandmother, like many of her generation, used and even installed traditional kitchen tools—and also maintained the network of food supply to which she was accustomed, resisting both the modernization of her cooking tools and her ingredients.

¹¹³ I thank Fatiha Taib for her insights in our discussion of this point during the American-German Young Academy’s summer school Emotions that Matter: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Feeling, Affect, and Body in Arabic Literature, Arts, and Culture, November 1-3, 2018 at Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco.
Salma was born in 1950 in a village outside Meknes, and grew up cooking either over a wood fire surrounded by stones (a kānūn) or over charcoal on a majmar.114 “There was no Butagaz then,” she said, and her childhood home’s water supply came from a spring that was “cold in summer and warm in winter.” I heard similar claims about natural water supplies from residents of the old city of Fes, whose homes were once supplied by a series of underground canals and wells. Older water delivery mechanisms were another example, like cooking over charcoal, of Moroccans expressing their opinion that the more modern and conventionally “advanced” versions of these technologies, farther removed from the natural world, were in fact inferior.

Salma married young, at age 15, and moved with her husband to a city apartment in Meknes in 1965. She was one of the few Moroccan women I interviewed who remembered owning a Primus-style kerosene stove, which she remembered by the name rīshū (from the French rechaud). Soon they moved on to cooking with Butagaz, however, where most of the family cooking took place; Salma only remembered the earlier gas stove when I showed her an image of one. Even in households that had a kerosene stove in Morocco did not view them as objects of nostalgia or desirable in any way—in contrast to Egyptian collective memory in which the wābūr has a more cherished place. When I asked Salma what it was that made Moroccan food Moroccan, she emphasized the importance of cooking with clay no matter the heat source (she said this to me, in fact, as we cooked a fish tājīn in clay over a gas flame). Her daughters had similar preferences for cooking over coals when possible, and always with clay cookware.

Zohour, who grew up in Rabat in the late 1960s and early 1970s, explains that her family had a Butagaz oven and stove in their kitchen for as long as she can remember.115 Because her

114 Interview conducted by author, October 7, 2018.
115 Interview conducted by author, April 8, 2018.
mother worked outside the home she used the *cocotte* frequently in order to save time, but also made sure to teach Zohour to cook over clay. Zohour as a result knows how to cook with a *cocotte* but chooses not to, favoring the use of clay on a gas range—facilitated with a metal heat diffuser that helps give her additional control over the distribution of heat and makes a clay *ṭājin* less likely to break. Zohour also explained that her father was insistent on teaching all of his children how to start a charcoal fire for roasting meat. “First you put oil on an old towel—we always have one in our kitchen for this purpose,” she told me as she narrated the steps he had taught her. The knowledge and implements for cooking over charcoal, she stressed, never left her kitchen, even when they ceased to become part of her everyday culinary practice. In Morocco the housewife and the embodied knowledge she carried came to be seen as essential to maintaining a well-ordered, modern kitchen—but bound up with qualities that celebrated tradition, authenticated through the continuities of intergenerational transmission. It affirmed and managed connections to the landscape and the natural world, rather than creating distance from it.

This chapter has argued that as the home kitchens of Egypt and Morocco’s urban middle classes became industrialized and permanent spaces they shared a number of key features, albeit along slightly different timelines: running water and a kitchen sink, a raised Butagaz stove, and an electric refrigerator. I have also shown how the tools and technologies of these kitchens were bundled with very different values and qualities: progress, economy, and industry in Egypt, and tradition, continuity, and landscape in Morocco. These differences were not merely a function of abstracted cultural essences, but were rooted in material factors and political circumstances. Particularly during what might be termed the major decades of culinary transition, the 1950s and 60s, crucial differences emerged as a modern kitchen in Egypt was associated with an industrialized, independent, and non-aligned state, whereas in Morocco it was inherited—
sometimes literally—from the departing colonial powers. Even as the gas stove came to embody Egyptian pride and identity, it could represent, at its most extreme, a threat in the Moroccan context.

The following chapters shift to the figure of the housewife, focusing on her culinary education. I examine how colonial and postcolonial states instructed women to run their homes as well as how culinary knowledge transmission worked in practice within home kitchens.
Chapter 2
Cooking Class (and Gender) in Egypt

In March 2017 the Egyptian television program Ṣāḥibat al-Saʿāda devoted an episode to the most famous cookbook in Egyptian history. The host, Isaad Younis, opens the show by looking directly into the camera and making a pronouncement in a serious tone of voice. “Al-ʿawda ilā al-uṣūl...wa-guzūr” (a return to fundamentals…and to roots) she intones before casting her eyes downwards solemnly. After a beat, she looks to her guest Murad Makram and they both burst into laughter.

The title of the 1941 cookbook that Younis and Makram are discussing, Uṣūl al-ṭahī: al-naẓarī wa-l-ʿamalī (Fundamentals of Cooking: Theory and Practice), uses a construction typically reserved for high-status works of theology or jurisprudence (e.g., Uṣūl al-dīn, Uṣūl al-ʿfiqh). The jokes that they make for the next hundred minutes all rest on this basic trope: namely, the humor inherent in describing Egyptian food and cooking using a formal register of Arabic. After a brief but sober documentary-style account of the cookbook’s history, Younis and Makram spend the majority of the episode poking fun at the difficulty and formality of its language as they cook their way through a handful of recipes. Throughout, they highlight the tension between the Egyptian vernacular Arabic (al-ʿāmmiyya) they use to describe food and the formal classical Arabic, or fuṣḥā they use when they read aloud from the cookbook. They mostly refer to the book not by its formal name but by the colloquial title by which it is better known,

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1 Mohamed Mourad, “Abla Naẓīra: Aqdam kitāb ṭabkh fī Miṣr,” Ṣāḥibat al-Saʿāda (Capital Broadcasting Center, March 28, 2017), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-gb1MuAnnA. As this chapter explains, Abla Nazira’s cookbook was not in fact the oldest cookbook in Egypt, but the episode’s title reflects the cookbook’s reputation in Egypt. The program’s name is the same as a personal title equivalent to “Her Excellency,” although more literally it might translate to “a woman in possession of happiness or good fortune.” It is also a reference to an Adel Imam comedy series, Ṣāḥib al-Saʿāda.
Kitāb Abla Naẓīra (Auntie Naẓīra’s Book). They feature clips from the 1978 Faisal Nada play al-Mutazawwijūn (The Married Couples), in which characters speaking Egyptian ʿāmmiyya make fun of the idea that a cookbook of formally written recipes could actually produce tasty food. When opening the cookbook for the first time, Younis turns to Makram and asks, “hal tataḥaddath al-lugha al-ʿarabiyya?” (Dost thou speak the Arabic language?), using fuṣḥā and affecting a serious tone to emphasize the elevated language of the text. She pulls out a dictionary to decipher its vocabulary; Makram visits an Arabic teacher for advice. When it comes to the actual recipes, they run into more problems, played up for comic effect. Reading aloud from a list of ingredients, Younis says “mustaka?” a few times and exchanges a puzzled glance with Makram before laughing at herself and correcting her reading of the unwovelled text: “mastika” (mastic gum), highlighting the fact that culinary knowledge like the names of spices is something she knows through spoken, not written language. At the market, the butcher does not understand the description of the meat the cookbook specifies, nor does the greengrocer know what is meant by “gazar ifranjī” (European carrots). Halfway through the first recipe, Makram exclaims “It’s like we’re in a cartoon! This isn’t cooking!”

Other episodes of the show, which is about “Egyptian identity, past and present,” cover topics ranging from contemporary Egyptian cuisine to historical icons like Umm Kulthum in a more straightforward manner. The tone is light and conversational, but not full of banter and wisecracks as in the episode described here. Why the disconnect between the first ten minutes of this episode, wherein the cookbook is treated as an important part of modern Egyptian heritage

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2 In one scene, a newly married woman cooks the popular Egyptian dish mulūkhiyya for her husband, following the cookbook’s recipe “word for word.” Upon tasting it he asks her: “This is from the mulūkhiyya page? Are you sure it’s not from the obituary page?”, staggering around the stage as though the food may kill him. I first learned about the cookbook from a bookseller in Cairo’s Azbakiyya book market, and he mentioned al-Mutazawwijūn when explaining the book’s cultural significance. Hassan ʿAbd al-Salam, Masrahiyat al-Mutazawwijūn, accessed February 21, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCYVfPPEias.
and identity, and the subsequent hour and a half, which turns it into a running joke? Why was there an attempt to set down culinary knowledge in such formal language in the first place in midcentury Egypt? This chapter addresses these questions by situating the cookbook and its authors within the history of the Egyptian state’s attempts to intervene in the way that women and girls managed their homes and kitchens. I show that this history is riddled with tensions and paradoxes surrounding how Egyptians, particularly women, were instructed to pursue ideal versions of family and national life. Sara Ahmed observes that frequently “ordinary attachments to the very idea of the good life are also sites of ambivalence, involving the confusion rather than separation of good and bad feelings.”\(^3\) I suggest that the tensions highlighted in the television episode described above—between formal and informal language, public and intimate modes of expression, and official and personal understandings of Egyptian culture—are expressions of this kind of ambivalence, which is epitomized by the cookbook author Abla Nazira and her complicated status as an Egyptian cultural icon. This chapter argues that Abla Nazira and the ambivalence she embodies are the product of a history of domestic education unique to Egypt.

1873 to 1922: Early Visions of Domestic Education in Egypt

The institutionalization of girls’ education in Egypt began under Khedive Ismail (r. 1863-79) with the founding of al-Siyufiya, Egypt’s first state-sponsored school for girls, in 1873.\(^4\) Eventually renamed al-Saniya, the name by which it is still known, the school’s students were

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4 Prior to this period, the Egyptian state played a minimal role in women’s education, with the exception of a government School for Midwives. Some girls were educated at home by private tutors or attended a kuttāb, or Qur’anic school. For more on the School for Midwives, see Hibba Abugideiri, *Gender and the Making of Modern Medicine in Colonial Egypt* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010); Khaled Fahmy, “Women, Medicine, and Power in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 35–72. For more on female education in Egypt in this period more generally, see Hoda A. Yousef, *Composing Egypt: Reading, Writing, and the Emergence of a Modern Nation, 1870-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).
initially drawn largely from Cairo’s working classes. While its original curriculum included both general education and domestic subjects, the latter dominated the school’s early years. Mona Russell notes that many Egyptian parents were initially reluctant to send their daughters to a government school; this meant that by the 1880s the school’s mission was limited to “preparing girls of modest means for entering domestic service.” During this period, domestic subjects were of particular interest to families whose daughters could earn a wage cooking or cleaning. This phenomenon was also linked to the demise of older forms of forced labor: the slave trade had been formally abolished in Egypt in 1877, and not long after, according to the American Consul-General in Egypt, the ruler Khedive Ismail proposed that in place of slaves, girls from the Egyptian fallāḥīn (peasantry) should be “educated, and taught the duties of cleanliness and household virtues.” Even so, the notion that domestic household labor was an important and desirable means for women to create happiness for themselves and their families did not take root immediately, but rather emerged as a dominant norm in Egyptian society over the course of several decades.

The evolution of domestic education into a set of skills deemed appropriate and desirable for all Egyptian girls, not merely those who would use them to earn wages outside their own homes, parallels the rise of the urban middle classes collectively referred to as the efendiyya. Lucie Ryzova describes the efendiyya as a “social category” made up of “self-consciously modern men” whose class identity is best understood not as an empirical matter of wealth or income level, but through “a distinct cultural identity and position,” including modern education,

6 Ibid., 107.
employment, and dress.\textsuperscript{8} Tracing the history of this group starting in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Ryzova notes that “the political elites that ruled Egypt for most of the twentieth century came of age as efendis.”\textsuperscript{9} Among other things, these men were reformers, journalists, and bureaucrats, and their ascendance entailed defining new expectations for their wives, daughters, and servants. The growing ranks of formally educated Egyptian women also contributed to debates about women in society as cookbook authors, teachers, activists, and mothers. Men and women of the efendiyya promoted new norms of modern Egyptian womanhood that were largely in line with an ideology of modern domesticity that was taking shape around the globe.

As these expectations and norms materialized in state-sponsored domestic education for girls and debates in the Arabic press in turn-of-the-century Egypt, the efendiyya projected them onto a new figure, the middle-class housewife, described in Arabic as rabbat al-dār, rabbat al-manzil, rabbat al-bayt, or sitt bayt (mistress or lady of the house). The ideal housewife according to this new vision of gender roles received a modern education, but unlike her male counterpart, her work was confined to the home—implying that she had neither the need nor desire to work for wages. If she supervised household staff, she was actively involved in the management and direction of their work. In other words, she belonged to a “middling” category situated between women who performed waged labor outside their home out of necessity and women who paid others to do all of their domestic labor.

And yet, as Russell points out, this new figure was paradoxical: educating women required training and employing women teachers who themselves worked outside the home, and it also produced increasing numbers of women qualified to teach and undertake other employment

\textsuperscript{8} Ryzova, Efendiyya, 4–5, 12.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 4.
opportunities. Russell suggests that a focus on domestic subjects was one solution to this problem: emphasizing domestic education helped make state education for girls acceptable to members of the urban middle classes who were invested in a newly emerging vision of what it meant to be Egyptian, respectable, and modern—a vision in which a woman should not be educated at the expense of her domestic role and duties. Lisa Pollard situates the growing middle-class emphasis on domesticity within broader shifts in Egyptian attitudes about education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as “women’s education became a project not only of creating educated, literate women but of producing mothers who could lead the home and national family into a new era.” She argues that the home’s importance not only as a modern space, but a site of moral formation, was increasingly tied to the future of the Egyptian nation leading up to the 1919 revolution.

Even so, the notion that domestic education was a desirable or even suitable subject for middle-class women was slow to gain traction. Prior to 1922, in rhetoric as well as policy, domestic education in Egypt was more a paternalistic approach to the urban working classes than a universal vehicle for nation-building. The work of Malak Hifni Nasif (1886-1918), who belonged to one of the early generations of women educated in Egyptian state schools, illustrates this point. A prominent early Egyptian advocate for women’s education who wrote from a salafi reformist perspective, Nasif was born to educated parents and studied to be a teacher at Saniya. In accordance with the domestic ideals of her social class, she stopped teaching upon marriage. Writing in the liberal nationalist newspaper *al-Jarīda* under the pseudonym Bahihat al-Badiya

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11 Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*, 122.
12 Ibid., 123.
(Seeker in the Desert), she critiqued attempts to limit girls’ education to domestic subjects. But this critique only applied to certain women: she argued that tasks like cooking and ironing were more suited to servants than to “refined ladies” (sayyidāt muhadhdhabāt). For Nasif, the “refined” Egyptian woman whose education she had in mind was from a specific class and cultural background. Workers and fallāḥīn (peasants), she wrote, could be forgiven for not educating their daughters, “but our enlightened and cultured men cannot be excused for leaving their daughters to be…brought up by mothers amidst nonsense and frivolity.”

Nasif saw a clear role for educational institutions to correct what she viewed as the transfer of ignorant and superstitious practices from mother to daughter, a common view among reformists of the era. She decried how difficult it was for girls to complete their schoolwork when their mothers spent too much time socializing with their servants or with a kudya, a word referring to women of Sudanese or Ethiopian origin who led zār rituals. According to Nasif’s vision of women’s education, excessive influence from women from outside her own cultural context and social class posed a threat to the ideal family she envisioned. While she identified a need for the state to intervene in women’s lives through education, her articulation of its role was based more on excluding certain elements from Egyptian society than on forging a new generation of citizens through a shared educational curriculum. Such a curriculum would not emerge until the end of the British occupation following World War I.

15 Ibid., 109–10.
16 Qasim Amin was the most famous of these, although Leila Ahmed and Mona Russell have pointed out that he was one of many Egyptian men and women writing in this vein before and after the turn of the twentieth century.
17 Nasif, Nisāʾʾiyāt, 71; A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic, s.v. “k-d-y,” Martin Hinds and El-Said Badawi. During this period, Sudan was under joint British and Egyptian authority. For a study of Egypt’s position as a colonizer vis-à-vis Sudan, and the relationship between Egyptian attitudes towards Sudan and the emergence of Egyptian nationalism, see Eve Troutt Powell, A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).
The persistence of this attitude towards women’s education can be explained in part through the nature of both the British occupation of Egypt, which had begun in 1882, and through the field of domestic science in England at the time, which influenced Egyptian domestic education significantly. While British officials supported domestic education for girls, Russell observes that this “domestic and practical bend in female education was part of [the British] effort to tame, sanitize, and control the Egyptians.” 18 This in turn reflected the origins and character of domestic curricula in the metropole, which in many ways paralleled its beginnings in Egypt. England’s first cookery school was established in 1873—the same year as Siyufiya (later Saniya). While the scope of British domestic science eventually expanded, it was originally established as a response to the domestic labor needs of the upper classes. For example, the Gloucestershire College of Domestic Science, where the Egyptian cookbook author Abla Nazira would study in the 1920s, was founded in 1891 by a number of “ladies of the county” concerned over the availability and capabilities of domestic servants. 19 They founded the school citing “how much the happiness and comfort of the home depends on the training of those responsible for its upkeep, whether mistresses or maids.” 20 Happiness and comfort would become prominent elements of middle-class domesticity in England and Egypt alike over the course of the twentieth century, but initially they were framed as the product of paid labor intended to be enjoyed by a select few.

By 1878, “domestic economy” was a mandatory component of state education for girls in England, where it was hoped that in its “civilizing” function, domesticity would help offset the

18 Russell, New Egyptian Woman, 138.
19 Report of H.M. Inspectors on the Technical Work of the Gloucestershire College of Domestic Science, March 1924, JQ15.3GS, Gloucestershire County Archives, Gloucester, England. The school’s chief founder was also said to have shown particular concern with the living conditions of English factory workers.
social ills of the new industrial working classes. Carol Dyhouse writes that in turn-of-the-century Britain, arguments made in favor of developing women’s roles in the home through education were tied to racial and “social-Darwinistic terminology,” emphasizing proper feminine education that highlighted the importance of maternal duties and housewifery to preserving the “efficiency of the British race.” In England as in Egypt, in order for a new middle class to embody modern domesticity “upstairs,” it was necessary to modernize the servant class “downstairs” as well. And as Karen Tranberg Hansen observes of a number of colonial situations, in both colony and metropole members of the servant class “often came from different class, regional, ethnic, and racial backgrounds from their employers.”

It is not surprising, then, that during the British occupation of Egypt (starting in 1882), rhetoric and policies concerning modern domesticity were largely a means to establish and consolidate ethnic and socioeconomic difference. British High Commissioner Lord Cromer nominally supported educating Egyptian girls on the basis of his critiques of veiling and seclusion. But in practice, the British administration slowed the overall trend of educational expansion in Egypt while maintaining the existing system of organizing separate educational tracks differentiated by class. British efforts to integrate more domestic science instruction into the curriculum for Egyptian girls were also largely ineffectual: according to Mona Russell, by 1921 “the domestic science division at Saniya was such an utter failure that… it existed ‘in name

22 Ibid., 31–32.
23 Hansen, African Encounters with Domesticity, 4.
25 For a discussion of early Arabic domestic science textbooks used in Egypt during this period, and the ways that different texts and curricula were tailored for working class, middle-class, and elite families in various ways, see Mona Russell, “The Use of Textbooks as a Source of History for Women: The Case of Turn-of-the-Century Egypt,” in Beyond the Exotic: Women’s Histories in Islamic Societies, ed. Amira Sonbol (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006), 270–94.
From the establishment of the first state school for girls in 1873 to Egypt’s achievement of nominal and provisional political independence in 1922, domestic education had faced significant obstacles and contradictions: many educated women like Nasif still viewed these subjects as beneath them, and supplying schools with enough female teachers was a perennial problem because the ideology of domesticity encouraged educated women to stop working outside the home upon marriage—effectively limiting its own supply of teachers. The British, meanwhile, were invested more in domesticity as a means to “civilize” and control the Egyptian population than as a framework for training modern housewives. Egyptian elites had begun to articulate ideas about the modern housewife, but questions about how she should be educated to her role—and in particular, the specifics of what she should cook, which would eventually emerge as a cornerstone of modern domesticity—were yet to be addressed. When Egypt won nominal independence from the British in 1922, however, this began to change. A new, provisionally independent government redoubled its efforts to promote domestic education for the sake of Egypt’s progress as a modern nation, and for the happiness of its families.

1922 to 1937: Domestic Education for All

“According to most modern scholars, the family is the basic unit of the state.”
—Egyptian civics textbook, 1926

In 1922 Egypt was granted nominal independence from Great Britain as a constitutional monarchy. Although the British continued to dominate Egyptian affairs, Egyptians were granted

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26 Russell, *New Egyptian Woman*, 139.
a new measure of autonomy in domestic matters. The advent of parliamentary politics also forced the emerging elites of the efendiyya, starting with the ruling Wafd party, to fashion a more populist image for themselves. In the 1920s and 30s, Egyptian nationalists began to draw variously on different elements of Egyptian history and culture to fashion a “collective image” of the nation through a process that might be referred to as “making manifest what is latent.”28 An initial focus on territorial nationalism linked to Egypt’s Pharaonic past gave way to imaginings based on Egypt’s Arab, Eastern, and Islamic identities.29 Beth Baron observes how rhetoric invoking the nuclear bourgeois family was also central to nationalist politics during this era in ways that selectively “modified the gender order.”30

These political and intellectual currents produced renewed attempts to reform and expand domestic education for all Egyptian girls, from the peasantry to the upper classes, and led to the production of a new genre of cookbooks written by and for Egyptian women. In addition, the effects of the global recession in the 1930s further incentivized an emphasis on economy in domestic management and food preparation. As the global price of cotton dropped in the early 1930s, the purchasing power of Egyptians fell drastically, severely impacting access to staple foods.31 These shifts provoked efforts to make domestic education more Egyptian, more universal within Egypt, and more practical—although these efforts would not yield tangible results until the late 1930s.

An episode from the memoirs of Huda Sha’rawi (1879-1947), a contemporary of Malak

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Hifni Nasif and a leading activist of her era, offers insight into the renewed emphasis placed on domestic skills. Shaʿrawi’s own life is representative of the changing makeup of Egyptian elite society over the first half of the twentieth century. Her father, an Egyptian notable and landowner, had married into the Turko-Circassian aristocracy that had long dominated Egyptian politics and urban society. Unions like these were a common route to social ascendancy among the efendiyya, many of whom were of rural Egyptian origin, and an important strategy for elite families of Turkish origin to establish and authenticate themselves as “Egyptian” in the post-1919 milieu.

Shaʿrawi explains that she had been traveling with her family in Europe when World War I broke out. While waiting for passage back to Egypt from a chaotic Italy, she overheard several women contemplating which of their domestic skills would be most useful should they be forced to remain in Italy and work for a living. “As I listened to them,” Shaʿrawi recalls,

I asked myself, what could I do if I found myself in that position? I was proficient at neither cooking nor sewing…I realized that this should be a lesson for me. After that I worked hard to learn how to cook.32

Shaʿrawi had been given a typical education for an elite girl: she had been tutored privately in Arabic, Turkish, and French.33 She was raised in a household with many servants and likely seldom, if ever, set foot in the kitchen of her childhood home. Shaʿrawi’s experience reflects changes in Egypt’s social and class structures and the emergence of a new class of Egyptians for whom modern cookery and domestic skills took on a new significance, for both practical and ideological reasons. In 1935, Shaʿrawi wrote an open letter endorsing the first Egyptian cookbook written by an Egyptian woman in Arabic, published the previous year by a woman

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33 Ibid., 35.
named Basima Zaki Ibrahim. The letter praises Ibrahim’s good taste, describing the book and its context in terms of “public service to the nation.”

Ibrahim’s cookbook and its sequels, all published under the series title al-Ghidhā’ wa-l-maṭbakh wa-l-mā‘ida (Nutrition, Kitchen, and Table), express various aspects of the cultural and ideological trends of her time. A volume of European and North American recipes is titled “modern cooking” (al-ṭabkh al-ḥadīth) while another, dedicated to “Eastern cuisine” (al-maṭbakh al-sharqī), devotes a chapter to the domestic and eating habits of the ancient Egyptians. It explains that the vegetables in their diet “included many of the various vitamins necessary to the body’s development,” and lists various Pharaonic foods still eaten by contemporary Egyptians, from fūl (fava beans) and lentils to pigeon and duck. The volume of Eastern cuisine is dedicated to Sha’rawi, referring to her as the “leader of the women’s awakening (al-nahda al-nisā‘iyya) in Egypt (al-qaṭr al-Miṣrī)” and thanking her for “raising the status of [the Egyptian woman] in the eyes of the West.” Ibrahim’s use of the term al-qaṭr al-Miṣrī, which refers to the land or territory of Egypt, and the chapter about the ancient Egyptians, reflect the influence of territorial expressions of Egyptian nationalism, which peaked in the 1920s and emphasized Pharaonic history. The book’s later chapters reflect shifts to a wider set

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34 A copy of the letter is held in the Huda Sha’rawi Papers, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo, Egypt. The only mention I have found of Ibrahim’s work in secondary literature is in Jack Goody’s 1982 study Cooking, Cuisine, and Class, which mentions her book only in passing in a section largely devoted to medieval Islamicate cuisine. Jack Goody, Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 131.

35 Interestingly Sha’rawi uses both al-umma and al-waṭan.


38 Ibrahim, al-Maṭbakh al-sharqī, 47–48. Archaeological evidence suggests that while fūl were indeed known to the ancient Egyptians, they were not in fact widely consumed in Egypt until the Greco-Roman period.

of imaginings of Egyptian identity in the 1930s, which also embraced Arab, Islamic, and Eastern influences. Although the majority of the book is made up of recipes for Egyptian foods (al-alwān al-Miṣriyya), shorter chapters are dedicated to recipes from Syria, Turkey, Iran, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, India, China, and Japan.

Ibrahim’s books also reflect the ascendency of a new ideological position regarding the role of the housewife, and a departure from the ideal household that Nasif had intimated a few decades prior. While the original 1934 volume emphasizes modern kitchen equipment and nutritional science, implying that it is written for a woman of some education and means, it also includes a chapter addressing food preparation “in a house with no servant” (fī manzil bilā khadam). She emphasizes that a housewife (rabbat al-manzil) is responsible for taking charge of household affairs herself, including preparing food that will please all of her family members. She does highlight the need for the housewife to promote a sense of culture and refinement, emphasizing the importance of presentation and describing cooking as one of the “fine arts” (min al-funūn al-jamīla); but she situates domestic labor in an entirely different mode from the “refined ladies” to whom Nasif refers. I suggest that these elements indicate that Ibrahim’s intended audience can be understood as the growing middle classes of her era: an increasingly expanding audience of women for whom a formal Arabic text would have been accessible thanks to the expansion of women’s education, but who could not necessarily afford as many domestic

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40 For an account of this shift see Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945*. For a critique of their account see Charles D. Smith, “Imagined Identities, Imagined Nationalisms: Print Culture and Egyptian Nationalism in Light of Recent Scholarship,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 4 (1997): 607–22. While Gershoni and Jankowski identify disparate “praxis-oriented” ideologies associated with these various influences, Smith qualifies them as more inchoate “orientations” and points out that the various strands of Egyptian identity frequently overlapped during this period: “the same “producers” often produced Eastern, Islamic, and Arab opinions in one book,” just as Ibrahim’s collection of “Eastern Cuisine” reflects a wide range of cultural influences, from Pharaonic Egyptian cuisine to Eastern foods in a much broader sense, 614.


servants as elites of previous generations. The audience of Ibrahim’s cookbook and later
cookbooks in the same genre likely shared Sha’rawi’s shifting sensibility towards playing a more
active role in the management of household affairs. This shift also represents the crystallization
of a new concept of domestic labor within the framework of “separate spheres,” with women
fully responsible for managing the private sphere of the home, newly conceptualized as separate
from public space. This new concept applied regardless of whether a household included
domestic servants: even women who employed maids and cooks were encouraged to take an
active role in supervising their servants’ labor and not leave important cooking, childrearing, or
cleaning tasks to their discretion.43

Ibrahim’s cookbooks did not emerge in a vacuum: fears that educated Egyptian women
would stop cooking as a result of their studies had been expressed in the Arabic press since the
late 1920s. One 1927 article, attributed to a woman named Layla, laments the fact that each day,
more Egyptian women hold high school diplomas and fewer know how to cook or even “how to
fry an egg.”44 And the 1934 review of Ibrahim’s cookbook in al-Ahrām specifically praises the
book’s significance at a time “when Egyptian girls are placing less and less value on working in
a kitchen,” arguing that knowing how to cook is essential even for girls who have earned
diplomas and completed their education.45 One graduate of Egypt’s Domestic Science Institute
wrote that by the late 1930s parents were requesting that “more subjects of feminine interest” be

43 In the 1920s and 30s women’s magazines Fatāt Miṣr al-fatāh and Fatāt al-sharq included columns about
managing household servants and advice about how to behave appropriately in front of one’s servants. The
implication of the change introduced by the notion of “separate spheres” was not necessarily that a woman should
do all of the labor herself, but that she should be actively involved in all household decisions, from decorating the
home to teaching her staff how to cook in the correct manner. For example, an article in the inaugural issue of Fatāt
Miṣr al-fatāh instructs the woman reader of the magazine on her responsibilities for the domestic happiness of
1, No. 1, 1921, 14.
taught in Egyptian schools, citing fears that educated girls “had no time to spare for domestic work at home” and no ability to run a household, which in turn threatened their marriage prospects.  

However, despite the expressed desire for more domestic education in general, and an increased emphasis on cooking in particular, the Egyptian educational system in the 1920s and 30s was simply not equipped to train the daughters of the new middle classes accordingly. A shortage of teachers remained a major obstacle: although teacher training colleges existed, including an institute specifically dedicated to domestic science, they were not meeting the demand for female teachers. Zaynab ʿIzzat, who was born in 1922 and attended secondary school in the early 1930s, recalls that with the exception of her Arabic teacher, the teachers at her government secondary school were all foreign. The domestic education she received consisted principally of etiquette classes reflecting the practices of European table manners and respectability:

We learned the principles of setting a table, where to place the napkin, and how to arrange the food on the table, and not to touch anything with our hands: everything was done with fork and knife.

Individual teachers were given considerable discretion in teaching domestic subjects, and despite the publication of a handful of household management textbooks in the 1910s and 20s, there was no widely implemented formal curriculum for teaching Egyptian schoolgirls how to cook.

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47 Russell, New Egyptian Woman, 122–23; Rushdi, “Domestic Science in Egypt,” 9. Russell notes that by 1919, the system produced 200 teachers a year in comparison with an estimated need of 900 teachers per year. Rushdi writes that prior to 1937, the existence of the Domestic Science Institute had little impact on the teaching of domestic science in secondary schools.


50 Russell, “The Use of Textbooks.”
There is no evidence that Ibrahim’s cookbooks were ever considered as potential school textbooks: in one of her introductions she even specifies that they are intended for use by housewives and not as textbooks (kutub li-l-dirāsa). In any case there would not necessarily have been enough Egyptian instructors to teach them at the time they were first published. Although this status quo did not change until the late 1930s, efforts to address the lack of teachers and textbooks had been set in motion in 1923 with a series of events that highlights women activists’ emergence as political players during this period.

In 1923, Sha’rawi’s Egyptian Feminist Union made a formal demand for gender parity in secondary and higher education. Identifying a lack of qualified female teachers as a key barrier, the government agreed to support a delegation of women to study abroad “to prepare women to teach in girls’ schools in Egypt.” When the Ministry of Public Instruction struggled to find young women who were sufficiently qualified for the opportunity, they appealed to the well-connected Sha’rawi, who identified a number of women who had graduated from foreign schools in Egypt. Sha’rawi frequently attended women’s conferences in Europe and the United States, and was well-positioned to integrate Egyptian women into international women’s educational and social networks, including domestic science institutions.

On May 22, 1926, an article in al-Siyāsa, the newspaper of the opposition Liberal Constitutionalist Party, announced the departure of a group of Egyptian girls “from the upper and middle classes” to England to study subjects that included medicine, nursing, physical education, English literature, and childhood development. Their goal, according to the article, was to

52 Although initially aligned with the Wafd party, Sha’rawi had a falling out with Sa’d Zaghlul and the Wafd beginning in 1924, aligning her with the opposition—a position from which she continued to wield influence. Baron, Egypt as a Woman.
54 Ibid., 193–4.
“contribute to the women’s awakening (al-nahḍa al-niswiyya) by teaching the girls of their country.”

55 That delegation included Nazira Niqula (later known as Abla Nazira), one of two women sent to study at the Gloucestershire College of Domestic Science.56 The choice to send members of the delegation to study domestic science and cookery in England reflects not only Shaʿrawi’s convictions about the importance of cooking, but a growing consensus among politicians and the urban educated classes that domestic skills were essential to national progress.

By the time Niqula enrolled in the Gloucestershire College of Domestic Science in 1927, the school had bolstered its scientific and academic credentials considerably since its founding as a school for domestic servants.57 In 1926 it had established a formal degree program, the first of its kind in the country.58 Although its students still included local factory workers and women training to be domestic workers, the college now also trained middle-class women to teach domestic science and cookery throughout Great Britain and its empire.59 The recipes in the Gloucestershire cooking curriculum reflected this diversity, designating different foods appropriate for various populations, differentiated by social class. While the lessons for “factory girls” comprised simple English dishes, the advanced curriculum for educators like Niqula was more cosmopolitan. In addition to continental dishes it included British imperial dishes like

56 Niqula’s family name suggests they may have been Christians who migrated to Egypt from Greater Syria in the late nineteenth century. This accords with the fact that Shaʿrawi relates many of the women sent to study abroad were from private schools; Niqula may have attended a Christian missionary or Catholic school.
curries and “kedgeree,” itself a version of an Indian dish, *khichidi*, that had migrated throughout the Indian Ocean and Red Sea coasts, appearing in Basra and the Hejaz as well as the cities of Egypt as *kusharī*.

Advanced cookery instruction at Gloucestershire was underpinned by French culinary techniques, from the mother sauces to consommé, aspics, and soufflés. The curriculum offered Niqula a model that she would later replicate and translate into Arabic: a variety of dishes of diverse origin, refined and modernized through French technique and the latest kitchen technology.

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After completing a two-year course in domestic science and cookery, Niquula obtained an appointment to work in the domestic science division of the Egyptian Ministry of Public Instruction in 1929 and was teaching at Saniya by 1930. Within a decade she was teaching at the ministry’s Domestic Science Institute (Ma‘had al-Tarbiya li-l-Tadbīr al-Manzilih), training a new generation of domestic science teachers. Meanwhile, as the Egyptian parliament began drafting a policy of compulsory primary education in 1933, lawmakers and education officials reaffirmed the inclusion of domestic economy and hygiene—the only gender-specific subject in the Egyptian curriculum. Emphasizing the importance of including girls in the compulsory education scheme, one senator argued that “the happiness of the home, and indeed that of the nation, depends upon [women]” and that to fulfill this role successfully, Egyptian women had to be educated. Numerous subjects were added and removed over the course of the deliberations, but domestic education was never cut from a draft of the law. As Egypt’s political class sought to define and educate a new generation of modern citizens, educating all Egyptian girls in domestic skills was legislated as essential to the nation’s progress and its happiness. This marked a new vision of the nuclear family as a fundamental building block or unit of the Egyptian nation, with the implication that a single educational curriculum could serve all of the housewives that managed these families. Happiness, too, was now in the legislative record as an essential


62 Tadbīr al-manzilih or al-tadbīr al-manzili can be translated as either household management or domestic science. I use both; in this case I defer to the official English translation of the name of this institute.

63 Law for Compulsory Elementary Education, minutes from meeting of Egyptian Chamber of Deputies, 23 May 1933, and minutes from meeting of Egyptian Senate, June 12, 1933, FO 141/703/13, British National Archives, London, England. The final list of subjects agreed upon was: Qur’an, religion, moral and civic education, Arabic (reading and writing), arithmetic and basic geometry, drawing, general knowledge, physical education, and domestic economy and hygiene for girls.

64 Minutes from meeting of Egyptian Senate, June 12, 1933, FO 141/703/13, British National Archives, London, England.
component of the modern nuclear family.

Despite the rhetoric of politicians and reformers, however, the implementation of domestic education for girls had mixed results, particularly at the secondary levels. Inspectors reported that domestic subjects for schoolgirls had been “almost completely neglected,” having been tacked on to the end of the school day rather than integrated into the curriculum, and poorly attended as a result. As a result, the curriculum for girls was again overhauled, with an additional year added to girls’ secondary education in order to allow for additional time for domestic education. “In the new curriculum,” inspectors explained, “special attention has been given to Female Education in order to fit girls for intelligent domestic life and render them good wives and mothers as well as good citizens.” According to the Ministry of Public Instruction, these reforms were carried out in accordance with the wishes of parents with daughters in Egyptian schools, although it is difficult to know the extent to which this was the case. Anisa al-Hifni, who attended state schools starting from the late 1930s, recalled attending school an extra year for the sake of tadbīr al-manzil (domestic science) lessons. She also recalled that the only non-Egyptian teachers she had taught foreign languages, meaning that unlike Zaynab ʿIzzat just a few years prior, al-Hifni had been taught domestic science by an Egyptian instructor. Likely this was the result of the expansion of government domestic science training institutes starting in 1937, which aimed to train more Egyptians to teach domestic subjects in state

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65 Report on education in Egypt, 1939, BW 29/5, British National Archives, London, England, and Rushdi, “Domestic Science in Egypt,” 9. In 1948 Esmat Rushdi wrote that the only domestic science being taught in secondary schools prior to the reforms of the mid- to late 1930s took place in the context of “some school clubs in their activities on Monday afternoons, which is half day in Egypt.”
67 Ibid.
70 Ibid., 8–9.
schools. With these reforms in motion, it was finally time for cooking to rise to a place of prominence in the Egyptian curriculum.

1937 to 1952: New Recipes for Cooking Modern

In the late 1930s, a number of new textbooks on domestic subjects were published by the Ministry of Public Instruction—written for the first time by Egyptian women, in Arabic, and specifically tailored to Egyptian schoolgirls. The ministry took multiple steps to expand domestic science offerings, including sending more students to Europe and the United States to study the subject and opening a Higher Institute of Domestic Science in 1937, complete with four kitchens equipped with “modern apparatus, cleaning machines and gas and electric stoves” comparable to the kitchens in British domestic science training institutes of the era. The aim of the new institute was to complement the existing Domestic Science Institute (which trained primary school teachers) by training women to teach domestic science in secondary schools, where it was especially lacking.

While cooking had nominally been a part of girls’ domestic education in Egypt for decades, it had not been fully integrated into the curriculum in a practical sense. One reason may have been a lack of qualified teachers; another may have been the fact that cookery was typically not taught until at least the fourth year of primary school because cooking on stoves was not considered appropriate for younger girls, and until a critical mass of female students continued into the higher grades of levels of education it would not have been practical to implement

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72 Russell discusses several textbooks published in Egypt in the 1910s, written by men. Russell, “The Use of Textbooks.”
74 Ibid.
cooking lessons (as opposed to other domestic subjects like needlework and cleaning).\textsuperscript{75}

Another major issue, however, was the lack of a unified curriculum specifying what should be taught in cooking lessons. It was not until the late 1930s and 40s that the principles of modern cookery were assembled into systematic, encyclopedic textbooks written in Arabic and published in Cairo. One such text was \textit{al-Ta 'lim al-manzili} (Domestic Education), a three-volume series written by Fatima Fahmi and published in 1939. The series included a volume dedicated entirely to cooking and recipes, explaining that “good nutrition is the foundation of health, and it is only possible through masterful cooking.”\textsuperscript{76} Fahmi was educated in England, and in her introduction she positions herself within global women’s networks, citing her participation in an international domestic science conference in Rome in 1927. Huda Sha’rawi recounts that the invitation for that conference was originally offered to her; when she was forced to decline due to a prior commitment to another women’s conference, she urged education officials to send someone—presumably Fahmi—in her stead.\textsuperscript{77}

By far the most significant work in the Egyptian domestic science field produced during this period, however, was \textit{Uṣūl al-ṭahī: al-nażarī wa-l-ʿamalī} (Fundamentals of Cooking: Theory and Practice), co-written by Nazira Niqula and Bahiya ʿUthman and published in 1941.\textsuperscript{78} Although it eventually enjoyed success as a home cookbook that was popular among the middle classes, and was dedicated to Egypt’s “current and future mothers,” it debuted as a textbook written for domestic science teachers in training.\textsuperscript{79} The book’s preface, written by ʿA’isha Iqbal

\textsuperscript{75} Rushdi, 9.
\textsuperscript{77} Sha’rawi, \textit{Mudhakkirāt}, 237.
\textsuperscript{78} Niqula and ʿUthman, \textit{Uṣūl al-ṭahī}, 1953. I quote this edition throughout the dissertation. ʿUthman had also been trained in a British domestic science college, Berridge House in Hampshire. In addition to the cookbook she co-authored with Niqula, she went on to write recipes for the primary women’s magazine of the post-1952 era, \textit{Ḥawwā'}, but never became the famous household name that Niqula did.
Rashid, dean of the state Domestic Science Institute, praises the book’s authors for their contribution to “the most important branch of household management (al-tadbīr al-manzilī), the art of modern cooking (fann al-tahī al-hadīth).”\(^80\) Rashid also points out that the ministry sponsored both authors’ educations in England. In their introduction, the authors acknowledge Qadir ʿAbd al-Hamid Hassan Bey “for correcting the book’s language,” signaling that their text is written in a formal, and formally approved, register of Arabic.

This stamp of male approval of the book’s language is significant given the subject of the text and its female authorship. According to the ideology of domesticity promoted by the Egyptian state, home cooking and kitchens belonged firmly within the feminine, domestic, private sphere. Then and now, this gendered spatial division frequently maps onto language, with colloquial forms of Arabic, or ʿāmmiyya, associated with women’s speech. Spoken in everyday and domestic contexts, ʿāmmiyya is the register that is an Arabic speaker’s “mother tongue,” sometimes referred to as “kitchen Arabic.”\(^81\) Niloofer Haeri describes how gender corresponds with classical and vernacular registers of Arabic in modern Egypt specifically. She argues that classical Arabic, or fuṣḥā, has historically indexed Muslim men, even as the language has undergone modernization and revitalization efforts since the nineteenth century.\(^82\) Haeri specifically cites the role of male-dominated state institutions like al-Azhar and the Academy of the Arabic Language (founded in 1932) in regulating formal written Arabic in Egypt. Even today, she notes, the pool of “text regulators” and “correctors” who act as the gatekeepers of formal written Arabic includes few or no women or Coptic Christians.\(^83\) For Niqula and

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\(^{81}\) See the Introduction of this dissertation for a discussion of the term “kitchen Arabic” and its history.

\(^{82}\) Niloofer Haeri, Sacred Language, Ordinary People: Dilemmas of Culture and Politics in Egypt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 64–65.

\(^{83}\) Ibid.
ʿUthman, the use of state-approved fuṣḥā was a way to stake claims to authority and recast the kitchen as a sphere of modern domesticity, rather than backwards tradition.

According to the cookbook’s introduction and preface, its intended audience is “current and future mothers” of the Egyptian nation (waṭan) and society (mujtamaʿ). Like Ibrahim’s texts, Uṣūl al-ṭahī instructs readers to use modern kitchen equipment. Its list of kitchen appliances and tools specifies it is for a “middle-class kitchen” (al-maṭbakh bi-manzil mutawassit), and the book eschews advice about managing servants, which had been a common subject in the women’s press before 1920. Niqula and ʿUthman direct all women to study the arts of running a home (al-funūn al-manziliyya), the most important of which is cooking, so that they can establish a home on a sound foundation that will guarantee comfort and happiness (al-rāḥa wa-l-saʿāda).

Since the early decades of the twentieth century Egyptian reformers like Malak Hifni Nasif had criticized existing Egyptian women’s approaches to domestic matters, insisting on the importance of formal education rather than inherited practices or servants as a source of knowledge about household management and childrearing. Niqula and ʿUthman continue this critique, using the example of cooking to evoke “emotion work” by explicitly linking unpaid domestic labor with the production of happiness. Rashid’s preface reinforces this connection, suggesting that the “secret” behind the cookbook’s strengths is that in writing it, the authors were fulfilling their own personal desires (raghabāṭihimā). In the framework assumed here, whereby men work outside the home and women work within it, expectations of women’s emotional and material labor are deeply intertwined. This co-identification of the emotional, intellectual, and

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86 Niqula and Ṭhman, Uṣūl al-ṭahī, 24.
87 Yousef, “Malak Hifni Nasif,” 76–78.
88 Rashid, “Taqdīm,” np. The phrase also connotes satiating an appetite.
practical implications of cooking, both in the directives to the book’s readers and the descriptions of its authors, reflects the ideology of modern domesticity that the cookbook details and promotes. It also marks a significant shift from previous genres of Arabic cookbooks which were largely written by and for professional male cooks and unconcerned with the affective dimensions of culinary labor.

The book’s organization follows the basic pattern of contemporaneous French and British cookbooks and the forms of culinary practice they dictate. It begins with a detailed description of the specific equipment that the kitchen should contain, a pantry section, an overview of various cooking methods (boiling, frying, roasting, etc.), and a chapter about nutritional science. Recipes are organized into standard European categories—soups, vegetables, fish, poultry, meat, and desserts—reflecting the meal structure and culinary aesthetics of modern French cuisine, in which dessert was created as a separate category segregating sweet flavors from savory meat and vegetable dishes.\(^8^9\) These categories also reflect an emphasis on efficiency and standardization, values that characterized an entire genre of British cookbooks written by and for women.\(^9^0\) The organization of these cookbooks embodied the Victorian ideals of practical organization, domestic economy, and domestic happiness—which in turn underpinned the British domestic science tradition in which Niqula and ʿUthman had been trained.\(^9^1\)

The recipes in ʿUṣūl al-tahī have a distinctive and consistent form that also reflects that of European cookbooks: each one is divided into a list of ingredients (al-maqqādir), often indicated in exact weights and measures—indeed the Arabic maqqādir suggests “amounts” more explicitly

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\(^9^0\) Anne Willan, Mark Cherniavsky, and Kyri Claflin, *The Cookbook Library: Four Centuries of the Cooks, Writers, and Recipes That Made the Modern Cookbook* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 131. Willan et al note that women’s cookbooks of this genre, which emerged in the nineteenth century, were distinguished from the cookbooks written for professional chefs, which featured more “creative, fashionable menus.”

\(^9^1\) Ibid., 11, 43; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 168.
than it does “ingredients”—and a set of numbered instructions (al-ṭarīqa), a recipe format that dates to the work of the British cookbook author Eliza Acton (1799-1859). Reflecting the values of economy and standardization, this form of recipe includes a ready-made shopping list and theoretically assists the housewife in calculating the costs and timing of a meal.

Niqula and ‘Uthman’s adoption of this form reflects the influence of British cookery on their writing, but it also marks a departure from the way that Arabic language cookbooks had been written previously. The medieval manuscript tradition of Arabic cookery texts features recipes written as aide-memoire style descriptions. Written by and for professional cooks, they often assume significant culinary knowledge and a set of techniques that is already understood by the cook, rather than named or explained explicitly (e.g., “do this in the usual way”) and fold the ingredients into the narration of cooking methods, with the entire recipe presented as a running narrative with no breakdown or lists. For example, *Kanz al-fawā'id fī tanwī' al-mawā'id* (Treasure Trove of Benefits and Variety at the Table), a fourteenth-century Egyptian cookery text, is written in a post-classical register of Middle Arabic, like other Arabic cookbooks of its era. Its recipes often begin in the passive voice but shift to second-person or to the imperative over the course of a few lines. Printed cookbooks published in Arabic by professional male chefs beginning in the late nineteenth century do not divide their recipes either, presenting them as continuous narrations in the same form as the medieval cookbooks—

94 Nasrallah, *Treasure Trove of Benefits and Variety at the Table*, 6; Jérôme Lentin, “Middle Arabic,” ed. Kees Versteegh, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). Lentin writes that Middle Arabic can be defined as “all the attested written layers of the language which can be defined as entirely belonging neither to Classical Arabic nor to colloquial Arabic.” It is often marked by mixing “standard and colloquial features with others of a third type.”
albeit with more standardized language.95 Basima Zaki Ibrahim’s first published recipes, written in the 1930s, are divided into ingredients and method, but not consistently presented in list form. Niqula and ‘Uthman’s work thus introduces an innovation when it comes to recipe writing in Arabic, one that became commonplace in subsequent Arabic cookbooks published in Egypt. It is highly unlikely that Niqula and ‘Uthman would have been familiar with the medieval cookbook manuscripts, and somewhat more likely that they would have had some familiarity with the more recent genre of male-authored cookbooks. Regardless, the recipe form that Ibrahim, Niqula, and ‘Uthman followed positions their texts within a new global genre of cookbook that expressed the ideology of modern domesticity—specifically, commitments to efficiency, economy, and standardization, reflected in the form of their recipes.

The contents of the recipes in *Uṣūl al-ṭahī* are a more complex matter than their form. The book features hundreds of pages of recipes, many likely drawn from the cookery lessons at British domestic science institutions, alongside staples of Egyptian cuisine such as *fūl mudammās, mulākhiyya*, pigeon with cracked wheat, and local cheeses. Recipes range from elaborate French dishes to Egyptian street foods to other Middle Eastern dishes. Most chapters begin with a brief instructive section (presumably the “theory” referenced in the book’s subtitle), followed by recipes (the “practice”). The instructive sections largely focus on the techniques of French haute cuisine, explaining how to make a roux-based sauce, bake a soufflé, and clarify soup stock. In several places, the text assumes that its readers already have a certain level of knowledge about Egyptian or Middle Eastern foods and therefore require less instruction to

make them: for example, there are illustrations explaining techniques for making certain European breads and pastries, but not baqlāwa or kunāfa. The authors detail how “foreign cheese” (al-jubn al-ifranjiyya) should be purchased and stored, but state that “housewives should store local cheeses (al-jubn al-baladī) however they see fit.”

Within each chapter, categories of food are mixed together. The soup chapter, for example, juxtaposes French vichyssoise with local recipes for lentil soup and “Egyptian style” fish soup. The book’s two primary cultural categories are ifranjī (European or Western) on one hand, and sharqī (Eastern), on the other. In some instances the adjectives ifranjī or sharqī are used, and in others a recipe is labeled as English, French, Scottish, Turkish, Syrian and so forth. Some of the “Eastern” also reflect specifically Egyptian labels, whether baladī (local or native; literally “of the country”) or regional appellations like Ṣaʿīdī, Dimyāṭī, Fayūmī, and the like.

These categories reflect the twinned “codes” of modernity and authenticity that Lucie Ryzova identifies as hallmarks of the efendiyya class and its practices of social differentiation:

The efendi sees this boundary [between European and Egyptian] very clearly (indeed, he is the one who articulates it). He can hop back and forth. He is the only one in possession of the repertory of cultural resources (or cultural capital) that functions most effectively for a nascent Egyptian national middle-class culture. . . . local Egyptian middle-class culture functions under a code-switching model between the two most potent codes of social and cultural identity at this period: tradition and modernity.

In this sense, Niqula and ‘Uthman’s work is a quintessential efendi cookbook. Whereas Ibrahim’s cookbooks organized “modern” (hadīth) recipes—meaning European and North

96 Niqula and ‘Uthman, Uṣūl al-ṭahī, 750.
97 Ibid., 13.
98 Ibid., 42–43, 57, 65.
99 For critical discussions of what constitutes “local” or baladī food in Egypt, see Chapters 2 and 4 in Malak Rouchdy and Iman Hamdi, eds., The Food Question in the Middle East, Cairo Papers in Social Science (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2017); For a discussion of the meaning of the word in a Lebanese context, see Toufoul Abou-Hodeib, “Taste and Class in Late Ottoman Beirut,” International Journal of Middle East Studies 43, no. 3 (August 2011): 481.
100 Ryzova, Efendiyya, 86. Emphasis in original.
American—and “Eastern” (sharqī) recipes into separate volumes, *Uṣūl al-ṭahī* presents a mixed repertory of Eastern and Western recipes within each chapter, all integrated into the explicit category of modern cooking.101 The *baladī* is not opposed to the modern here, but rather integrated and absorbed into a modern framework through which the Egyptian housewife might practice a kind of culinary “code-switching.” The culinary aesthetics of this framework are articulated in the instructive sections that preface each chapter, which provide a common set of principles and terms with which to situate and modify both new and familiar recipes.

Notably, the book’s “Eastern” recipes comprise far more than a strictly territorial understanding of modern Egyptian cuisine. There is no reference to the Pharaonic diet, nor an attempt to articulate a concept of Egyptian terroir. Alongside kishk Ṣaʿīdī and jubn Dimyāṭī, the book includes the originally Circassian chicken dish sharkasiyya, Turkish coffee and baqlāwa, Maghribi couscous, and shāmī sweets from the Levant. This mix of recipes, which conveys a cosmopolitan approach to cuisine that balances ifranjī, sharqī, and *baladī* elements, may be explained in part by a point the authors make in their introduction. While clearly positioning themselves as experts in terms of modern cooking methods and nutrition, they also express their hope that the book will reflect their readers’ good taste (*muṭābiq li-hawqih al-salīm*).102 This indicates an awareness of the diverse and nominally non-Egyptian foods, from béchamel to sharkasiyya, that signaled distinction and refined taste among the elites and middle classes of Egypt at the time.103 According to Esmat Rushdi, an Egyptian educator writing in 1948, this approach to recipes informed the way that cookery was taught at the Higher Institute of

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101 In their introduction, Niqula and ʿUthman specifically frame their volume as presenting food within a modern framework (*mādat al-ṭahī al-nizām al-hadīth*), and Rashid also refers to the book’s subject as “the art of modern cooking” (*fann al-ṭahī al-hadīth*).
103 See Chapters Three and Six for more detail about the introduction and spread of béchamel and other dishes that came to signify middle-class status and culinary refinement in Egypt.
Domestic Science by the late 1940s:

We learn in our Institute to cook many national dishes of different countries, e.g., English, American, Indian, and Turkish and French. We are taught the slight difference in laying the tables of different countries. Besides that, we have our own Egyptian dishes and ways of cooking, plus a collection of Eastern sweet dishes of which Egyptians are so fond that they have adopted them as part of their menus.  

Given this open and eclectic approach to defining the Egyptian menu, it is worth examining in depth how Niqula and ʿUthman treat recipes for baladī foods—that is, foods understood to be historically rooted in Egyptian culture or whose production is tied specifically to Egyptian landscapes, and which would not have been obvious choices for inclusion in a sophisticated middle-class kitchen. The initial act of spelling out step-by-step instructions in fuṣḥā for making these foods is itself a meaningful gesture—reflecting efforts among nationalist elites of the period to “make manifest what is latent” by selectively incorporating elements of local culture into a modern national identity. Historically, these recipes would have been conveyed and passed down through spoken instructions and learned gestures; if written at all, they would have been expressed in colloquial or Middle Arabic, not the formal language of ʿUṣūl al-ṭahī. In many cases the only substantive transformation of these baladī recipes, besides their rendering into formal written Arabic, is the use of a modern heat source to cook them.

This was not always the case, however; in some instances, as in Niqula and ʿUthman’s recipe for roast duck, ifranjī techniques are used to cook a classically Egyptian baladī food. A close reading of the recipe shows that it presents a number of challenges to the reader: in certain instructions crucial directions are left vague or unspecified, and many of the ingredients involved

would have been costly, rare, or imported, making them practically out of reach for the average middle-class Egyptian.

Of course, just because cookbooks like Niqula and ʿUthman’s described themselves as practical manuals does not mean that their reception was only a matter of practical use: cookbooks with complex recipes have served as markers of social distinction, exhibiting aspects of middle-class respectability and refinement, in multiple historical contexts. Anne Willan notes that in Western Europe, modern printed cookbooks “were not just instruction manuals in cooking; they also had a voyeuristic element, showing upwardly mobile households how to keep up with the neighbors.”\textsuperscript{106} Arjun Appadurai, who invites a reading of cookbooks as “revealing artifacts of culture in the making,” suggests that cookbooks “appear in literate civilizations where the display of class hierarchies is essential to their maintenance.”\textsuperscript{107} The emerging efendiyya in urban Egypt presented such a situation; social distinction within this new urban middling classes depended less on family origin or land ownership than education and bodily comportment—both of which were enacted and displayed through cooking and serving food. ʿUṣūl al-ṭāhī was also written as a textbook, and as Mona Russell cautions, textbooks should not be taken to reflect the society for which they are written, as they often “present distorted or idealized images of reality as conceived by the ruling elite and textbook authors.”\textsuperscript{108}

\textit{Uṣūl al-ṭāhī} may have been poorly timed as a culinary instruction manual in 1941: the appliances, ingredients, and techniques it promoted were not yet within reach of most Egyptian home cooks. But its significance lies in the way it modeled aspects of modern kitchen ideology in other ways, starting with instructions for replicating the refined look, smell, and taste of a

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\textsuperscript{108} Russell, “The Use of Textbooks,” 271.
European culinary aesthetic, from sauce texture to a focus on typically European spices and seasonings. The use of roux-based sauces throughout Niqula and 'Uthman’s cookbook, including as a garnish to local vegetables and meats like duck, can be read as a means to transform baladī dishes into a more refined dish fit for an efendi dining table. The notion of “refinement” here applies not only on cultural and symbolic levels, but in a haptic, textural sense, a dimension that will be further explored in Chapter Six. Despite the potential failures and frustrations that the cookbook might pose in practical terms, its authors went on to become beloved national figures, and many core elements of the ideology it translated became entrenched in Egyptian society. The next chapter turns to questions of reception in order to tease out the relationship between the ideological underpinnings of Uṣūl al-ṭahī and the culinary habitus that it at once reflected, shaped, and failed to fully capture.

This chapter has argued that in Egypt, domestic education and the contours of the ideology that informed it evolved over time in attempts to reflect and dictate how Egyptian women cooked and ran their homes. From the perspective of the Ministry of Public Instruction, the period following 1937 was an era of sweeping transformation in domestic science education. Specialized textbooks were written in Arabic, and multiple institutes trained Egyptian women to teach domestic education at primary and secondary levels. Domestic instruction reached women at all levels of education, meaning that mothers and grandmothers were no longer the only source of authority in domestic matters. A 1948 report unequivocally described the changes implemented since the late 1930s as “great strides…the educated girl can now look after her house successfully.”\(^{109}\) Indeed the eventual popularity of Niqula and 'Uthman’s cookbook might be trumpeted as a success story of the ministry’s efforts.

Even so, neither the cookbook itself, nor the discursive expressions of the ideology that helped produce it, can actually explain its popularity, nor can they speak to the significance of domestic education’s reception overall. It appears that Ḥusūl al-ṭahāʾī did not experience a surge in popularity as a household cookbook for at least a decade after it was published.\textsuperscript{110} Even once wartime rationing had ended, the complicated nature of the book’s recipes and language did not bode well for its widespread acceptance. How was it, then, that this encyclopedic textbook came to be a common wedding gift in the 1950s and 60s and a reference in popular culture well into the 1970s?\textsuperscript{111} And how did it weather the cultural shifts that unfolded in the wake of the overthrow of the Egyptian monarchy, and the introduction of a new political order, in 1952? Which aspects of its ideology were incorporated into culinary practice, and which were refused? The next chapter takes up these questions. Using the figure and career of Nazira Nīqula as a central reference and starting point, and drawing on oral histories detailing how middle-class Egyptian women learned to cook, the next chapter tracks the popularization of Nīqula’s work and the selective incorporation of aspects of her kitchen ideology into Egyptian kitchens. I argue that understanding precisely how, and to what extent, expressions of an idealized domesticity came to structure society, inform culinary culture, and produce the nation requires looking beyond the page and into the kitchen.

\textsuperscript{110} It is difficult to gauge the book’s popularity quantitatively, but circumstantial qualitative evidence exists supporting this claim. Oral histories suggest that the book became common in households a generation after its initial publication, and based on my perusal of editions of the cookbook in Cairo’s used book markets and libraries over the course of five years, the majority of used copies of the book in informal circulation date to the 1950s and 60s.

\textsuperscript{111} In addition to the Faisal Nada play referenced at the opening of this chapter, a significant reference is made to Ḥusūl al-ṭahāʾī in Ihsan ʿAbd al-Quddus’s novel ʿAnā Ḥurra, first serialized in 1953 and later published as a single volume. At the end of the novel the protagonist, a woman who pursues a modern education and career, devotes herself to domestic life. She turns to Nīqula and ʿUṭmān’s cookbook to learn “enticing dishes” to make for her husband ʿAbbas. I am grateful to Jonathan Smolin for alerting me to this important cultural reference. Ihsan ʿAbd al-Quddus, ʿAnā ʾḥurra (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam al-Maktaba al-Hadith, 196-), 217.
In 1953 an Egyptian man named Yahya bought his wife a copy of *Uṣūl al-ṭahī: al-naẓarī wa-l-ʿamalī* (Fundamentals of Cooking: Theory and Practice). He inscribed it with a message in flowery, formal prose, addressed to his “dear companion” and “partner in life” (*sharīkatī fī al-ḥayāt*). “We are one soul,” he proclaimed, offering his wife the book as a token of their “Muslim family” and their “loving and virtuous home.”

Judging by the numerous marks of use on its pages, most of which take the form of food stains, Yahya’s unnamed wife’s copy of the book made it into the kitchen on more than one occasion. The recipes that appear to have gotten the most exposure to kitchen use are European foods that Yahya’s mother-in-law likely did not pass down to her daughter herself: the recipe for béchamel (*al-ṣalṣa al-bayḍa al-faransawīyya, al-bāšamīl*) bears a few grease stains, while the page containing anchovy, parsley, and onion sauces has even more, and a few crumbs as well. Other splatters suggest that she visited the “miscellaneous” section at the back of the book with its various recipes for European stuffing, including the one described above. A section explaining how to braise meat in brown sauce is particularly sticky, as is a page with several recipes for stuffed potatoes. In the index, the entry for *bīfīk* (beef steak) is clearly marked with a pen. It looks as though she tried her hand at choux pastry. A sheet of paper with *Sūrat al-Baqara* on it bookmarks a page with three recipes for strawberry jam. There is nothing to suggest that she attempted the cookbook’s elaborate roast duck recipe.

How can we read between the lines of Yahya’s ornate and emotive prose, handwritten in classical Arabic, and the splattered, anonymous marginalia and marks of use that bear witness to

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1 I purchased the copy of *Uṣūl al-ṭahī* with this inscription in a Cairo book market in 2016.
his wife’s labors? How did a training text for domestic science teachers make its way into Egyptian home kitchens, and what was its reception there? This chapter uses the example of Niquula’s work to chart the popularization and reception of modern domesticity through the Nasser and Sadat eras (roughly the 1950s through the 1970s). First, I narrate Nazira Niquula’s transition from a ministry employee to the beloved public figure referred to as Abla or “Auntie” Nazira, a process that entailed the vernacularization of her legacy on a number of fronts. Next, I draw on oral histories to argue that although certain aspects of modern domesticity were integrated into culinary practices and attitudes, others were refused. Approaching refusal as a generative act, I use it to explain the emergence of a uniquely Egyptian culinary habitus—one that incorporated foods from a diverse and eclectic range of cuisines and prioritized food’s emotional significance over its cultural origin.

1952 to Infitah: From Ṣūl al-ṭahī to “Abla Nazira’s Book”

Following years of popular uprisings against British rule in Egypt and a 1952 coup staged by a group of junior Egyptian army officers, Egypt’s monarchy was overthrown and an Arab socialist regime put into its place. As domestic science was integrated into the new regime’s pan-Arab vision of modernity and technical expertise, Nazira Niquula remained an authority in the field for decades. Her material was updated to suit new cultural and political norms introduced during the Nasser era (1952-70), but her basic view that the proper cooking could produce progress and happiness for the nation remained unchanged. As she and ʿUthman wrote in the introduction to Ṣūl al-ṭahī, they viewed the proper kind of cooking as essential for a nation to produce sound

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2 “Abla” is an honorific borrowed from the Turkish for “older sister.” According to the Hinds-Badawi dictionary, it is a “title of, and respectful form of address or reference to, an older woman, applied in particular by children to a schoolteacher.” A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic, s.v. “a-b-l,” Martin Hinds and El-Said Badawi.
Although I will argue that the eventual popularity of *Uṣūl al-ṭahī* is the result of a number of external factors, there are several features of the text itself worth mentioning as having potentially contributed to its resilience through this political transition. First, its commitment to both a standard form of Arabic and its inclusion of regional recipes meant it remained a relevant text during the height of pan-Arabism in a way that a book committed to a *terroir*-based Egyptian cuisine would not have. Secondly, its inclusion of recipes for street foods like *kusharī*, *fūl mudammas*, and *ṭaʿmiyya*, however stilted or superfluous their expression in formal Arabic may have been, meant that the book could not be readily dismissed as merely a reflection of pre-1952 bourgeois taste. On some level, the book had brought a number of popular foods associated with Egypt’s working classes and peasantry into a new form of Arabic expression—one that was actually well-positioned to transition into the gender politics of the Nasser era. Writing recipes in *fuṣḥā* framed cooking not in the language of the home, but of Egyptian public life. As education became increasingly universal and literacy rates rose, *fuṣḥā* became more of a mass medium than it had previously been in practical terms, while Gamal ʿAbdel Nasser’s pan-Arabism lent the language, which transcended national boundaries within the Arab world, a new mass appeal and status.

At the same time, crucial pivots in Niqula’s career undoubtedly also contributed to the book’s popularity and her rise as a popular figure. Perhaps the most important of these was her appearance on Egyptian radio starting in 1945, which likely cemented her nickname and

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4 For instance, Laura Bier notes that the number of Egyptian students attending primary school more than quadrupled between 1951 and 1976, and that female education was a major part of this shift: “in 1952 there were 541,712 girls attending primary school, and by 1969 there were approximately 1.4 million.” She notes that similar increases were mirrored in intermediate education. Bier, *Revolutionary Womanhood*, 51.
provided listeners with a more colloquial expression of her cooking expertise. Niqula’s body of written work also demonstrates how she adapted to social and political changes, particularly a series of cookbooks written for the “working woman” of the Nasser era rather than the housewife of the 1940s.

By the mid-1960s, Uṣūl al-ṭahī was enjoying a new level of popularity among Egypt’s middle classes and had come to be known by a colloquial and affectionate nickname, Kitāb Abla Naẓīra (Auntie Nazira’s Book). A 1965 article in al-Aḥrām celebrating Niqula’s twenty-five-year career refers to her as “Abla Nazira” in both the headline and throughout the text (only once does it refer to her by her full name, and even then the author writes “Abla Nazira Niqula”). The article notes that the cookbook she had co-written with ʿUthman had already been reprinted eight times. It implies that by the mid-1960s, “Abla Nazira’s book” had reached a mainstream status that Uṣūl al-ṭahī had failed to achieve: that is to say, it achieved popularity not as a bible of culinary principles and technique but as a popular phenomenon and status object associated with the celebrity figure of one of its two authors.

The Aḥrām article echoes many key principles of the cookbook and its vision of modern domesticity: the article refers to the book as “the most important authority for modern cooking in Arabic” and a reference for “every housewife,” crediting Niqula with “transforming the process of cooking from a routine task to an art, with its own rules and principles.” Niqula is also quoted highlighting the importance of emotion work in cooking: she explains that husbands greatly prefer their wives’ cooking to food prepared by a professional chef, because when a man eats

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5 “Abla Naẓīra: al-sayyida allaṭī taḥtallu makān al-ṣadāra fī kull maṭbakh mundhu 1/4 qarn.”
6 Bahiya ʿUthman largely drops out of popular discussions of the cookbook, other than the occasional mention of her name in passing. The only instances I have seen her name in print (besides the work she co-wrote with Niqula) are the pages of the magazine Ḥawwā’, to which she contributed recipes in the 1960s.
8 “Abla Naẓīra,” al-Aḥrām, 2. Here the term “rabbat bayt” is used to refer to the housewife.
food specially prepared by his wife “he feels happiness (al-saʿāda).” The article indicates that Niqula and ʿUthman’s cookbook, and the ideology it promoted, were widely disseminated in 1960s Egypt.

At the same time, other elements of the article point to a process by which the book and its tenets were being translated into a more vernacular Egyptian idiom—starting, of course, with the adaptation of Niqula’s name into an affectionate nickname and the use of that nickname in print. The Ahrām article also opens with a dialogue between Abla Nazira and the author, transcribed in Egyptian ʿāmmīyya and depicting a scene familiar to anyone who has been welcomed into an Egyptian home. After an exchange of pleasantries (“ahlān wa-sahlān...nawwartī al-bayt”), the guest politely declines something to eat. “Nonsense!” Abla Nazira replies, “you must have something.” The guest accepts a cup of coffee, but protests when more is offered, to which Abla Nazira insists “you must at least try some cake!” The dialogue is entirely in Egyptian ʿāmmīyya, using distinctive colloquial phrases like da mish maʿqūl abadan (“that’s out of the question”), implying that the guest must accept some cake. That is to say, the author of the article, which is otherwise written in fuṣḥā, frames the reader’s encounter with Niqula through a colloquial exchange in a familial and familiar setting. Later in the article, Niqula—or is it Abla Nazira?—emphasizes the importance of learning how to manage domestic affairs (al-shuʿūn al-manziliyya) at home and from an early age, downplaying the role of the school and highlighting a mother’s role in domestic education. The use of colloquial language and emphasis on the home environment as a site of learning can be read as a way of distinguishing Nazira Niqula, who wrote in fuṣḥā and trained domestic science teachers, from the character of Abla Nazira, who was known in home kitchens through her cookbooks and radio broadcasts and celebrated as a

9 Ibid.
national icon by the mid-1960s.

**The Housewife as Working Woman**

In addition to Niqula’s transformation and vernacularization as Abla Nazira, her popularity can be understood in light of the gender politics of the Nasser era, which emphasized the concerns of the working woman and the promise of middle-class standards of living for all Egyptians. Significant increases in the number of educated women in Egypt meant a larger audience and market for cookbooks; meanwhile, state-manufactured kitchen appliances and cookware meant that the “middle-class kitchen” that such cookbooks inevitably described was now within the reach of many Egyptians.

Between 1941 and the time of the Free Officers’ coup in 1952, Niqula had written or co-authored six textbooks. She continued to work at the Higher Institute of Domestic Science after the regime change.\(^{10}\) In 1958 she was appointed to a post overseeing women’s subjects (*al-mawād al-niswiyya*) in the Ministry of Education.\(^{11}\) Although *Kitāb Abla Nazīra* continued to be successful and was reprinted many times up through the 1980s, Niqula also partnered with the popular women’s magazine *Ḥawwā’* to write recipes and produce a new series of cookbooks. When the magazine published a 350+ page commemorative edition celebrating 60 years since its founding, it included a special insert dedicated to Niqula, highlighting her contributions to the magazine and referencing her significance not only to the Egyptian kitchen, but as a reference in popular culture.\(^{12}\)

The socialist and pan-Arab ideologies of ‘Abdel Nasser’s regime transformed dominant

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\(^{10}\) Nazira Niqula, *Aṭbāq ladhīdha wa-aṣnāf sarī’ a li-l-mar’ a al-ʿāmila* (Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1975), 4. This series of cookbooks includes a brief biography of Niqula’s career and achievements.

\(^{11}\) “Abla Nazīra,” *al-Ahrām*.

\(^{12}\) *Ḥawwā’: 60 ʿāman min al-thawra: ʿadad tadhkārī*, 2015.
ideas about Egyptian womanhood. Perhaps most significantly, the question of whether women should work outside the home was no longer an issue (in official discourse, at least); debates turned instead on mobilizing women as a part of the nation’s workforce, and how women should balance work and motherhood. Laura Bier identifies the rise of the figure of al-mar’a al-ʿāmila (the working woman) as “ubiquitous in the press and popular culture and within the regime’s self-presentation,” after 1952, even though women’s actual workforce participation remained somewhat limited. Regardless, Bier argues, the figure of the working woman did important ideological work, marking “the Nasserist public sphere as modern, secular, and socialist.”

The cookbooks Niqula wrote for the Hawwā’ series reflect this shift. While her earlier works had been directed at housewives assumed to work only within the private sphere of the home, these later cookbooks were explicitly directed at none other than al-mar’a al-ʿāmila. Their recipes are advertised as “quick dishes for the working woman,” and emphasize the use of new time-saving kitchen devices like electric mixers and blenders. Reflecting the Egyptian state’s emphasis on technocratic expertise, Niqula explains how integrating modern science into the home can uplift both the family and the nation.

Post-1952 ideological shifts also entailed a reorientation of Egyptian domestic science away from the context of a universal and international women’s network centered on the kinds of European conferences Huda Sha’rawi and Fatima Fahmi once attended, and towards the Arab world and the non-aligned movement. Domestic science was still a platform through which the

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14 Ibid., 61.
15 Ibid., 62.
16 One such cookbook is literally titled “Delicious Dishes and Quick Meals for the Working Woman.” Nazira Niqula, *Aṭbāq ladhīdha wa-asnāf sarī’ a li-l-mar’a al-ʾāmila* (Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1975?). Others acknowledge “the working woman” elsewhere in their subtitles or introductory material.
Egyptian state asserted its status within global networks, but now it positioned itself as a leader of the Arab world and the Third World, rather than as a colonized society proving its capacity for progress and modernity to the West. Under ‘Abdel Nasser, domesticity was integrated into the state’s vision of progress and freedom—underpinned by technical expertise and held up as an example to the world. A 1959 pamphlet published by the United Arab Republic depicts participants in that year’s Afro-Asian Youth Conference visiting the Higher Institute of Domestic Science. Women are pictured in lab coats, stirring pots at gas stoves, and a caption explains that one of them is a Palestinian woman cooking with her “Egyptian sister.” The pamphlet portrays cooking as a women’s activity that unites Arabs across national borders, celebrating Egyptian domestic science as a model of progress and modernity.

Despite this new context, certain features of Niqula’s culinary philosophy remained constant. In the introduction to one of her Hawwā’ cookbooks, she describes the central tenets of what was by then referred to as home economics (iqtiṣād al-manzil), a slightly updated version of the old domestic science. Its ultimate goal, she writes, is to ensure the comfort and happiness of the individual (rāḥat al-fard wa-saʿādatihi) so that he might become an upright citizen. The citizen benefitting from home economics is gendered male; the home cook who practices it is female. In these books, Niqula frames economy not as a bourgeois moral virtue, but a civic responsibility—a necessary means to happiness and the good life for the nation. Despite sweeping political and economic changes in Egyptian society, Niqula’s work maintained the centrality of the kitchen to the production of the nation. The fact that gifting Kitāb Abla Naẓīra to women as a wedding gift became a common practice among the middle classes during this

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19 Ibid.
20 Niqula, Aṭbāq sarīʿa, 5.
period is an indicator of how entrenched the connection between cooking and domestic happiness was. The words of Yahya, the husband who gifted his wife the cookbook described at the start of this chapter, demonstrate how a cookbook could be a symbol of domestic ideals. His dedication suggests that for many Egyptians, the notion that a woman’s role as her husband’s partner entailed emotional and material work in the kitchen had taken root. The Hawwā’ cookbooks note that in 1973, Niqula was honored as a pioneer in education and awarded a medal commemorating one hundred years of girls’ education in Egypt. She died in 1992; during her lifetime, at least six other Egyptian women published cookbooks of “modern cooking” in the style pioneered by Ibrahim, Niqula, and ‘Uthman.21 Through to the end of her career, Niqula consistently promoted the idea that a good home cook, “working woman” or not, could (and should) produce not only meals but comfort and happiness.

Over the course of a century, domestic education in Egypt had evolved from a subject deemed suitable only for the daughters of the working classes into a universal skill set for wives and mothers working in modern kitchens and cooking for the citizens of a modern state. The version of modern domesticity the state promoted had shifted with the times, adapting to the needs of political elites and, to an extent, the demands of Egyptians. Throughout these changes, the core ideological tenets of rationalization, economy, hygiene, the mother as a fount of middle-class morality and refinement, the importance of the family to the nation, and domestic labor as emotion work, had remained largely intact. The remainder of this chapter draws on oral histories to evaluate the reception of this ideology among its primary targets—women from a range of middle-class backgrounds. Their experiences demonstrate that while the state had little impact on the way that people cooked and transmitted culinary knowledge, the forms of modern

21 Based on the catalog at Dar al-Kutub (2 titles) and used books I purchased in Cairo (4). This is in addition to one Sudanese woman who published a book of modern cooking in 1949.
domesticity it promoted did play an important role in structuring dominant attitudes about the relationship between cooking and domestic happiness, and about the importance of domestic life to that of the nation.

Reception and Refusal: Cooking Egyptian

Even cookbooks written in *fuṣḥā* and produced under the aegis of government institutions are embedded within a complex set of practices that include vernacular modes of knowledge transmission. Niqula herself reportedly conducted her own research in local Egyptian restaurants to augment the Egyptian and other “Eastern” recipes included in her cookbooks, interactions that would not have been conducted in formal classical Arabic (even though the resulting recipes were eventually written up in that register).²² Arjun Appadurai argues that a new genre of modern Indian cookbook emerged in the context of a set of practices enacted by the women of the urban middle classes—most fundamentally the oral exchange of recipes among women from different regions in India.²³ Similarly, the role of cookbooks and their recipes within informal networks and practices of learning, exchange and experimentation in Egypt is an essential part of the cultural significance of Niqula’s work and all that it represents. Thus, understanding middle-class women’s reception of state-driven educational discourses that aimed to discipline the home and produce a particular kind of housewife requires shifting focus to the practices and spaces of everyday cooking, particularly the question of how women learned to cook in midcentury Egypt.

I draw on oral history data to sketch a framework of culinary habitus: a learned “practical sense” that informed how women cooked and was connected to the ideology of domesticity in

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complex and sometimes unpredictable ways. While oral histories cannot offer a comprehensive picture of the reception of *Uṣūl al-ṭahī* or of modern domesticity, they are a starting place for exploring the relationships between oral, written, and embodied forms of culinary practice and knowledge transmission. I shift focus from the discursive and ideological to the haptic, embodied, and affective not in order to consider “feeling against thought,” in the words of Raymond Williams, but “thought as felt and feeling as thought.”

The goal is to avoid a consideration of modern domesticity divorced from questions of materiality and embodiment and explore it in terms of “meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt.” In the kitchen, this means exploring how cooks measure ingredients by eye or feel rather than with a measuring cup or spoon, or the way they learned to interpret open-ended written instructions such as “cook until it is done” or “season with spices.”

What follows are oral narratives of middle-class women from three generations born after 1922: those who grew up and were educated before World War II, those born during the war or immediately after, and the subsequent generation, born between the mid- to late 1950s and the early 1960s. “Middle-class” is interpreted here as broadly as possible, encompassing a range of shared cultural and social characteristics including education level, profession, and residence in neighborhoods recognized as “middle-class.” In seeking to identify “middle-class” subjects it also became clear that the category of individuals participating in and identifying with middle-class culture expanded through the generations: in the oldest generation I interviewed, women tended to be the daughters of a small stratum of elites and in the minority of women their age to

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25 Ibid.
26 Narratives from the first generation are taken from a collection of women’s oral histories transcribed and published in Egyptian ʿāmmīyya, Amal Abu al-Fadil, ed., *Aṣwāt wa-Aṣdāʾ* (Cairo: Women and Memory Forum, 2007). I conducted oral histories with women in the second two generations myself.
be educated; by the youngest generation, it was far more common for women to participate in educational, cultural, and consumer practices associated with middle-class life, regardless of the specifics of their empirical socioeconomic status.

In addition to asking women to describe their experiences learning to cook, I asked subjects how their mothers had cooked and transmitted culinary and domestic knowledge to the next generation. The narratives suggest that cooking practices were embedded in existing social relations and practices not easily disrupted by formal education—nor captured in fuṣḥā or any other formal textual idiom. While many post-World War II households owned a copy of Kitāb Abla Naẓīra, and many women recalled domestic science instruction in school, they emphasized the importance of learning through embodied practices that engaged all the senses. Women also explicitly and overwhelmingly highlighted mothers, grandmothers, friends, and neighbors, not cookbooks or schoolteachers, as culinary authorities. The common thread among their experiences was not necessarily that of learning directly from one’s mother or family members so much as a mode of learning conducted in person, through sensory cues and colloquial Egyptian speech, rather than through formal texts or institutions. For some women, learning from neighbors was as important as learning from their mothers; but nobody highlighted the importance of a cookbook, magazine column, or school instructor, or even a television or radio show, over experiential learning in home kitchens.

I characterize these responses as forms of refusal, a concept that has recently been revisited extensively by anthropologists.27 Unlike resistance, typically theorized as “the act of

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standing against” state and other hegemonic forms of power, refusal accommodates acts of avoidance as well as practices that are generative and social; it offers a framework for describing the actions of those not necessarily construed as outsiders or consciously acting as subversives. Refusal is useful in this context for understanding the attitudes of middle-class Egyptian women who accepted certain principles of modern domesticity—assuming the responsibility of cooking for their families, accepting an understanding of cooking as “emotion work” with affective and material significance, attending state schools, and connecting the work of the kitchen with the life of society and the nation—while applying those principles in varied and unpredictable ways within the home kitchen.

Bourdieu writes that inculcation is a key aspect of habitus. Understanding how certain instincts or practices are learned is therefore essential to explaining habitus as learned, rather than innate: second nature rather than nature. Culinary knowledge transmission is accordingly essential to an understanding of culinary habitus, as opposed to domestic ideology. The patterns and paths through which specific recipes and practices entered the Egyptian middle-class culinary repertoire were far messier than the dictates of state pedagogies. They rely on forms of culinary learning beyond the grasp of state-sponsored domestic education, relying on sensory and embodied modes of knowing and learning more than discursive ones. The linguistic elements they did incorporate were overwhelmingly expressed in colloquial Arabic. Yet despite the emphasis on learning within the home, these processes of culinary knowledge transmission are not a straightforward matter of passing recipes down uninterrupted generational lines. Rather, they are inextricable from patterns of migration and mobility that were a characteristic of Egypt’s modern middle class. Education and internal migration frequently interrupted these lines of

transmission, reworking them and introducing alternate genealogies for the making of Egyptian family dishes.

*Generation One: Daughters of First-Rate Housewives*

Women born before World War II and educated in the 1930s were the first generation of women to experience the post-1922 reforms that had aimed to introduce domestic science instruction for all Egyptian schoolgirls, including those from middle-class families. These women’s attitudes about what made a good mother and housewife are telling: they largely echo the ideas expressed by Malak Hifni Nasif and others about the need for mothers to have certain specialized knowledge and to take an active role in their household, but they reject the notion that formal schooling is necessary to produce such women. Multiple women made a point to argue that their mothers had been excellent housewives despite not having gone to school—pushing back against rhetoric that criticized the capacities of mothers without modern educations. Duriya Zaki (b. 1936) explains, “my mother was a housewife (*rabbat manzil*) with a great deal of knowledge, despite never having enrolled in school.”

She adds that her mother expertly managed the household budget based on an allowance her husband gave her each month. According to her narrative, the knowledge Zaki’s mother exercised in managing the home was not described in terms of a timeless tradition passed down through the generations, but encompassed “modern” knowledge, like the ability to manage a household budget with economy and efficiency. Zaki describes her mother as an ideal modern housewife, pointing out that formal and/or state education had nothing to do with it.

In the words of Anisa al-Hifni (born ca. 1925), “although she married young…my mother

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30 Ibid., 29.
was a first-rate housewife (ṣitt bayt daraja ʿūlā). Even though we had a cook, she loved to go into
the kitchen and cook for us herself.”31 Al-Hifni implies that her mother had limited formal
education, having “married young,” but still explicitly describes her as an ideal modern
housewife. Despite having servants she took seriously the importance of demonstrating her love
for her family by performing domestic labor personally—performing the kind of emotion work
central to understandings of modern domesticity. Women of this generation were aware of both
the principles of modern domesticity and the charges its proponents leveled against uneducated
mothers; and while many were willing to accept the former, they rejected the notion that women
needed formal or modern educations to embody those standards. Their narratives simultaneously
idealize the figure of the modern housewife as described by cultural elites and state educational
discourse while rejecting the need for state intervention to produce that figure.

Generation Two: “If You Love Your Husband, You Have to Make Good Food”

Women of the next generation, born during or shortly after World War II, were educated in a
system in which Fahmi, Niqula and ʿUthman had played an active role designing the curriculum
and training teachers. These women did not resist state domestic education or its principles per
se, but like women of the previous generation, they refused to concede its authority in domestic
matters. Many women in this group were from the first or second generation of their families in
which girls attended secondary school. For them, the primary significance of education when it
came to learning to cook lay not in the domestic science lessons at school, but the fact that their
studies frequently kept them away from their mothers’ kitchens, and sometimes their mothers’
homes, when they were young girls. The promise of formal education often prompted women to

move to cities, where they lived with older brothers or uncles before they married, formed nuclear family units, and cooked with new friends and neighbors.

Hanan, born in an Upper Egyptian village in 1940, is a case in point: she was sent to live with her uncle in Minya, the provincial capital, in order to attend school. When she married her husband and moved to Alexandria at the age of 18, she knew only a few simple family recipes—bāmiya (okra), mulūkhiyya, kofta, potatoes—and she had not yet fully mastered even those. Because she and her husband lived so far away from her family, Hanan learned most of her cooking skills from an older neighbor in the apartment building where she lived with her husband. In Hanan’s words, this woman was “like a mother” to her, showing her more difficult culinary techniques from stuffing vegetables for maḥšī to newer recipes like béchamel sauce.

In this respect Hanan’s narrative was not uncommon: another interviewee’s mother, born in 1941, had moved to Cairo from a village in the Egyptian delta at the age of fifteen to live with her brother and attend secondary school; she learned all of her mother’s recipes over the phone after she was married, and picked up other cooking techniques from friends and neighbors. Education, in other words, did not necessarily interrupt the transmission of recipes and other culinary knowledge from generation to generation, demonstrated in the context of home kitchens—but it did frequently alter when and how that transmission took place and broaden the range of mother-figures from whom one might learn recipes to include non-relatives. The phenomenon of educated brides learning to cook only at the point of marriage was common enough to be the subject of a cartoon in the popular magazine al-Muṣawwar in 1959, which

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32 Interview conducted by author, October 21, 2016.
33 Interview conducted by author, October 5, 2016.
pictures a woman in a wedding gown gesturing at a pot on a stove and proclaiming to her new husband, “Of course I know how to cook! Mama taught me this just yesterday.”

Figure 4. Cartoon in *al-Muṣawwar*, February 20, 1959. Courtesy of the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo. The woman in the wedding gown exclaims “Of course I know how to cook! Mama taught me this just yesterday.” Note the tile floor, raised stove, and refrigerator in the couple’s modern kitchen.

Hanan explicitly and proudly identified herself as from a modern family (using the French term *moderne* even though we spoke in Egyptian Arabic). When I asked what she meant by modern she cited a number of examples, from her kitchen, which featured up-to-date cooking technologies both when she was a girl and after marriage, to her education in a Catholic French school run by nuns. The way Hanan spoke about the relationship between cooking and the way she conceptualized her “modern,” middle-class family life clarifies why the home, as opposed to

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the school, remained such an essential learning space culinary and domestic subjects. To begin with, formal schooling generally ended upon marriage for women of her generation, but for Hanan, culinary learning was a lifelong process. She emphasized the importance of continually improving her culinary technique in order to make her husband happy. Echoing the rhetoric about domestic happiness prevalent throughout the first half of the twentieth century, she explained the practical dimension of this goal: to ensure that her husband would “love his home and love his children.” For her, cooking well was integral to specific kinds of emotion work that a modern family entailed, producing specific forms of love that secured the happiness and comfort of her middle-class home. “If you love your husband,” she explained,

you have to make good food. You can’t just make any old thing for him…if [your husband says], this isn’t quite right, then next time you try to make it better. You try. I didn’t know how to make kunāfa at first; there were many things I didn’t know how to make. So I tried! The first time maybe wasn’t so good, but on the second try it would come out well.

As part of a learning process that continued well after marriage, often in accordance with her husband’s taste and requests and which owed much to neighbors and friends, cooking was simply not something that formal education could teach. Hanan did look to written recipes in magazines or to the radio, but as she remembered them, they featured “things we already made.” She recalled consulting these kinds of sources for variations on dishes she had already learned from her family or neighbors.

Hanan also tied learning about cleanliness and good hygiene to the example set within the home, not the school, environment. “We became accustomed to the idea of cleanliness (al-naẓāfa) from a young age,” she explained, citing the example set by her mother and other women in her family. She repeatedly emphasized, too, that these ideals were grounded in Islam, not her French education or the influence of the Egyptian state, even after the state intervened in her
Catholic school’s curriculum after 1952. “Cleanliness stems from faith,” she explained, describing it as a foundational concept within Islam. Hanan’s articulation of modern domestic and culinary ideals was remarkably in line with the prescriptive literature of her childhood and young adulthood. Even her apartment resembled one of Fatima Fahmi’s domestic science textbooks, featuring a formal salon and dining room with a china cabinet, a well-ventilated kitchen, and cushions Hanan had embroidered by hand. But time and again she attributed her embodiment of modern domestic ideals to her family background and marital home, not to her formal education.

Women from this generation who recalled domestic science classes in state schools did not credit those lessons with any of their culinary or domestic expertise, either. Zaynab, born in 1943, waved her hand dismissively when I brought up the subject. “Those lessons were very simplistic and theoretical,” she said. “It was all empty talk.” The public school she had attended in Alexandria did have a teaching kitchen, but lessons were largely limited to lectures from the teacher: “we would listen to what the teacher said but that would be it,” Zaynab explained. “Home was where you learned things in a practical way.” Far more important than school lessons, she said, was the knowledge inherited from one’s mother and passed on from person to person. As if to prove the point, our interview was interrupted by a phone call from a relative seeking her advice on a family recipe.

Zaynab emphasized that it was the practical aspects of learning at home that school lessons simply could not convey—one more reason the home was a more important pedagogical site for domestic subjects. Smell was one example that she tied to both hygiene and happiness, both central tenets of modern domesticity. She explained to me that one can tell her house is

35 Interview conducted by author, December 4, 2016.
clean because there is no smell of cats when you walk in her door (she owned two cats who lived indoors and smoked cigarettes throughout our interview, and it is true that the apartment smelled of neither smoke nor cats). According to Zaynab, cleanliness was the sort of ongoing work evidenced by the absence of bad smells in a house over a long period of time, and it was learned from one’s own home and mother. “You have to have a system (niẓām) in your kitchen…there has to be organization (tartīb),” she said. In her mother’s house “things were put away in a specific and orderly way,” and this facilitated keeping everything clean. Zaynab could not tell me where her copy of Kitāb Abla Naẓīra had gone, but emphasized that the foods she had prepared for me—kamūniyya and spicy stuffed eggplant—were recipes she had learned from her mother. Zaynab was proud of being a good cook, and remarked that the good smells coming from her stove made her feel happy. Hanan and Zaynab readily accepted and even aspired to an understanding of domesticity that tied emotion work, hygiene, and well-ordered domestic space to the production of a happy nuclear family. But they rejected the idea that the school was the site where these ideas were inculcated.

Education had transformed the way these women learned to cook—but not in quite the way that education officials like Niqula had planned. School may have delayed their culinary education from childhood to the early years of marriage, but it did not change the fact that most women in midcentury Egypt, regardless of education level, began to learn how to cook with their mothers’ recipes and refined and expanded their cooking techniques in the physical space and the social context of their marital homes. Modern middle-class housewives produced the nation through domestic labor not because educators or cultural elites said so, but through the interactions and learning processes that took place between women in city apartment buildings like Hanan’s, where women from different regions cooked together and gradually developed a
new repertoire of Egyptian middle-class foods, from *sharkasiyya* to *kunāfa* to *macarona béchamel*.

**Generation Three: “Nobody Cooked Like That”**

Women from the subsequent generation, who grew up as *Uṣūl al-ṭahī* was becoming popularized as *Kitāb Abla Naẓīra*, were as likely to associate Abla Nazira with her radio show as with her cookbooks. While multiple women I interviewed from this generation, who grew up in the 1960s and early 1970s, owned a copy of her cookbooks or grew up in a household that did, nearly all of them said that cookbooks were put to limited use in the kitchen itself. While there were exceptions, this points to a broader and somewhat paradoxical trend: even as written recipes became increasingly common in cookbooks and magazines, and more and more women were educated enough to read them, they were still regarded as less important than other forms of culinary knowledge. Owning cookbooks or reading recipes in magazines represented its own form of social capital; the relationship between those printed recipes and actual cooking practice was less important.

Middle-class women of this generation were also more likely to enter the workforce as members of the professional classes, which in some cases reinforced the process of mother-daughter recipe transmission because working mothers frequently relied on their oldest daughters to start preparing or cooking recipes while they were working outside of the home. This is not to say this had never occurred before, but it was doubly important when both parents worked outside the home. As a result, some women from this generation and many of their daughters recalled learning to cook as teenagers, before marriage. In multiple instances in families I interviewed, this produced a phenomenon by which certain techniques or recipes might skip a
generation, with a granddaughter particularly interested in cooking asking her grandmother about family recipes her working mother had not bothered to learn. Yet even when women of this generation were considerably distanced from their family’s recipes, they depended on haptic rather than textual modes of learning. Sofia, for instance, recalled learning to cook for the first time with a friend from Cairo when they were both studying overseas. Neither had learned much cooking at home, and so her friend had brought a copy of Kitāb Abla Nazīra with her. “But I still don’t remember that we ever used that book,” she told me. “We just had it.”36 Even with the cookbook at her fingertips they had learned to cook through experimentation and trial and error.

When written recipes were relevant at all to women of this generation, they were embedded in other practices of knowledge transmission that involved spoken language and haptic, visual, or sensory experiences. For example, a woman might ask a neighbor for a recipe and receive a handwritten version of it, or take notes about a dish she heard about on the radio, then pass it on to her children through spoken language and gestures. Women who grew up in the 1960s and early 1970s remembered that as they were learning to cook from their mothers, recipes printed in books or magazines were at most a source of ideas for new things to cook, or inspiration for variations on foods already in a woman’s repertoire. Nour, for instance, recalled that her mother only consulted Kitāb Abla Nazīra for recipes of dishes she had already heard of, rather than using the book as a source for learning a new culinary technique from scratch.37 Conversely, other women recalled written recipes as a source of new dishes that their mothers cooked—like Reem, whose mother consulted Kitāb Abla Nazīra “for ideas” and Nadia, whose mother collected recipes from French magazines.38 Her mother then integrated European salads

36 Interview conducted by author, November 1, 2016.
37 Interview conducted by author, June 16, 2015.
38 Interviews conducted by author, June 15, 2015 and November 18, 2016.
and steaks into the family’s rotation of Egyptian foods like mulūkhiyya, kishk, and sharkasiyya.

Perhaps Yahya’s unnamed wife did the same with her daughter, poring over the sections of Uṣūl al-ṭahī that featured biftīk and choux pastry.

When it came to actually learning a new recipe or technique, however, women said they tended to rely on some combination of people they knew personally and experimentation in the kitchen, not texts written in formal Arabic. For example, all the women I interviewed learned how to make béchamel sauce from mothers, neighbors, friends, or the television—not in school, and not from a book. When Nour’s mother introduced béchamel sauce to dishes that already existed in the family repertoire, it was because she had learned how to make the sauce from a television program, not a cookbook. Nour herself cited television programs as the most important source of culinary innovation in her own cooking as an adult.

Their narratives indicate the importance of visual, haptic, and oral cues to learning how to cook, whether by watching a demonstration on television or learning from a friend or relative in person. Women related how, when learning from their mothers, measurements were gauged by eye or touch, not weight or volume, and recipes were judged done based on how they smelled or tasted, not how long they had been cooking. Some women explicitly contrasted this with the clinical approach of Uṣūl al-ṭahī: Reem explained the cookbook’s approach to measurement as the reason that the cookbook was not used as a practical guide in her mother’s kitchen. “It was too complex,” she explained. “Everything was measured in grams. Nobody cooked like that.”

The Tastes of Refusal

Of course, gauging measurements by eye or by feel is as complex a matter as the calculations

39 Interview conducted by author, November 18, 2016.
required by a modern written recipe. But these skills cannot be conveyed in a text; they require practical experience in a kitchen, engaging multiple senses and instructions expressed in conversational language. Thumping a pot of steaming noodles until it sounds “like a darbuka,” waiting for a duck’s skin brown to the perfect shade of dark red, getting a feel for how finely to grind walnuts for sharkasiyya sauce or how thinly to core a vegetable for mahshi without breaking through the other side, learning what the frying garlic and coriander in a taqliya smell like when they are done, watching a roux of a béchamel to know how much to let it brown before whisking in the milk: these are the kinds of things best learned with the body. The various ways that these methods of learning and practicing culinary knowledge engaged with written recipes can be read as acts of refusal. Women accommodated modern domesticity in selective ways while practicing the bulk of culinary teaching and learning through a combination of showing, telling, smelling, looking, and tasting. While shaped by ideologically motivated culinary texts, these cooking practices are deeply informed by the acquired knowledge of a “practical sense,” all culminating in an historically and culturally specific culinary habitus.

Refusal is not only a matter of avoidance of acknowledging state power or of using a cookbook you own; it is also generative. Oral histories illustrate how modern housewives produced the Egyptian nation in concrete, embodied ways through culinary habitus that were sometimes at odds with the directives of the ideology promoted by state actors and elites—but with far more profound effects. Narratives I collected about how women learned to cook brought to light how women in the decades following political independence literally cooked up a new understanding of what constituted Egyptian, middle-class cuisine. The foods they learned homogenized regional foods into a national cuisine and were adapted from elite, rural, or working class culinary roots and recast as middle-class in order to distinguish a family’s cuisine
either from strata both above and below it. We see this process in Hanan’s story: the practice of stuffing vegetables with rice for *maḥāshī* was once a food primarily associated with Ottoman cuisine and therefore associated with elite culture in the early twentieth century. Although she had eaten *maḥāshī* in her uncle’s home, where she lived as a schoolgirl, that had been in a provincial, elite household with a full-time professional cook. When she learned to make the dish herself as an Egyptian housewife in charge of a nuclear family, she learned from a neighbor from Alexandria—who also taught her how to cook béchamel, another food from a foreign, elite cuisine, as well as regional foods like Mediterranean fish. For Hanan these dishes, as well as the cardamom and mastic flavors she remembered from childhood, were all a part of the foods of *abil bayt al-Miṣrī*, Egyptian home cooking.

In another example, Maryam, a woman who grew up in a village outside of Giza, married a man from Upper Egypt who lived in Cairo near his parents. When I interviewed her she was eager to teach me (among other things) how to make her family recipe for *ṣaṭṭayta* (the diminutive form of hot sauce, *ṣaṭṭa*) made from garlic, oil, tomato, and fresh hot peppers. But this was not something they made in her own village; it was her mother-in-law’s recipe that she had learned after marriage, and which she described it as a typical *Ṣaʿīdī* flavoring. By contrast, Niqula and ʿUthman feature very little in the way of hot, spicy foods: they only list *al-shaṭṭa* as a dried seasoning, include no recipe for making fresh *shaṭṭa* in sauce form, and do not include it with Egyptian recipes that typically feature it, such as stuffed eggplant or fish. In their refined and sophisticated vision of what Egyptian women of the middle class should cook for their husbands, it seems that *shaṭṭa* had no place. But multiple women I interviewed, from a range of

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40 Interview conducted by author, November 6, 2016.
41 At most they include “a little red pepper” (*qalīl min al-filīf al-ahmar*) with two of the cookbook’s three dozen fish recipes (216, 247). On their spice pages (20-22), they list *al-shaṭṭa* as even spicier than dried red pepper. Niqula and ʿUthman, *Usūl al-Ṭahī*. 
geographical backgrounds, highlighted the importance of *shaffa* to their cooking. Maryam told me an urban legend to illustrate the importance of knowing what to do with hot peppers: there was a woman, she said, who did not know how to cook them. So she threw them into a stew with meat and vegetables, making everything far too spicy and ruining the dish. Upon tasting it, her husband divorced her immediately, figuring she must not know how to cook. The story was told in jest, but in the context of a recipe learned from her mother-in-law, it also drove home the importance of mastering a specific repertoire of Egyptian foods—which might include foods one had not necessarily learned from one’s own mother. Also in this category, she explained, were “modern foods” (*akla ḥadītha*) that were uncommon in her home village but that she had learned from family and friends in the city. These included modern Egyptian staples like *macarona* *béchamel* and *farākh* *pané* (breaded chicken), made with techniques originally introduced to Egyptian society through palace cuisine then disseminated through bourgeois restaurant culture and gradually integrated into the home cooking of the urban middle classes.

Then there is the example of Magda, who like Niqula and ʿUthman agreed that goose had an unpleasant country smell (*zafar* or *zafara*) owing to its fat content.42 “Egyptians don’t like goose,” she said, “but they love duck” (in fact, it was in Magda’s kitchen that I was served my first gloriously oven-browned Egyptian-style roast duck). Magda took great pride in cooking only duck, chicken, and pigeon that was *baladī*, sourced directly from the countryside, and not a state-subsidized factory farm. The very tastes and smells that Niqula and ʿUthman’s duck recipe sought to play down with its sauces and stuffing were the aspects of the animal that Magda most valued in her vision of Egyptian cuisine.

Starting with the first generation of middle-class women targeted with state-imposed

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42 Interview conducted by author, October 5, 2016.
domestic science lessons and state-sanctioned cookbooks, Egyptian women have enacted their refusal of state authority in defining the cuisine of the modern, middle-class Egyptian home kitchen. While accepting many of its principles as well as its eclectic framework of recipes from diverse sources, they nevertheless applied them in the kitchen in ways that were frequently unpredictable and contradictory. They refused to acknowledge the culinary authority of state-driven attempts to rationalize knowledge in printed, divided recipes or domesticate local traditions. Instead they insisted on the primacy not only of their mother’s cooking but the way their mothers both learned and taught cooking, seeking mother figures outside of their family if necessary and resorting to the telephone before relying on cookbooks. Accepting the importance of cooking as emotion work in the creation of a certain kind of family, they located the power of this affective dimension in the intimate spaces and gestures of the home. Refusing the aesthetic demands of educators who downplayed hot peppers and baladi smells, they embraced cardamom and mastic, shaṭayfa, and Fayumi duck, and used samna baladi in their bèchamel. The ideological terms of modern domesticity were thus mediated by the embodied knowledge, habits, and inclinations of a culinary habitus that refused to cede to the state what Egyptian home cooking should be—even though the stakes of that cooking often reflected state discourse.

This mediation of and by the body might be precisely what is at work in satirical treatments of Nazira Nqula’s work, from Faisal Nada’s 1978 comedy to the farcical attempts to cook in Șaḥibat al-Sā’āda. Laughter is an intensely and obviously embodied expression of emotional meaning, the sort that William Reddy describes as having “self-altering” effects.⁴³ According to a recent article in the Egyptian press, Nqula was saddened at Nada’s jokes at her expense.⁴⁴

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what could be a more fitting tribute for an Egyptian than to be simultaneously recognized as a respected cultural authority and the subject of a longstanding tradition of humor that rendered her more legible to all Egyptians? For Egyptians uncomfortable with ḥushā, the demands of middle-class respectability, or simply the state’s attempts to dictate its citizens’ private lives, perhaps laughter simply represents one more way to transform Niqula’s work, and the ideology that underpinned it, into a relatable form—mediated through the bodily affect of laughter. There is something generative and meaningful in forms of refusal that simultaneously embraced Abla Nazira and kept their distance from Nazira Niqula’s writing. The book’s social meaning is produced in part through the tension between selectively adopting state-approved ideas while rejecting state authority on the same subject, between owning a copy of Uṣūl al-ṭahī but never cooking from it, between listening to Abla Nazira on the radio then teaching your version of her recipe to your daughter over the phone. The latter is always a creative engagement with, and hence a recognition—however begrudging—of the former. Similarly, Abla Nazira the punchline is difficult to imagine without Nazira Niqula’s legibility as an authority in the first place.

While none of the women I interviewed formally had used “Abla Nazira’s book” extensively themselves, over the course of living in Egypt I came to know several women whose mothers had used the cookbook as it was intended to be used. But even in these cases, there were qualifications and ambivalences: one woman echoed the sentiments of al-Mutazawwījūn, saying that following the book’s recipes never produced good food. Another loved the recipes her mother had cooked from the book, but clarified that her mother had trained for several years at the High Institute for Domestic Science, which was the real source of her prowess in the kitchen. In every discussion of the cookbook I had, it seemed to occupy a position as an ideal or a placeholder—perhaps not so unlike the ideal of domestic happiness that always guides and
orients behaviors and attachments, but can never quite produce a concrete sense of satisfaction itself. *Uṣūl al-ṭahīh* is still recognizable as a book that is intended to orient Egyptians to some version of “the good life,” but it also remains so far from the reality of that imagined ideal that it prompts reactions of ambivalence or even mockery.
Chapter 4  
**Gender Across Borders: Domestic Education in Modern Morocco**

“Virtue is achieved in a girl who knows herself and her value in this world, as well as her duties in life. This can only be attained through correct learning (ʿilm saḥīḥ). Brothers: the future of the [Moroccan] girl is in your hands…they are the mothers of tomorrow.”

—Bahithat al-Hadira (Malika al-Fasi), 1934

In Morocco, as in Egypt, the process of defining a modern national identity entailed “making the latent manifest,” the selective marshalling of certain aspects of Moroccan culture and society under the banner of a national community. This process was enacted in large part by members of an emerging middle class and among many other things it included the informal codification of women’s domestic practices into a legible set of national traditions. As in Egypt, state education systems in Morocco played a key role in shaping this process; and as in Egypt, the creation of a new middle-class culture went hand-in-hand with the expansion of new educational opportunities and new ideas about gendered labor that accompanied them. The passage quoted here, penned by nationalist and women’s advocate Malika al-Fasi, highlights the explicit links that Moroccan reformers drew between the correct form of women’s education and the role she played in the nation.

Compared to Egypt, there were fewer attempts by the state to intervene directly in the way that Moroccan women cooked and managed their homes. This difference can partially be explained by French colonial education policies—which did not prioritize these kinds of interventions as state policies in Egypt had. But women’s education and their domestic labor were no less meaningful when it came to defining modern Morocco. In this chapter, I explain how ideas about modern domesticity and domestic education were introduced to Moroccan

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society not only through the colonial encounter but also through a more complex web of relations including pan-Arab and pan-Islamic networks of exchange. Through these histories I explain the emergence of the unique role played by women’s domestic labor in producing the Moroccan nation, which depended upon authenticating traditions by way of maternal lines of transmission and favoring a specific strand of Arab cultural heritage. While scholars like Spencer Segalla and Hamid Irbouh have explored the gendered implications of the French colonial education system, less attention has been paid to the role of relationships within the Arabic-speaking world in shaping the gender ideologies of the modern Moroccan state.²

This chapter therefore attempts to account for both, relating the history of domestic education in Morocco along two axes: one between metropole and colony, and the other between Morocco and the rest of the Arab world. Both of these axes represent significant forces at play in expanding the middle classes and defining the Moroccan nation: During the French and Spanish protectorates (1912-56), Morocco’s middle class grew in size and importance: the historic bourgeoisie of Fes in particular consolidated wealth and influence, capitalizing on the modernization of the Moroccan economy, while European-driven development expanded educational and work opportunities, particularly in the cities, providing avenues for upward mobility for the newly educated.³ At the same time Moroccan nationalists, many of them the beneficiaries of new forms of modern education (not all of them colonial: many traveled to Cairo and elsewhere in the Middle East for higher education, and the nationalist movement also founded its own parallel school system within Morocco), began to make claims about Moroccan


authenticity and identity in nationalist terms. They did so largely within the framework of Arab and Islamic heritage—and frequently with specific references to Fes, Rabat, and Tetouan, cities known for their historical links to al-Andalus. When it comes to domestic education, the influence of this “axis” can be traced most clearly through its introduction of the idea of domestic happiness, *al-saʿāda*, which is far more prominent in the Arabic-language writing of Moroccan reformers than the French colonial record. While food plays at best a supporting role in this chapter’s discussions of domestic education in Morocco, these discussions nevertheless provide crucial background for understanding how food eventually does come to define the Moroccan nation (explained in more detail in Chapter Five).

This chapter follows Olivia C. Harrison’s call “for a repositioning of the field of Maghrebi studies along an East-West, rather than North-South, axis,” as well as David Stenner’s emphasis on the significance of the international dimensions of nationalist organizing efforts in Morocco. The former relationship or axis emphasized cultural preservation and facilitated the invention of certain Moroccan practices, from architecture to women’s weaving, as “traditions.” It was through the latter axis, which forged lines of engagement with the broader Arabic-speaking world, that the ideology of modern domesticity dominant in Egypt at the time was most explicitly brought to bear on the Moroccan context. The speeches and writing of prominent Moroccan reformists directly cited Egyptian models, including around issues of gender; Moroccan intellectuals like Abdelkrim Ghalbab and Abdelmajid Benjelloun spent years studying and writing in Cairo; and after independence Egyptian advisors contributed to the production of

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Morocco’s new school textbooks. These influences set the tone for the way that postcolonial educational institutions in Morocco addressed gender roles—and alongside the influence of colonial policy, informed the relationship between gendered practices and understandings of authenticity and modernity in Morocco.

Inventing and Teaching Tradition: _al-Taqlīd_, 1914-1930s

The history of modern domestic education in Morocco begins with the French protectorate (1912-1956), which established the first state-sponsored schools for Moroccan girls.⁵ During its first three decades, the French protectorate promoted policies about women’s education that prioritized the preservation of existing social structures and cultural practices. But the “preservation” of Moroccan culture demanded considerable efforts on the part of the French to research and define it. The legacy of this approach was a concept of tradition, _al-taqlīd_, that incorporates both ethnographic and pedagogical elements, and which outlived the colonial institutions that had created it.

While on the surface this process appears to be one of preserving past structures, a closer analysis reveals it began as a French project to “introduce modernity without change.”⁶ That is to say, the French made deliberate and conscious efforts to intervene in Moroccan society, including in women’s practices; but their use of a specific concept of “tradition” masked these interventions with a veneer of preservation and non-interference. Edmund Burke writes that although this approach “began well,” eventually “it became apparent that French understandings

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⁵ This chapter primarily addresses the school system designed for Moroccan Muslims under the French protectorate; it includes limited references, where possible, to the Spanish protectorate in the northernmost part of the country as well as to the educational tracks designed for Jewish Moroccans.

of Morocco were based on faulty assumptions.”7 This chapter juxtaposes French preservationist attitudes towards domesticity with Moroccan perspectives that emerged to challenge them. Although the French approach to “tradition” is insufficient on its own for understanding how the ideology of modern domesticity emerged in Morocco, it was nonetheless influential in the process of defining national identity—particularly in terms of articulating a need to preserve cultural heritage for the sake of the nation. This ethos continued to resonate after independence; in the next chapter, for example, I argue that its legacy is particularly salient in the genre of Moroccan cookbooks, which only emerged as a modern print genre after independence.

Prior to the French protectorate, Moroccan girls might have received basic religious instruction from a local faqīh or faqīha or studied embroidery and handcrafts with a female teacher through an institution known as a dar mu'allima.8 As in Egypt, daughters of elite Moroccan families often received some additional tutoring at home. The French administration designed the educational system to maintain existing social structures, beginning with the creation of segregated educational tracks for Muslim Moroccans, Jewish Moroccans, and European colonists.9 The French also differentiated Moroccan students by class, with separate schools created for the children of the working classes and the sons of elites.

Overall, the French devoted far less attention and resources to educating girls than boys.10

7 Ibid.
9 Although the French colonial administration created a track for Jewish Moroccans at the end of the First World War, by 1924 the administration of Jewish schools was returned to the Alliance Israelite Universelle. Segalla, The Moroccan Soul, 53-4.
They established the first state school for Muslim girls in 1914, and although other schools followed, Moroccan girls’ enrollment did not increase significantly until the end of World War II: by 1924 only 465 Muslim girls were enrolled in French-run colonial state schools throughout Morocco.11 Little evidence remains indicating what curricula or lessons the French developed for Muslim girls in Morocco: French colonial archives, Moroccan libraries, and used book markets yield practically nothing in the way of textbooks written specifically for Moroccan girls prior to independence—the lone exception being a 1922 book on breastfeeding and childrearing.12 All told, very few Moroccan Muslim girls were educated by the French at all: at the point of political independence in 1956, only about 13 percent of all Moroccan children were being educated in the French system, and of these students, girls were only a fraction.13

The dearth of standardized curricula or textbooks is also significant in that it is indicative of the overall orientation of the protectorate towards girls and women. The French attitude in Morocco was in marked contrast to that of the British in Egypt where Lord Cromer, the first British consul-general of Egypt (1883-1907) had singled out Egyptian women as a site of reform and evidence of Egyptian backwardness. Cromer wrote that “Islam as a social system has been a complete failure,” citing its attitude towards women as the first reason for this failure and insisting as a result that “the new generation of Egyptians has to be persuaded or forced into imbibing the true spirit of Western civilisation.”14 By contrast the first resident-general in Morocco (1912-25), Hubert Lyautey, did nothing of the sort. Spencer Segalla situates French attitudes towards Moroccan girls and women within Lyautey’s associationist policy in Morocco,

13 Segalla, The Moroccan Soul, 55.
at the heart of which was a “charge to preserve ethnic difference.”\textsuperscript{15} This included an extensive set of policies and institutions devised to demonstrate a French commitment to preserve existing social institutions and relationships, including what the French conceived of as Moroccan Islam.\textsuperscript{16} Although colonial education reached a relatively small number of Muslim Moroccan girls, what can be gleaned from the available evidence offers significant insight into the terms of how \textit{al-taqlīd} was defined during this period, and the role that the domestic sphere played in that definition.

French officials professed a desire to teach Muslim girls of all classes to be proper and proficient housewives (\textit{bonnes ménagères}), but not at the expense of altering existing tastes, habits, or existing social hierarchies. Colonial policies regarding women struck a balance between interfering and “reforming” existing practices and limiting those reforms to the domestic sphere in order to preserve existing class and gender social structures. A crucial aspect of this policy during the initial decades of the protectorate was the use of girls’ schools as a means to produce a reified notion of Moroccan culture through handcrafts—often divided along class lines in a way that preserved notions of weaving as a more popular practice and embroidery as a practice of the daughters of elites.\textsuperscript{17} By taking control of the institution of the \textit{dār mu’allima}, the French hoped to demonstrate nominal respect for Moroccan culture while educating girls and women who would influence their future husbands in the protectorate’s favor. Segalla writes that the scarcity of female Moroccan instructors and the absence of formal curricula meant that through the 1930s, the content of Moroccan girls’ education was largely left to the discretion of French instructors.\textsuperscript{18} This accounts for the lack of historical documentation about their

\textsuperscript{15} Segalla, \textit{The Moroccan Soul}, 16.
\textsuperscript{16} Burke, \textit{The Ethnographic State}.
\textsuperscript{17} Irbouh, \textit{Art in the Service of Colonialism}.
\textsuperscript{18} Segalla, \textit{The Moroccan Soul}, 175.
curriculum. But it is still possible to form some general conclusions about what Moroccan girls were actually taught based on metropolitan educational policies, the protectorate’s associationist tendencies, and the archival evidence that does exist.

While educational reforms in metropolitan France in 1880 had provided unprecedented educational opportunities for French women, state education was largely intended to train schoolgirls to be housewives and mothers—working within the confines of the home—well into the 1910s.¹⁹ The women who taught Moroccan girls in the first several decades of the protectorate were products of this system. As instructors in Morocco, they were also expected to know local customs and handcrafts and told that “studying [indigenous languages] is not only useful, but necessary.”²⁰ Knowledge of local languages and customs was important not only for practical reasons, but because teachers’ roles hinged on defining and preserving what protectorate officials defined as the “Moroccan soul.”²¹ This was but one aspect of a formidable system knowledge production designed to inform all French colonial policy in Morocco, including its educational efforts.²² For example, the Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines (IHEM), founded in 1920, was an “ethnological institute” of the French colonial government, located in Rabat and organized under the Direction de l’Instruction Publique (DIP) “so that the knowledge produced might be channeled into teaching.”²³ French schoolteachers were expected

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²⁰ Quelques conseils pratiques a l’usage du personnel suppléant des écoles musulmanes, 1939, F-107, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco. Teachers were advised to consult IHEM for resources. See also: Note sur l’état de l’enseignement des indigènes musulmanes, January 1, 1929, F-107, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco, which describes a training course for French teachers that included Moroccan dialects and general knowledge about Morocco. Women were specifically required to demonstrate familiarity with Moroccan embroidery and carpet weaving in addition to Arabic. Recrutement de maitresses-ouvrieres pour les écoles musulmanes de filles, 1939, 3MA/900/93, Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Nantes, France.
²¹ Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul*. See in particular Chapter 4 of Segalla’s book for a detailed explanation of how this informed teaching philosophy
²² Burke, *The Ethnographic State*.
to act as ethnographers, learning about the cultural contexts in which they taught in order to “preserve” them. For women in particular this included learning not only language but the basics of women’s handcrafts.

Historians have detailed how French women in particular fulfilled this role in accordance with the injunction “Muslim culture, French instruction” that defined the educational policy of the protectorate through the 1930s.24 Hamid Irbouh explains how Louise Bouillot, a French colonial official charged with running a dār muʿallima in Salé, first approached the students’ families as a student of their culture: “a simple guest who wished only to be taught by them, not to teach them.”25 After forging friendships and earning local trust she began transforming the dār muʿallima into a place where Moroccan girls would not only produce traditional crafts but “learn to manage their homes” as well (as though Moroccan women had no capacity for managing their homes already).26 For Bouillot, it was at the site of transmission of traditional knowledge, newly subject to colonial supervision and control, that progress might occur. But when it came to the Muslim women of Morocco, this progress had to be managed carefully, lest the Moroccan “mentality” be altered through education.27 A similar approach was described by a Mme. Moudjeber, who in 1920 was recruited as the first Moroccan woman to teach in a colonial state school in Rabat.28 She described how, accompanied by a French instructor, she went door to door in the “popular quarters” of Rabat in an attempt to persuade Moroccans to enroll their children in school.29 Ellen Amster describes how protectorate doctors dispatched French women like Aline

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26 Ibid., 107, 110.
27 Ibid., 108.
28 Bahia Kadmiri, “Bilan de la scolarisation des filles,” in Femmes et education: etat des lieux, ed. Fatima Mernissi and O. Azziman, Marocaines Citoyennes de Demain (Casablanca: Editions Le Fennec, 1994), 65. Presumably Moudjeber means she was the first Moroccan woman recruited to teach something other than handcrafts or religion, as the French had always recruited local Moroccan women instructors for these subjects.
29 Ibid., 65.
de Lens to infiltrate Moroccan homes, learn about their traditional healing practices by gaining women’s trust, and exert influence over matters of hygiene. Through these women, protectorate officials “sought to eliminate women’s traditional practices and to restrict Muslim women to the private sphere of the home.” Read in light of the tenets of modern domesticity this appears less an attempt to preserve social structures precisely as they were found than the introduction of a new configuration of separate public and private spheres central to European domesticity politics at the time. In other words, a private sphere was newly identified and singled out for preservation, but in order to establish policies that enacted the directive to “preserve” required subjecting the “private sphere” of Moroccan homes to the colonial gaze in ways that were invariably transformative.

A 1917 report from a school for Muslim girls in the city of Safi relates how this approach to reforming the private sphere was enacted through domestic education in French colonial schools. The report relates how the school’s director, Renée Bazet, taught modern hygiene within the traditional space of the local neighborhood ḥammām, or public bath, where the students’ mothers joined them. Bazet described the school as a “second family” to its students, and explained that “the Moorish bath…has the twofold advantage of keeping the pupils in an almost permanent state of cleanliness and maintaining relations with the family mothers.” By bridging educational and family structures, French schooling introduced principles of modern domesticity into a Moroccan context—but in the guise of preserving existing social spaces and structures.

Well into the 1920s, however, enseignement ménagère (household management

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31 Ibid., 156.
32 ‘Mon école:’ school report written by Mlle Renée Bazet, November 19, 1917, 3MA/900/23, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, France.
33 Ibid.
instruction, sometimes also translated as domestic science) remained a low priority in Muslim girls’ education, which remained more focused on reforming the way girls learned traditional handcrafts. The household management lessons that did exist initially focused on handcraft-adjacent skills like sewing and mending clothing rather than cooking and cleaning. School timetables from the 1920s indicate that often only one or two lessons per week were dedicated to household management lessons, and sometimes none at all—compared to daily lessons devoted to embroidery and weaving. A 1924 inspection report notes that household management lessons in the girls’ school in Rabat consisted of sewing, mending, and crochet. Nowhere do school records from the 1910s or 1920s specifically mention cooking as a separate subject.

When cooking lessons for Muslim girls first appear in the historical record in the 1930s, however, they follow a similar pattern as the approaches to domestic education described above: promoting mother-daughter transmission of knowledge in traditional spaces or structures, but re-framed with French principles of hygiene and economy. In a 1936 report, Y. Braguet, director of a girls’ school in the town of El Hajeb, outside of Fes, describes a similar approach to household management and cooking. The French Bulletin d’enseignement (Teacher’s Bulletin) describes Braguet’s school, founded in 1932, as a success story. Her enseignement ménagère lessons were practical in nature, consisting chiefly of cleaning the school’s classrooms. Braguet explains to her fellow teachers that wealthy students may resist the notion of cleaning, but that they must be taught that “one must learn in order to know how to manage.” This is another example of how the French system subtly imparted ideological elements of modern domesticity and its new approaches to domestic labor—in this case, the need for a housewife to be as or more skilled in

34 Emploi du temps, 1922, 3MA/900/22 and 3MA/900/6, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, France.
domestic matters as her servants—to Moroccan students. When it comes to cooking, Braguet explains that her students’ culinary instruction consists of preparing certain foods on the eves of holidays. Students bring the necessary items; we work together following recipes collected from the students’ parents. One of the mothers may come to advise.\textsuperscript{37}

French language and childrearing were the only subjects for which Braguet listed a specific textbook.\textsuperscript{38} In other words, the cooking techniques taught in French schools during this period came not from metropolitan curricula or textbooks, but the culinary repertoires of the students’ own mothers. In the next chapter I suggest that this structural approach to defining and transmitting Moroccan cuisine remained influential well after independence. Equally important, however, was the influence of a form of Arab modernity focused on authenticity. This emerged in Morocco through another major line of influence on domestic education beginning in the 1930s. It was oriented not towards the colonizer, but to the eastern Arab world.

Reforming Tradition for a Modern Nation: \textit{al-Asāla}, 1930s to 1960s

In the 1930s, domestic education in Moroccan girls’ schools began to change due to a number of factors: the emergence of a nationalist movement dominated by \textit{salafī}-minded reformists introduced a new gender discourse that called upon women to embody modernity, refinement, and progress, in contrast to the French colonial policy of cultural preservation. Jonathan Wyrtzen identifies women’s education and women’s legal status as two key areas targeted by the French colonial administration’s gender policies—which Moroccan nationalists subsequently singled out for reform beginning in the 1930s, citing them as evidence of the French administration’s failure

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 471.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 465.
to achieve progress.\textsuperscript{39}

There were significant differences between the nationalist and colonial attitudes towards the position of women, domestic education, and Moroccan culture more broadly: whereas the French attitude was one of fostering continuity through tradition, the reformist rhetoric of the nationalists was one of return to an earlier, more authentic form of Moroccan identity, with Islam an increasingly central component.\textsuperscript{40} This orientation can be understood through the term \textit{al-\textasciitilde{}a\textasciitilde{}la}, a word derived from a root connoting “roots” and sometimes (imperfectly) translated as “authenticity.” The temporal implications of the word, which point to an authenticity located in the past, in relation to roots or origin are crucial to its logic. They also make it particularly apt for the Moroccan nationalist context, which combined invocations of precolonial aspects of contemporaneous Moroccan culture, from the ‘Alawi dynasty to Morocco’s Andalusi heritage, with calls for a return to earlier and more “correct” forms of Islam.\textsuperscript{41} Moroccan nationalists frequently referenced examples from the Islamic reform movement broadly and the Egyptian example specifically. This included the promotion of a new system of separate spheres, including a private sphere where a new kind of modern Muslim wife and mother performed a kind of household management (\textit{tadb\textasciitilde{}ir al-man\textasciitilde{}zil}) that produced both food and happiness. The emotional valence of modern domesticity in particular had not figured prominently into French discussions of domesticity in Morocco, but it \textit{was} referenced frequently in the Arabic-language writings of

\textsuperscript{39}Wyrtzen, \textit{Making Morocco}, 232.
\textsuperscript{40}Although here I focus on \textit{salafi} nationalist discourse because of its influence on gender discourse and its general prominence within the nationalist movement, it should be pointed out that by no means were all nationalists \textit{salafi}. For a detailed study of the \textit{salafiyya} movement in Morocco and its relationship to the nationalist movement, see Jamil Abun-Nasr, “The Salafiyya Movement in Morocco: The Religious Bases of the Moroccan Nationalist Movement,” \textit{St. Antony’s Papers} 16 (1963): 90–105 Abun-Naser also describes how Egyptian ideas about Islamic reform were introduced from Egypt to in the late nineteenth century.
Moroccan nationalists and reformers—an indication of the influence of broader Arab reform movements and rhetoric on the latter.

At the same time, the effects of the global recession as well as locusts in 1930 and a drought in 1936–37, followed by World War II, all threatened Morocco’s food supply.\footnote{Holden, \textit{The Politics of Food in Modern Morocco}, 115–16.} This created incentives for educating more girls in part because education held the promise of employment and higher wages for women who sought employment out of necessity, while giving new emphasis to the values of economy and efficiency within households whose female members did not work outside the home. Stacy Holden argues that it was “grievances over the distribution of local resources,” particularly food supply, that accelerated nationalist ideas into widespread action and “sparked the movement that eventually led to Moroccan independence,” particularly from the 1930s onwards.\footnote{Ibid., 12.} The material circumstances of the final decades of the protectorate are inseparable from questions of who could provide a better life for members of Moroccan society and nationalist critiques of French failures to do so. In this context, nationalist visions of modern Morocco entailed an emphasis on separate spheres in line with the ideology of domesticity that was being increasingly legislated and elaborated in Egypt, with women accorded a prominent role as educated mothers and wives in debates over the nation’s future.

I argue that the demands of nationalists and middle-class Moroccans under the French protectorate, which were increasingly aligned with ideas about modern domesticity in the eastern Arab world, contributed to concrete changes in the colonial state’s approach to educating girls and women. Whereas French colonial documents from the 1920s stress the importance of \textit{enseignement ménagère} to cultural preservation, a 1950 pamphlet about Moroccan education published just a few decades later explains, in Arabic, that female students are learning “modern
principles of the science of child-rearing and household management” (mabādiʾ ʿaṣrīyya fī ʿilm tarbiyat al-ʿatfāl wa-tadbīr al-manzil), citing terms and phrases lifted almost directly from contemporaneous Egyptian domesticity discourse.\footnote{Pamphlet, “Al-Taʾlīm al-ḥadīth bi-l-Maghrib” 1950, F-78: Documentation imprimée, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco.} This emphasis on “modern” approaches to domestic education points to another key difference between French colonial and Moroccan reformist approaches: as domestic education shifted from a preservationist to a modernizing endeavor, it was cast in terms not of a secular modernity, but what Omnia El Shakry describes as “nonsecular modernity.”\footnote{El Shakry, “Schooled Mothers and Structured Play.”} In contrast to what Edmund Burke refers to as the “historical specificity of Moroccan Islam” that was discursively established through the ethnographic practices of the French colonial state, nationalists articulated a more universal vision for Islam in line with a transnational Islamic reform movement.\footnote{Burke, The Ethnographic State, 1.} Their narrative was not one of preservation or continuity so much as return to a more authentic past, captured succinctly in the concept of al-aṣāla. For the French, the position of women in society was a part of Moroccan culture and their stance towards the woman question was a matter of policy tactics. For many Moroccan nationalists, however, the stakes of the “woman question” became a matter of religious urgency.

This section outlines the emergence of an ideology of modern domesticity in colonial Morocco and then turns to the changes in the state education system that reflected that ideology, both before and after independence.

Nationalists and the Woman Question: Contesting Colonialism

For nationalists, a Moroccan identity framed in Islamic terms provided a powerful source of legitimacy and authenticity for a number of reasons. A reformist vision of Islam offered its
proponents a vision of modernity that they argued was culturally superior to the model offered by the French regime, and it also had older roots, lending it the added weight of historical precedence: in addition to centuries of interaction with the broader Islamic world, Moroccan engagement with eastern Arab and Islamic reform movements also predated direct colonial intervention. In the 1940s, nationalists cited Moroccan participation in Islamic reform movements with regard to gender ideology specifically, dating it to early constitutional movements that had taken place in the years before the establishment of the protectorates.

These short-lived movements had been prompted by the increasing encroachment of Western powers in Morocco and inspired by constitutions in Japan, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire. They produced two constitutional texts, written circa 1908 and likely composed in part or in full by eastern Arabs. While the movement’s impact was limited, the texts it produced—including a provision for girls’ education—were revived and referenced by Moroccan nationalists in the 1940s and 50s. Invoking Arab and Islamic reform projects, nationalists argued that they could offer more meaningful gender reforms than the French.

Jonathan Wyrtzen explains the importance of the status of women to nationalists as a

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47 Daoud notes that Moroccan sultan Hassan I sent missions to Muhammad ‘Ali’s Egypt, and that scientific missions were sent to both Japan and Europe between 1874 and 1888. Abun-Nasr also describes how Egyptian ideas about Islamic reform were introduced from Egypt in the late nineteenth century. He distinguishes between the earliest *salafi* movement in Morocco, whose aims were religious, and what he refers to as the “neo-Salafiyya” movement in Morocco following World War I, which “aimed at the establishment of a liberal political organization of society with a view to enabling Muslims to lead the good life, part of which was the correct exercise of their religion.” Abun-Nasr, “The Salafiyya Movement in Morocco: The Religious Bases of the Moroccan Nationalist Movement,” 99; Zakya Daoud, *Féminisme et politique au Maghreb: 1930-1992* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1993), 239.


50 One example is an article by ʿAbdallah Ibrāhīm, “al-Taʿlīm al-ilzāmī,” in *Risālat al-Maghrib*, August 1947, 7–9. This 1947 article acknowledges the Egyptian model of compulsory education and the practical steps taken in Egypt to ensure educational opportunities be provided to both boys and girls. While recognizing Egyptian leadership, however, the author also argues that “Moroccans had considered the need to impose compulsory education before the Egyptians had,” citing the 1908 constitution and its mention of providing educational opportunities for girls.
means to contest the legitimacy of the colonial state and advance an alternate vision of national progress.\textsuperscript{51} The inferior status of women in Morocco was offered as proof that the colonial state had failed to fulfill its own developmentalist narrative, which justified colonial rule by claiming to bring progress to Morocco.\textsuperscript{52} Nationalists argued that a return to correct Islamic social and legal principles guaranteed women protection and status that the French system could not. Fatima Mernissi lays out a feminist reading of Moroccan history along these lines, arguing that while French policy worked to maintain and uphold existing social and gender hierarchies, Moroccan nationalists “advocated the liberation of women in the name of Islam’s triumph.”\textsuperscript{53} Her narrative, like many other nationalist narratives, contends that women’s education was a cornerstone of Moroccan nationalist politics and casts religious justifications for women’s education as a restoration of a pre-colonial past.

The intertwined histories of domestic education and gender discourse in Morocco between the 1930s and the 1960s reveal how nationalist politics relied on new logics of exclusion as well, promoting a form of Moroccan identity that emphasized elite Arab, urban, and Islamic elements. Wyrtzen also points out, for example, how nationalists decried what they viewed as the inferior status of the “Berber woman,” whom French rule had placed under a separate legal system from her Arab sisters. By this logic, the “woman question” became a means to advocate for national unity by bringing Amazigh/Berber Moroccans into the nationalist fold under the broad and allegedly liberatory banner of Islamic reform.\textsuperscript{54} Seen this way, the nationalists’ narrative of return to an earlier, more “correct” form of Islamic society can be read as part of a deliberate process by which certain Moroccans asserted their authority to speak for

\textsuperscript{51} Wyrtzen, \textit{Making Morocco}, 232–35.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 232–35.
\textsuperscript{53} Mernissi, \textit{Beyond the Veil}, 8, 154.
\textsuperscript{54} Wyrtzen, \textit{Making Morocco}, 232–35.
the nation on terms that largely reflected their own backgrounds and priorities, “making the manifest latent” by privileging various aspects of identity at the expense of others. This process also explains how certain recipes and flavors associated with Fasi, Tetouani, and Andalusi culture came to be highlighted as authentic national foods, mirroring similar elevations of Andalusi culture in music and architecture.

Meanwhile, throughout the 1930s a new urban middle class was expanding as Moroccans moved to cities in search of work and education. Its members participated in new forms of print and popular culture and increasingly purchased manufactured consumer products, from radios to new kitchen equipment. At the same time, droughts, harvest failures, and inflation triggered urban food shortages in the late 1930s: economy and efficiency became increasingly important in the management of the home, and in more and more families, women and girls had to work outside the home to make ends meet. These economic and social transformations were the basis of concrete demands that gave shape to broader gender-related Moroccan critiques of French colonial rule. Namely, Moroccans began to demand more educational opportunities for Moroccan girls, with an increased focus on domestic education.

Malika al-Fasi: Reforming Tradition, Starting at Home (1930s)

Despite its concern over the “woman question,” the Moroccan nationalist movement was overwhelmingly male-dominated. In the 1930s, however, a limited number of Moroccan women also began to write about the status of women in the nationalist press. They included Nadia Benjelloun and Malika al-Fasi, both married to nationalists from elite Fasi families. Al-Fasi,

55 Pennell, Morrocco since 1830, 238–39.
56 Wyrtzen, Making Morocco, 232–35. Wyrtzen suggests that the first woman to publish in the nationalist press may have been Nadia Benjelloun, wife of nationalist Abdelkader Benjelloun, to whom he attributes a 1934 article signed N.B. She had also published several articles on the same subject in 1933 in a Paris-based publication under a
who was related to nationalist leader 'Allal al-Fasi and married to her cousin Muhammad al-Fasi, another prominent nationalist, was the only woman to sign the 1944 independence manifesto, which called for an independent Morocco under the leadership of Sultan Muhammad bin Yusuf (later King Muhammad V) and established the Istiqlal (Independence) party. In the 1930s and 40s, al-Fasi published a number of essays, initially using the pseudonym “al-Fatat,” (The Young Woman) and later adopting the pseudonym “Bahithat al-Hadira” (Seeker in the City)—presumably a reference to the pseudonym of Egyptian writer Malak Hifni Nasif, Bahithat al-Badiya. In one essay, she stresses the importance of education to combating ignorance, superstition, and other corrupting practices among Moroccan girls—echoing the rhetoric of Egyptian reformers on the same subject. She also urges her fellow Moroccans to look to the example of “civilized nations” (al-umam al-mutamaddana) where women are considered pillars of the nahda, presumably referring to Egypt and other places in the Arab world where women played more vocal roles advocating for reform.

Educated at home and raised in a conservative Fasi household, it is likely that Malika al-Fasi learned about Islamic reformism from male relatives, including her husband, who were connected with transnational pan-Islamic anticolonial movements. By this time, pan-Islamic and other anticolonial political publications from Egypt and elsewhere were being smuggled into Morocco either through networks of activists or, ironically, through the British postal system,

different pseudonym. Her background and stance on women’s education are similar to that of Malika al-Fasi: education should prepare women for their “natural role” as mothers and should learn practical household management skills with an emphasis on “rationalization” of those tasks, 234.

58 To my knowledge, the parallel between these two women’s pseudonyms has gone unnoticed by scholars.
which enjoyed protected status under the French protectorate.\textsuperscript{61} French colonial officials were well aware of this phenomenon: they reported that young Moroccan students eagerly read Arabic books and newspapers from Egypt and Tunisia, and attributed the increasing popularity of Moroccan nationalism in large part to eastern influences, with one official noting that “the East, and Egypt especially, revived and liberated, is a fascinating example for all of the enlightened population and especially for students.”\textsuperscript{62} The daughters of educated Moroccan families were also likely to learn about Egyptian activist women like Huda Sha’rawi and Malak Hifni Nasif, not only from their male relatives but directly from the radio. Fatima Mernissi recalls learning about Sha’rawi, Zaynab Fawwaz, and ‘A’isha Taymur within the confines of her aristocratic Fasi home in the 1940s, in part through radio broadcasts from Cairo.\textsuperscript{63} And Alison Baker, profiling a half-dozen other Moroccan women from prominent nationalist families, also mentions the importance of the radio for women during this period—initially as a source of information from elsewhere in the Arab world, and later as a platform for their own advocacy.\textsuperscript{64}

Like other reformers of her time, al-Fasi presented the education of girls and women as a generational problem: not only did a lack of educational opportunity for girls leave them to be raised in ignorance by their mothers, it left them unsuitable partners for cultured, educated men and unfit mothers themselves. Somewhat paradoxically, reforming traditional women’s practices required intervention through schooling but could also not be left entirely up to the state: the primary goal of reforming education for girls and women, according to their outlook, was to

\textsuperscript{61} Burke, \textit{Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco}, 101; Pennell, \textit{Morocco since 1830}, 143; 206; Stenner, “Centring the Periphery.”
\textsuperscript{62} M. Brunot, Head inspector of indigenous instruction, Rapport au sujet des tendances de la jeunesse marocine, July 5, 1927, F-107, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco.
\textsuperscript{64} Baker, \textit{Voices of Resistance}, 47. In her interview with Amina Leuh, Leuh describes how she conducted her own advocacy work through a radio show broadcasted from Tetouan, 143–48.
produce mothers with the proper training, education, and culture to teach their children within the home. Adapting Islamic reformist discourse to a specifically Moroccan situation, al-Fasi singles out the dār muʿallima, the handcraft training institutions that had largely been taken over by the French:

It cannot be denied that the life of the Moroccan woman is all lethargy and indolence. How could it be otherwise, when she never leaves her mother except to go to the dār muʿallima, then quits once she has learned a few handicrafts? After that she is a prisoner in the home and learns nothing of life except what her grandmother and other old women pass on.  

Al-Fasi describes the dār muʿallima as ineffectual, offering a critique of both the French approach to women’s education and a Moroccan status quo that she viewed as corrupt and backwards. Much of her writing pursues this kind of double critique, presenting a vision of the modern Moroccan housewife that was distinct from the French model while applying Islamic reformist concepts in ways that attended to the specifics of the Moroccan situation. One of her key points of departure from the French model, and resonance with the Egyptian one, lies in her approach to “emotion work:” al-Fasi links the status of women to that of the nation through happiness. Again, the introduction of the affective dimension of a modern woman’s labor is a key distinction between the vision of domestic education offered by the French and one increasingly supported by Moroccan reformers writing in Arabic and consciously in conversation with other reformers in the Arab world. For al-Fasi, the key to domestic happiness lay in a “separate spheres” approach, explicitly articulated as a system within which women worked within the home and men worked outside of it. Writing in 1935, al-Fasi specifically counseled against higher education for girls, explaining that a secondary education was sufficient to prepare

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66 Ibid., 9.
them for their domestic tasks. Like her contemporaries in Egypt, she promoted this approach to the domestic labor of housewives as a strategy for building a new nation, unlike the French approach that sought to maintain what they perceived to be an existing system in order to justify their rule. In comparison to the preservation-minded French colonial system, al-Fasi, like other nationalists, sought to recast women’s role in an educational model that granted the school (and hence the state) much greater latitude in preparing Moroccan girls for their familial and national duties.

Drawing on the nahda trope of national awakening, al-Fasi wrote that educating girls would “awaken them to culture and produce happiness” for both genders. The specific version of “culture” that she and other Moroccan nationalists envisioned accords with the rhetoric of Islamic reformists and nationalists elsewhere in the Arab world in that it emphasized Islamic and Arab forms of culture and identity. But it also evoked locally and historically specific aspects of Moroccan heritage that informed understandings of authentic Moroccan identity waiting to be recaptured and revitalized by the nationalists. In particular, al-Fasi and other nationalists focused on aspects of Moroccan identity that highlighted a specific iteration of Arab and Islamic urbanity, rooted in the legacy of al-Andalus. For example, al-Fasi references the elevated status of women in early Islamic history, but unlike other Islamic reformists, she singles out for particular praise women’s status “during the flourishing of Arab civilization in al-Andalus.”

This reference speaks directly to a powerful current in Moroccan nationalist culture whereby Andalusi influences in Moroccan culture constituted a powerful source of cultural

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67 Ibid., 8.
68 Ibid., 8.
69 See Eric Calderwood’s work for a detailed narrative arguing that Andalusi culture was central to the making of modern Moroccan culture, including highlighting the ways that both Spanish colonists and Moroccan nationalists drew on Andalusi history and heritage to support their projects. Calderwood, Colonial Al-Andalus.
authenticity. Eric Calderwood argues that the strong identification of modern Moroccan culture with Andalusi history and heritage, while rooted in histories of shared political rule and the migration of Muslims and Jews from al-Andalus to Morocco starting in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, became newly salient in the context of both colonial rule and the nationalist movement.^^71 Spanish writers and officials emphasized the historical ties between Spain and North Africa, and these links were later taken up as key tenets of Moroccan nationalist visions of their national culture.^^72

These Andalusi influences manifested in the music, cuisine, and religious and domestic architecture of a handful of cities (Fes, Rabat, Tetouan)—not coincidentally, the cities of origin of many prominent families and centers of nationalist activity. The nationalist movement included a number of prominent Moroccans who claimed Andalusi descent, including Malika al-Fasi’s husband Muhammad. Eric Calderwood explains that the Lebanese pan-Islamist figure Shakib Arslan was largely responsible for popularizing the trope of al-Andalus in the Arabic-speaking world, particularly after publishing an encyclopedic work on the subject in the 1930s. Muhammad al-Fasi was one of many Moroccan nationalists who drew on the legacy of al-Andalus “to insert their nationalist struggle within broader reform movements in the Arab-Islamic world,” and had even accompanied Arslan on part of his trip to Spain in 1930.^^73

Calderwood also argues that following the original surge of renewed interest in al-Andalus, a wave of intellectual thought emerged, distinct from the pan-Arab and pan-Islamic visions of al-Andalus to articulate a “Morocco-centric view of al-Andalus (or an Andalus-centric view of Morocco)” that centered al-Andalus as a primary site of authenticity and tradition in modern

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^^72 Ibid.
^^73 Calderwood, *Colonial al-Andalus*, 252-3.
Morocco.\textsuperscript{74} It is reasonable to assume that Malika al-Fasi, as the wife of an enthusiast of al-
Andalus and an active participant in the nationalist movement herself, consciously drew on these
ideas and views of Andalusi elements of Moroccan identity.

The emphasis on Andalusi culture as a privileged source of authentic national culture
effectively downplayed aspects of Amazigh/Berber, Jewish, and rural Arab Moroccan cultures.\textsuperscript{75}
Al-Fasi and others frequently used terms like \textit{mutamaddana} and \textit{ḥādira} in their writing, invoking
specifically urban forms of Moroccan culture that countered the claims of the French “civilizing
mission” with alternate forms of refinement and civilization rooted in Moroccan history. These
invocations of urbanity and authenticity would come to shape dominant understandings of
Moroccan cuisine; they also reflect how many Moroccan nationalists asserted their right to speak
for the nation in ways that reflected their specific social and class background, from an emphasis
on urban Arab culture to the middle-class ideal that a woman should not work outside the home.

\textit{Domestic Education Expands in Morocco}

Beginning in the 1930s, the French were increasingly forced to acknowledge Moroccan demands
for educational reform including, but not limited to, matters of girls’ schooling. With the
exception of a brief interlude during the Vichy era, French colonial policy gradually began to
downplay its focus on cultural preservation and difference in favor of a modernizing approach to

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 268-69.

\textsuperscript{75} Eric Calderwood writes that evocations of Andalusi identity have a centuries-old legacy in Morocco that has
historically exhibited “ethnic overtones,” providing a source of authentic identification that also creates distant from
elements of Moroccan culture understood as lesser or backwards (10). He goes so far as to argue that in its most
recent form, “Morocco’s Andalusi identity is a product of the colonial encounter between Spain and Morocco,” (8)
although his argument situates that encounter within “an alternative map…that crisscrosses the Mediterranean and
links Spanish colonial Morocco to movements of peoples and ideas” between Morocco, Europe, and the eastern
Arab world (18-19)—similar to the argument this chapter makes that the making of authentic national traditions in
Morocco demands attention to transnational currents that operated along an east-west axis, not only the north-south
relationship between colonizer and colonized.
Muslim education in Morocco from the mid-1930s through the end of the protectorate in 1956.\textsuperscript{76} This included increased accountability to the demands of Moroccans themselves—particularly with regards to girls’ education, which was not only important to nationalists generally, but was taken up personally by the Moroccan sultan Muhammad bin Yusuf in the 1940s.\textsuperscript{77}

Segalla argues that 1936 marked the start of a major shift in Moroccan educational policy because the election of the Popular Front in the metropole ushered in an administration with “an increased commitment to egalitarianism and universal education” and thus a greater level of responsiveness to Moroccan demands to broaden educational opportunities and access.\textsuperscript{78} But when it came to the issue of girls’ education, colonial records indicate that a shift in French attitudes in fact predated the 1936 change of administration: beginning in the late 1920s and continuing into the early 1930s, Moroccan demands were already prompting reforms in educational policies regarding Muslim girls’ education. A 1929 DIP memo addressed to the French official in charge of indigenous education declared the colonial state needed to produce a new kind of Moroccan woman. Citing the demise of polygynous households made possible in part by slavery, he wrote that Moroccan men needed “skilled and intelligent wives, more industrious than the women of the past.”\textsuperscript{79} A confluence of material and ideological factors was leading members of the Moroccan middle classes, both the newly educated and old urban elites adapting to modernization, to demand that their daughters receive modern educations.

An episode from 1932-33 demonstrates the French administration’s increased

\textsuperscript{76} Segalla, \textit{The Moroccan Soul}, 237–43.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 243–45.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 237–38.
responsiveness to Moroccan demands. Although girls’ education had been a part of the French system since 1914, the lack of formal curricula meant that there was no official exam to evaluate or denote a girl’s completion of any level of schooling. In 1932, six Moroccan fathers with daughters in a French school in Casablanca protested this state of affairs and wrote to the director of their daughter’s school to demand that a primary school certificate be established for Moroccan girls.80 The director of the girls’ school wrote to her superiors urging them to create such a certificate swiftly, lest the fathers make good on their threats to remove their daughters from the colonial system and place them in a “free school.”81

“Free schools” were salafi schools run by nationalists, so named because they operated “freely” from the colonial government. First founded in 1921 in the French zone and 1926 in the Spanish zone, free schools offered a modern education that emphasized Arabic language and Islamic studies.82 Initially accepted with some reservations by the French administration, they were eventually seen as competition and then a threat to colonial rule.83 In the Spanish zone, a free school for girls opened in Tetouan, while in the French zone, a limited number of girls were admitted to the free schools, where they were educated alongside boys.84 By 1935, however, French regulations explicitly forbade girls from attending free schools.85 This indicates the

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80 Letter from M. Dumaz, director of the school for Muslim girls on the rue de Safi in Casablanca, to the inspector of Muslim instruction in Rabat, December 4, 1932, and response sent to all Muslim girls’ schools, 1933, 3MA/900/80, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, France. The response from the DIP indicates that multiple school directors had reported similar requests from parents.
81 Ibid.
82 Segalla, The Moroccan Soul, 189–90; Baker, Voices of Resistance, 143.
83 Segalla, Moroccan Soul, 190. Segalla notes that by 1924 free schools served between 1500 and 2000 students. By way of comparison, in 1929, the DIP reported 9,355 Moroccan students in French-run schools, of whom 18% were girls. Statistique des Ecoles Musulmanes, January 10, 1929, F-107, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco.
85 Letter from Director of Public Instruction to Director of the Benghazi Free School in Fes, September 11, 1945, F-107, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco. This letter cites the 1935 regulation and reminds the director that Moroccan girls are not to be educated in free schools. Presumably this explains the absence of dedicated free schools for girls in the French zone.
importance the French placed on retaining control of whatever small percentage of Moroccan girls were being educated in their system. Free schools had a reputation for encouraging nationalist thought and action among their students, in part through their emphasis on Arabic and Islam. These anxieties, coupled with Moroccan demands for reform, likely account for the expansion and reform of education for Moroccan girls beginning in the early 1930s.

Accordingly, the fathers’ requests for a primary education certificate for girls were taken seriously. French officials corresponded extensively discussing the makeup of the exam, emphasizing the importance of a practical education that would promote the principles of domestic economy and prepare girls for their future roles as mothers and housewives. Six girls were listed as candidates for the primary school examination in 1933, although their results were neither widely publicized nor recorded in the French archive. Nevertheless, the process of reforming girls’ education was underway.

Throughout the 1930s, as it was increasingly accepted as compatible with middle-class ideas about respectability and gender norms, domestic education was gradually institutionalized in French-run schools for Moroccans. Practical lessons in household management and related subjects were no longer dismissed as merely a potential income source for women of lower social standing. For example, in 1934, a delegation of local notables in the city of Salé (the city where the first French efforts to educate Muslim girls had been initiated twenty years earlier)

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86 Pennell, *Morocco since 1830*, 186; Leila Abouzeid, *Rujūʿ ilā al-ṭufāla* (Casablanca, Morocco: Sharikat al-nashr wa-l-tawziʿ al-madāris, 2016), 105–6. In her memoir, Leila Abouzeid recalls that in the free school she attended, instruction was in Arabic and French was restricted to an hour per week, a reversal of the balance in French-run schools.

87 Handwritten memo from Mlle. Marcelle Dumaz to the official in charge of Muslim instruction, January 18, 1933; letter from the inspector of indigenous instruction to the director of public instruction, March 20, 1933, 3MA/900/80, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, France.

88 List of exam candidates, “Certificat d’etudes elementaires des fillettes Musulmanes,” May 5, 1933, 3MA/900/80, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, France. I found no record of the outcome of this exam in either the Archives du Maroc in Rabat or the Archives Diplomatiques in Nantes; nor did I find documentation of Moroccan girls sitting such an exam again until the 1940s.
petitioned French officials to open a new school for girls that would include instruction in both French and Arabic.\textsuperscript{89} The men specifically requested that their daughters’ schooling include “French and Arabic, but exclude any vocational education” (à l’exclusion de tout enseignement professionnel).\textsuperscript{90} Notably, however, the memo clarified that lessons in sewing or household management were not considered “vocational,” implying that the fathers did wish these subjects to be a part of their daughters’ educations.\textsuperscript{91} This likely indicates the men’s desire that their daughters be educated in a manner they considered appropriate to their social class; one report from the same month written by a French official indicated that this particular part of Salé’s bourgeoisie were “reluctant to send their daughters to school with the children of more modest origins,” and that a separate school ought to be created for this class of Moroccans, to which the colonial administration was eager to cater.\textsuperscript{92} As more Moroccan families of all classes agreed to formally educate their daughters, domestic education was increasingly viewed as an acceptable and even desirable subject of study among the middle classes and elites—even as it contributed to deepening class divisions.

At the same time, domestic education remained a means to organize and reinforce class distinctions. The French colonial administration was well aware of attitudes towards social class among Moroccan elites, both through direct petitions like the ones discussed above and through their constant monitoring of the nationalist press. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, French officials emphasized the importance of tailoring a school’s educational objectives to the social position of its students. One memo highlighted the need for French schools for daughters of Moroccan

\textsuperscript{89} Letter from the head of municipal services in Salé to the director of indigenous instruction, September 20, 1934, 3MA/900/25, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, France.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} Letter from the Civil Supervisor, Rabat, September 25, 1934, 3MA/900/25, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, France.
notables “to train…companions that will be model wives destined to marry the students in our colleges and lycées.” Colonial education reforms increasingly came to reflect new ideas in Moroccan society of what a modern Moroccan wife should be, and how she ought to be educated.

In the 1930s the expansion of girls’ education, including domestic education, extended beyond just Casablanca and Salé. In a 1935 study about Muslim and Jewish girls’ education in North Africa, Zenaide Tsourikoff wrote that “in recent years, Muslim girls’ schools in Morocco have become household management schools as well as establishments of general education.” When the French system expanded girls’ general education to include more math, reading, and writing, it expanded offerings in domestic education, including classes in sewing and managing a home, as well. By 1934, just under 3,000 Muslim girls of all classes attended French colonial schools, up from 465 a decade earlier. (In 1932-33 the Muslim Moroccan population of the French zone was reported as approximately 4.7 million, of whom approximately 628,000 lived in urban areas.) When it came to cooking and housekeeping, the philosophy of cultural preservation was still generally in place, with limited gestures towards modern principles of domestic science. Tsourikoff emphasized that while household management and childrearing lessons were intended to prepare girls “for their future roles as mothers of the family,” the household they were being prepared to run was “a Muslim home,” not a European one.

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94 Tsourikoff, *L’Enseignement des filles en Afrique du Nord*, 113. I have been unable to discover anything further about this author, except that her study was prepared as a doctoral thesis for the law faculty at the University of Paris.
95 Ibid., 111.
possible, she stated, household management lessons were delivered in Arabic, and in cooking classes, Muslim girls were taught to make “Moroccan pastries” (*les pâtisseries indigènes*). She also remarks, however, that girls were taught “how to use leftovers to an advantage,” an indication that the principles of efficiency and economy had become integrated into the curriculum.

Domestic education gradually became more specialized, branching out from its initial focus on sewing and handcrafts and incorporating cooking lessons more consistently. In the late 1930s, French educational officials began to list cuisine as its own subject under the broader framework of household management, where it had not specifically been mentioned in previous years. As girls’ education expanded and evolved, cooking and the kitchen increasingly became targets of modernization, reform, and change within colonial education. In several schools, cooking had become integrated in a practical way in the late 1930s, with inspectors reporting that girls were cooking their own lunches in the school canteens; in at least one school in Marrakesh, these lunches were reported as being prepared “à la mode française.” Even if it was an isolated case, instructing Moroccan girls in French cuisine would have been unthinkable a few decades earlier. In a 1942 report, a French instructor of Moroccan girls in Rabat declared a “crisis” of Moroccan domesticity, citing visits to her students’ homes in which she found cold, damp rooms with braziers left continuously burning, among other reasons (throughout the duration of the

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98 Ibid., 115. The report does not mention cooking or food in Jewish girls’ schools, beyond explaining that these schools often provided supplementary meals for their poorer students.
99 Ibid.
100 Letter from inspector of Muslim primary instruction to director of school for Muslim girls in Safi, November 5, 1938, 3MA/900/23, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, France; Inspection non officielle des écoles des filles musulmanes à Casablanca, Fes, Oujda, and Meknes, 1939, 3MA/900/85, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, France.
101 Inspection non officielle des écoles des filles musulmanes à Casablanca, Fes, Oujda, and Meknes, 1939, 3MA/900/85, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, France. Numerous sources point out that sometimes poorer families sent their children to school in part because they would be fed in the school canteen; this is the first mention I encountered of students cooking in the canteen as a part of the educational program.
protectorate, family visits made by teachers continued to be promoted as essential). At that point it was likely that few Moroccans could afford to cook in any other manner, but the teacher in question indicated no awareness of this. She suggested instead that more French women should be trained specifically to teach Moroccan girls in cuisine, patisserie, knitting, and mending, sharing the “arts of household management” with them. Just a year after Niqula and ‘Uthman published their landmark textbook introducing modern European cooking techniques to Egyptian schoolgirls, a French colonial official was suggesting a similar approach in Morocco. There is no evidence to suggest that her proposal was taken up or indeed given any serious consideration, but these episodes illustrate how much attitudes towards girls’ education had changed in the three decades since a French official first took over a dār muʿallima.

Women, Nationalists, and the Monarchy

In the 1940s, two milestones cemented the status of women’s education as a priority issue within Morocco’s nationalist movement, and as an issue framed squarely in the context of Islamic reform. Significantly, both events also worked to consolidate the prominence of the Moroccan sultan, Muhammad bin Yusuf, in both realms. In 1943 the sultan’s daughter, Princess Lalla Aicha, earned a primary school certificate along with seven other girls. Four years later, in 1947, the sultan along with Lalla Aicha and her brother, Prince Hassan, travelled to Tangier to deliver a series of historic speeches. The sultan’s speeches were a decisive landmark event in the monarchy’s turn from a collaborationist arrangement with the colonizers to an alliance with the nationalists. The speeches also positioned Morocco and the monarchy squarely within an Arab-
Islamic framework: the sultan declared that Islam “guaranteed justice and individual freedom,” and Lalla Aicha’s speeches referenced Egyptian reformers Muhammad ’Abdu and Rashid Rida, as well as educational missions sent by her grandfather Hassan to Egypt. She also emphasized the importance of women’s education to Islamic reform, referencing the example of Egyptian and other eastern women. These events highlight the increasing importance of education as a sphere for inculcating Morocco’s would-be citizens with a sense of national duty, led by the sultan and framed in Islamic terms. Expanding, modernizing, and participating in women’s education, even if it continued to be administered by the French system, became an important sphere of resistance—a way for Moroccans to demonstrate their loyalty to their sultan, their religion, and the nationalist movement, and their opposition to the colonial state.

Although the French colonial archives indicate that a group of girls had taken a primary exam in 1933, they appear to have received little to no publicity at the time. By contrast, in 1943, the primary school exam taken by the group of eight girls, including the princess, was widely reported in the Arabic and French press as well as in radio broadcasts. The exam included French and Arabic language, Qur’an, arithmetic (which consisted of suitably domestic word problems related to cutting and buying fabric), and a section devoted to hygiene, childrearing, and household management. The latter was administered orally, so the exact questions, as well as the language in which they were posed, remain unknown. But the exam marks a major shift from early French efforts to educate Muslim girls in Morocco: even the daughter of the sultan...
was given a “modern” education, and women’s education had been decisively relocated into a sphere of “nonsecular modernity” articulated in Moroccan terms, including domestic and general education and subjects in French as well as in Arabic and the Qur’an.

Shortly after Lalla Aicha and her cohort were awarded their primary school certificates, Malika al-Fasi published an article celebrating their achievements, this time under the pen name Bahithat al-Hadira. Whereas her writing in the 1930s had focused on the “young Moroccan woman,” her 1943 essay refers to the “Muslim woman.” She highlighted the example set by the sultan’s support for women’s education, citing a speech he had given at al-Qarawiyyin University in Fes. The significance of the venue, and consequently al-Fasi’s reference to it, operates at two levels. Al-Qarawiyyin is an Islamic university in Fes, founded by a woman in the ninth century. As such it reflects a narrative of return to pre-colonial Arab and Islamic roots, while underscoring the importance of the Andalusi city of Fes to those roots. It is in this context that al-Fasi reprises her claims about educating women to fulfill roles as wives and mothers, which she describes as the only path to women’s “happiness and well-being,” this time with an emphasis on the importance of true Islam as the key to ensuring progress.

Malika al-Fasi was not the only writer in the nationalist press to underscore the centrality of domestic happiness to the project of girls’ education and its importance to the nation. Men writing in the nationalist press discussed similar themes, referencing Egyptian writing on the subject and highlighting the importance of training women to fulfill their duties at home properly. A 1943 article in the nationalist journal *Risālat al-Maghrib*, titled “On Girls’ Education,” explains that the home is “a kingdom in miniature,” and woman’s natural role is to

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109 Ibid.
oversee it as man’s partner (sharīka)—equipped with specific skills. The author writes that reform must begin with mothers, whom he describes as the first teachers and schools of the nation in a reference to a famous poem by Egyptian poet Hafiz Ibrahim, which the author quotes:

The mother is a school: prepare her, and you nourish a people from virtuous roots
The mother is a garden: water her and she will flourish and grow
The mother is the first of all teachers, and her deeds fill the horizons.

An educated woman, the author writes, is a fount of “pure refinement” (al-tamaddun al-ṣāfiyya), “correct knowledge” (al-ʿilm al-sahīḥ) and “the waters of civilization” (miyāḥ al-ḥadāra) for her children. Alongside these references to refinement and civilization—expressed, again, with words connoting urbanity (al-tamaddun, al-ḥadāra)—the author also invokes the values of economy and order as essential components of a society’s “complete happiness” (al-saʿāda al-kāmila).

Another writer expands on a woman’s role in even more explicit emotional terms, calling upon women to subordinate their emotions to those of their family members for the sake of the family’s complete well-being and happiness (al-hināʾ al-shāmila wa-l-saʿāda al-kāmila). Charging women not only with efficiently cooking, clearing the table, cleaning the kitchen, arranging furniture, and mending clothing, but with this added emotion work, he places the burden of domestic happiness squarely on the wife-mother of a household: “how can there be domestic happiness when families are run through poor household management?” he asks. In the world of complementary gender roles and separate spheres promoted by Malika al-Fasi and other nationalists, the proper education of women was key to achieving national progress and

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111 Ibid., 23.
112 Ibid., 24.
113 Ibid., 21.
115 Ibid., 17–19.
domestic happiness.

By the end of the 1940s the dominant Moroccan approach to women’s education reflected a modern ideology of domesticity, modeled in some ways on the Egyptian case but situated in an authentically Moroccan context. Significantly, a key aspect of the narrative was the fact that the nationalist movement was united under Sultan Muhammad bin Yusuf. His status as a member of the `Alawi dynasty legitimated his role as the figurehead for a form of Moroccan aşala that predated colonial intervention. His status as a patriarch—a father to the national family—further linked that sense of aşala to a family structure based on complementary gender roles.

**Modern Workforce, Modern Kitchens**

Soon Morocco faced another issue that had plagued girls’ education in Egypt: the formalization of girls’ primary education and increased enrollments drove up demand for girls’ secondary education as well as for more female teachers. After the end of World War II, Muslim girls’ enrollment in the colonial school system exceeded 10,000 for the first time, and by 1951, it was reported at 28,370.116 Starting in 1945, secondary schools and teacher training institutes for Moroccan girls were opened in Fes and Rabat, in the French zone, and Tetouan in the Spanish zone, to meet this new demand.117 In the 1940s and 50s, educated Moroccan women began to enter the workforce not only as teachers but nurses and midwives.118 By 1952, it was estimated

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117 Ouverture de la 6éme Feminine Musulmane (Fes, Rabat), 1945, and Ouverture d’un cours complementaire et d’une ecole normale de fillettes musulmanes (in Tetouan), 1945, 3MA/900/85, Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, France; Rapport sur le budget, Direction de l’Instruction Publique au Maroc, 1951, F-80, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco.

118 Direction de l’Instruction Publique au Maroc, “Numéro spécial,” 38; Dialmy, “Femmes Marocaines et Emploi: de (1913-1982),” 135 According to Dialmy, formal nursing training for Muslim women was instituted in 1944. See
that one in eight Moroccan women worked for wages outside the home, and by 1957 a fifth of wage earners were women. However, the widespread expectation that Moroccan women would take on the bulk of domestic work, and that they were responsible for their families’ health and happiness, regardless of whether they worked outside the home, did not change.

Consequently, domestic education remained a cornerstone of education for Moroccan girls in the final years of the French protectorate. A 1952 edition of the DIP bulletin dedicated to the history of Muslim girls’ education in Morocco declared that the goal of all its female students was marriage, and that their education was therefore primarily concerned with educating girls to be mistresses of their homes. It also stated that the class-based, two-track system initially implemented in Morocco’s urban schools was becoming obsolete, and that all girls (with no specification of religion mentioned) were now given similar curricula focused on practical handwork like sewing and household management skills, rather than education tailored to different social classes. The curriculum was evolving to reflect the evolution of education as a site where a new kind of middle-class, gendered citizen subject was formed.

Between 1949 and 1955, girls’ enrollment doubled to reach 13 percent of all Moroccan students, although only 55 girls sat for the secondary school baccalauréate exams that year. Secondary and higher education remained the provenance of only the most elite women, but as more members of the growing urban middle classes educated their daughters, cooking lessons in

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119 Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*, 192; Pennell, *Morocco since 1830*, 349. Note that many forms of labor, including informal and agricultural labor, would not have been included in statistics about waged labor.
121 Ibid., 14–21.
122 Daoud, *Féminisme et politique au Maghreb*, 267. Miller, *History of Modern Morocco*, 154. Miller points out that the protectorate’s educational system had never prioritized Moroccans of any gender or religion completing secondary school; over the course of its entire rule, it produced only 1415 baccalauréates (640 Muslim and 775 Jewish graduates).
the school curricula began to cater to the needs of the “modern” housewife. Starting in the early 1950s, Moroccan girls who had passed their primary school exam, but who were not continuing onto secondary education, had the opportunity to pass into “Section C,” a new course of study focused on their role as “housewives and future mothers” with the option of studying a “feminine trade.” A description of a girls’ school in Salé explains how the Section C curriculum approaches cooking: students learn to follow a recipe they are given, and to use new kinds of household appliances, including various machines and modern utensils. They learn the latest information about nutrition and diets, hygiene, and how to care for sick infants.

A rare photograph of a girls’ school in Casablanca indicates that raised stoves were used to teach cooking in practice in at least one school.

By the time Morocco achieved political independence in 1956, therefore, domestic education for the small percentage of girls enrolled in formal education was taking place on modern stoves and articulated in terms of the Arabic term for household management, *tadbīr al-manziel*, in the context of an emergent modern, Arab, and Islamic national community. Yet while the emphasis on Morocco as an Arab and Islamic nation remained a prominent feature of educational discourse after political independence, the experiment with modern domestic education was short-lived; there is no evidence of widespread, standardized household management or cooking lessons for Moroccan girls after 1956.

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124 Ibid., 49.
Postcolonial Domesticity

The transition to independence entailed significant continuities in the Moroccan educational system. While the Ministry of Public Instruction of the newly independent Moroccan government, run by Malika al-Fasi’s husband Mohammed al-Fasi, aimed to unify, Arabize, and universalize education, it faced a shortage of Moroccan teachers and Arabic teaching materials. As the system adapted, it retained large numbers of French teachers at all levels, including at the newly established Université Mohammed V.

The Arabization policy, meanwhile, consolidated notions of Morocco’s Arab identity while firmly establishing Amazigh/Berber languages and cultures outside of the bounds of national language and educational policy, where they would remain for nearly half a century. (Chapters Five and Six will detail how this model of elevating specific versions of Morocco’s urban Arab heritage over rural and Amazigh aspects of its heritage also influenced Morocco’s national food culture.) The nationalist free schools of the colonial era had used textbooks imported from Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria, and after independence Moroccan educators continued to look east for educational models. A 1956 press conference outlining the priorities for the new government’s Ministry of Public Instruction, headed by Muhammad al-Fasi, cited the Egyptian example as a model for transitioning to a postcolonial Arab educational system. The statement issued at the press conference notes that although Egyptian texts were not ideally

127 Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul*, 247. Segalla notes that IHEM was transformed into the university.
128 Conference de Presse de Son Excellence le Ministre de l’Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, June 25, 1956, F-78, Archives du Maroc, Rabat, Morocco The influences of other Arab educational texts on protectorate-era and post-independence Morocco are numerous: in her memoir, Leila Abouzeid recalls her instructors using Lebanese textbooks; the Bibliotheque Nationale in Rabat holds a number of Egyptian, Syrian, and Lebanese household management and scientific childrearing books, some acquired before and some after independence. Used book markets across Morocco yield similar texts including some published in the 1960s. Arabic teachers were also recruited from across the Arab world.
adapted for Moroccan students, they had to be used until suitable Moroccan materials could be developed.

No separate curriculum, with or without domestic science, was ever implemented for Moroccan schoolgirls, likely due to limited resources and the priority given to Arabization efforts and the expansion of basic general education in the early years of independence. Nevertheless, although the textbooks used in newly independent Morocco did not include explicit household management lessons, they did promote “separate spheres” and complementary gender roles for men and women in other ways.

The first generation of Moroccan textbooks post-independence included Ahmed Boukmakh’s *Iqra’a* series, a set of elementary Arabic primers. Boukmakh, born in the 1920s, was involved in politics and Arabic theater in the 1940s before deciding to create a Moroccan set of Arabic textbooks to supplement the Egyptian and Lebanese textbooks in use at the time.\(^{129}\) Although he first published the series in 1954, it was not adopted throughout Morocco until some years later, after independence.\(^{130}\) It became the basic Arabic reader for Moroccan primary school students from the generation following independence until it was replaced in the early 1980s.\(^{131}\)

The books promote traditional gender roles in the context of a modern home. They depict mothers regulating their children’s schedules and explaining the importance of keeping a regular

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\(^{130}\) Ibid. I have been unable to determine what year these books were first mass-produced; copies are still widely available throughout Morocco.

\(^{131}\) Amina Lemrini, “L’image de la femme à travers le discours scolaire: Elle cuisine, il lit,” in *Femmes et education: blocages et impacts*, trans. J Chiche, Marocaines Citoyennes de Demain, Casablanca (Casablanca, Morocco: Editions le fennec, 1994), 55–76. Based on Lemrini’s observations, the series that replaced *Iqra’a* was no different: adult women are portrayed as illiterate and ignorant, best suited for cooking; men are portrayed doing many things, including teaching.
bedtime to their sons: “so you can wake early and memorize your lesson.” A lesson titled “People Who Help Us” includes images of a male dentist, male teacher, and male bricklayer, and a woman ironing, another portrays a girl, Su’ad, who “loves to help her mother with housework,” and yet another lesson titled “A Perfect Young Woman” also depicts a girl helping to wash dishes. It is worth noting that the name “Su’ad” is derived from the same root as the word “happiness” in another subtle nod, intentional or not, to the link promoted between domestic happiness and women’s domestic labor in this modernizing, Arabic-language discourse. In these textbooks, adult women are pictured only as mothers; girls are never shown as students, but as mothers-in-training, helping with housework or practicing with dolls. Women are depicted as successful and happy when fulfilling their duties in the home, reflecting the persistence of an approach that sought to educate women to fulfill roles as wives and mothers, even in the absence of dedicated domestic education.

Other textbooks published in Morocco in the 1960s were often co-authored or edited by Egyptians, and promote a similar vision of gender roles. During this period pan-Arab connections were affirmed in a number of ways—not only through the educational establishment and texts that framed Moroccan literary, historical, and political figures within the broader Arab world, but through participation in pan-Arab networks and conferences, such as the attendance of Princess Lalla Aicha and a number of other prominent Moroccan women activists at the 1957 congress of Arab women in Damascus. As in Egypt, gender-based ideology became a sphere in which Morocco could represent itself not only vis-à-vis the West, but within the Arab and

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These connections are evident in school textbooks: one 1961 primary school Arabic reader was written by Moroccans but edited by the director of the cultural section of the Ministry of Education of the United Arab Republic. One of its lessons narrates the fate of “the Arab girl” (al-fatāt al-ʿarabiyya) in terms of complementary gender roles: it explains that although “Arab girls” were once confined to the house, scholars quickly realized “the harm caused to children whose upbringing is controlled by an ignorant mother.” The solution, according to the lesson, is for girls to be educated in such a way that preserves their sense of propriety, sense of shame, and dignity (ḥishma wa-l-waqār), and maintains her sense of duty to manage the home and raise children. Although it does not explicitly distinguish lessons for girls from lessons for boys, the textbook includes a poem celebrating the virtues of motherhood—namely, the same Hafiz Ibrahim poem (“The mother is a school”) quoted above and printed in the nationalist press in the 1940s. It also includes an essay on the responsibilities of citizens to cultivate moral and nationalist sensibilities; the citizen is gendered masculine.

The complementary gender roles depicted in these textbooks do not reflect the realities of Moroccan women’s workforce participation: in 1960, more than one in four Moroccan women worked outside the home on top of her domestic duties, with women’s share of participation in the total workforce remaining steady at a little over a third of the total workforce throughout the

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136 It also became a sphere in which the state exercised its hegemony; reference paragraph in Shurūq 1965 complaining that the state was selecting delegates to women’s conferences to represent Moroccan women, without consulting Moroccan women as to who should be included.


138 Ibid., 3:52.

139 Ibid., 3:52.

140 Ibid., 45, 77.
60s and 70s. Chapter Five will explain how the entry of women into the workforce impacted culinary practices in significant ways as women were required to balance hours in the workforce with their duties at home, belying the projected ideal of complementary gender roles promoted in state textbooks. Despite this, as in Egypt, Moroccan women were instructed to cultivate maternal sensibilities and support their families in order to be dutiful citizens. In 1959, the state adopted a codified personal status law, based on elements of Maliki jurisprudence, that established men’s authority over their wives within the marital home. The legal definition of marriage in Morocco did not change to incorporate the joint responsibility of both spouses for the marital household until 2003. Despite major political shifts and the transition to independence, the core principles of modern domesticity had been firmly established in Moroccan policy and legislation.

This chapter has outlined two major axes of influences that informed the emergence of the ideology of modern domesticity in twentieth-century Morocco. It also identified two distinct modes within which this ideology operated: *al-taqlīd*, connected to the invention of national traditions with specific strategies that produced knowledge through ethnographic practices and put them to pedagogical use, and *al-aṣāla*, the identification and promotion of certain cultural material and narratives as authentic through assertions of return to roots or origin. But understanding how this contributed to the formation of a modern Moroccan culinary habitus requires looking beyond educational discourses and state institutions. The next chapter traces how modern domesticity worked upon notions of *al-taqlīd* and *al-aṣāla* in culinary terms by examining cookbooks and oral histories in turn.

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In 2015 Choumicha Chafay, celebrity chef and doyenne of Moroccan cuisine, devoted an episode of her popular television show to cooking *bastila bi-l-dajāj*, a sweet and savory chicken pastry made with eggs, saffron, almonds, cinnamon, and sugar.\(^1\) She selected the dish specifically for the celebration of the end of the month of Ramadan, and explained that the recipe had been passed down directly through generations of her family. “Today there are so many versions of *bastila*, but I’m still very attached to the way my grandmother made it,” she says, “and I haven’t changed a single thing.”\(^2\) The comments on the YouTube version of the show, posted in a combination of *fuṣḥā* and Moroccan dialect (*dārija*), written in both Arabic letters and Roman script, heap praise on Choumicha and her *bastila*. In particular they describe the recipe as *taqlīdī* (traditional) and *aṣīlī* (authentic), and celebrate Choumicha for preserving and transmitting traditional and authentic Moroccan (*Maghribī*) foods.\(^3\)

In print, *bastila* has been touted as a delicacy of “Moroccan cuisine” (*la cuisine Marocaine*) since at least 1970, when Latifa Bennani-Smires referred to it this way in the first modern Moroccan cookbook to be published by a Moroccan author.\(^4\) But print cookbooks published before this date describe *bastila* in terms of a history that is both more specific and more complex, categorizing it as a recipe of Andalusi origin particular to the high cuisines of Fes

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\(^2\) While I typically transliterate this dish as *basṭīla*, I have omitted the initial “a” when transcribing Choumicha’s speech to reflect its pronunciation in Moroccan Arabic.

\(^3\) These comments were posted on the YouTube page of the Arabic version of the show. Choumicha Web TV, *Choumicha: Basṭīla bi-l-dajāj*.

and Tetouan. In 1954, a British aristocrat wrote a cookbook that included the Tetouani version of the dish, confidently declaring that “the Moors obtained this dish from Spain.” And in a 1957 cookbook, Zette Guinaudeau, a French settler living in Fes, wrote that the bastila was “brought originally, they say, from Andalusia” to become “the most perfect dish in the traditional cooking of Fez.” Claudia Roden’s 1968 Book of Middle Eastern Food similarly situates bastila within a shared Moroccan and Andalusi heritage.

Guinaudeau’s recipe hints at the existence of even more layers to the dish’s origin, explaining that to make the paper-thin pastry sheets that envelop the dish, one should have “a dark-skinned woman (une nègresse) who is a specialist in this type of pastry make it for you,” indirectly referencing the fact that in the elite households of Fes, much culinary knowledge was preserved and practiced by enslaved women from Morocco’s southern peripheries. Over the span of a few generations, a recipe reputedly brought to a handful of cities by Jewish and Muslim refugees expelled from Iberia, made with techniques perfected in part through the forced labor of bourgeois kitchens and sugar plantations, became a dish served at weddings and holidays and passed down through families throughout Morocco—including those not originally from Fes or Tetouan. In 2014, then-prime minister Abdelilah Benkirane listed bastila alongside harira (a vegetable soup frequently made during Ramadan) and kuskus as Morocco’s greatest tourist attractions. How did a number of specific foods, including several specialties of Fes and Tetouan, become hallmarks of what is considered traditional, authentic, Moroccan cuisine in

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5 Following Eric Calderwood’s usage, I use “Andalusi” to refer to modern Moroccan references to the historical legacy of al-Andalus, as distinguished from the word “Andalusian,” which refers to contemporary southern Spain. Calderwood, Colonial Al-Andalus.
9 Guinaudeau, Fes vu par sa cuisine, 57.
mainstream national culture? What can the history of one of these foods, basṭīla, tell us about how home kitchens came to define how Moroccan identity was created and experienced? This chapter moves beyond state discourse and educational institutions by exploring how cookbooks—which in the Moroccan case were written and published outside of state-sponsored reform efforts—set down a selective version of Moroccan culinary tradition in formal Arabic and French. It then turns to oral histories and other personal narratives to explain how certain gendered Moroccan traditions were negotiated as “authentic,” primarily through practices within home kitchens and maternal lineages of knowledge transmission. These narratives demonstrate how new understandings of Morocco were forged through daily domestic practices.

The previous chapter explained how the twinned modes of al-taqlīd and al-aṣāla informed modern domesticity in Morocco. I argued that formally, Moroccan iterations of domesticity adopted by the state shared many key tenets with their Egyptian equivalents: modernizing the kitchen through rationalization, emphasizing refinement in domestic practices, linking the production of food and happiness through women’s emotion work, and tying the family’s happiness to the progress of the nation. Shifting focus to culinary habitus, however, demonstrates how differently modern middle-class domesticity tasted in Morocco as compared to its Egyptian counterpart. This chapter explains that the dominant flavors and textures that informed understandings of refined middle-class taste in Morocco drew on the historical high cuisines of Fes, Rabat, and Tetouan. Whereas in Egypt, French culinary principles had informed a sense of cosmopolitan, Mediterranean middle-class cuisine, in Morocco modern culinary principles reflected claims to cosmopolitanism epitomized by Andalusi culture and heritage. Foods like basṭīla became stand-ins for Moroccan tradition and authenticity in ways that signaled refinement and sophistication, and a form of uniquely Arab modernity.
Compared to the Egyptian case, state attempts to reform or intervene in the ways that Moroccan women ran their homes were far less widespread in practice and less far-reaching in their aims, particularly when it came to the kitchen. Early Moroccan reformers did not make cooking a priority in women’s education, as had been the case in Egypt, and so neither training institutions nor curricula prioritized a new approach to cooking. As a result, cookbooks were never written as textbooks in Morocco. In the mid-twentieth century, recipes and cooking were not a prominent feature of Moroccan mass media (radio, magazines, television) to nearly the same extent as was the case in Egypt. Television shows dedicated to Moroccan cooking, for example, did not appear until the 1980s.

In order to understand the development of a middle-class Moroccan culinary habitus, therefore, rather than tracing state interventions and assessing their reception, this chapter explores how the modes of *al-taqlīd* and *al-āṣāla* produced a Moroccan national cuisine rooted in specific traditions and modes of authentication. To begin tracing how a set of universalizing ideological principles materialized as a specifically Moroccan set of tastes and cooking practices, I begin with an analysis of the first printed cookbooks of Moroccan food. These were not produced as part of a ministry-sponsored curriculum, although they do reflect official narratives in various ways. I argue that French-language cookbooks reflect how *al-taqlīd* manifested in a culinary idiom, while an Arabic-language cookbook embodies the concept of *al-āṣāla*. Together they help to explain which tastes, flavors, and recipes were asserted as dominant and became national traditions in Moroccan food culture.

Next, I turn to women’s personal narratives in order to describe how these foods made their way into urban middle-class kitchens in practice, and to explore the role of those kitchens in producing the modern Moroccan nation. If cookbooks explain which foods were invented as
culinary traditions, oral histories explain how culinary knowledge has been transmitted and authenticated within Moroccan homes—specifically through matrilineal lines of knowledge transmission. Kitchen practices tell the story of a process by which Arab, Islamic, and urban aspects of Moroccan culture—of which the Andalusi heritage of Fes and Tetouan are paradigmatic—came to epitomize and, at times, stand in for national culture. My telling of this story centers on the allegedly Andalusi dish, basṭīla, using it as a thread to follow through the history of print cookbooks of Moroccan cuisine as well as to contextualize the place of Fasi and Tetouani cooking within the changing practices of middle-class families in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The journey of basṭīla from a delicacy of the wealthy bourgeois of a few urban centers to a national tradition used to mark weddings and other major life occasions throughout the country offers insights into the way that the modern Moroccan nation came to be produced not only by state officials or cultural elites, but by women cooking for their families—as well as the kinds of origins and narratives this production of “authentic traditions” may obscure.

_Basṭīla As Taqlīd: Inventing a National Tradition_

Scholars have explained the dominance of Fasi culture in Moroccan national culture in a range of fields, and the history of Moroccan cookbooks unfolds along similar lines.\(^{11}\) The texts and publishing histories of the small number of Moroccan cookbooks published between 1957 and

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\(^{11}\) For two different examples of academic work describing the place of Fasi culture in modern Morocco, see Atiqa Hachimi, “The Urban and the Urbane: Identities, Language Ideologies, and Arabic Dialects in Morocco,” *Language in Society* 41, no. 3 (2012): 321; John Waterbury, _The Commander of the Faithful: The Moroccan Political Elite – a Study in Segmented Politics_, Modern Middle East Series, v. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 94. Hachimi illustrates how the “perceived elitist uniqueness of the Fessis in Moroccan society—a sense of distinction that confounds notions of time, place, ethnicity, class, and language” manifests through language ideology and speech practice. Waterbury describes the relationship between Fasi identity and Moroccan elite culture: “If to be Fasi is to have a certain frame of mind rather than to be born in the city of Fez, then it can be said that the Moroccan elite is basically Fasi.” Writing in 1970 he notes that while “by no means the only historical urban center in Morocco, [Fes] has, until recently, been the uncontested pace setter in culture, intellectualism, and social behavior, influencing to some degree the educated elites of all other Moroccan cities.”
1979 illustrate the articulation of an increasingly distinct tradition of “Moroccan cuisine” through the codification of selected urban tastes as national tastes.

Like modern Egyptian cookbooks, the first printed cookbooks of Moroccan food were clearly influenced by metropolitan cookbook traditions, although with key differences. First of all, there were far fewer cookbooks published in Morocco than in Egypt before the 1980s—a finding based on a thorough search of libraries and used book markets throughout Morocco and confirmed by Claudia Roden and Choumicha Chafay, two leading authorities on North African cuisine.¹² Unlike the flurry of Arabic-language print cookbooks published in Cairo and Beirut starting in the late nineteenth century, the first cookbooks of Moroccan cuisine were not published in Morocco until the 1950s, and none were published in Arabic, as far as I have been able to ascertain, until 1973. The majority were published in French, including those by Moroccan authors. While the first printed cookbook of Moroccan cuisine, written by a British expatriate who spent significant time in Tangier, was published privately in 1954 in Scotland, the first such cookbook to be published in Morocco was Zette Guinaudeau’s 1957 Fes vu par sa cuisine (Fes Seen Through Its Cuisine).¹³ Guinaudeau’s book established a genre of Moroccan cookbooks that illustrate how al-taqlid, the invention of tradition, worked within the realm of cuisine.

Fes vu par sa cuisine is structured according to the universalizing conventions of French metropolitan cookbooks, with precisely measured ingredient lists and formal, didactic instructions. At the same time, the book highlights the particularity of Moroccan food with ethnographic descriptions that emphasize specialized embodied knowledge and the specific

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¹² Personal correspondence with Claudia Roden, April 15, 2016; with Choumicha Chafay, January 24, 2017.
material conditions of Moroccan culinary production, like local utensils and ingredients. Guinaudeau’s work also privileged the urban cuisine of Fes, prefiguring the generalization of this dominant regional cuisine as the foundation of Moroccan national cuisine.

_Zette Guinaudeau, between Colonial Ethnography and Metropolitan Cookery_

Through written passages describing meal traditions and market scenes, illustrations, and numerous Arabic colloquial terms carefully transliterated into French, Guinaudeau sought to represent local culinary practices in exacting detail. At the same time, she presented the vast majority of her recipes in a modern format, with separate lists of ingredients and instructions and precise, European weights and measures. As a result, the text gives the impression that it is composed of notes taken in a kitchen in the old city of Fes and written up for a kitchen in the _ville nouvelle_. This combination situates Guinaudeau’s book between two genres: French colonial ethnography of Morocco and French metropolitan cookbooks written for housewives that were popular at the time Guinaudeau was writing.

The previous chapter outlined how French women, including teachers and public health workers, participated in the colonial state’s invention of tradition in ways that promoted “Muslim culture, French instruction” and incorporated ethnographic work. I read Guinaudeau, who was herself a French settler who had moved to Fes in 1929, as a part of the same cultural project, even though she was not technically working for the French colonial state. Like colonial ethnographers, Guinaudeau lifted Moroccan techniques, practices, and recipes out of oral and haptic contexts and wrote them down in French. Her book did not rewrite existing local recipes for a local audience (as Niqula and ʿUthman had done) but rather coded certain traditions—all of them belonging to the city of Fes—as prestigious and worth preserving in the face of
encroaching modernization.

Guinaudeau claimed to represent the foods of Fasis from “wealthy families as well as poor ones,” but the ethnographic vignettes and many of the dishes she presents signal a wealthier milieu for the most part: she describes lavish feasts of many courses, kitchens filled with servants, and very few meatless (and hence inexpensive) meals.\(^\text{14}\) Most likely this, as well as her choice to focus specifically on the foods of Fes, reflects Guinaudeau’s own social and geographical context and surroundings. In the context of the French protectorate, urban policies in cities like Fes and Rabat have generally been discussed in terms of how they were designed to create segregated built environments, separating Moroccans from European populations with the former in carefully preserved *medinas* and the latter in modernist *villes nouvelles* in a system Janet Abu-Lughod referred to as “cultural and religious apartheid.”\(^\text{15}\) Without discounting the significance of the built environment and the policies that motivated its construction in particular ways, it is also the case that European women living in these cities did frequently interact with Moroccans over the course of their everyday lives. French colonial archives and newspapers include numerous examples of markets as spaces where Europeans and Moroccans shopped and worked together, for example. Colonial women’s writing also attests to the fact that many European women interacted with Moroccan women in private spaces as well: Elisa Chimenti (1883-1969) in Tangier and Aline de Lens (1881-1925) in Meknes blended amateur ethnography with their writing, describing extended experiences spent with Moroccan women—many of them

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\(^\text{14}\) Guinaudeau, *Fes vu par sa cuisine*, 5. Her chapter on vegetable dishes is quite short, with some of the simplest and least elaborated recipes in the book, and begins, “Fasis generally do not like vegetables,” 137.

from prominent local families who welcomed these French women into their homes. Like Guinaudeau, de Lens also collected recipes—not for foods, but for beauty potions and medical remedies.

Although these women frequently carried out their “ethnography” and writing in non-official or semi-official capacities, their work resembles what Edmund Burke calls the “Moroccan colonial archive.” This “archive,” which was integral to the logic and practice of French colonial rule in Morocco and reflective of French expatriate culture in Morocco more broadly, was produced largely by amateur ethnographers at a time when, as Burke points out, ethnography was not yet a formalized field in the French academy. Colonial wives like Guinaudeau, in other words, were part of a world in which it was common practice to create ethnographic texts about Morocco and Moroccans. Guinaudeau’s stated goals reflect her place in this milieu; she is explicitly preservationist and declares her aim is “to fix the traditions of the cuisine of Fes before it is transformed by the influence of European dishes.”

The other genre to which Guinaudeau’s cookbook can be said to belong is that of French cookbooks written for women, by women. Whereas British women produced many cookbooks directed at women cooks from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, French women did not begin writing their own cookbooks until the early twentieth century. Books like Evelyn Saint-Ange’s *La Bonne Cuisine* and the works of Ginette Mathiot, published in the late 1920s and early 1930s, were latecomers to the British-dominated genre of women-authored cookbooks but quickly

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17 Burke, *The Ethnographic State*, 7. Burke uses the term “Moroccan colonial archive” to refer not to the holdings of state archives or libraries, but rather “to the writings in French, both published and unpublished, about Morocco and Moroccans in the period 1880-1930.”

18 Ibid., 6.


gained popularity as practical guides and wedding gifts and continued to be reprinted in subsequent decades.\(^{21}\) These books, and the domestic science movement of which they were a part, had a much later start in France as compared to England. But they were ideologically aligned with their English counterparts, seeking “to help the cook create a well-ordered kitchen, the foundation of a happy family.”\(^{22}\)

It is difficult to gauge the extent to which these books traveled beyond metropolitan France, but book markets in Rabat and Marrakesh yielded a number of French cookbooks from this genre in editions from the mid-1950s, including several by Ginette Mathiot, who was a household management inspector in the French school system.\(^{23}\) The copies I purchased bear numerous marks of use, from staining due to food splatters to insertions like handwritten recipes and even a stray piece of parsley, in one instance. It is reasonable to assume that when Zette Guinaudeau was writing her cookbook, she was familiar with the format and approach of a genre of French cookbooks explicitly written for the modern housewife, with precise information about measurements, serving sizes, and cooking times. The combined influence of this genre and colonial ethnography resulted in a cookbook that in many ways reflects how a new Moroccan culinary habitus was beginning to emerge—most clearly in the book’s illustration of what a commitment to tradition (\textit{al-taqlīd}) looked like in the kitchens of a modernizing Morocco.

“\textit{French Instruction}” and the Assertion of Authority

Establishing a tradition requires assuming a stance of authority. Guinaudeau draws on various elements of knowledge production to establish herself and her cookbook as sources of cultural


and culinary authority. The book is written in French, but demonstrates knowledge of Moroccan colloquial Arabic in a number of ways: first, its recipes and ethnographic vignettes are filled with transliterated Arabic terms: the names of pots, pans, and other kitchen utensils, for instance, are always given in transliterated colloquial Moroccan Arabic, never translated into French.\(^{24}\)

In addition, like Niqula and 'Uthman, Guinaudeau’s cookbook carries a stamp of approval from a male authority where linguistic matters are concerned. She thanks “M. Mercier” of the Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines (IHEM) for correcting her transliterations of Arabic words.\(^{25}\) Although Guinaudeau wrote the cookbook as a private citizen, the fact that she worked with an IHEM expert in finalizing her text points to the difficulty of separating the official and unofficial roles of French settlers during the protectorate. Edmund Burke refers to the establishment of IHEM in 1921 as one of the hallmarks of the “inception of the academic discipline of Moroccan studies,” and so Guinaudeau’s connection with the institute may be read as an extension of that field as it was formalized over the subsequent decades—or at the very least, as a sign that the methods and institutions that underpinned the ethnographic study of Morocco were well-known and generalized among educated Europeans living there.\(^{26}\) In addition to French and transliterated Arabic, the book features line drawings by J. E. Laurent that depict cooks, kitchen utensils, and ingredients throughout, in a final assertion of authority through a realist mode of representation. In many ways the cookbook exhibits the ideal qualities of colonial publications designed to aid French colonial teachers in fulfilling the goals of cultural preservation discussed in Chapter Four, from the use of ethnography to the detailed descriptions

\(^{24}\) The only Arabic script in the book appears on the illustrated cover, where َحَوْلَة مَا یِدَت فَاس (“around the Fasi table” or “about the Fasi table”) is written in Arabic script beneath the French title. No other reference is made to this version of the title in the text, however; the cover Arabic script is largely ornamental.

\(^{25}\) Guinaudeau, Fes vu par sa cuisine, 6. This note about transliteration appears in editions starting in 1958, in which Guinaudeau states that “in previous editions, the phonetic transcription of Arabic words left much to be desired,” prompting her to consult M. Mercier to standardize spellings in subsequent editions.

\(^{26}\) Burke, The Ethnographic State, 125.
of social rituals to the inclusion of Arabic vocabulary.

The issue of language raises the question of the cookbook’s intended audience: to whom is Guinaudeau making claims about defining Moroccan culinary tradition? I suggest that although the book makes claims to be working on behalf of Moroccans, it was primarily addressed to French settlers and expatriates living in Morocco. I also suggest that it would have circulated within a specific social class of educated Francophone women that included some Moroccans, but as a cultural object rather than an instructive or descriptive text. The book was first published shortly after Morocco gained political independence, in 1957, and was reprinted many times locally (the edition referenced here is the eighth, published in 1966) before a revised and expanded edition was published in 1981. In other words, demand for the book within Morocco persisted for many years after its initial publication. Guinaudeau also makes clear that traditional Moroccan cooking implements are essential to cooking her recipes, which also implies a local readership.

Which, if any, Moroccans might have read or owned the text? Evidence points to the existence of a small readership of elite Moroccan women who read recipes and other popular women’s literature written in French during this period. After independence in 1956, a small number of French-language newspapers continued to exist and publish in Morocco. At least one of these, *Le Petit Marocain*, featured women’s pages, including modern-style recipes, mostly for French dishes, in the mid- to late-1950s. These pages also featured letters from readers, usually asking for beauty and housekeeping tips. A sampling of these letters written in 1957

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28 Based on reading daily issues of *Le Petit Marocain* from January through June 1957. Although I cannot claim to have conducted an exhaustive search of Moroccan newspapers in this period, this was the only periodical published in Morocco in French or Arabic from the 1930s through the 1960s that I came across to feature recipes.
shows that they were signed with both French and Moroccan names—suggesting that a select population of Moroccan women, likely graduates of French colonial schools, were consumers of women’s popular literature in French that included modern recipes like Guinaudeau’s.

It would have been unusual for Moroccans to consult written recipes reflecting their own cuisine at this time, but it is also plausible that the cookbook may have functioned as a status item to signal class distinction. Even as many prominent Fasis relocated to Casablanca and Rabat during the 50s and 60s, the city of Fes came to represent a key site of Moroccan authenticity and heritage, and a book of Fasi cuisine could plausibly have signaled affiliation or appreciation of the city’s culture. At least some women from prominent Fasi households would also have been familiar with the book simply because they (or their cooks) had provided the author with its recipes. Claudia Roden recalls visiting Fes in the 1980s and speaking to multiple women who remembered Guinaudeau fondly, explaining that they had contributed recipes to her volume.²⁹ And finally, the texts of two French-language cookbooks subsequently published by Moroccan women from Fasi families exhibit strong similarities to Guinaudeau’s book, as will be discussed below, suggesting that their authors were familiar with it. None of this establishes the readership of Guinaudeau’s book or precisely what its reception was at the time it was published. But it does suggest that the book was viewed favorably among a certain elite category of Francophone individuals who supported Guinaudeau’s vision of Moroccan cuisine as a significant cultural tradition that was strongly identified with cities like Fes.

The cookbook’s preface supports this speculation. Like Niquia and ʿUthman’s cookbook, *Fes vu par sa cuisine* features a preface written by an educational official—in this case, Ahmed Sefrioui (1915-2004), a novelist and native of Fes who worked for the Moroccan ministries of

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²⁹ Personal correspondence with Claudia Roden, June 29, 2018. 
culture, education, and tourism before and after independence. Sefrioui’s writing, in particular his 1954 novel *La Boîte à merveilles*, depicts everyday life in the old city of Fes as a touchstone of Moroccan culture and heritage. In a short essay, Sefrioui thanks Guineaudeau for her contribution to the history of Morocco while observing that the book will be useful for housewives (*bonnes ménagères*). The category of the modern housewife, expressed here in French, and its relationship to cooking and happiness, is apparent in Sefrioui’s formulation: he notes that well-prepared food is not only agreeable in terms of physical nourishment, but “often produce the happiest effects (*les plus heureux effets*) on the temperament.”

The recipes themselves project authority through the modernizing and scientific conventions of modern domesticity. They are divided into lists of ingredients mostly measured in grams and kilograms, and instructions that are not numbered but narrated in short, separated paragraphs. In this sense, the form of Guineaudeau’s recipes largely reflects the trend of contemporaneous metropolitan cookbooks, with a number of adaptations. Whereas Ginette Mathiot’s most famous cookbook included recipes for both the time-pressed home cook or a housewife with a bit more time on her hands, with a cover advertising recipes ranging from “five minutes to three hours” of preparation time, Guineaudeau’s recipes are for elaborate meals that take three to four hours or more to prepare. Her recipes are also generally indicated for ten people, whereas the standard in French cookbooks by Mathiot and Saint-Ange feature recipes for six. Thus, Guineaudeau’s recipes are a blend of elements designed for the prototypical modern

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32 Guineaudeau, 4.
33 There are a few exceptions, as in the vegetable chapter, in which some recipes are simply a one-sentence list of spices, herbs, and dressings with which a certain vegetable should be prepared; but these are in the minority. Furthermore, Guineaudeau herself downplays the importance of vegetable dishes and emphasizes the centrality of meat to Fasi culinary and hospitality culture, so presenting vegetable recipes in this format may be read as downplaying their significance.
housewife, on one hand, and features of a more labor-intensive cuisine designed for hosting guests or feeding larger families on the other.

“Muslim Culture”: Defining the ‘Culinary’ in Culinary Habitus

The content of Guinaudeau’s cookbook singles out specific aspects of Moroccan cooking to be preserved through practices that accord with al-taqlīd: the establishment of an “invented tradition” through the ethnographic study of cultural material and its integration into a pedagogical form—in this case, the housewife’s cookbook. The culinary tradition Guinaudeau outlines amounts to a model for refined, urban, cosmopolitan culture cast as entirely separate from and equal, if not superior, to European modernity. In her framing, the cuisine of Fes is distinguished by its diversity of cultural influences—from which she is careful to exclude the influence of modern Europe, which she considers a threat. She explains that “the time has come to fix the tradition of the cuisine of Fes before it is transformed due to contact with European dishes,” while characterizing Fasi cooking as the result of a mix of influences from the “Orient,” Constantinople, al-Andalus, and the “Berbers.”

Her conceptualization of the culinary tradition of Fes not through purity, but cosmopolitan diversity, has echoes in many subsequent written descriptions of Moroccan food and countless conversations I had with Moroccans over the course of my fieldwork. Although Guinaudeau considers contemporary outside European influences to pose a problem for the tradition of Fasi cuisine, she describes its various historical “eastern” and other influences as an integral part of “the high civilization that is, today, the culinary art of the bourgeois of Fes.” Evidence of these diverse influences emerges in various guises through her ethnographic sketches, with a particular emphasis on the Andalusi roots of

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34 Guinaudeau, Fès vu par sa cuisine, 5.
35 Ibid.
Fasi cuisine: one section cites Andalusi music playing in the background of a meal, and several recipes are specifically described as having come to Fes from al-Andalus.36

She also describes a specific type of female servant, the dāda, who oversees the cooking in wealthy Fasi households.37 Guinaudeau repeatedly emphasizes their dark skin, referring to them as négesses; and numerous line drawings depict women drawn with darker hues as well. Although Guinaudeau does not discuss their ethnic origin explicitly, it is almost certain that these women were either descended from enslaved women captured in Saharan or sub-Saharan regions south of Morocco and transported from to Fes via Marrakesh, or that they had been captured and enslaved themselves. This is not merely to be inferred from the darkness of their skin: Chouki El Hamel’s historical account of blackness in Morocco notes that during the colonial era, the Moroccan slave trade that transported captured men and women from the Sahara and sub-Saharan Africa was still a thriving institution, both in terms of trafficking and the continued presence of enslaved persons in domestic service.38 He also notes the semantic overlap in Moroccan Arabic between terms denoting enslavement and blackness, and cites European travel accounts indicating a propensity among wealthier Moroccans for black concubines and the preference of Fasis in particular for black, female concubines or domestic servants.39

36 Guinaudeau, *Fes vu par sa cuisine*, 38, 112. “Bstila” and “Tajine Tfaia” are two dishes she describes as Andalusi in origin.
37 Ibid., 11; 12–13.
39 Ibid., 259–60, 267. One observation about concubines comes from the travel narrative Jerome and Jean Tharaud (1930); the observation about Fasis’ propensity for black domestic servants is from a report written by Lapanne Joinville (1950). Similar observations are made in an account of the Moroccan merchant community living in Manchester, England, in the 1920s and 30s, made up almost exclusively of Fasi merchant families, which refers to the community’s “womenfolk—mostly black women, some of whom had been previously purchased in the slave market, married and brought to England.” “Picturesque Moroccan Colony Leaves Manchester,” *Manchester City News*, 2 October 1936. Accessed in Manchester City Archives: Local Studies Newspaper Cuttings/Mary Turner Collection Box 16: “Manchester Places,” Section: Moroccans in Rusholme, Manchester, England.
ʿAbd al-Karim Ghallab’s novel *Dafanā al-māḍī*, published in 1966, offers a fictionalized imagining of what life might have been like for enslaved women in a wealthy household in Fes in the 1950s. The opening chapters of the novel describe the lives and daily rhythms of a group of enslaved women living in the household of a prominent Fasi family, where they perform the majority of the home’s domestic labor. They also detail the traumatic histories of these women: one, who was abducted and sold into slavery as a young girl, “remembers every detail of life in [her home village] except her name.”\(^{40}\) It is striking that even as these women’s lives are dominated by the act of forgetting key aspects of their names and origins, they are nevertheless repositories of embodied knowledge and practitioners of culinary habitus that is later claimed as central to Moroccan national authenticity.

Despite the clear expertise of the *dādāt*—one is described as “queen and priestess of the kitchen”—Guinaudeau downplays their position as enslaved servants or concubines and situates them instead in a context that emphasizes the Andalusi elements of Fasi cooking.\(^{41}\) In one scene she describes a *dāda* as having come from Tetouan, which has a reputation for excellent cooks.\(^{42}\) Tetouan, like Fes, was renowned as a city where Andalusi culture had relocated and thrived following the expulsions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A royal Moroccan archival document dated September 9, 1889 records that Sultan Hassan I, hearing of the excellent reputation of Tetouani food, sent four women from his palace in Fes—whose names are listed as Saʿada, Mabruka, Saʿila, and Zayda—to apprentice with wealthy households in Tetouan, learn its culinary specialties, and introduce them to the royal palace kitchens.\(^{43}\) *Basṭīla* is listed among the

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 13.
foods they learned. This episode makes it clear that while elements of the sophisticated cuisine Guinaudeau describes moved within historical circuits of elite urban households, many of whom claimed affinity with Andalusi heritage, their preservation and transmission were carried out through the bodies, memories, and skills of enslaved or servant women. While Guinaudeau does highlight the diverse influences of Fasi cuisine, she attributes ownership of the city’s culinary heritage to the Fasis themselves—by which she means the wealthier bourgeoisie whose households she depicts, rather than the domestic labor responsible for the cuisine’s practical expertise.

As for the actual ingredients and flavors that Guinaudeau highlights throughout her book, these emphasize the classical Arab influences characteristic of medieval Andalusi cuisine, reputedly brought to the cities of Fes, Rabat, and Tetouan by Jews and Muslims fleeing persecution and expulsion orders. Guinaudeau refers to the cuisine of Fes as one of “refined delicacies” and a mark of “high civilization.” In practice, this translates to combinations of salty and sweet flavors, particularly in meat and poultry dishes, and the use of saffron, ginger, and cinnamon, which fit the flavor profile of this particular culinary heritage and are common throughout the book. One necessary consequence of highlighting Andalusi cuisine is a privileging of urban Moroccan cuisines over rural ones. In a passage about restaurants in Fes, Guinaudeau describes a “wealthy peasant (une riche fellah)” coming to enjoy various gustatory delights, including “chickens coated with saffron,” as “his palate, rapt with wonder, partakes of the refined cuisine of the city.” As opposed to the cosmopolitan Mediterranean restaurants enjoyed by Egyptian elites, here, provincial Moroccan elites are represented as coming to Fes to

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44 For more about the connections between the cities of al-Andalus and Tetouan and Fes, see Calderwood, *Colonial al-Andalus*, in particular Chapter 7, “The Daughter of Granada and Fez.”
46 Ibid., 185.
enjoy refined and cosmopolitan cuisine. The frequent inclusion of saffron is juxtaposed with the conspicuous absence of fenugreek (ḥulba) from Guinaudeau’s cookbook—a pungent herb that would likely have been common in the rural cuisine of the “wealthy peasant” she describes.

An extension of this emphasis on certain cities as key sites of Moroccan culinary tradition is the way Guinaudeau highlights the particularity of Fasi food as rooted in specific spaces, objects, and bodies (like those of the ṭaḍaṭ). Despite her conversion of ingredients into grams and kilograms, she offers few adaptations in terms of cooking equipment and explicitly distinguishes the kitchens that produce Fasi food from the “modern kitchens” (la cuisine moderne).\textsuperscript{47} She also notes that opportunistic merchants have replaced traditional pottery cookware with cheap plastic goods.\textsuperscript{48} An emphasis on the use of certain traditional, handmade Moroccan utensils and cookware, as well as the importance of embodied knowledge inculcated during childhood, would go on to become central and resilient features of modern Moroccan culinary habitus. Guinaudeau’s project implies that despite society’s transition to modernized kitchens and equipment, tradition might be preserved if one is equipped with the right kind of history, stored in embodied knowledge or particular objects—a sentiment that resonates with many of the oral histories I conducted with Moroccan home cooks.

Perhaps the most important legacy of Guinaudeau’s cookbook to modern Moroccan culinary culture lies in its occasional conflation of Fasi cuisine and Moroccan national cuisine. For instance, Sefrioui’s preface refers to “Moroccan cuisine” (la cuisine Marocaine), and states that “Moroccans have the right to be proud of their cuisine” and that the culinary arts “reflect the degree of civilization of a people (un peuple).”\textsuperscript{49} It is unclear whether the “people” here refers to

\textsuperscript{47} Guinaudeau, \textit{Fes vu par sa cuisine}, 12.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 12, 19.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 4.
the people of Fes or the people of Morocco, or whether the former is intended to stand in for the latter. Guinaudeau herself refers to *kuskus* as “the national dish” of Morocco (*le plat national marocain*).\(^5\) While acknowledging the diverse origins of Moroccan food, Guinaudeau also enacted a cultural logic by which certain traditions were posited as a key source of authenticity in national culture—a process furthered in subsequent Moroccan cookbooks.

*Moroccan Cookbooks after Guinaudeau*

The history of Moroccan-authored cookbooks that began to appear in the early 1970s demonstrates the dual legacy of *al-taqlīd* and *al-āṣāla* outlined in Chapter Four and its relevance in the culinary sphere. Following in a similar vein as Guinaudeau of upholding Fasi food as central to Moroccan culinary tradition is Latifa Bennani-Smires’ 1970 *La cuisine Marocaine* (Moroccan Cuisine), the first cookbook of Moroccan cuisine published by a Moroccan. In a very different cookbook tradition, Fatima al-Rahuni published *Fann al-ṭabkh al-maghribī al-tīṯwānī* al-āṣīl (The Art of Authentic Moroccan Tetouani Cooking) in 1973, the first Moroccan-authored cookbook to be published in Arabic to my knowledge. Bennani-Smires’ book can be read as a continuation of the colonial-influenced approach to Moroccan culture as *al-taqlīd* evinced in Guinaudeau’s work; al-Rahuni’s cookbook, by contrast, is modeled on Egyptian cookbooks in form and style, with an explicit emphasis on the Andalusi origins of Tetouani food.

Despite its broad title, the recipes in Bennani-Smires’ cookbook are largely Fasi in origin—unsurprisingly, as hers is a prominent Fasi family—although the book includes no discussion about the geographical origins of its recipes. Bennani-Smires’ book also bears a number of striking similarities to Guinaudeau’s. The preface is written by a male authority—in

\(^5\) Ibid., 61.
this case, decorated French chef Raymond Oliver—and emphasizes the diverse origins of Moroccan cuisine while contrasting it with French gastronomy, but in a way that presents them as equally sophisticated.\textsuperscript{51} Echoing Guinaudeau’s emphasis on the specificity of the spaces and utensils used to produce traditional Moroccan cuisine, Bennani-Smires includes a section detailing the Moroccan utensils “needed for the preparation of Moroccan dishes,” which, she explains, “are available in Moroccan souks.”\textsuperscript{52}

Initially published in France and then in Casablanca, the book appears to be oriented, like Guinaudeau’s, more towards a French than a Moroccan readership. In fact, it includes a special foreword “for French readers” with advice on how to adapt the recipes for a French kitchen (“place a diffuser between the pot and the gas flame to attain the soft and diffuse heat of Moroccan stoves”) and the address of a shop in Paris where key ingredients can be purchased—including, crucially, fresh sheets of ouarka for bastīla, prepared twice daily.\textsuperscript{53} The content of Bennani-Smires’s recipes themselves, however, offer few adaptations for the European kitchen and largely assume that the reader has access to Moroccan utensils and cooking equipment.

Bennani-Smires’ bastīla recipe is especially telling. Although generally her recipes include very little in the way of prefaces or anecdotal descriptive framing, there is a brief paragraph describing bastīla:

An exquisite dish for grand dinners (grands diners). Simultaneously sweet and peppery, crispy and delicate…to prepare it, you need practice and a lot of dexterity (doigté), but believe me, it is one of the delights of Moroccan cuisine.”\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{51} Bennani-Smires, \textit{La cuisine Marocaine}, 3.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 4–5. The shop, which is in the Marais, appears to be in operation to this day and owned by Moroccans of Sephardic Jewish origin. There is an entire story to be told of the way that the modern history of \textit{basfīla} also writes Sephardic Jewish influences out of the narrative of the dish’s history, which I have not yet been able to fully address here.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 17.
Three points should be emphasized here: first, she describes the recipe as particularly difficult, as does Guinaudeau. Second, the language of contradiction in the way the dish is described (“soft and peppery,” “crispy and delicate”) mirrors Guinaudeau’s language (“sweet and peppery,” with both “crisp pastry” and “delicate stuffing”). Finally, in a departure from Guinaudeau’s recipe, Bennani-Smires describes *bastīla* as a Moroccan delicacy for special occasions, not a Fasi or Andalusi specialty. All told, the book shares a number of aims and features with Guinaudeau’s, while furthering the generalization of Fasi cuisine to the category of Moroccan cuisine.

Fatima al-Rahuni’s 1973 cookbook, *Fann al-ṭabkh al-maghribī al-tīwānī al-aṣīl* (The Art of Authentic Moroccan Tetouani Cooking), could not be more different.55 Born into an elite Tetouani family, al-Rahuni was working as a teacher when she published her cookbook, which she wrote in her spare time over the course of three years.56 The recipes in it are largely family recipes, but the style, language, and form of the cookbook is explicitly modeled on Egyptian cookbooks. When interviewed, she could not recall the authors or titles, but clearly remembered ordering Arabic cookbooks from Cairo through a local bookseller when she began working on her cookbook. “There was no model for a cookbook like that available here in Morocco,” she told me, explaining her desire to study Egyptian cookbooks in order to write an Arabic cookbook for a Moroccan readership. Her awareness of Egyptian cookbooks written in Arabic reflects that of other elite families from the Moroccan north like the family of ʿAbd al-Karim al-Khattabi, whose female descendants also had Egyptian Arabic cookbooks in their home libraries.57 In other words, the east-west axis that informed a new approach to domesticity education in Morocco, discussed in Chapter Four, also influenced Moroccan cookbook culture—at least in a very small

56 Interview conducted by author, December 29, 2018.
57 Interview conducted by author with Asma El Khattabi, July 21, 2017.
handful of prominent Moroccan families whose political orientations (and in the case of the Khattabi family, enforced exile) granted them familiarity with Egyptian writers and publishers.

Al-Rahuni’s cookbook echoes the framing of many of the Egyptian cookbooks discussed in Chapter Two, opening by explicitly addressing “the Moroccan girl” (*al-fatāt al-Maghribīyya*) and encouraging her to cook well in order to ensure “marital happiness” (*al-saʿāda al-zawjiyya*).58 At the same time she translates a uniquely Moroccan approach to authenticity into a culinary context by highlighting the importance of maintaining the “authentic Tetouani Andalusi character” (*al-lawn al-Tīwānī al-Andalusī al-āṣīl*) of Morocco’s cultural heritage.59 Her recipes alternate between dishes intended for a nuclear family of four and “feast dishes” like *baṣṭīla*, which are indicated to serve eight. In this sense her book balances between the middle-class domestic ideology that underpinned midcentury Egyptian cookbooks and a specifically Moroccan elevating of urban Andalusi Arab culture.

By 1970, *baṣṭīla* had begun to transform from a complex cosmopolitan dish whose contrasts told the story of its diverse influences to a hallmark of national cuisine whose contrasts were simply part of its aesthetic. The generalization of *baṣṭīla* from Fasi and Tetouani specialties to a Moroccan national dish in the context of cookbook writing was affirmed in 1979 when Fettouma Benkirane (also from a Fasi family) published *La Nouvelle Cuisine Marocaine* (New Moroccan Cuisine), a book intended to modernize and update classic Moroccan cuisine for the time-pressed modern woman—but in a way that maintained commitments to Moroccan cuisine’s “deep roots” (*racines profondes*).60 In Benkirane’s text, *baṣṭīla* is integrated into a national culinary tradition that must be updated, rather than a dish rooted in a specific local place and

59 Ibid., 4.
history. The original edition of the book includes recipes for the typical Fasi *bastīla* made with pigeon and almonds and no fewer than five additional variations, including one made with mushroom and quail and another made with seafood.\(^{61}\) She provides instructions for baking the *bastīla* both over charcoal and a method for cooking in a “more modern” fashion, in an oven.\(^{62}\)

By the late 1970s, *bastīla* was firmly established in culinary texts as a national traditional dish; Choumicha Chafay points out that the now-common variation of *bastīla* made with seafood was first introduced during this decade.\(^{63}\) The writing of Moroccan cookbooks therefore illustrates one aspect of the trajectory by which *bastīla* was removed from its historical origins, from Andalusi cuisine to enslaved forms of labor, and generalized as a national tradition. Once established, it became a new national form stable enough to introduce variations to it.\(^{64}\) At the same time, making the dish in its original iteration also became a means through which Moroccans could demonstrate their ability to cook truly “traditional” Moroccan cuisine. This explains why in 2015, Choumicha framed her recipe for the “traditional” version of *bastīla* in the way that she did: despite the many versions of *bastīla* that are now popular, she explains, for the end of Ramadan she is presenting *bastīla* exactly “the way [her] grandmother made it.”\(^{65}\)

Choumicha, who grew up outside of Casablanca, is not from a Fasi family herself, which makes

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 61–64.

\(^{62}\) Not incidentally, Benkirane’s cookbook is the first instance in which a Moroccan recipe including fenugreek—a pungent herb associated with rural Moroccan cuisine—appears in print in a Moroccan publication, as far as I have discovered. Thereafter, written representations of Moroccan cuisine expanded considerably, with cookbooks that feature more regional foods and updated variations. It was not until the 1990s with the works of Fatema Hal, the long-neglected role of the *dādāt* began to find acknowledgement, with the histories of these women at last introduced to the genre of Moroccan cookbooks. Fatema Hal, *Les Saveurs & les gestes: cuisines et traditions du Maroc* (Paris: Stock, 1995); See also La Maison Arabe, *Moroccan Cooking: Our Dadas’ Recipes* (Marrakesh, Morocco: La Maison Arabe, 2013); and Claudia Roden, *The New Book of Middle Eastern Food*, Rev. ed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

\(^{63}\) Interview conducted by author, August 16, 2017.

\(^{64}\) It should be said that Fasi *bastīla* was not historically the only version that existed before the 1970s: Tetouan boasted its own variety, which emphasized preserved lemons rather than cinnamon. Both, however, bear traces of Andalusi heritage, and existed in cities that claimed that heritage explicitly.

\(^{65}\) Choumicha Web TV, *Choumicha: Bastīla bi-l-dajāj.*
it all the more significant that her grandmother’s recipe is presented as an example of an authentic national tradition.

The translation of oral and embodied culinary knowledge into written recipes can be read as part of a complex process that led to the positing of the family as the site of transmitting “authentic” Moroccan cuisine and hence, culture and identity, a process that will be elaborated further in the next section of this chapter.66 Cookbooks are a window into the discursive manifestations of a modern domesticity that instructed Moroccan women to be bonnes ménagères, cooking up happiness through a culinary tradition that emphasized cultural refinement and new forms of middle-class domestic labor. But they are insufficient for explaining how a particular Moroccan culinary habitus developed. The appearance of new forms of written recipes in Morocco had an indirect influence at best on the way that women of the middle classes actually cooked: despite the evolution of basṭīla and a handful of other Fasi dishes as popular Moroccan foods, Moroccan middle-class women did not suddenly adopt Fasi cuisine en masse, nor did they refrain from integrating European foods, including béchamel, into their culinary repertoires. Yet narratives that repositioned certain culinary histories, like that of basṭīla, within individual families, and specifically within maternal lines of transmission within those families, is a strikingly concrete example of the way that the family came to produce the nation in the initial decades of Moroccan independence. How did the transmission of culinary knowledge change over the middle decades of the twentieth century in the realm of the home kitchen? How did embodied practices in particular define Moroccan cuisine as its very definition evolved? The next section draws on oral histories and published personal narratives to answer these questions.

66 An Arabic translation of Bennani-Smires’ book did not appear until 1994, and so far as I am aware no earlier Arabic print cookbook of Moroccan cuisine was published.
Cooking Ḃaḥla: Kitchens as Sites of Authenticity in Practice

I have argued that the invention of tradition entails a politics of knowledge production that dictated, among other things, the terms of a national cuisine. Chapter Four narrated how commitments to what I term al-ḥaḍra led to the promotion of certain elements of tradition as authentically Moroccan through assertions of those elements’ connections with roots or origin. This section applies this concept to cooking practices to argue that Moroccan women’s labor has been a generative force in the formation of the modern nuclear family, the middle class, and the nation itself in concrete ways.

The narrative that women produce the nation is in line with conventional nationalist narratives that view women as both vessels of tradition and conduits of reform. But what is the nature of “tradition” in these contexts and how is it enacted and maintained by the women who supposedly wield it? Abdallah Laroui has critiqued the idea that “tradition” exists as an unconscious, immutable essence, arguing that “the notion of an eternal tradition maintaining itself by itself is an illusion.” Referring specifically to the situation of Morocco under colonial rule he describes tradition as “a choice made in response to foreign intervention,” and which can “unite[] the whole society in opposition to the foreigner”—while pointing out that it is often elites who are driving what he calls a process of “traditionalization” to consolidate their own position. Writing of the entrenchment of “traditionalization” within the nationalist movement during periods of intense repression, he writes, “it is not tradition that finds expression in this policy” but rather “the policy that recreates tradition and forces everyone to behave in a

68 Ibid., 37, 40.
traditional way.” In other words, tradition is invented as modernity’s other; it does not exist independently or outside of modernity.

The process Laroui describes as traditionalization resonates in many ways with the narratives I have outlined above, which explain the evolution of attitudes towards gender roles and the codification of a Moroccan culinary tradition. Both of these entailed deliberate efforts to define what exactly constitutes tradition and the promotion of traditional modes or practices articulated in opposition to a hegemonic outside influence, usually on the part of elites. A key insight of Laroui’s analysis is his assertion that this dynamic was an extension of the colonial system into postcolonial Morocco, not “a resurgence of a precolonial system.” How did traditionalization manifest on an everyday level? How did it pass through culinary gestures and recipes within the home to reproduce the notion of a traditional Moroccan cuisine in practice? When did everyday affects and tastes run counter to the dictates of cultural elites?

I use the concept of *al-aṣāla* to extend my analysis of cuisine into the realm of habitus by outlining a process by which traditions are authenticated as properly Moroccan in a range of contexts. Oral histories and other personal narratives explain how before independence, women’s roles in anticolonial movements, from attending modern schools to the armed resistance, consolidated a connection between women’s labor, including cooking practices, and the nation. They also illustrate that after independence, the home kitchen emerged as a site of authenticating foods and culinary practices as Moroccan. If the concept of *al-taqlīd* explains how knowledge production asserted particular forms of power by defining the nation, *al-aṣāla* represents the social reproduction and contestation of that power. While cookbooks and the writing of cuisine encoded a narrow set of foods as national dishes, and often featured the stamp of male authority,

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69 Laroui, 38–39.
70 Ibid., 39.
oral histories illuminate how ideas about culinary traditions, passed from mother to daughter, are seen to mark food as authentic even when produced in the most modern of kitchens, or amidst patterns of migration and mobility. They also illustrate how certain foods and culinary practices came to represent something essential about the Moroccan nation—particularly when their histories were routed through lines of maternal transmission, from grandmother to mother to daughter. This provides a crucial accounting for the transmission of embodied and vernacular culinary knowledge and notions of Moroccan identity not only as it was defined by elites on paper but as it was “actively lived and felt”—and, perhaps, tasted.71

In what follows I discuss published narratives and interviews with women who came of age in the 1940s and 50s amidst Morocco’s anticolonial struggle. Next, I relate the narratives of middle-class women from the subsequent generation, who grew up in the 1960s and 70s, based on interviews I conducted. Their stories illustrate how the kitchen became a site of authenticity in practice. Even in modern kitchens, or amidst middle-class migration and mobility, certain recipes—including, but certainly not limited to, the culinary traditions of Fes—came to express what it meant to “cook Moroccan,” as well as what it meant to run a modern, middle-class home.

Learning Resistance

The previous chapter explained that in the 1940s, women’s education in Morocco increasingly emerged as a sphere in which French rule was contested, and where support for both the independence movement and the sultan could be demonstrated. A nationalist focus on the “woman question,” inspired and influenced by similar movements in the eastern Arabic-speaking world, politicized women’s education and their labor as a sphere of anticolonial resistance. As

71 Williams, Marxism and Literature, 132.
had been the case in Egypt and elsewhere, this unfolded in ways that consolidated the organization of Moroccan society according to “separate spheres,” emphasizing women’s roles within the home. The kinds of traditional practices the French had aimed to define and preserve were thus transformed into a sphere subject to modernization and politicization, as a matter of national resistance. Hence, in the early 1950s, the heyday of armed anticolonial resistance in Morocco, domestic education for Moroccan schoolgirls had begun to adopt the language of modern household management and domestic science: it was important for girls to receive a “modern” education, but what this entailed specifically involved a vision of a middle-class housewife cooking with modern appliances, under the banner of a national family led by a national patriarch, the sultan. Despite this, the role of tadbīr al-manžil lessons in formal education was short-lived and had even less of an impact on the way Moroccan women learned to cook than it had in Egypt. Given that most culinary knowledge transmission remained within the home, what was the relationship between modern education and culinary practice in the 1940s and 50s?

In those early decades it was not difficult for girls to both attend school and have ample time to learn domestic skills from their mothers, largely because at first educational opportunities for Moroccan women were limited to primary school. Without the existence of a formal exam or certificate to mark its completion before 1943, there was little incentive for girls to complete even that stage of schooling. Writer and activist Amina Leuh remembered being one of the few girls who actually completed her studies at a Spanish colonial primary school in Tetouan in the 1940s, “because the girls would only stay in the school for one or two, three years at the most” before returning home “to learn housework in preparation for marriage.”

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72 Interview conducted by Baker, *Voices of Resistance*, 144.
When new norms of gender and domesticity did effect change within the domestic sphere less through direct school lessons than through reconfigurations of domestic labor. The example of Rabea, born in 1940 to a wealthy family from the old bourgeoisie of Safi, is telling in this regard. Although her father had many wives, she described her mother as her father’s favorite because she had more education than her co-wives, having been tutored privately at home as a child. “My mother was sensitive and perceptive, and I think this is what my father sought in a woman,” she recalled, remarking that his other wives could provide him with only physical satisfaction, while her mother offered something else. This suggests that the new norms of the modern housewife, with a focus on education and the provision of affective forms of labor, were already manifesting in Rabea’s father’s generation. It appears her mother had adopted these norms as well, because once Rabea was born she demanded to move out of the family’s large polygynous home into a small, nuclear family apartment with only her own offspring.

Perhaps most telling, however, is the change in the way Rabea’s family educated girls over the course of her lifetime. While her older sisters, twelve and twenty years her senior, were sent to the dār muʿallima and expected to master traditional skills like cooking and embroidery largely through in-house apprentice-style learning from the household’s servants and slaves, Rabea herself was one of a small minority of Moroccan girls of her generation to be sent to a modern primary school. Whereas her sisters had learned to cook in the conventional fashion for girls of their class, by taking turns working alongside the servants in the family kitchens, Rabea had no such domestic tasks to learn or perform. She completed her education, graduating from

74 Ibid., 56.
75 Ibid., 57.
76 Ibid., 61.
one of Morocco’s recently established teacher training institutes, and continued to teach after she married, despite the fact that her husband, a doctor, insisted she had “too much independence.”77 Although her husband entertained frequently and had an appreciation for “the fine things” in life, she explained that the allowance he gave her to manage the home was unpredictable and “irrational,” and so she used her own salary to decorate and maintain their home at the necessary standard.78 This also enabled her to employ a maid, who took care of the cooking.

Born into a wealthy, polygynous household with many servants and co-wives, Rabea was educated in the heyday of Moroccan national resistance, which she recalled as “the moment when everyone was looking for something, everyone wanted to do something.”79 Her education and upbringing consolidated her understanding of gendered labor while recasting it in modern terms; although she insisted she could never be satisfied working only in the home, she also believed that “in the domestic sphere, a man cannot do what a woman does.”80 As a highly educated working woman who married into a new professional class, she considered herself fully responsible for the domestic sphere, from overseeing meal preparation to decorating to entertaining. Rabea’s account demonstrates one way in which spheres of anticolonial resistance, in this case girls’ education, were indelibly gendered in ways that had lasting effects after independence.

*Feeding Resistance*

Perhaps the most striking manifestations of gendered national resistance were the various ways that Moroccan women participated in mass mobilizations and the armed resistance movements

77 Ibid., 69.
78 Ibid., 70.
79 Ibid., 65.
80 Ibid., 83.
starting in 1953, upon the exile of the sultan—by then a major nationalist figurehead. Women’s contributions to the independence struggle took a variety of forms. Records of the High Commission for Veterans of the Resistance and Liberation Army indicate that hundreds of women from throughout Morocco performed a wide range of services for resistance cells: in addition to smuggling messages and weapons, women performed essential tasks in line with conventional gender roles, providing men with clothing, bedding, food, and medical care.\textsuperscript{81} While wealthier women generally organized fundraising and social services in support of the resistance, others prepared food for students in free schools and cooked for resistance fighters or political prisoners. As the anticolonial struggle spread across the countryside and into the streets of Morocco’s cities, women weaponized everyday domestic objects: multiple women recount throwing household items and boiling water from their windows and rooftops onto the heads of colonial troops in Fes, for example.\textsuperscript{82}

Domestic objects and skills were weaponized for the resistance in subtler ways as well. Aicha Senhaji (born ca. 1937) married Abdellah Senhaji, a resistance leader, and was immediately swept up into the cause performing a number of roles from within her marital home in Casablanca:

I prepared lots of food, and I sent it to the prisoners. That was my work, me, always at home. They took the food to those who had been captured, the members of the resistance who had been arrested…all the money we had went for the resistance, for fighters, and for cooking for them or for prisoners…we used to have to escape [from the police] and hide in different houses.\textsuperscript{83}

Because her husband was frequently on the run from colonial authorities, Aicha always had a


\textsuperscript{82} Baker, \textit{Voices of Resistance}, 9, 83, 220. Baker’s collection includes a number of detailed accounts of women’s lives as part of the armed resistance.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 225–26.
bag “filled without household utensils” should she need to flee one house and set up operations in another. Eventually her husband was forced to flee north to the Spanish zone, and Aicha, several months pregnant, could not follow. So essential was women’s domestic labor to the resistance that Abdellah took a second wife from Ksar El Kebir, Mena (born ca. 1936). Chosen from the family of another resistance leader, Mena immediately began cooking three meals a day for anywhere between sixty and eighty fighters, including throughout her own pregnancy. “Our job was cooking,” she remembers, “that’s all, cooking all the time. We didn’t even have time to wash ourselves and comb our hair until very late in the evening when all the work was done.”

Despite their contributions, the women of the Moroccan resistance have not been recognized or compensated for their work the same way that male resistance fighters have; many faced challenges in the process of applying for status as resistance veterans, and although their work afforded them a measure of involvement and equality with men during the struggle, after independence they were expected to resume their domestic roles. Their discontentment with the conflicting demands placed upon them by the nationalist struggle points to a central paradox in the gender history of Morocco: the politicization of traditional and gendered practices in ways that contributed to the liberation of the nation, but not necessarily of its women. This in turn relates to a conflict at the heart of many postcolonial situations, between anticolonial movements that require women’s labor but refuse to prioritize their liberation after independence is achieved.

Frantz Fanon explored a similar dynamic in Algeria in his essay “Algeria Unveiled.” At the time he was writing, in the fifth year of the Algerian revolution, women had become integral

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84 Ibid., 220–22.
85 Ibid., 223, 227.
86 Ibid., 230.
87 Ibid., 281. Baker observes that in many interview situations, particularly when groups of women who knew each other through resistance work gathered together, women spoke with a great deal of anger and bitterness at the way they had been treated after independence.
to the armed struggle, variously donning Western and traditional Algerian forms of dress as needed to smuggle weapons and bombs past the French army and taking advantage of the French reluctance to conduct personal searches of Algerian women. Fanon argued that the French will to dominate Algeria in part through its women produced an entrenched commitment to gendered practices like veiling and seclusion. He interpreted women’s embrace of these and other gendered roles as a sign of their commitment to an independent Algeria:

The Algerian woman’s ardent love of the home is not a limitation imposed by the universe. It is not hatred of the sun or the streets or spectacles. It is not a flight from the world…The Algerian woman…in choosing a form of existence limited in scope, was deepening her consciousness of the struggle and preparing for combat…In reality, the effervescence and the revolutionary spirit have been kept alive by the woman in the home. For revolutionary war is not a war of men.89

Although French policy did not aim to assimilate women in Morocco as it had in Algeria, a parallel does emerge in the way that women’s embodying of conventional gender norms, from caretaking and cooking to wearing a haik that conceals one’s body as well as smuggled weapons, become, perhaps ironically, revolutionary acts. Fanon was optimistic that women’s participation in the struggle meant they would achieve full equality following independence, and that their newly elevated status would come to be “permanent, an augury of the future, ‘modern,’ socialist, revolutionary Algeria.”90

Assia Djebar had worked as a writer at the same time as Fanon in 1950s Algeria; but unlike Fanon she lived to see the history of postcolonial Algeria unfold and therefore had the benefit of hindsight, had a different assessment of the postcolonial reality.91 In 1979, seventeen years following independence, Djebar wrote that all the work women had done for the resistance had done nothing for them in the face of a postcolonial Algerian patriarchy that consigned women to

89 Fanon, Dying Colonialism, 66. Emphasis added.
91 Ibid.
the home—and not as a matter of free choice or an expression of revolutionary solidarity. Rita Faulkner presents a powerful reading of Djebar’s work as revising Fanon’s through a powerful critique of “both traditional myths eulogizing the role of mothers and modern myths of the new woman standing equal to men.” Djebar’s analysis incisively explains a deep irony at work in Algeria, Morocco, and many other postcolonial societies: women had so long been inscribed into domestic and maternal roles as an integral part of the anticolonial process that the newly independent postcolonial political regime largely refused or failed to integrate its women on the universalist terms that colonized men and women had fought for.

Novelist Leila Abouzeid has depicted this aspect of Moroccan women’s experience in her fictional work as well as in her own memoir. Her 1983 novel ʿĀm al-fīl (The Year of the Elephant) dramatizes the story of a Moroccan woman who participates actively in the resistance only to discover that there is no place for her in postcolonial Morocco. Abouzeid herself, born in 1950, was sent to a free school in the final years of the French protectorate. She attributes this decision to her father, a political prisoner who insisted she be sent to school rather than the dār muʿallima because the sultan had instructed all Moroccan nationalists to do so. Her memoir, now a part of Morocco’s national curriculum, highlights foods saturated with cultural and religious meaning—frequently in connection with stories about Abouzeid’s mother’s visits to her husband (Leila’s father) when he was a political prisoner held by the French for his nationalist activities. Much of Abouzeid’s retelling is narrated in the voice of her mother and other women, and numerous scenes depict them bringing specific Moroccan foods to political prisoners, frequently on occasions with Islamic connotations: the soup harīra during Ramadan,

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92 Ibid., 847–48.
93 Abouzeid, Rujūʿ ilā al-ṭufūla, 66–67.
94 Ibid., 37–42.
kuskus on Fridays. The details highlight the same aspects of Moroccan food emphasized as traditional or taqlīdī by the cookbook authors discussed earlier in this chapter: in one scene a family member cooks ḥarīra not in the kitchen on a raised gas stove, but out in the courtyard over a wood-burning fire. The memoir also mentions typically Andalusi versions of tajīn and kuskus dishes.

When interviewed, Abouzeid identified her Arab heritage in terms of two distinct lineages, explaining that her mother’s ancestors “came from Andalucia in the fifteenth century” and settled in Sefrou, near Fes. She distinguished her mother’s Arab heritage from that of her father, whom she describes as a “true Arab, because his ancestors came from Arabia” in the seventh century. Her memoir pointedly emphasizes the importance of her maternal, Andalusi lineage to the birth of a modern and independent Morocco, and not only by referencing specific culinary practices that evoke that lineage and which feed imprisoned nationalists. Each of her chapters is set in a different place, framing a specific overall narrative. It begins in al-Qsiba (El Ksiba), the village where Abouzeid herself was born, proceeds to Sefrou, her mother’s hometown, and ends in Rabat, the capital of the modern Moroccan state. This framing suggests a narrative in which the nationalist movement is quite literally nourished by specific elements of Morocco’s Arab heritage, routed through urban spaces and Andalusi practices. The memoir hints at the way that a modern mode of al-aṣāla, a historically rooted authenticity, is necessary to produce an independent Morocco—and that it is inextricable from the work and narratives of women. The title of the memoir itself, Rujūʿ ilā al-ṭufūla (Return to Childhood) connotes the sense of return central to discussions of al-aṣāla in the previous chapter.

95 Ibid., 42, 118, 126.
96 Ibid., 66–67.
97 Ibid., 14, 17, 118.
98 Interview conducted by author, April 12, 2017.
Women’s education, anticolonial activism, and armed resistance transformed women’s work into matters of national significance in new ways. In the context of the anticolonial movement, embodying certain gender norms became a revolutionary means to subvert colonial domination, lending them a more complex significance than simply the results of the ideological dictates of Moroccan elites or reformers. Women’s contributions to the independence movement and armed resistance highlighted their importance to the life of the nation—but in ways that concretely produced gendered expectations of women’s forms of citizenship and belonging.

In the kitchen, these forms frequently highlighted the allegedly Andalusi foods of Fes, Tetouan, and Rabat and nearly always emphasized the importance of maternal lineage over other historical narratives. Realigning these traditions within the context of the new nation and its nuclear families replaced and overwrote other historical narratives. It elided the historical roles played by enslaved women and Amazigh populations while absorbing others, like the heritage of the Andalusis that settled Fes, Rabat, and Tetouan. Performed in the context of the new Moroccan family headed by the sultan (later king) as its political and symbolic head, cooking was transformed from a tradition into a way to enact and perform national authenticity. Oral histories of women born in the decades after independence explain how this unfolded through a specific culinary habitus by which certain traditions become authenticated as Moroccan.

Cooking Authentic Traditions in Modern Kitchens
This culinary habitus, comprising a set of habits and strategies, evolved alongside the emergence of a new middle class in Morocco. As in Egypt, this class included both elements of the old elites, including the merchant bourgeoisie of Fes, as well as upwardly mobile families who migrated from the countryside to the cities in search of the educational and work opportunities that would situate them in a new middle class. Shana Cohen locates the roots of a “modern
middle class” in Morocco in the colonial period, but writes that it expanded considerably after independence, when it occupied a “new space of social mobility.” Under the French protectorate, many Fasi merchant families (of whom many, though not all, identify as having Andalusi heritage) relocated to Casablanca in order to maintain and expand their commercial interests in the new commercial hub and were “united in the Istiqlal Party to fight against French capital and for control of domestic industry and commerce.” Fasis remained a dominant force in business, politics, and the administration after independence.

Meanwhile, the gradual expansion of educational opportunities and the rise of modern professions, including a significant public sector, led to the creation of what André Adam terms a new “bourgeoisie of the diploma,” whereby Moroccans whose parents had little or no education entered the new urban professional classes. In 1920, one in ten Moroccans were living in cities; by 1950 it was one in four, and by 1982, that fraction was well over one in three, with 42.8 percent of Moroccans city dwellers. In the 1960s and 70s, the middle class continued to grow, with the expansion of the public sector, the introduction of state food subsidies, and a gradual increase in women’s workforce participation. Cohen argues that the creation of the middle class was not only a matter of responding to personnel needs in the administrative and commercial sectors created by the departure of the French after independence, but also a new concept of national development. This approach viewed the modern middle class as both an object and instrument of development. What Cohen refers to as “the ideology of an essential, unified Moroccan society” was inextricable from the notion of the modern middle class.

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99 Cohen, Searching for a Different Future, 13.
100 Ibid., 41.
101 Ibid., 13.
102 Ibid., 43, 47.
103 Ibid., 47–50.
104 Ibid., 65.
105 Ibid., 37.
other words, towards the end of the colonial period and in the initial decades of independence, the middle class became identified with the Moroccan nation in various new ways, both practical and ideological.

Focusing on cooking practices within this class integrates women’s domestic labor into this narrative of the rise of the middle classes in modern Morocco. This leads to a narrative in which Moroccan women are historical actors who played key roles in producing the nation—sometimes in ways that contradict or complicate official narratives about Moroccan national culture. While often women in the new middle classes sought to integrate Andalusi foods into their personal culinary repertoires, they just as often drew on the significance of maternal lineages of knowledge transmission to posit the authenticity of alternate dishes and culinary influences in describing what constituted “authentic” and “traditional” Moroccan food. Below, I draw on oral histories of women born in the 1960s and 70s and who represent a range of the family backgrounds that produced Morocco’s new middle classes during those decades.

Following independence, very few cooking lessons or domestic science classes took place in state schools in Morocco, leaving homes and families the primary site of authority in domestic and culinary matters. For Moroccan women growing up in the 1960s and 70s in post-independence Morocco, the kitchen was the primary site where the transmission of culinary knowledge occurred or was even attempted. As in Egypt, some women told stories about calling their mothers for recipes on the telephone, after marriage; others who for various reasons did not learn directly from their mothers and grandmothers related how they learned from friends and neighbors or other female relatives. But two features of Moroccan women’s oral kitchen histories stood out and were shared by nearly all of the women I interviewed.
The first was the articulation of a mode of learning culinary knowledge that was immersive, intimate, and affective—and explicitly differentiated from formal learning processes or forms of labor. Women emphasized learning through observation, smell, repetition, and trial and error, usually in the context of their childhood home kitchens. The majority emphasized that as girls they were expected to help their mothers in the kitchen after returning home from school each day, and that was how they had learned to cook and clean. “You learn by watching,” one woman explained, “without even being aware of it, because you are there…It’s not a duty; it just happens.” Another woman differentiated this process from the formal educational processes, which were narrated with verbs like “teaching” (ʿallim) and studying (qrā) were appended. When I asked her if her mother had taught her to cook, she answered in the negative. “She didn’t teach me. I just started going into the kitchen; I saw what she did. Then I tried it myself.” Learning her family’s culinary traditions was a matter of immersion: simply being in the right place to observe and absorb as a child. As another interviewee pointed out, you can’t learn smell from a cookbook. When I asked another how she learned to cook at home, she said, “we learn by love…you observe and see, then you stand next to your mother and she tells you. Then the neighbor knocks at the door, [asking] what did you do? I did this, and this, and this.” Learning recipes was a matter of conversation, social exchange, and smells wafting through an apartment building: a form of knowledge as feeling that engaged all of the senses.

Interviewees also emphasized the importance of tracing sound culinary knowledge through maternal lines of transmission. Many women emphasized the continuity of cooking styles within their family from their grandmother to their mother to them, despite sometimes drastic changes in kitchen equipment or geography. Thanks to increased mobility and exposure

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106 Interview conducted by author, April 8, 2018.
to other cultures, various European foods had entered the Moroccan culinary scene; by the 1960s European recipes were increasingly popular in home cooking, a trend that accelerated in subsequent decades. Amidst these changes, identifying certain culinary traditions within maternal lineages stood out as a way to discern what foods were definitively Moroccan. In addition, the notion that the ability and knowledge to make Moroccan food in a manner unchanged from the way their mothers and grandmothers had emerged in the interviews as a way to claim a kind of status, regardless of a family’s regional origin or social class. I use the term *al-aṣāla* to refer to the way that these two elements of culinary habitus worked to materialize elements of modern domesticity—authenticating selected traditions in modern kitchens while asserting the roots of those traditions within the family and therefore the nation.

*Andalusi Imaginaries*

For women who trace their family lineage to the Andalusis who left Iberia beginning in the fifteenth century, that heritage continues to frame the way they understand and describe their family’s culinary practices. Fatima (b. 1961) is from an old Fasi family. Until the age of eight, she lived in her family’s *riyāḍ*, or traditional courtyard home, in the Fes medina, where she watched her mother and grandmother cook in a kitchen she describes as *bildī*, traditional (the Moroccan equivalent of *baladī*). When she was eight her family moved to a more modern apartment in the *ville nouvelle* with an updated kitchen. Upon marriage she and her husband briefly moved to Senegal, for his work, and they now live in Rabat. Despite these drastic shifts in kitchen environments throughout her life, Fatima emphasizes that she makes food exactly the same way (la même façon) as her mother, and that her mother’s cooking in turn is exactly the

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107 Interview conducted by author, August 7, 2017.
same as her grandmother’s (ṭīyyāḥ waḥd, bḥāl bḥāl: one cuisine, exactly alike). Although my questions were phrased in Moroccan Arabic, Fatima frequently code-switched between Arabic and French. In addition to speaking the prestigious Fasi dialect of Moroccan Arabic, her frequent use of French signaled her education and social status.¹⁰⁸ In comparison to other families in the Fes medina, she explained her family was “modern” (using the French word moderne) for various reasons—including, for instance, that even in their traditional kitchen they had a large window allowing for light and ventilation.

Fatima’s sense of her own relationship to food and authenticity was informed by her membership in a community of other Fasis and closely tied to Fes as a place, even long after she had left. When I asked why she never cooked with fenugreek she simply replied “it isn’t ours. There is never fenugreek in a Fasi kitchen.” A “Fasi kitchen” in her understanding was not simply a kitchen in Fes; it existed anywhere that members of a certain group of Fasis cooked with their characteristic spices and distinctive cuisine, such as bastīla and mqallī chicken. Explaining another specific food tradition (al-taqlīd) related to smen, or clarified butter, she explained that even though she does not practice this she knows it because “this is Fasi cuisine…I am Fasi.” For her, cooking Fasi food and being Fasi are one. When attempting to explain to me why she did not make rafīsa, a dish requiring the use of fenugreek, other than the tautological “because I am Fasi and Fasis don’t do that,” she explained that the Fasi kitchen was historically associated with the culture of the makhzen, Morocco’s historical governing class, and to the royal court, as well as Andalusi heritage, as though it were self-evident that such populations would not deign to use the spice.

Most striking, however, was Fatima’s commitment to the notion that the experience of

¹⁰⁸ For a detailed analysis of Fasi dialect and language ideology in Morocco, see Hachimi, “The Urban and the Urbane.”
growing up in a Fasi kitchen and observing her mother and grandmother cook forged an
authentic set of culinary habits and instincts that could withstand significant changes in
environment. The authenticity of her Fasi cooking rested on the right inculcation and
environment in childhood within the right environment and lineage. Fatima’s narrative was
ultimately about maintaining continuity and tradition in spite of patterns of mobility and
migration. In her view, her family’s culinary tradition could withstand any geographic
displacement, including the various forms of mobility typical of the modern middle class (e.g.,
moving from medina to ville nouvelle or relocating one’s family abroad for a work opportu-
nity). This tradition did not preclude simultaneous claims to social distinction through identifying as
modern: by Fatima’s logic, the fact that she had learned properly from her mother and
grandmother established her cooking as authentic wherever she practiced it. Her culinary habitus
fuses tenets of modern domesticity, middle-class culture, and an Andalusi version of Moroccan
Arab identity.

Zohour (b. 1965) comes from a Rabati family on her mother’s side, while her father’s
family is from Oujda, on the Algerian border.¹⁰⁹ Her maternal grandparents had homes both in
the Rabat medina and in Laarache, in the north of Morocco. She explained that the latter was an
apartment in a building constructed by Andalusis who left Spain and sought to build “an
Andalusia in Morocco.” Her maternal side of the family had a deep attachment to making bastila
in a specific way, but the dish was not in the culinary repertoire of her paternal grandmother in
Oujda, whose family had no claims of connections to al-Andalus. Zohour recalls that bastila was
the first course at her wedding, where her mother personally oversaw the preparation of thirty of
the pastries. Her family background demonstrates how, over the course of generations, Moroccan

¹⁰⁹ Interview conducted by author, April 8, 2018.
families that may only have partial connections to Andalusi heritage have come to prepare dominant foods like *bastīla* to mark important life occasions. These histories explain how serving *bastīla* evolved into an essential practice of the modern Moroccan middle class.

Zohour had a similar narrative of culinary authenticity as Fatima, explaining at first that “we altered nothing from my grandmother to my mother…nothing was changed.” But once the discussion turned to specific recipes, she qualified what she meant by this, explaining that she had altered certain aspects of her mother’s and grandmother’s recipes for health reasons—using honey rather than sugar in sweets, serving Moroccan tea without sugar, and removing red meat from her family’s diet. But she articulated a logic that justified these changes as immaterial to the authenticity of her family’s culinary traditions. “I altered the sugar because it impacts my daughters’ behavior. If there’s anything I’ve changed, it’s the sugar. But I’m maintaining the tradition—we don’t buy boxes of cookies,” she explained. She justified her reforms to specific traditions, in other words, by invoking the domestic ideal of responsible motherhood to maintain their authenticity. The key to maintaining the tradition in a modern world, for her, was to uphold a “tradition of making” and find a way to avoid purchasing pre-prepared foods. Similarly, although her family ate little meat, she made exceptions when they were entertaining guests and for Eid al-Adha, as in those situations the importance of consuming meat outweighed the decisions she made about her nuclear family unit’s nutritional and health needs.

*Rural to Urban Migration: Reconfiguring Lines of Transmission*

Fatima and Zohour come from families that have been urbanized for generations, but a significant percentage of Morocco’s middle-class come from families that were rural just a few generations ago, and who do not identify with Andalusi heritage or other historical forms of
Moroccan urbanity. Regardless, an emphasis on maternal lineage in culinary traditions proved equally important for women from these backgrounds, in one way or another. Amina (b. 1969) was born in a village outside of Rabat and now lives in a city apartment. She still consumes certain food products from her family’s land in the country, however, and insists that her cooking is precisely the same as her grandmother’s. Although her mother died when she was young, she learned how to cook from her mother’s sister and from watching her grandmother and other women in the family. Amina identifies authentic Moroccan food, the kind her grandmother made, closely with the land where some of her elder relatives still live. “The food in the market and that stuff they sell in boxes is not good,” she explained to me. According to Amina, the more an ingredient has been processed, transported, or handled, the less likely it is to produce good food. “A spoonful of local olive oil is better than a cup of vegetable oil,” she declared, referring to the government-subsidized cooking oil that many Moroccans now use because they can no longer afford local olive oil.

For Amina, the way that women nourish their families is tied to the fate of society as a whole, and the future does not look good. She disapproves of women who no longer make foods from scratch:

Women today don’t make bread or cook; they get food from a restaurant…Today’s woman only sees her mother every now and then. It isn’t like before, when women would take care of their home and children so that the family would not be spoiled. Now when she marries there is no real purpose. And this is going to spoil the country.

Amina used the same verb, *khsir* (to spoil, squander, or fail) to refer to a mother ruining her family, the resulting spoilage of the country, and also the spoilage that will happen to clarified butter if it is not properly salted. For Amina, preserving and caring for food in the most minutely material ways are directly linked to preserving and caring for Moroccan society and its families.

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110 Interview conducted by author, July 22, 2017.
Amina rejects what she sees as problems posed by the convenience foods, supermarkets, and restaurants of city life and counters with her own version of culinary tradition rooted in rural space. Her logic of authenticity, however, is similar to that of Fatima and Zohour, in that it is explicitly grounded in her grandmother’s culinary practices. She also marshals the values embedded in her culinary practice to make arguments about the stakes of home cooking for the family and nation, demonstrating her own respectability by explaining how her family’s food practices uphold middle-class domestic ideals.

Finally, the family history of Aida (b. 1964) weaves narratives of rural to urban migration that demonstrate how over the course of several generations, the transmission of recipes directly from mother to daughter sometimes breaks down, creating space for dominant foods to insert themselves into the family repertoires of a new middle class. Aida learned very little about cooking from her own mother, learning to cook instead after she married from a number of friends whose Rabati families did maintain certain culinary traditions. As part of a highly educated, mobile middle class, Aida’s own rural culinary heritage was supplemented, though not entirely supplanted, by recipes reflecting the Andalusi flavors of Morocco’s dominant cuisines.

Aida was born into an Amazigh Rifi family and spent her early childhood in Nador, a provincial city on Morocco’s north coast. Her family’s history reflects an internal series of migrations within Morocco, from a village in the Rif Mountains to the provincial capital, where her father had moved in 1940. When Aida was a teenager her family moved to Rabat where the schools were better, motivated in part by her mother’s desire that the children receive a quality French-style education. This pattern, by which a family moves from a village to a provincial capital to the national capital over the course of two or three generations, was a common one in

\[\text{Interview conducted by author, July 13, 2017.}\]
interviews I conducted in both Egypt and Morocco. It slightly complicates the commonly
rehearsed narrative of rural-to-urban migration, which implies that individuals or families move
directly from “country to city,” directly from a village to the capital. In Aida’s case, it provided
her access to excellent secondary and university education but at the expense of culinary
education in her mother’s kitchen: because her father’s business was still based in Nador, she and
her siblings spent considerable time apart from her parents, with women employed by her
parents doing much of the cooking as she attended high school in Rabat. Because her mother had
grown up in French Algeria, where she was exposed to more European cooking than the women
on her father’s side, Aida’s mother’s culinary repertoire was a mixture of traditional Rifi dishes
and European ones like quiches, salads, and pastas. Aida learned some European dishes from
cookbooks written in French. “But I didn’t learn Moroccan cooking from those books,” she
explained, “I learned it after I married, from my friends.”

Whereas her mother’s ṭajīn style reflected ingredients typical of the north coastal region,
with more fish than meat and the use of oil, cumin, and black and red pepper, Aida befriended
numerous women who taught her how to make the dishes of Morocco’s urban cuisines: “You
can add other things to ṭajīn,” she explained, “like cinnamon and prunes”—naming two
ingredients typical to Fasi and Rabati cuisines, which frequently mix cinnamon and dried fruit
into savory meat dishes. “I have friends who did learn with their mothers, Moroccan recipes like
the foods from Rabat and Fes and Casablanca,” Aida explained—“the Moroccan cooking of their
grandmothers (ṭabkh maghribī dyal jdāthum). For example, there was a friend I always spent Eid
with. I would help her cook, but the cuisine we made was her family’s.”

Aida began learning these recipes, including basṭīla, in Rabat after she married, both
from friends and by watching the first Moroccan celebrity television chef, Abderrahim Bargache.
While she described these as “Moroccan” recipes, she did not include her mother’s or grandmother’s culinary repertoire into this category—instead describing the foods of her early childhood as local, country food (*mākla bildiyya*), food from the Rif, or alternately, Western food introduced through the family’s contact with French Algeria or the nearby Spanish enclave of Melilla. Aida’s case illustrates the way that the notion of tradition authenticated by maternal lines of transmission becomes national tradition within the context of circles of mobile, educated, middle-class women. It also highlights the way that patterns of mobility in modern Morocco favor urban and Arab identifiers over rural and Amazigh ones.

These histories illustrate how in Morocco, a modern culinary habitus emerged through a combination of middle-class mobility, modern domestic ideals tying the nuclear family to the nation, and a cultural history that defined and privileged specific Arab and urban traditions. This has not resulted in a practical way in the collapsing of Moroccan cooking into a single set of dishes, but it does create a logic by which the family, and specifically the domestic work of its women, produces the nation.

When I asked her about the nature of modern Moroccan cuisine, Choumicha Chafay highlighted a commitment to tradition, defined through adhering to one’s mother’s and grandmother’s style of cooking, as the most important common ground that Moroccans shared. “For most Moroccans, there is a need to cook in a traditional way (*ṭarīqa taqlidiyya*),” she told me. “If I post a *kuskus* recipe on Facebook the whole world will talk about it and protest saying ‘we don’t put *fūl* in our *kuskus*’ …in Morocco, you don’t forget anything that reminds you of your mother or grandmother, your family when you were young.” Sure enough, as I was writing this chapter Choumicha tweeted an image of *kuskus* that featured peas. The tweet sparked a social media scandal, dozens of indignant anti-pea memes, and heated online debates. An
examination of culinary practice demonstrates that Moroccan culinary habitus extends far beyond elite-driven processes that assert the dominance of certain culinary traditions as national cuisine. It encompasses instead a learned practical sense that sometimes engages and sometimes contests culturally dominant terms of what it means to cook Moroccan. In doing so, however, it fully embraces and expresses the aspects of modern domesticity that emphasize the simultaneous affective and material importance of women’s work within the framework of the modern nuclear family. Moroccan culinary habitus illustrates how the modern Moroccan nation came to be produced not only by state officials or cultural elites, but by women cooking at home.
Chapter 6
Refining Sauces: Recipes for a Nation

“Sauces are distillations of desire.”
— Harold McGee

This chapter uses cooking sauce to trace and compare expressions of modernity in the emergence of national culinary tastes in twentieth-century Egypt and Morocco. Preceding chapters have demonstrated that as home kitchens became modern spaces, cooking became a central practice through which cookbook authors and home cooks defined their lives. Here, I shift focus from the kitchen and the cook to the material qualities of food itself, taking examples from the category of sauces. What was entailed in making sauces modern? What were the tastes and textures of that modernity? What does it mean that “modernity” and related concepts materialize into such strikingly different tastes in different circumstances? In answering these questions, I show that producing sauces that conveyed modernity, refinement, and urbanity became important among the urban middle classes of Egypt and Morocco during the middle decades of the twentieth century—but in differing and ultimately contingent ways.

Making Sauces Modern

My approach to the study of modernity follows the work of Paul Rabinow, who argues that since modernity “has no essence, and refers to so many diverse things, it seems futile—or simply part of the modernizing process—to worry extensively about abstract definitions.”2 Rabinow proposes a more concrete and ethnographic alternative: “to explore how the term has been

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understood and used by its self-proclaimed practitioners.” Omnia El Shakry adopts a similar approach in her study of the Arabic writings of Egyptian reformers who promoted modern motherhood and childrearing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; rather than comparing their writings directly to Western discourses on the subject, she instead situates their work “within an Islamic discursive tradition and a national nonsecular project of modernity” that entailed both linguistic translations and cultural adaptations of colonial discourse. In doing so El Shakry parses out key similarities as well as differences between Arab reformist and European colonial understandings of modern motherhood. This chapter takes a similar approach, beginning from the premise that the cookbook authors and home cooks of the middle classes count among the “self-proclaimed practitioners” of modernity, and that their attempts to implement modernity in cooking deserve to be examined on their own terms.

While Rabinow and El Shakry are largely concerned with fields of knowledge, social technologies, and norms, I extend this approach to include quotidian practices like preparing and eating food, which I analyze on sensory, aesthetic, and material levels. In this sense my work follows that of Lara Deeb, whose study of the relationship between Islamic piety and modernity in Lebanon deliberately focuses on the everyday practices of those who claim to inhabit what she calls “an enchanted modern” through particular attention to both “embodied and discursive forms of piety.” Rather than addressing questions of piety, Islam, and enchantment, this chapter turns to the relationship between the everyday textures and flavors and the ways that they produced and came to signify national belonging, refinement, and modernity.

3 Rabinow, French Modern, 9.
One goal of this approach is to focus a feminist analytical lens on questions of modernity and nationalism. I consider what is typically considered women’s work, including emotion work and forms of culinary expertise that are not formally recognized or taught, on an equal footing with the forms of expertise and education that are more likely to be gendered as male, from literature written in classical Arabic to technical expertise that is typically associated with modernization and nation-building on a large scale. While this chapter includes readings of cookbooks, it also accounts for the ways that women acquired knowledge and expertise about “modern” sauces outside of culinary training institutions or cookbooks written in formal linguistic registers, and considers women’s informally acquired expertise alongside more visible and formal manifestations of culinary modernity. This chapter also builds on the “material turn” to ask how modernity became concrete, acquiring social and cultural meaning through specific flavors, textures, and chemical manipulations of ingredients made possible by material reconfigurations of food systems and new kitchen technologies like refrigeration and gas stoves.6

In tracing how modernity materialized through cooking sauces, I focus on a number of linked concepts that define the particular sensibility of modern cuisine (and sauce) in North Africa. In Arabic they are expressed in Arabic as al-raqī, connoting refinement as superiority, progress, or elevation, al-tamaddun, which connotes refinement associated with education and urbanity, and al-haḍāra, sometimes translated as civilization or culture, with strong connotations of the urban or settled environment as well. In the French language sources consulted here (cookbooks as well as ethnographic material), a parallel sensibility is expressed through evocations of la civilisation and the adjective raffinement. Just as concepts like urbanity and

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refinement in English connote specific spatial and material qualities (e.g., the sophistication of urban versus rural cultures, the texturally fine weave of the cloth of a refined garment), similar connotations hold for the Arabic and French terms; I explain how they manifest in sauces.

To weave together these various aspects of the meanings of modern culinary refinement, I use Daniel Wickberg’s framework of sensibility—a concept that comprises “the elements of sense perception, cognition, emotion, aesthetic form, moral judgment, and cultural difference.” I trace expressions of modernity, expressed through the qualities of refinement and urbanity, to explain how cultural differences evolved within Egypt and Morocco. I examine the conceptual, moral, aesthetic, sensory, and material layers of culinary modernity as it materialized in cooking sauces. In Egypt, refined flour replaced coarser materials like chopped nuts as sauce thickeners of choice. In Morocco, specific spice and flavor combinations historically common in certain urban cuisines, like the use of dried fruit in meat dishes and spice blends like cinnamon, saffron, and ginger, became desirable for those who sought to demonstrate refinement. In both cases, the acquisition of new kitchen appliances also emerged as a means to demonstrate a refined culinary sensibility. By mapping the processes of “cooking modernity” beyond the conceptual and moral into the realm of the aesthetic, sensory, and material, I propose a means for reading and analyzing modernities even when they are not explicitly labeled or expressed as such.

In this sense I am drawing on the work of a number of anthropologists who move beyond language to concentrate on materiality. In particular I take up Webb Keane’s argument that materiality is “integral, not subservient” to signification and meaning. Keane argues that the meaning of particular qualities “must be embodied in something in particular” and thereby

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8 Miller, Materiality, 31.
connected to other qualities, which he refers to as copresence or bundling. In order to explain
the social meaning and significance of something as quotidian as a cooking sauce, this chapter
explores how specific qualities—refinement, modernity, and those qualities that make something
legible as “Egyptian” or “Moroccan”—are bundled with specific ingredients, spices, textures,
bodily gestures, and kitchen technologies. Keane points out that to focus closely on the
materiality of things as a way to discern their social meaning is not simply a matter of “the
expression of ‘identities.’” Rather he suggests that a new kind of material thing (in his
example, clothing) “makes possible or inhibits new practices, habits and intentions; it invites
new projects.” Thus my point is not to claim that making béchamel was always a deliberate,
conscious expression of sophistication for a midcentury Egyptian home cook, or that a new
member of the Moroccan urban middle class necessarily cooked a certain type of tājīn with the
intent of expressing some specific form of urbanity. Instead I argue that our understanding of
various new projects and intentions, whether the formation of Egyptian and Moroccan national
cultures or the establishment of new forms of Arab modernity, must be understood as being
made possible and manifest through everyday materialities.

Whereas Benedict Anderson highlighted the role of print cultures and language in forging
“imagined communities,” here I extend my analysis beyond language, following the thread of
how certain ideas expressed in Arabic print cultures extended into the Egyptian and Moroccan
kitchens in comparable yet contingent ways to produce feelings of belonging expressed through
specific textures and flavors—national communities that were not so much imagined as they
were viscerally tasted and felt.

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10 Ibid., 192–93.
11 Ibid., 193.
12 Anderson, Imagined Communities.
Because they are fundamental building blocks of cuisines and culinary technique and key carriers of flavor, sauces are useful for tracking how modern forms of refinement and urbanity concretized in the kitchen. Focusing on sauces also enables a historiographical intervention in the field of global food history—a field which has expanded considerably beyond the study of Western cuisines in recent years but which in many ways remains dominated by Eurocentric frameworks and narratives. The discussions of sauce in this chapter revise and complicate dominant narratives of French culinary hegemony by demonstrating how a French culinary sensibility gained traction in Egypt but not in Morocco. At the same time, I argue that the openness of béchamel sauce as a signifier qualifies the way this modern French culinary sensibility operated in Egypt. By arguing that culinary modernity can be found in aesthetic and material expressions beyond the context of modern French cuisine, this chapter counters dominant narratives that highlight the global hegemony of French cuisine from the nineteenth century onwards—suggesting that modernity is both historically particular and contingent. Overall, sauce illustrates the important role that the mundane, the domestic, and the material play in the history of public cultures and national identity formation. By tracing how cooks and cookbook authors express modernity through specific claims and linking those claims to webs of meaning that bundle specific material qualities with more abstract notions of culinary modernity and refinement, I offer a model for reading cultural meaning in the everyday.

14 On the surface level, this is all the more curious given that Morocco, not Egypt, was formally colonized by France.
Making Sauce Modern: The French Paradigm

A central narrative in Western food history is the transition from medieval cuisine to modern cuisine in France, starting with the emergence of French *nouvelle cuisine* around 1740 and progressing through a series of related culinary styles.\(^{15}\) French cuisine subsequently rose to global prominence and today remains a hegemonic cooking style worldwide. Sauce was central to distinguishing the old French cuisine from the new, as was the integral link between the development of a new kind of stove technology, the raised stove, and the development of a new kind of sauce. Here I present a brief overview of how sauce made possible a new sensibility of modern refinement in French cuisine in ways that were initially highly indexical—connected to specific material and sensory qualities—and eventually came to signify modernity in more abstracted ways.

Medieval European cooking was seasoned with “grainy-textured, condiment-like sauces” that were easy to cook over an open hearth, blended many ingredients, and incorporated contrasting flavors and spices.\(^{16}\) As French cuisine transformed starting in the eighteenth century, however, these gave way to “warm emulsified sauces and sauces thickened with roux,” smooth and well-blended concoctions that were entirely different from their predecessors not only in taste, ingredients, and texture, but in process and composition: they were made separately from the food they seasoned, rather than in the same dish.\(^{17}\) Typically these sauces begin with a roux, a mixture of fat and flour, which gives the sauce the material quality of adhering to another ingredient (e.g., a meat, vegetable, or pasta), thus compensating for the fact that they are prepared separately from a dish’s main ingredient. This fits in with the overall aesthetic aim of

\(^{15}\) Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste*, 155. Note that already the labeling of this French culinary styles as “bourgeoise” indicates the relationship between this cuisine and the urban environment.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 109.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 108–9.
the emerging French culinary sensibility: the new sauces were intended to “accent the natural characteristics of principal ingredients” rather than stand out on account of the flavors intrinsic to the sauces themselves.\textsuperscript{18} By the early twentieth century, the French chef Auguste Escoffier had codified five such sauces as the “mother sauces” of French cuisine: béchamel, espagnole, hollandaise, tomato, and velouté. These remain fundamental to modern French culinary technique and are the basis for its other sauces.

For their proponents, these sauces expressed an understanding of modern refinement not only on account of their textual smoothness and new material qualities, but on conceptual and moral levels as well. Vanina Leschziner and Andrew Dakin locate the emergence of modern French cuisine as a new ordering of tastes as well as the distinguishing of cuisine as a field independent from medicine, corresponding to “a general epistemic shift in the way phenomena were classified, as well as…changing economic and institutional conditions.”\textsuperscript{19} That the new French sauces were part of a culinary system that was considered independent from medicine represented a break from past conceptions of food and nutrition. The new cuisine, associated with a growing bourgeoisie, was also tied to the idea that food choices represented a way for an individual to demonstrate her own preferences and taste—rather than a predetermined and fixed set of dishes or foods that was a simple function of a person’s social standing.

These shifts also coincided with political changes, most notably the French revolution, that imbued the new cuisine with specific moral qualities. Attitudes towards cuisine were democratized, countering the notion that elites and others should have separate diets. This divide between “high and humble cuisines” had been characteristic of the ancien régime and indeed

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Leschziner and Dakin, “Theorizing Cuisine,” 349.
most food systems worldwide up until the modern period.\textsuperscript{20} Although French cuisine is popularly regarded as elite food today, when it was created it was designed, in a sense, to emphasize simplicity, authenticity, and a connection to nature. At the time this was a move towards a more democratic way of eating that stemmed from a moral critique of older culinary styles associated with the despotism of absolute rule.

As a result, in France and elsewhere during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a new kind of culinary style, the “middling cuisine,” emerged, representing a step up from the diets of the poor, with more meat and more variety, while remaining simpler than the elaborate high cuisines of the aristocracy and royalty. Rachel Laudan observes that “In the West, the appearance of middling cuisines ran in close parallel with the extension of the vote…Nothing proclaims your equality more than eating the same as other people.”\textsuperscript{21} The new French sauces remained a means to indicate social distinction by performing or displaying refinement, but the change they marked was that the opportunity to access varied, elaborate, and refined foods was opened to a wider swath of the population rather than restricted to the upper echelons of society. Even those who could not afford to eat in the emerging institution of the modern restaurant could at least aspire to do so, because the moral economy of French cuisine had shifted to a new sensibility that theoretically granted everyone the right to the same food.\textsuperscript{22} Cuisine gradually shifted from something simply dictated by one’s social status to a means of participation in a new kind of public.

\textsuperscript{20} Laudan, \textit{Cuisine and Empire}, 208.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 208–9.
\textsuperscript{22} Rebecca Spang, \textit{The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). Discussing various forms of public eating that emerged in 1790s France that eventually came to be associated with the modern restaurant, Spang writes that “the Revolution’s ideal tables functioned as spaces of solidarity and uniformity, not of idiosyncrasy and preference. They promised equality and sustenance, not distinction and restoration. Directly challenging the modes of social and cultural differentiation to which Old-Regime restaurants had catered, the Revolution’s communitarian meals necessarily focused attention on all forms of table-based sociability,” 92–3.
This in turn went hand-in-hand with the emergence of national cuisines, a process that granted status to certain culinary techniques and foods as a means through which modern citizens could taste and feel a sense of belonging to a new national community. Laudan asserts that “diners tended to identify cuisines as national, not imperial, by 1920.”²³ Although I suggest that this timeline varied in non-Western societies like Egypt and Morocco, with distinct national culinary styles emerging in the 1930s in Egypt and the 1950s in Morocco, I do maintain that a central element of a modern sauce is its status as an affective link through which an individual might express her sense of attachment and belonging to a national community.

In modern French cooking specifically, the status of modern sauces as refined culinary material was attached to specific material and sensory qualities. Unlike previous expressions of culinary refinement, the new sauces were thickened with refined flour and cooking processes that emulsified their constituent parts into materially finer substances that resulted in a new kind of sensory experience in terms of appearance, taste, and mouthfeel. The result of emulsification was to blend completely the fat, liquid, and solid elements of a sauce into one consistent texture, literally refining the feel of the sauce. Rather than include complex blends of spices, seasonings, and varied textures, their flavors also reflected a new understanding of refinement through a more simplified and streamlined aesthetic. Finally, they were made possible with the help of new kitchen technologies like the raised stoves and modern saucepans discussed in Chapter One. In other words, promoting French sauces as modern and refined was not merely a matter of distinguishing them from older ways of saucing dishes, or of their significance within a new political or epistemological framework. It was also bundled with specific material, sensory, and aesthetic dimensions that were integral to the production of their social meaning.

²³ Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 249.
Making Sauce Modern, Globally

Following the work of Norbert Elias, historians have also described modern French cuisine and its sauces as part of a “civilizing process” that entailed moving towards more moderate, restrained, subdued modes of taste and behavior.\(^{24}\) One component of the self-restraint typified by these sauces, for example, lay in a more understated, moderate use of spices in cooking.\(^{25}\) Stephen Mennell explains that “the civilizing of appetite” was related to a host of other historical developments, from better food supplies to colonial conquest.\(^{26}\) Inevitably the history behind these sauces, and broader trends reflecting what it meant to be refined, modern, and civilized, were bound up with the colonial histories of European empires. As Patricia Morton writes, “during the 19th and early 20th century, the discourse of restraint and civilization developed such that distinction between races and cultures were gauged by eating habits, tastes, and table manners.”\(^{27}\) During the same time frame, French cuisine was globalized as a hallmark of sophistication and “civilized” dining in dozens of capitals worldwide, with French sauces prominent indicators of culinary refinement: Laudan explains that the French milk-based sauce béchamel became “by far the most useful sauce for making a dish appear French.”\(^{28}\) From Mexico to India to Egypt, adding béchamel sauce became a way to make any local vegetable or dish “respectable” and to mark oneself as a member of a “global cosmopolitan elite.”\(^{29}\)

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\(^{24}\) By referencing the “civilizing process,” I am drawing on Norbert Elias’ paradigm, which holds that that bodily sensibilities, such as practices and attitudes related to food and drink, offer a means to track social change over time. Elias argued that changes in bodily comportment in Western Europe were tied to larger, structural changes in society, most notably the consolidation of state violence and the rise of the modern state. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, ed. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).


\(^{27}\) Morton, “Consuming the Colonies,” 64.

\(^{28}\) Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, 288.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.
cuisine and its sauces, in other words, represented a way for people all over the world to declare that they were modern, civilized, and refined.

This resonates with arguments made by Ann Laura Stoler and other scholars of colonialism about the inextricability of metropolitan discourses about domesticity, refinement, and respectability from colonial spaces and experiences. Stoler argues that the “choreography of the everyday” of colonizing men and women, including culinary practices, stemmed directly from anxieties about maintaining morality and racial purity of European populations. As these new norms circulated between colony and metropole, everyday domestic spaces became important sites in both spheres for establishing and maintaining new distinctions based on class, gender, race, and ethnicity in a range of contexts, including the new Moroccan and Egyptian middle classes.

Making Sauce Modern in North Africa

While new “middling” and national cuisines developed alongside the expansion of suffrage in the West, in most colonized societies these cuisines emerged in the context of colonial rule and the rise of anticolonial movements. The result was the complex reception of new culinary norms across North Africa. While the conceptual terms of these links took root among North African urban middle classes and elites in ways that paralleled similar configurations in the metropole, they in no way predicted or dictated the aesthetics or flavors of the foods to which these new concepts of modernity and refinement were actually attached. As a result, while there were broad similarities in the conceptual and moral terms through which “modern” cuisine took root in

30 Stoler, Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power, 17.
Egypt and Morocco, there were salient aesthetic, affective, material, and sensory differences between the two.

While the majority of this chapter turns to more material aspects of sauces themselves and how they were concocted in the context of “the choreography of the everyday,” to use Stoler’s phrase, I begin with an overview of the differences between Egyptian and Moroccan cuisine as expressed through cookbooks. Cookbooks provide a useful starting point for understanding the similarities and differences in various understandings of culinary refinement between Egypt and Morocco. As texts they stake out the basic terms of the sensibility of sauces in each: their introductory material and overall structure presents food in conceptual and moral frameworks, pantry sections prescribe the ideal material equipment and ingredients for producing food, and recipes offer insight into the sensory and aesthetic terms through which the cookbook’s overall philosophy is conveyed.

Here I outline how modern culinary refinement is expressed as a sensibility desirable in cooking sauces in a small sample of cookbooks (or sections of cookbooks) written by Egyptians and Moroccans between the 1940s and the 1970s: Nazira Niqula and Bahiya ʿUthman’s ʿUṣūl al-ṭahī: al-naẓārī wa-l-ʿamālī (Egypt, 1941), Basima Zaki Ibrahim’s Māʿidat al-ḥaṣb (1959), Nazira Niqula’s ʿAṯbāq ladhīdha wa-aṣnāf sarīʿa li-l-marʿa al-ʿāmila (Egypt, 1975), Ahmed Sefrioui’s preface to Zette Guinaudeau’s Fes vu par sa cuisine (Morocco, 1957), Latifa Bennani-Smires’ La cuisine Marocaine (Morocco, 1970), and Fatima al-Rahuni’s Fann al-ṭabkh al-Maghribī al-Tīwānī al-ḥāṣil (Morocco, 1973).

All of these cookbooks highlight the colonial logic of a civilizational discourse that considered cuisine a means to diagnose or convey civilized refinement and good taste in explicitly national terms. Niqula and ʿUthman’s cookbook addresses the women and girls of the
Egyptian homeland (*al-waṭan*) and emphasizes that the book is intended both to reflect their readers’ “good taste” (*dhawq salīm*) and guide them towards leading a “refined domestic life” (*al-ḥayāt al-manziliyya al-rāqiyya*). These sentiments are consistent with the language expressed in Egyptian cookbooks post-independence, well through the mid-1970s. This language reflects a central aspect of culinary modernity in these contexts: its advocates, like these cookbook authors, referred to a form of refinement that was specifically “middling” and middle-class, balancing practicality with sophistication and taste with thrift. National cuisines, in other words, were strongly identified with and as modern middle-class cuisines. As visions of modern national futures increasingly implied that all citizens deserved the advantages of a middle-class life, national foods were part of the “middling” cuisines that everyone theoretically could access. Niqula and ʿUthman list the kitchen tools required for a “middle-class kitchen” (*al-maṭbakh al-mutawassit*) and Ibrahim also addresses a middle-class audience (see Chapter Two) while al-Rahuni specifies two types of recipes: one for a feast or celebration, which makes eight servings, and the other for a nuclear family of four, or *usra mutawassita*.

Cookbook authors in both countries link a particular form of moral virtue, often associated with a middle-class positionality, to a woman’s domestic culinary practices. Al-Rahuni stresses cleanliness and hygiene, stating that “it is shameful for a housewife to have a dirty kitchen.” Niqula and ʿUthman identify teaching young women to cook as part of a process of moral education (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*). Both Egyptian and Moroccan cookbooks during this

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32 Al-Rahuni explained to me that in using this phrase she meant a “middle-sized” or nuclear family, as opposed to an extended family. Nevertheless it is notable that she uses the same adjective used to indicate “middle-class” in other contexts, including the Egyptian cookbook authors that were the models for her cookbook. Similarly the growth of the middle classes and the rise of the nuclear family operate along parallel and linked trajectories.
33 al-Rahuni, 5.
period held up the cooking style of the nation as an important frame for claims to moral
dignity and civility.

Moroccan cookbooks also identify a national cooking style whose refinement and
sophistication place it on a comparable footing with French cuisine. This is in contrast to
Egyptian cookbooks, which make no such explicit link or comparison. Moroccan novelist
Ahmed Sefrioui’s preface to Zette Guinaudeau’s 1957 cookbook observes that cuisine “reflects a
people’s degree of civilization” and that “Moroccan cuisine is among the most savory and
refined” of world cuisines.35 Latifa Bennani-Smires’ 1970 cookbook *La cuisine Marocaine*
features a foreword written by two French writers, directed at French readers, that uses words
like “erudite” (*savante*) and “refined” (*raffinée*) to describe Moroccan cuisine.36 This might be
read as an assertion that Moroccan cuisine, as presented in the cookbook, is a worthy rival or
equivalent of French cuisine as a vehicle of civilization and refinement. And Fatima al-Rahuni’s
1973 cookbook of Tetouani cuisine stresses the importance of preserving the authenticity of
Moroccan cuisine, evoking words like civilization (*al-ḥāḍāra*), ethnic roots (*al-ʿarāqa*), and
Moroccan nationalism (*al-qawmiyya al-Maghribīyya*) as concepts that are characteristic of, and
preserved in, proper Moroccan cooking.37

A closer look into the aesthetic, material, and sensory configurations to which these
concepts were attached reveals further differences in the flavors, textures, and kitchen tools that
indexed modern refined cuisine in each case. First, the aesthetic and sensory manifestations of
this refined modern cuisine differ from Egypt to Morocco. The Egyptian case tracks closely to

35 Ahmed Sefrioui, preface to Guinaudeau, *Fès vu par sa cuisine*.
36 Latifa Bennani-Smires, *La cuisine Marocaine* (Casablanca: Editions Alpha, 1974), 4; Fettouma Benkirane, *La
37 Fatima al-Rahuni, *Fann al-ṭabkh al-Maghribī al-Tiṭwānī al-aṣīl*, 4th ed. (Tetouan, Morocco: Matbaʿa Widan,
1995), np.
the aesthetics of colonial modernity in the form of both French cuisine and British domestic science—unsurprising given the British educations of most Egyptian cookbook authors (Chapter Two). Egyptian cookbook authors explicitly identify their subject as “modern cooking” (al-ṭabkh al-hadīth or al-tahī al-hadīth) and organize their cookbooks along the same schematic lines as both French and British cookbooks from the same period. Typically this includes a separate chapter devoted to sauces, which translates the basic aesthetic philosophy and basic techniques of French cuisine into Arabic. The principles of this French modern culinary sensibility are applied throughout Egyptian cookbooks, from pantry sections that include lists of spices as well as the specific seasonings used within the cookbooks’ recipes. Ingredients that had long been part of Egyptian cooking, like fenugreek (ḥulba) and hot peppers, are omitted or downplayed, while herbs like sage, which is more typical of continental European cuisine and less common in Egypt, are included. The overall flavor profile of the foods in Egyptian cookbooks from this period emphasizes foods with subtle rather than bold spicing, no pungent flavors or aromas, and little use of hot and spicy seasonings.

Moroccan cookbooks also translate the terms of refinement into a culinary vision that conveys a modern sensibility, but is attached to a very different set of material factors. They highlight a style of cooking associated with Andalusi and to a lesser extent, Mediterranean influences. These establish a sense of authenticity and rootedness in place while distinguishing Moroccan cuisine from the rest of the Arabic-speaking world by situating it as either adjacent to or literally within the European continent. An introduction to Bennani-Smires’s cookbook, written by decorated French chef Raymond Oliver, declares that Moroccan cuisine is on equal footing with French cuisine, emphasizing that both share a Mediterranean heritage.38 Al-Rahuni

38 Raymond Oliver, Foreword, Bennani-Smires, *La cuisine Marocaine.*
is careful to distinguish Andalusi Moroccan cuisine and European cuisine as equal but separate, citing the need to defend Tetouani cuisine against “foods imported from the West.”\textsuperscript{39} Eric Calderwood has argued that the strong identification of Moroccan culture with Andalusi history and heritage is in fact “a modern invention that emerged from the colonial encounter between Spain and Morocco in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”\textsuperscript{40} I suggest that cuisine offers a glimpse into the way this logic worked not only among intellectuals and politicians, but in the private sphere of everyday practices and tastes. In this sense both Egyptian authors’ fixation with French cuisine and their British domestic science educations and Moroccan authors’ emphasis on Andalusi cuisine can be read as engagements with colonial modernities.

Another example of the way that Moroccan cookbooks promote a specifically modern culinary sensibility in a more abstracted way is through the categories that structure the books’ content. Both Bennani-Smires’ and al-Rahuni’s books have structural similarities to French cookbooks, but unlike Egyptian cookbooks, these categories are then filled out with exclusively Moroccan culinary content. Bennani-Smires, for example, lists four sauces (“M’qualli, M’hammer, K’dra, M’chermel”), echoing the mother sauce paradigm of French cuisine. But the ingredients and techniques of these sauces are historically Moroccan and in no way resemble French sauces. The notion of structure—the idea that a cuisine has building blocks of base sauces—helps distinguish Moroccan cuisine as modern, elaborate, and sophisticated. Within this framework the flavors both Bennani-Smires and al-Rahuni prescribe, which emphasize fragrant blends such as ginger, saffron, and cinnamon, bear some similarities to the refining impulses of the Egyptian cookbooks—fenugreek is conspicuously absent in both, despite its significance in

\textsuperscript{39} al-Rahuni, \textit{Fann al-tabkh al-Maghribi al-Ti\textsuperscript{\textdegree}w\textsuperscript{\textdegree}n\textsuperscript{\textdegree} al-a\textsuperscript{\textdegree}sil}, 3.
historical Egyptian and Moroccan foodways. But the Moroccan cookbooks also depart from the culinary aesthetic of Egyptian and French cookbooks in important ways: they do include hot pepper, for instance, and mix sweet and savory flavors prodigiously: sugar and honey are listed as key seasonings in their pantry sections. Bennani-Smires and al-Rahuni both feature spice blends like ras al-ḥanūt, whose distinctive blend is earthy and sometimes pungent.

Moreover, the divergent iterations of modern refinement in these cookbooks depend upon very different material arrangements: comparing the ideal kitchens prescribed in Egyptian versus Moroccan cookbooks reveals differences in heat sources, the type and material of cooking receptacles and utensils, and kitchen appliances. Egyptian cookbooks highlight the latest in kitchen technology, from Primus stoves in the 1940s to electronic food processors in the 1970s.41 Even though at times Egyptian authors gesture to the fact that these kitchens remain aspirational for most Egyptians, the latest kitchen technology is nevertheless held up as an ideal. A 1959 Egyptian cookbook features two images of a gleaming kitchen with a gas stove, refrigerator, and Formica counters, captioned, “two modern kitchens…we hope that every Egyptian kitchen looks like this someday.”42

The Moroccan cookbooks also integrate some modern technologies, like gas stoves and refrigerators, in their instructions and prescriptions. But unlike Egyptian cookbooks, which tend towards a universal set of kitchen equipment that has no distinctively Egyptian elements, Moroccan cookbooks also include lists of specialized equipment that emphasize the need for maintaining a uniquely Moroccan and traditional kitchen. These lists typically include a kiskās, or nesting stew and steamer pots for making couscous, a clay tagine for making stews, and a

charcoal brazier. Certain recipes in the Moroccan cookbooks furthermore specify the use of these traditional implements for particular recipes. The message is that one’s kitchen might modernize, but this does not mean that older Moroccan cooking implements can be dispensed with entirely. By the 1970s the typical middle-class urban kitchen in either place would have had running water, an electric refrigerator, and a gas stove. But for the Egyptian cookbook author, the production of refined cuisine was dependent upon a fully modernized kitchen, whereas for the Moroccan cookbook author, it was the opposite: to continue to produce refined foods as a modern housewife, one had to master both, while resisting the relinquishing of traditional cookware in the face of modernization.

In summary, these two sets of cookbooks attach conceptual dimensions of modern culinary refinement—cuisine as a moral force, as a site of nationally oriented attachment, and as a sign of cultural sophistication—to vastly different material and aesthetic qualities. The Egyptian cookbook authors highlight continental culinary techniques in ways that are explicitly modern (ḥadīth) while the Moroccan authors promote a vision of modern cuisine more implicitly, bundling culinary modernity with local traditions specific to Fes and Tetouan, Moroccan cities associated with Andalusi heritage. Approaching cuisine through the framework of sensibility and its various elements—conceptual and material alike—allows a reading of culinary modernity as open and contingent.

The remainder of this chapter considers the histories and sensibilities of a series of specific cooking sauces. I begin with a discussion of the sauce techniques that were shared between Egypt and Morocco prior to the modernization of the kitchen. Next I trace how sauces diversified as they came to newly signify refinement, urbanity, and national culinary character. Jumping off the pages of cookbooks into the material features of these sauces and ethnographic
data, I explore the varying tastes of modernity in Egypt and Morocco. The aim is to show how modernities can be understood through the “modes of perception and feeling,” in Wickberg’s phrase, through which they generated social meaning. This leads to a reading of modernity not as universal, abstract, modal, or inevitable, but rather contingent, palpable, and local.

**Stews and Braises: Baseline Culinary Techniques**

Before turning to the modern culinary styles that emerged in twentieth-century Egypt and Morocco, I examine two cooking techniques that were already dominant in North African home cooking—braises and stews—in order to argue how new and “modern” sauces represented a rupture in the region’s culinary history. The widespread nature of these earlier approaches to cooking and sauce in Egypt and Morocco highlights the extent of the region’s shared culinary heritage leading up to the twentieth century. It also establishes a baseline for arguing why newer sauces marked such a significant departure from the status quo—in a way that must be understood not only conceptually but through bundlings of ingredients, techniques, textures, and equipment.

This section offers a brief overview of techniques and vocabularies associated with braising and stewing over coals or open flames that dominated much North African cooking prior to the advent of gas stoves, focusing on two examples that remain widespread today: Egyptian *tashīka* and the Moroccan *ṭājīn*. Discussing “pre-modern” sauces that are still popular in everyday cooking underscores the point that they were by no means displaced by the newer techniques. Including them thereby works against a teleological narrative of food history that might explain cuisines as progressing or modernizing along a particular arc, or towards a French or European model. My intent in discussing these sauces is to address the ways that older
culinary styles persisted even as they were updated and adapted for new kitchens, and acknowledge their continued existence alongside newer sauces.

Braises and stews are similar culinary techniques involving cooking multiple ingredients—typically meat, vegetables, fat, and seasonings—all together in liquid, often in a covered vessel, over a long period of time. The primary difference between the two is the amount of liquid used: a braise involves the minimum amount of liquid necessary, often added after ingredients are browned in fat, while stewing involves immersing the ingredients in liquid. These techniques are linked practically and semantically to the types of cooking technology used to make them. The word braise comes from the French word for hot charcoal, also the origin of the word brazier, and stew comes from a French word for a hot enclosure. Similarly, the Moroccan Arabic word ṭājin and the Egyptian ṭājin [ṭāgin] can refer both to dishes cooked in a particular way as well as to the cooking vessel itself.

That these are one-pot, single-burner meals speaks to their economy and versatility, meaning they are easily adapted to new stove technologies as well as to regional and seasonal variations. Harold McGee explains cooking the meat slowly at a simmer “allows the meat enzymes to tenderize and flavor the meat,” meaning that the technique transforms even a small amount of meat or a tough cut into an edible portion, distributing its flavors to the sauce that seasons the dish. In a practical sense, dishes like these make efficient use of fuel and heat resources, and because they require only one pot, minimal water and time are needed to clean up afterwards. These qualities make stews and braises amenable to both high and humble cuisines:

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43 McGee, On Food and Cooking, 162.
44 Ibid., 162.
45 Ibid., 164.
they are able to accommodate significant quantities of meat and expensive spices but are also suitable for simpler preparations of vegetables and herbs.\textsuperscript{46}

\textit{Egypt’s Red Sauce: Tasbïka}

Improbably, my introduction to the paradigmatic Egyptian stew took place at Dar al-Watha’iq al-Qawmiyya, the Egyptian National Archives. During a discussion with a group of archival officials about which collections would be most useful for my study of the kitchen, the only other woman in the room gave me a hard look. “If you really want to understand the Egyptian kitchen,” she said, “you need to know \textit{tasbïka}.” The Egyptian men in the room quickly agreed.

\textit{Tasbïka} is only one name for a tomato-based stew common not only in Egypt but throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. In Egypt in everyday conversation it is more frequently referred to not as \textit{tasbïka} or any of its other names, but by the name of its principal vegetable ingredient.\textsuperscript{47} It has a number of variations, but its essence is meat and vegetables cooked slowly in a tomato sauce. Its foundation is a \textit{taqliya}, akin to a \textit{sofrito}, which involves frying chopped onions, and often garlic, in \textit{samna} (clarified butter). Many cooks explained to me that this step distinguishes the resulting sauce from a simple tomato \textit{salsa}. Next a significant volume of grated or blended tomato pulp, the principal vegetable (usually dictated by the season), and herbs or

\textsuperscript{46} Rachel Laudan notes that similarly structured one-pot dishes, consisting of some combination of “grains, roots, greens, and a bit of meat” dominated humble cuisines for much of history in many parts of the world, always with local variations, which in Europe alone included “\textit{pot au feu, potage, bollito misto, puchero, or escudella}.” Laudan, \textit{Cuisine and Empire}, 40.

\textsuperscript{47} In Egypt this genre of stew is sometimes referred to using the passive participle of \textit{tasbïka} as “\textit{khuḍār musabbak}” (stewed vegetables) or \textit{khuḍār bi-l-dim’a}, “\textit{dim’a}” referring to the specific type of tomato sauce involved. Malak Rouchdy refers to the dish using the latter term, which she classifies as central to Egyptian “traditional eating habits,” and describes as “favoring meat/poultry and vegetable stew cooked in onion and tomato sauce” in “Food Recipes and Kitchen Space: Constructing Social Identities and New Frontiers,” in \textit{Cultural Dynamics in Contemporary Egypt}, ed. Maha Abdelrahman et al., vol. 27, Cairo Papers in Social Science (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006), 132. Various Egyptian cookbooks from the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century typically label these dishes as \textit{khuḍār bi-l-dim’a} or \textit{yakhni}. 255
spices are added, along with pieces of red meat. The pot is then left on low heat until the tomato broth has transformed from a liquid to a nearly solid consistency, and “the fat rises to the top” (al-samna bi-yaṭlaʾ or al-zayt bi-yaṭlaʾ) of the mixture.

One common quality ascribed to a proper tashīka was that it should be jāmid (gāmid), which in Egyptian Arabic connotes a range of meanings. It can mean solid in a material sense, as in hard or congealed; more abstractly it can mean strong or robust. One interviewee, Hanan, used the word repeatedly both to describe the material nature of tashīka and to praise my own knowledge about certain culinary terms or foods from her own childhood—the implication being that for a foreigner to know such things her knowledge must be extensive, robust, and the result of significant study over time. She (and others) described the gāmid quality of tashīka as copresent or bundled both with the dish’s samna, which lends it a heavy (daqīl) and rich character, as well as with the long process of reducing the tomato pulp and juice to something denser, more solid, and more intensely flavored.

These material qualities are not unrelated to the etymologies of the Arabic root s-b-k, which range from metallurgic processes by which molten metal is molded and solidified or flatbread formed from flour.\footnote{Arabic-English Lexicon, s.v. “s-b-k,” Edward William Lane and Stanley Lane-Poole.} Colloquial understandings of the verb sabbaka include reducing (in the culinary sense), doing something well, and expressing an idea with eloquence and economy of language.\footnote{The former definition comes from the Hinds-Badawi dictionary, which also describes the stew. The latter usage was described to me by Dr. Yasser Mongy, an Egyptian professor and art critic. A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic, s.v. “s-b-k,” Martin Hinds and El-Said Badawi.} All of these various meanings materialize in the saucing technique, which transforms all of its various components into a single flavor profile, distributing and intensifying flavors and richness through a specific material process in order to improve the flavor of all the ingredients—as they are transformed from disparate ingredients and textures to a
unified mass held together by a rich red sauce. This in turn is broadly in line with a premodern culinary aesthetic common to both Europe and North Africa by which “sauces fused with principal ingredients,” reflecting an “understanding of cooking as the art of transforming raw material into wholesome, digestible, invigorating food.”

Ethnographically, the most striking aspect of *tasbīka* was that it was both everywhere and nowhere: every Egyptian I asked about it recognized it and knew it well when I brought it up, but few thought to explicitly name it in either formal oral history interviews or casual conversation about Egyptian cuisine. When I did bring it up, everyone had an opinion about how it should be made and declared its importance to the everyday Egyptian kitchen. No other food, except for *fūl mudammas*, was mentioned as regularly and consistently in my fieldwork conversations and interviews as *tasbīka* stews by a cross-section of Egyptian families, including families with diverse geographic origins and the full range of middle-class trajectories—from those who had moved to a large city relatively recently and whose children were the first generation of the family to join the modern professional classes to families descended from the Turkish aristocracy. One interviewee described it as “the most basic Egyptian food,” while another interlocutor called it “the mother of all dishes.” Oral history interviewees born both before and after Egyptian independence spoke of *tasbīka* as something learned very early childhood, a culinary technique acquired so early as to be nearly innate. Hanan, who was born in 1940 in a village outside Minya in Upper Egypt, distinguishes between the complicated city foods she learned from her neighbors in Alexandria after marriage and the *baladī* foods she learned from

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51 Interview conducted by author, October 5, 2016. The second comment was from an audience member at a talk given at the American Research Center in Egypt on October 26, 2016.
her mother. “I knew *tasbïka* my whole life,” she said, “from the moment I was born…back then, the food was all cooked *bi-tasbïka*.”

At the same time, the technique is infrequently referenced in print sources, and despite its ubiquity it is often not given a specific categorization or name within the context of European cookbook organizational schemes. Niqula and ʿUthman’s cookbook, for instance, translates “braising” as *al-tasbïk* but then lists recipes only for European-style braises that feature none of the elements described above. The cookbook includes a separate recipe in its sauce chapter titled *šalṣat al-ṭamâṭim al-maʾrūfa bi-l-dimʿa* (“tomato sauce, known as al-*dimʿa*”) rather than granting *tasbïka* or *dimʿa* the distinction and status of its own category or technique.\(^{52}\) I suggested above that the categories that structure cookbooks are a key vehicle through which culinary modernity is conveyed; *tasbïka* is clearly excluded from this organizational scheme in this influential cookbook.

Despite its ubiquity and the consistency with which many people describe the stew, *tasbïka* has not gone unchanged. Its simplicity enabled it to make the transition from being cooked in copper pots over coals to aluminum pots over gas. As a result, the various qualities associated with it are not bundled with any particular cookware or cooking technology: they are copresent rather with the specific combinations of ingredients involved as well as with the rice that typically accompanies the stew when it is served. These configurations were subject to change too, however, in limited ways: by the 1970s as new nutritional concerns arose in Egyptian society, a new variant of the technique known as *nayy fî nayy* (“raw in raw”) became popular. This technique entails the same general method as *tasbïka* but with a far shorter cooking time, so that the vegetable ingredients are much closer to raw; additionally the vegetables are

\(^{52}\) Niqula and ʿUthman, *Uṣūl al-ṭahī, 100.*
cooked with oil rather than clarified butter for a version of the dish many believed to be lighter and healthier. Many women who had grown up in the 1960s and early 1970s recall their mothers gradually removing samna from their traditional dishes and swapping in vegetable oil, which was considered lighter and healthier. In another adaptation, Nour, an interviewee born in the mid-1960s, recalls her grandmother making a tadbika-style sauce to dress pasta dishes because she did not know how to make a white, French-style sauce.

In summary, tadbika is indicative of the overall sensibility of Egyptian cooking prior to the emergence of sauces as vehicles or expressions of a modern culinary sensibility—although it was clearly not untouched by those discourses, as evidenced by nayy fi nayy. It adheres to several principles of “pre-modern” culinary techniques: one-pot meals, stews and braises that integrate all components with mixed textures, and a flavor profile in which meat, vegetable, and sauce all share the same flavors. The rise in popularity of béchamel sauce, which will be discussed below, marked a significant departure from the culinary sensibility that underpins tadbika.

Morocco’s Essential Braise: The Ṭājīn

“Peut-on imaginer la cuisine marocaine sans son tajine?”
—Fatema Hal, Les Saveurs et Les Gestes53

What tadbika is to cooking in Egypt the ṭājīn is to cooking in Morocco. Like the quintessential Egyptian stew, a ṭājīn is less a specific recipe or dish and more a technique or category of dishes. All of its various elements—fat, liquid, vegetables, and sometimes meat, fruit, and nuts—added and cooked together in a specific order on low heat over a long period of time. In another similarity, many cooks cite the moment the fat separates from the sauce as a sign that the sauce is

properly done.\textsuperscript{54} In this sense both techniques reflect a premodern culinary sensibility in which diverse ingredients are transformed into a uniformly flavored new substance. Another key component of the \textit{ṭājīn} is the bread that doubles as the utensil used to eat it; this element is as integral to the meaning of the \textit{ṭājīn} as rice is to the consumption of \textit{tashbīka}.

Unlike \textit{tashbīka}, \textit{ṭājīn} is a braise, meaning that managing the right amount of liquid in the resulting sauce is an essential component of the technique, regardless of a cook’s culinary, cultural, and geographic background. As Amina, a home cook from a rural background who also works occasionally as a cook for wealthier families in nearby Rabat, explained to me, “the key to the sauce is the right amount of water. It should slide off a spoon, but not too quickly.”\textsuperscript{55} Similarly Fatima, who explicitly identifies her cooking style with the high bourgeois cuisine of Fes, cautioned that the sauce in one’s \textit{ṭājīn} must not be too thick.\textsuperscript{56} Like \textit{tashbīka}, a \textit{ṭājīn} can be made with little or no meat or significant quantities of meat. Its other components are highly variable: it can feature expensive imported spices like cinnamon and saffron or local herbs and seasonings, with seasonal vegetables and with or without fruit. As a result it is amenable to a range of adaptations based on geography, culture, and social class. Claudia Roden argues that Morocco “inherited more than any other Muslim country the high culinary culture of medieval Baghdad, which was itself heavily influenced by Persian cooking traditions.”\textsuperscript{57} She cites a particular category of \textit{ṭājīn}, those that “marry meat with vegetables or with fruit, the savory with the sweet, and an extraordinarily delicate blend of spices,” as a key example of the manifestation of this influence in later aristocratic and bourgeois cuisines in Morocco.\textsuperscript{58} In less affluent

\textsuperscript{54} In Moroccan Arabic the fat component of a \textit{ṭājīn} sauce is referred to as \textit{iydām}.
\textsuperscript{55} Interview conducted by author, July 22, 2017.
\textsuperscript{56} Interview conducted by author, August 7, 2017.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 251.
kitchens or rural kitchens where cultural influences are quite different, however, the ṭājīn is also common, and may be made with only vegetables, simpler spicing, and little or no meat.

What makes a ṭājīn a ṭājīn, then, is the fact that its ingredients are cooked together in a slow braise and in a clay pot with a conical lid, preferably over a slow-burning fire or coals. In a sense the word contains the same doubled meaning as the English word dish, which refers both to a vessel and to a specific food cooked or served within it—but with far greater specificity. The French-Moroccan chef and culinary anthropologist Fatema Hal succinctly explains the various essential qualities of Moroccan cuisine that are copresent with the clay ṭājīn, and the way their aesthetic, material, and practical qualities are bundled:

It is true that the tajine brings together all the elements that represent the archetype of the Moroccan dish. Its form — conical; its material — terracotta, well adapted to cooking over the kanoun [brazier]; the beauty of its ornamental motifs; the clarity of the colors; the brilliance of its enamel; the ochre tones of varnished earth…but beyond these aesthetic characteristics, one cannot forget the practical qualities of the tajine. The cooking process, always very gentle, allows the ingredients to simmer longer as the earth protects it from flames that would burn metal. The heat diffuses slowly on the walls of the vessel, and the lid, finally keeps it warm while waiting the arrival of the guests.59

Not only is the ṭājīn here described in terms of a connected set of visual, gustatory, and haptic culinary aesthetic qualities, these extend to the vessel’s relationship with the type of cooking technology best-suited to it as well as the values of hospitality: a ṭājīn is aesthetically, practically, and materially suited to serving one’s guests properly. A similar understanding of the importance of the right kind of vessel to the production of a well-cooked meal was expressed to me in much simpler terms by a merchant specializing in high-quality antique cookware: “Ṭājīn māshī cocotte” (“a ṭājīn is not a pressure cooker”) he shrugged. To him the idea that a mass-manufactured pressure cooker designed for cooking food quickly could never produce the same quality of food as a handmade vessel designed for cooking slowly was obvious to the point of

59 Hal, Saveurs & les gestes, 77.
being tautological. In sum, the ṭājīn signifies an entire culinary sensibility bound up with cultural authenticity, good and proper food, the obligations of hospitality, producing the right amount of liquid, combining all ingredients into a unified dish, and using a specific material vessel and technique.

Although the concept of the ṭājīn has existed for centuries, however, the particular sensibility I have described here is neither timeless nor unchanging. The word ṭājīn once referred generically to a round clay cooking vessel. In Lisān al-ʿarab it is defined simply as a miqlā or generic dish used for cooking.⁶⁰ Textual and archaeological evidence from the medieval period in al-Andalus and Morocco suggests that the ṭājīn was originally a lidless round clay vessel and more commonly used in an oven, much like today’s Egyptian ṭājin [ṭăgin].⁶¹

Yet by the time modern print cookbooks were produced in and about Moroccan cooking in the 1950s, the ṭājīn and the kind of dish cooked within it was synonymous with the ṭājīn slāwī, a round clay vessel with a fitted conical lid. Associated with cooking a particular kind of braised dish over a brazier, it was also a staple of a new genre of cookbook that sought to define and promote a version of Moroccan cuisine that was both rooted in local culinary traditions and sophisticated, modern, and refined. The ṭājīn, now embodied in a specific piece of cookware, was an essential hallmark of that framing: its presence anchored a modern middle-class kitchen in the proper culinary traditions, particularly when paired with the proper spices and technique—even if used over a gas stove. This twentieth-century iteration of the ṭājīn marks a specific culinary sensibility read through the bundling of a combination of ingredients—meat, vegetables, fruits, seasonings, and fat—slow-cooked together in a specific kind of clay vessel, over low heat, with the proper amount of liquid to produce a thick unctuous sauce.

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⁶⁰ Lisān al-ʿarab, s.v. “ṭ-j-n,” Edward William Lane and Stanley Lane-Poole.
Modernizing North African Sauces: Béchamel in Egypt

In Egypt, béchamel is the clearest example of how the home kitchen was transformed into a space where a modern culinary sensibility was produced, tasted, and domesticated as Egyptian. Béchamel marks a distinct shift in sensibility from the model of *tasbīka*; it also conforms neatly to a narrative of French culinary hegemony in which modernity materialized into a distinct class position that claimed a form of refinement bundled with distinct cooking tools and technologies. Béchamel was one of the smooth, roux-based French sauces that were cornerstones of a new and explicitly modern French cuisine; part of a global trend, they made their way into elite kitchens in Egypt in the mid- to late nineteenth century. First produced by professional male chefs for the Turkish-speaking rulers and aristocracy of Egypt, these sauces were eventually served in restaurants frequented by expanding urban middle classes before becoming a staple of Egyptian home cooking. Smoother and simpler in flavor than the sauce produced through *tasbīka*, béchamel also features few seasonings besides salt and pepper— in a typical expression of a modern French culinary sensibility based on refinement and restraint.

This section charts the history of béchamel in modern Egypt, detailing its origin in elite nineteenth-century kitchens, its movement into restaurants, its translation into the standardized Arabic of cookbooks, and how it became cemented as a staple of middle-class home cooking. I frame the latter portions of this narrative using a history of *macarona béchamel*, a popular Egyptian casserole dish of pasta, ground beef, tomatoes, and béchamel sauce. Originally modeled on a Greek dish but today a staple of Egyptian home cooking, *macarona béchamel* exemplifies how a French mother sauce became popularized within the Egyptian home kitchen.
Béchamel and other French sauces first entered Egypt in the context of a gradual turn to French cuisine among Egypt’s rulers and aristocracy in the mid-nineteenth century. Egypt had been an Ottoman province since the sixteenth century, but the viceregal reign of the country under the dynasty founded by Muhammad ‘Ali (r. 1805-1848) marked a period of increasing independence from Istanbul. The degrees of political autonomy established by Egypt’s Turkish-speaking khedives were accompanied by cultural shifts: for example, although originally the practices and ceremonies of the Egyptian khedival court were modeled on those of the imperial court in Istanbul, this began to change in the middle of the century with a turn towards the court culture of French emperor Napoleon III. Felix Konrad describes how beginning in the 1850s, “Ottoman patterns of representation receded, while European forms came to the fore.”

French and Italian entertainments like operas and ballets became popular at court, as did banquets—which increasingly featured French cuisine. By the reign of Khedive Said (r. 1854-63) the palace kitchen staff included a French chef.

Court menus attest to the dominance of French cuisine at palace banquets by the turn of the twentieth century. One banquet menu from 1896, written in French, opens with consommé de volaille and ends with a savarin aux fruits. It includes no Egyptian or Ottoman dishes and explicitly identifies one course as “modern:” langues a la moderne. A similar menu from 1899, for a banquet celebrating the thirty-year anniversary of the opening of the Suez Canal, features

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62 Felix Konrad, “Global and Local Patterns of Communication at the Court of the Egyptian Khedives (1840-1880),” in Court Cultures in the Muslim World: 7th to 19th Centuries, ed. Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (New York: Routledge, 2011), 244.

63 Russell, New Egyptian Woman, 13. See Russell pp. 13-15 for a description of the various foods, beverages, and kitchen and dining implements imported by Said’s successor Ismail as the French mode of entertaining became more elaborate within the khedival household.

asparagus in a cream sauce, a sorbet course to cleanse the palate, a cheese course with dessert, and other staples of high French dining. The only nod to anything remotely local is a “Khedivial potage” (soup) served at the start of the banquet.

By the 1930s the political situation had changed considerably, as had palace culture. Following Egypt’s nominal independence in 1922, members of the monarchy took pains to prove their affinity with Egyptian culture, speaking Arabic and appearing in the press as consumers of the cheap popular staple food fūl mudammas. Although a 1939 court banquet menu indicates that Arabic as well as French was used at this point in printing these documents, nineteen of the banquet’s 22 courses are French. Admittedly, the few surviving banquet menus that made their way into library collections do not attest to the everyday eating habits of the Egyptian khedives and kings, which likely featured significantly more Ottoman dishes. But these menus do establish that in Egypt, serving French cuisine became a clear indication of sophistication, elite status, and refinement, alongside Ottoman Turkish recipes. Crucially, they also establish that by the turn of the twentieth century there were chefs trained in French haute cuisine working in Egypt’s most elite kitchens. This was part of a broader trend of Egyptian rulers orienting courtly culture away from Istanbul and towards Paris during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

As mentioned previously, this trend was not unique to the Egyptian court. By this point, French cuisine was “the preferred cuisine of monarchies […] and of aristocrats and monied

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66 In the magazine al-Muṣawwar, for example, an article was published in 1936 featuring a cook who allegedly made the best fūl mudammas in Cairo and who was invited to cook for the royal family as a result. “Fūl al-Hajj Ṭālī ’Assī,” al-Muṣawwar, May 21, 1936.
67 “Menu, Buffet, Palais D’Abdine,” March 4, 1939, Essam Awny Collection, American University in Cairo Rare Books and Special Collections Library. The Ottoman dishes included in the menu are “yalandji dolmas” and “counafà aux pistaches,” and “agneau de lait a la Menoufieh” is also mentioned, although likely “Menoufieh” refers to the provenance of the lamb, not the style in which it was prepared.
68 Konrad, “Global and Local Patterns.”
people everywhere, at least on those occasions when demonstrating membership in a
cosmopolitan global elite was required.”⁶⁹ Its spread worldwide was facilitated by the production
and circulation not only of cookbooks, but also French chefs with culinary expertise who
traveled across the globe, training local counterparts. Laudan observes that “the globalization of
French cuisine depended on hundreds of cooks willing to travel.”⁷⁰ Many traveled to Cairo and
Alexandria, working in palaces and other elite kitchens and training Egyptian men to make
béchamel and other fundamentals of French cuisine.

Restaurant Béchamel
As the Egyptian court increasingly turned to French cuisine, Egypt was becoming a popular
destination for European tourists, and as a result a new genre of hotels sprang up to cater to them.⁷¹ As aspiring “outposts of Europe planted on Egyptian soil,” hotels like the Cecil in
Alexandria and Shepheard’s in Cairo were another site where French cuisine was served in
Egypt.⁷² As a new salaried class of Europeans increasingly gained access to leisure travel, so too
did members of the professional classes in Egypt, who began dining at European hotels and
restaurants in Cairo and Alexandria. European restaurant culture, described in Muhammad
Muwaylihi’s satirical Hadîth ʿĪsâ Ibn Hishâm took root in Egypt’s major cities and had a lasting
influence on understandings of what constituted refined food in twentieth-century Egypt.⁷³
Muwaylihi juxtaposes French restaurant foods like asparagus and truffles with local foods like
rice and kebab to drive home the sharp contrasts between restaurant food and ordinary Egyptian

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⁶⁹ Laudan, Cuisine and Empire, 280.
⁷⁰ Ibid., 337.
⁷¹ Andrew Humphreys, Grand Hotels of Egypt: In the Golden Age of Travel (Cairo: American University in Cairo
⁷² Ibid., 15; 82.
food at the time. A major consequence of the flourishing restaurant culture was the creation of a new group of Egyptian men trained as professional chefs. They worked in the kitchens of both elite hotels and the palaces of the royal family and aristocracy, and several of them wrote cookbooks in Arabic.

The first wave of these cookbooks reflected a Turkish-influenced version of local cuisine more than French cuisine. This trend shifts markedly in the 1930s with the publication of two cookbooks whose authors explicitly identify them as books of modern cooking and devote most or all of their space to French cuisine. The first is a 1932 cookbook written by Muhammad ʿAli Abu Sunun, *Murshid al-ṭabākh al-hadīth* (Guide for the Modern Cook). The author explains that he began his culinary career working for his father, another professional Egyptian chef, at the age of nine, working in a series of hotel kitchens including the Continental and Mena House hotels in Cairo. He also names the European master chefs under whom he trained and worked, suggesting that apprenticing under these professionals was an important aspect of his culinary training and pedigree. After many years working in these hotels, Abu Sunun went on to work in King Faruq’s palace kitchens, during which time he traveled with the royal entourage to Europe where he received further culinary training.

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74 Ibid., 2:41.

75 According to Maxime Rodinson’s 1948 essay “Studies in Arabic Manuscripts Relating to Cookery,” which remains the definitive account of the history of Arabic cookbooks, the earliest Arabic print cookbook was published in 1878 in Beirut, followed by cookbooks published in Cairo in 1885, 1886, and 1889. These early books appear to focus largely on local or Turkish recipes. He describes one such volume at length, observing that it includes a section at the end—only one part out of six sections of the book—“devoted to European cookery.” Many of these books remain rare and difficult to locate, but a 1915 edition of text this genre that I managed to acquire, written by Muhammad Sidqi Afandi, is a direct translation of a Turkish text into Arabic. Its section on stews features tomato-based *yakhnī*, but there is no mention of béchamel or any other French sauce. Maxime Rodinson, “Studies in Arabic Manuscripts Relating to Cookery,” in *Medieval Arab Cookery* (London: Prospect Books, 2006), 104-7.

76 It is likely that more than two such cookbooks existed, but I have found multiple copies of these two in Cairo’s book markets. Rodinson mentions a number of other cookbooks with “ḥadīth” (modern) in the title, but they are undated.

The book, which is entirely made up of French and other European dishes translated into Arabic, suggests that professional cooks like Abu Sunun were a key avenue through which French mother sauces as well as other European dishes like *macarona béchamel* made their way into Egyptian culinary repertoires. Abu Sunun explicitly cites his desire to translate his knowledge of modern cooking into Arabic for the benefit of the Egyptian nation. “Looking at books on the art of cooking, I have found them to be in foreign languages, and none in Arabic except for a small number of booklets devoid of value,” he writes. “I thought I should contribute my knowledge of this art to the field of Arabic writing, and in doing so help build my country.”78

A similar cookbook was published in 1934, *Funūn al-ṭahī al-ḥadīth* (The Arts of Modern Cooking).79 It was co-written by two men who also had careers in the royal palace cooking for both King Fu’ad and King Faruq. Their massive 1170-page tome includes approximately 200 pages of “La Cuisine Orientale” (*al-ṭahī al-sharqī*) with the remainder devoted to “La Cuisine Français” (*al-ṭahī al-afrankī*). Its introductory pages feature not only the authors but the entire *brigade de cuisine* from the palace, all of them Egyptian and wearing white French chef hats. It can be inferred that by this point, it was not only foreign chefs but a new generation of Egyptian chefs who worked in a growing number of hotels and restaurants and had mastered the fundamentals of French cooking, which they deemed synonymous with “modern” cuisine.

The influence of this transmission of knowledge can be read through the history of *macarona béchamel*, which is practically speaking an Egyptianized version of a Greek dish called *pastitsio*. Before it became popular in Egypt, *pastitsio* was itself an example of the globalization of béchamel. Rachel Laudan notes that the dish did not originally include béchamel, but that by 1910 recipes for *pastitsio* were being published in Greek cookbooks with

78 Ibid., np.
béchamel added to lend it sophistication. It was this version that was likely introduced into the restaurants by Egypt’s Greek population, which ran a significant number of restaurants and cafés in Cairo and Alexandria. Abu Sunun’s cookbook includes a recipe for Macaronis à la Grecque (although his recipes were written in Arabic, they have French titles) that is identical to recipes for macaronà béchamel later included in cookbooks for housewives and recounted by home cooks themselves. According to these cookbooks, by the 1930s béchamel and the expertise necessary to make it were a part of the repertoire of Egyptian restaurant chefs and authors. The next wave of Egyptian cookbook authors and makers of béchamel would be women.

_Cookbook Béchamel_

The next stage in the transformation of pastitsio from a foreign restaurant dish to one prepared in Egyptian homes was its publication in the next generation of cookbooks: those written for and by Egyptian women beginning in the 1930s and 40s. These almost universally included a recipe similar or identical to pastitsio; but they titled such dishes with transliterated Arabic as “makarūna” or “ma’karūna” with white sauce or béchamel sauce, rather than “Greek” style pasta dishes as Abu Sunun had labeled his recipe. According to Omar Taher, upon her return from her training in England, Nazira Nqula furthered her education and expanded her culinary repertoire by spending time in restaurants and bakeries in Egypt—in which case she almost certainly would

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80 Laudan, _Cuisine and Empire_, 288.
81 Awad and Hammudah claim that “the vast majority” of eateries in Alexandria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were owned by Greeks; although they do not provide substantial evidence supporting this claim, their volume does detail an extensive number of landmarks cafés, bars, and restaurants in Alexandria that were founded and run by Greeks. Mohamed Awad and Sahar Hammudah, _A Taste of Alexandria: A Cosmopolitan Flavor_ (Alexandria, Egypt: Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center, 2009), 2.
82 Abu al-Sunun, _Murshid al-tabākh al-hadīth_, 97.
83 Rodinson cites a 1914 book by a woman, Munira Fransis’s _al-Ṭabbākh al-manzilī_, though I have been unable to locate a copy. Rodinson, “Studies in Arabic Manuscripts Relating to Cookery,” 106.
have encountered *pastitsio*.³⁴ Cookbook authors like Niqula who had trained in England might have learned the *pastitsio*-style dish from restaurants in Egypt, but they would also have been familiar with its constituent parts though their British training, which included French mother sauces like béchamel as well as a variety of pasta dishes and gratin-style casseroles.³⁵ This may explain why female cookbook authors did not label the dish as Greek but rather named it after its constituent parts: “macaroni with white sauce,” “macaroni with béchamel,” and so forth.³⁶

What is notable about these new names for the dish now known as *macarona béchamel* is the way that they point to béchamel as a modern kind of sauce, as distinct from a dish produced in the *tasbīka* style. According to the logic of a dish like *tasbīka*, the sauce is an integral part of the dish as a whole. But the structure of a dish titled macaroni *plus* a type of sauce makes clear that the sauce is prepared separately from the main components of the dish—reflecting a decidedly modern and French approach to making and serving sauce and to its culinary function. When discussing modern sauces, authors like Basima Zaki Ibrahim, Nazira Niqula, and Bahia ʿUthman referred to their sauces as “white,” “European,” or simply “béchamel,” and instructed that they should be thickened with a roux made with refined flour (and occasionally cheese or eggs).

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³⁵ The archives of domestic science institutions attended by Egyptian women, including Berridge House and the Gloucestershire Domestic Science Training College, attest to the inclusion of these techniques and dishes in their curricula. See Chapter Two of this dissertation. The Berridge House records are housed at the London Metropolitan Archives, while records pertaining to the Gloucestershire Domestic Science Training College can be found at both the Gloucestershire County Archives and the University Archives of the University of Gloucestershire.
It is not only the material and conceptual aspects of these cookbooks’ sauces that conform to the culinary sensibility of refinement characteristic of French cuisine: the aesthetic and arguably the moral dimensions of this sensibility are conveyed as well. This is particularly evident in the chapter that Niqula and ‘Uthman dedicate to sauces. Although the chapter, like all chapters in their book, features a mixture of European and Middle Eastern recipes, the framing of the sauce chapter and its didactic section about culinary technique adopt the key tenets that underpin the sensibility of French sauces. They define a sauce (translated as salṣa or qaliya) as “a liquid with a particular aroma (nakha) which it acquires from its basic ingredients. These are thickened, like soup, with the addition of a small amount of cornflour, flour, clarified butter, eggs, butter, cream, etc.”87 They write that a good sauce should “be free of solids or suspended fats,” that it must have no sediment or particles, and that “all of its ingredients must be combined equally and not separate out.”88 This last comment in particular resonates with French culinary technique and distinguishes this approach from the tasbīka style of sauce, wherein the separation of fat from the sauce is in fact a mark of a good finished sauce, in material and aesthetic terms.

According to Niqula and ‘Uthman, there is no sensory aspect of food that cannot be improved by a good sauce, including appearance, flavor, aroma, and texture. Finally, they note that the right kind of sauce can add nutritional value to food and diversity to one’s cooking. This remark hints at a moral dimension linked to the mother’s responsibility to feed her family well, while implying that a diversified cuisine is superior to one that merely replicates a handful of traditional recipes. This remark fits into the broader genre of these cookbooks, which sought to translate both local and foreign dishes into standard Arabic and situate them within a new framework of “modern cooking” (al-ṭahī al-ḥadīth or al-ṭabkh al-ḥadīth).

87 Niqula and ‘Uthman, Uṣūl al-ṭahī, 67.
88 Ibid.
In sum, mid-century Egyptian cookbooks written by and for women promoted a particular modern culinary sensibility that depends upon the capacity of a smooth roux-based sauce to improve, refine, and modernize existing dishes. In a sense this places bourgeois Egyptian cuisine during this period squarely within the global narrative of French culinary hegemony. And yet the transfer of this sensibility was neither straightforward nor confined to the realm of the printed word. It was facilitated and mediated by processes of apprenticeship and other educational structures, migration, generational shifts, translation, and publishing trends.

*Home-cooked bêchamel*

The appearance of a dish or a particular kind of sauce in a cookbook, of course, is not the same as its appearance in home kitchens and repertoires of family dinners. How did bêchamel, through the vehicle of *macarona bêchamel*, spread from palaces, restaurants, and cookbooks into the urban home kitchens of countless Egyptians by the 1960s? And how did understandings of how this sauce expressed a modern culinary sensibility change along the way?

Most home cooks I interviewed who had grown up in the 1960s distinctly remember the evolution of *macarona bêchamel* within the generations of their family. Their grandmothers had made baked casserole dishes with pasta, but dressed them with a red sauce, not a white sauce, and the béchamel was generally introduced to these dishes by their mothers—women born in the 1930s and 40s. This timeline, and its implications, can be explained through three key factors.

The first is leisure practices—not only dining out in restaurants, but vacationing in Alexandria, where the eating patterns of Cairene families would temporarily change. One of the many women who recalled being introduced to bêchamel in Alexandria was Nadia, who grew up in a wealthy family in Cairo in the 1960s. Although she remembers her grandfather’s villa as the
center of family dining and entertainment in Cairo, in summers spent in Alexandria her family ate out far more frequently, which exposed them to Greek cuisine, Italian pizza, and dishes involving béchamel—including Chicken Negresco, a variation on a *pastitsio*-style casserole but made with chicken.\(^{89}\) Hanan, married to a judge in Alexandria, where she raised her children in the 1960s, recalls the restaurant habits of her married life among Egypt’s professional class. “We would eat out during vacations and on Fridays,” she explained. “We ate *macarona* with ground meat, and sandwiches, and during vacations anyone with money would go to San Stefano. You’d take a servant and all the children and eat outside.”\(^{90}\) It was experiences like these that gave many Egyptians their first taste of dishes like *macarona* béchamel, chicken *pané*, and *buftīk* (beefsteak) at Greek and Italian establishments. When it first appeared in restaurants in Egypt, likely in the 1930s and 40s, the ingredients used to make béchamel—refined white flour, butter, and milk—were out of reach to many Egyptians.\(^{91}\) This is likely one factor that kept it from spreading beyond restaurant menus before the 1950s, when subsidy systems were put into place facilitating Egyptians’ access to key ingredients like eggs (often used to thicken béchamel) and flour.

The second key factor that afforded Egyptian home cooks the ability to recreate béchamel in their homes was stove technology: béchamel appeared as a staple of home cooking among Egypt’s urban middle classes around the same time that the Butagaz stove became the primary home cookstove. Import substitution policies provided the Egyptian market with locally-produced stoves as well as the manufactured aluminum pans that were rapidly replacing copper cookware. Moreover, as Chapter One describes, these appliances frequently combined a gas

\(^{89}\) Interview conducted by author, October 14, 2016.
\(^{90}\) Interview conducted by author, October 21, 2016.
\(^{91}\) I wish to acknowledge Malak Rouchdy for helping clarify this point as it relates to the production of béchamel in particular.
range with an oven, meaning that all elements and steps needed to make *macaroni béchamel* were already in far more home kitchens than had been previously the case. The advent of the gas stove is particularly crucial for preparing béchamel because the process of cooking a roux and incorporating milk and eggs into a sauce requires a stovetop that affords the cook significant temperature control. It is all but impossible to prepare a béchamel over an open fire or directly over hot coals; in fact the modern raised stove itself co-evolved with modern French sauces.\(^{92}\) The latter would not have been possible without the former.

The final factor is the avenues of culinary habitus described in Chapter Three: the range of embodied modes of learning through which the majority of home cooks’ culinary knowledge is transmitted, and the ways that this habitus transformed in urban Egyptian society during the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. Women born in the 1940s and 50s said that béchamel as a concept was introduced to them through cooking shows on the radio or television, but in every case women could name a neighbor, friend, or family member—very seldom a mother—who had taught her how to actually produce béchamel in the home kitchen. As women from a range of backgrounds moved into neighboring apartments in urban buildings, the widespread nature of béchamel was facilitated by a shift in culinary learning practices from a vertical, intergenerational model—transmission from mother to daughter—to a horizontal, intragenerational one, whereby the new housewives of a single generational group would teach and learn from one another. Magda, whose mother was born in 1941, said “I think one of my neighbors taught my mother to [make béchamel]. She was a little fancy.”\(^{93}\) Maryam, whose mother was born in 1950, explained that

\(^{93}\) Interview conducted by author, October 5, 2016.
“modern foods” (*akla ḫadītha*) like *macarona bêchamel* and chicken *panê* were not recipes that came down from her grandmother, but learned from neighbors and friends.⁹⁴

In subsequent generations, once béchamel was integrated into a woman’s home cooking repertoire, she typically would pass it down to her daughter, thus integrating it into existing intergenerational lines of transmission. Dishes made with béchamel became special occasion meals, but did not replace the everyday *tashîka* in another example of the kind of “code-switching” typical of Egyptian middle-class cuisine during this period. At the same time, through the complex series of adaptations and shifts made by béchamel, the dish now known in Egyptian Arabic as *macarona bêchamel* became identified as Egyptian—not a European dish made in Egypt. Béchamel was also integrated into other culinary practices—added to local eggplant, zucchini, and artichoke dishes, for example.

Sauce, and béchamel sauce in particular, is thus a useful lens for understanding how a distinctly Egyptian modern culinary sensibility emerged. In the context of the home kitchen, béchamel retained many of the dimensions that had distinguished it as modern in France or Greece or the khedival palace, including its smooth texture and conceptual distinction as an accompaniment for food that was prepared separately from its sauce. But it acquired a new set of dimensions as well: a shared practice of middle-class, rather than elite, cultures, an avenue through which a mother performed affective labor by producing a culinary embodiment of care, and a set of links to culinary technology with a distinct ideological dimension connected to the post-1952 state. Each of these factors created a new set of material, embodied, and social circumstances that facilitated the practice of a very different flavor of modern sensibility than that of Escoffier and his French apprentices.

⁹⁴ Interview conducted by author, November 6, 2016.
French Modern: Béchamel in Morocco

Béchamel is a useful starting point for highlighting the strident differences between the evolution of modern Moroccan and Egyptian culinary sensibilities. The majority of Moroccan territory was subject to French colonial administration and French language and culture did have significant impact on Moroccan culinary practices, even if they are not immediately apparent in the recipes that eventually emerged as token “national foods.” In other words, Moroccans did adopt western sauces like Italian red sauce and French white sauces into their culinary repertoires, but the way those sauces were attached to notions of modern Moroccan identity differs drastically from the Egyptian case.

Although béchamel was never integrated into a culinary style labeled Moroccan, the historical record attests that elite Moroccans, like Egyptians, did serve and consume French cuisine as a mark of social distinction. A British traveler in Fes in the 1940s, for instance, wrote that when he was being entertained in a prominent merchant’s household no kuskus was served, only French dishes, and that this European sensibility extended to the rest of the home which was furnished in the English style. 95 At the same time there is no evidence that the palace itself ever embraced the French culinary paradigm; instead the palace kitchens allegedly served only Moroccan dishes. When they wished to innovate or expand the palace repertoire, they looked within Morocco for inspiration—as in 1889 when the royal palace sent four cooks to the households of notables in Tetouan to learn how to make the city’s finest delicacies, after which they returned and presumably transferred what they had learned into the sultan’s kitchens. 96

French-style sauces entered a more middle-class Moroccan milieu somewhat later. While major nationalist publications began featuring women’s pages starting in the 1940s, these did not

include recipes or cooking columns. The first printed recipes in Moroccan periodicals I have been able to locate were published in *Aicha*, a women’s magazine founded in 1970 and published in French and Arabic (the language of each issue alternated between the two). Each issue of *Aicha* included a recipe section at the end.

The recipe pages of *Aicha* featured dishes like pizza, pasta, and other European or Western foods. A sampling of the recipes from 1970 in both French and Arabic includes potatoes served with a cream sauce made from a roux, tomato sauce, salmon in Hollandaise sauce, and chicken with a white sauce made with a roux. Oral history interviews corroborate the entry of these types of food increasingly into Moroccan home cooking repertoires during the 1960s and 70s. Post-independence, many Moroccans entered the middle classes through public sector jobs that afforded them access to modernized kitchens and leisure practices like dining out in restaurants. As one interviewee put it, these changes made the urban middle classes “more open to the French” than they had been when the French were seen as occupiers during the colonial period.97 Aida, who grew up in the 1960s, remembers her mother reading French magazines and making French dishes, particularly pasta dressed with a red tomato sauce, although she says that she only became familiar with béchamel and other white sauces as restaurant food in her adult years.98 Now, she said, “even the old families…have learned to cook that way”—although, she was swift to point out, without giving up their traditional foods. Her mother, who had grown up in Algeria, had been especially open to French cuisine compared to others of her generation.

But even families more attached to what they considered their traditional family cooking remember a shift towards Western dishes. “It was not our taste when I was young,” Fatima said, recalling her childhood in Fes. “We only wanted chicken *magalli* [a traditional chicken stew].

97 Interview conducted by author, April 12, 2017.
98 Interview conducted by author, July 13, 2017.
Pasta came later.” Choumicha Chafay attributes Moroccans’ openness to French culinary elements to a combination of logistical developments (the manufacture or import of certain cheeses or crème fraîche, for instance) and the aspects of Moroccan cuisine that balance diversity and openness with unity. “Moroccan taste is open (mutafattih),” she explained, informed by a “knack” for how to work in the kitchen (“al-yid fi-l-ṭiyāb”), a sensibility that she claims transcends regional differences and even informs the introduction of French, Italian, Spanish, and other foreign elements to the Moroccan kitchen.

In summary, aspects of modern European cuisines, including modern French sauces, have not been absent from Moroccan kitchens, and many view them as fully compatible with a Moroccan culinary sensibility—provided a cook does not lose her connection to the traditional Moroccan recipes that anchor her kitchen. The cultural logic underpinning this unique sensibility was described to me by one Moroccan scholar as a duality or izdiwājīyya. This duality explains why, if they can afford to, Moroccans maintain both traditional Moroccan-style salons lined with cushions as well as Western-style salons with couches and coffee tables; the need for both styles was as important as maintaining the two as separate rather than hybrid—as if this logic validates the distinction between the two as well as their equality.

This sensibility extends to the kitchen. Béchamel would never be hybridized into a Moroccan dish of eggplant and zucchini, nor considered something that might be localized, in the way that macarona béchamel has been in Egypt. The Moroccan case illustrates that the capacity of béchamel to project, signify, or perform culinary modernity is open and therefore historically contingent, its meaning embedded in a range of material factors and related cultural

99 Interview conducted by author, August 7, 2017.
100 Interview conducted by author, August 16, 2017.
101 With many thanks to Fatiha Taib and the organizers of the AGYA workshop in Rabat in November 2018 where this point came up in the discussion of my research.
meanings. Béchamel in some sense signaled modernity, but decoupled from a Moroccan sensibility and to an extent a refined one. Modernity and a uniquely modern sense of refinement came to be expressed and read through a separate and distinct culinary sensibility in Morocco—epitomized through the modern Morocco ṭājīn and the kind of sauce it produces.

“We Have Always Been Modern:” al-Andalus and Moroccan Culinary Modernity

As mentioned above, what is today a commonplace understanding of a ṭājīn as a round vessel with a conical lid used for cooking directly over a heat source is a relatively modern phenomenon, not a timeless one. How and when did this specific and complex bundling of social and culinary meanings become attached to the word ṭājīn and to the vessel itself? And what can it tell us about broader social and cultural processes in Morocco? I suggest that a part of the answer lies in the evolution of the term marqa in the twentieth century.

Marqa is the Moroccan Arabic word used to refer to the sauce that is both a byproduct and an essential component of a ṭājīn. At the same time, during the twentieth century marqa also evolved as a separate, standalone dish in and of itself, which is absolutely distinct from a ṭājīn. The notion that a proper ṭājīn has good quality marqa, but not too much of it, is in line with discourses of restraint and moderation that distinguish many other understandings of modern culinary refinement. Thus an understanding of marqa not only enables us to distinguish the key differences in sensibility between a twentieth-century ṭājīn and other modern sauces like béchamel, it also makes plain what distinguishes a modern ṭājīn from its forerunners.

An essay titled “Qaṣīda wa-Ṭājin” published in 1943 in the nationalist magazine Risālat al-Maghrīb analyzes a verse of Arabic poetry that discusses a ṭājīn being presented to a guest:
Take a piece of semolina bread and eat
The best of the meat and the best of the sauce.\textsuperscript{102}

The author explains that while he knew the poet in question was known for \textit{madīḥ} or praise poetry, he had not previously considered “that even bread and sauce could be objects of praise…and perhaps even more deserving of it than some men…”\textsuperscript{103} He points out that eating and drinking are among the most important acts in life and therefore deserving of poetry and praise, while tying the poem’s phrasing as an invitation to a guest to enjoy the best parts of the meal to Moroccan customs of hospitality. In explicating the \textit{maraq} (classical Arabic for \textit{marqa}) he describes it as the carrier of spices and seasonings, a substance with a delicious smell.

At this point in Moroccan history, as publications like \textit{Risālat al-Maghrib} were becoming places where aspects of a nascent national culture—from political institutions to the features of Moroccan literature—were being outlined and discussed by intellectuals, this is a rare but notable example of the integration of cuisine as a worthy subject of study within the context of national culture. Interestingly, while the word \textit{ṭājīn} does not appear in the poetry quoted in the article, it does appear in its title, suggesting the emergence of \textit{ṭājīn} as not only an index of certain cooking practices but as an abstracted concept connected to national culture. The notion that the \textit{marqa} is the distillation of the essence of a \textit{ṭājīn}’s flavor, as the carrier of spices, seasonings and fat, remains an essential part of the term’s definition. Such is the importance of \textit{marqa} that recipes that may historically have been cooked in clay are frequently now made in the modern kitchen in a metal pot over a gas flame, particularly for occasions like weddings that call for large quantities of a dish to be produced. So long as the \textit{marqa} is the proper texture and flavor,

\textsuperscript{102} Abu ἃ Abdallah, “Qaṣīda wa-ṭājin,” \textit{Risālat al-Maghrib}, June 1, 1943.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 29.
the dish is seen to retain its authenticity and culinary refinement. But with the modernization of the home kitchen (detailed in Chapter One) by the 1960s and 70s, marqa also acquired another meaning that lends the word a deep sense of ambivalence.

This second meaning of marqa refers to a stew based largely on onion and often garlic, made quickly over a gas stove in a mass-manufactured metal pot (gamīla or ṭanjara). It takes far less time than a ṭājīn to make; it is intended to produce a hearty sauce that can be soaked up with a great deal of bread, and with less expensive spices—and therefore is a more economic way for families of limited means to fill their bellies. It is also popularly viewed as unrefined. As Choumicha Chafay explained, “usually more sophisticated (rāqī) people don’t make marqa…they make mqallī, ṭhammar, or another form of ṭājīn, cooked directly in a ṭājīn.” In other words, standalone marqa is entirely distinct from the marqa produced within a ṭājīn; the latter is considered refined, or rāqī, and the former is not. A Moroccan friend pointed out to me that the notion of marqa as a standalone dish evolved not only with the prevalence of the metal pot and the gas stove, but with the entry of more women into the workforce: making marqa takes less time, expense, and expertise than ṭāwājīn or other more traditional dishes, and making it well suited to the schedule of the working woman. At its most negative marqa can be used in classist Moroccan colloquial phrases disdainful of those perceived as socially undesirable, who might be referred to as “shaʿb al-marqa.”

Yet the usage is contextually specific and deeply ambivalent: many of my friends and interlocutors also explained that as Moroccans they sometimes willingly self-identify as shaʿb al-khubz, shaʿb al-marqa as a way of conveying their taste for a particular mode of eating stews or

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104 I observed this in a number of settings—for example, discussing cooking practices with professional wedding caterers who produced traditional Andalusi braises for urban middle-class weddings as well as in an interview with cookbook author Fatima al-Rahunī, who stressed the proper seasoning of a dish as far more important to its authenticity than the cooking implements used.
braises with bread. As one friend noted, identifying someone as being of *sha‘b al-marqa* “can signify that a person is proudly sticking to their traditions and history, but it can also be used to refer to someone as backwards.”105 While the complexities of the term are boundless, one way to distinguish its meanings—when *marqa* is refined and when it is not—is by tracing the recipes, spices, ingredients, and timing entailed in its production.

I suggest this represents the development of a cultural logic that upholds a certain version of a traditional culinary technique and aesthetic, the *ṭājīn*, as the hallmark of a national tradition steeped in history, sophistication, and refinement when it is copresent with the “right” combination of flavors and techniques. The differentiation of *ṭājīn* from the standalone *marqa*, which is perceived as inferior and less refined, allows the *ṭājīn* to remain as a symbol of the nation in a way that is sophisticated enough to rival any French culinary technique, forestalling critiques of tradition as backwards or inferior. The “traditional” *ṭājīn*, ensconced within the modern kitchen, thus remains explicit as a symbol of the country that is not a mere symbol, but an everyday object that stands apart from modernization while remaining compatible with modernity. The *ṭājīn* as cooking vessel can move seamlessly between coal and gas heating technologies, and is defined both through and against the concept of *marqa*.

Furthermore, the specific recipes commonly upheld as expressions of refinement, urbanity, and a sophisticated Moroccan modernity are also telling. Certain *ṭājīn* recipes and not others are typically served to guests and on special occasions, particularly weddings (one such recipe is *maqallī* chicken, analyzed in the essay preceding this chapter). Overwhelmingly these reflect the urban cuisines of Rabat, Tetouan, and Fes: the three cities whose histories are most

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105 Particular thanks to Choumicha Chafay, Amine Boubnan, Zaynab al-Amrani, and the MA students in English Language & Literature at Tetouan’s Abdelmalek Saadi University for helping me understand the complexities of *marqa*. 
strongly associated with Andalusi culture. It was the kitchens of these cities that produced what might be considered Morocco’s mother sauces, which share certain aspects of culinary modernity with French sauces like béchamel but mark important departures from the Egyptian modern culinary sensibility. The equivalent sensibility in Morocco is one I refer to as “Andalusi modern,” reflecting the way that Moroccan nationalists and cultural elites asserted the centrality of Andalusi cultural heritage to the identity of modern Morocco—particularly as Moroccan culture was being defined against European modernity. Like the Egyptian embrace of béchamel, the primary sauces of Andalusi cuisine have been held up by Moroccans as signifying refinement, restraint, and well-ordered culinary technique. But compared to the Egyptian case, these qualities are indexed to very different material substances and objects, including the clay cooking vessel, the role of cooking fat, the complex spice combinations, and the mixture of sweet and savory flavors.

For example, Latifa Bennani-Smires’ 1970 cookbook *La cuisine Marocaine* lays out four key sauces of “Moroccan cuisine”—although as discussed in Chapter Five, her cookbook largely reflects elite Fasi cooking. She describes these as “base sauces” which are altered in various ways to suit particular dishes, echoing the structure of the French “mother sauces” which are also the base for more complex preparations:

- M’qalli: oil, ginger, saffron; a yellow sauce
- M’hammr: butter, cumin, pepper; a red sauce
- K’dra: butter, onions, pepper, saffron; a yellow sauce, lighter
- M’chermal: a blend of all these; red.\(^{106}\)

In structure and concept, these sauces—as Bennani-Smires lays them out—mirror a French modern culinary sensibility. But the sensory aspects are anchored in a very distinct Andalusi sensibility. She describes them as replete with spices, prepared using the juices from the meat in

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the dish, and cooked over a long period of time.\textsuperscript{107} Three of the four sauces include saffron, and none of them feature manipulations of the cooking fat along the lines of a French-style roux. Indeed, as discussed above, a key element of this type of sauces is not the \textit{incorporation} of the fat into the sauce through a suspension or roux but rather the \textit{separation} of the oil from the rest of the sauce. One Moroccan acquaintance, describing \textit{daghmīra}, the specific kind of sauce associated with certain refined \textit{ṭājīn} recipes, told me that sometimes cooks will “cheat” by adding a little extra oil at the end to reproduce this effect if it is not achieved through the cooking process. Whereas in the French approach to sauce a roux or eggs are used to thicken the sauce, Moroccans explained to me that the fatty element of a sauce, the \textit{iydām}, was the essence of what produced a properly thickened \textit{daghmīra}.\textsuperscript{108}

Although Bennani-Smires’ book was clearly oriented towards a French audience and explicitly structured to reflect a French culinary sensibility, I found that women whose family kitchens reflected the cuisine of Morocco’s Andalusi cities—Fes, Rabat, and Tetouan—typically classified the sauces they had learned growing up along similar lines as Bennani-Smires. When I asked her about the basic components of Fasi cuisine, one woman recited (in Moroccan Arabic) the components of \textit{m’qalli}, \textit{m’ḥāmmr}, and \textit{k’dra} in almost the exact fashion as Bennani-Smires had written in French.\textsuperscript{109} Zohour, an interviewee whose maternal side is Rabati, described the key sauce styles of her family’s cooking as “yellow” and “red,” corresponding roughly to the sauces that Bennani-Smires classifies by color. She also described them as base or mother sauces: “We learned a yellow base and a red base in this way,” she said, “and then you add what you want to them.”\textsuperscript{110} A Tetouani friend who also traces her Andalusi heritage through her

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[107]{Ibid., 7.}
\footnotetext[108]{Interview conducted by author, August 7, 2017.}
\footnotetext[109]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[110]{Interview conducted by author, April 8, 2018.}
\end{footnotes}
mother’s side classified a similar set of base sauces along these lines, referring to one as a savory seasoning commonly served with fish—red, with cumin and sweet red pepper, and another as a typical seasoning for meat, a yellow sauce with onions, cinnamon, and ginger a sweet seasoning for meat. In Tetouan in particular, what distinguished sauces like these from other Moroccan sauces, according to many men and women I spoke with, was the restraint of the cook in preparing them: using the right quantities of spices was as important as using the right spices in the first place.

All this is to say that the ṭājīn recipes and associated sauces set forth in cookbooks as epitomizing refined Moroccan cuisine in the 1970s were equally prominent in the culinary repertoires of women who grew up in the same decade in families that self-identify as practicing Andalusi-style cooking. It was through the intragenerational practices of culinary knowledge transmission described at length in Chapter Five that those recipes spread beyond the knowledge base of a handful of urban families to become popularized as staples of special occasions, particularly weddings, among Morocco’s urban middle classes. Although the gradual integration of European foods like pasta and dishes with béchamel sauce were markers of culinary modernity among these classes, the elevation and circulation of these specifically Andalusi ṭājīn recipes, with their own distinct culinary sensibility, became important ways for middle-class home cooks to distinguish their cooking as simultaneously modern and Moroccan.

In summary, I have argued that the emergence of modern culinary refinement, read as a sensibility, represents a break in the history of the North African kitchen. As béchamel became a fixture of Egyptian cooking in the 1950s and 60s, and Andalusi ṭawājin became widespread across Morocco in the 1960s and 70s, the sauces produced in home kitchens began to play a new
role in the life of the nation—informing the way that middle-class Egyptians and Moroccans identified as modern citizens in ways that were not only thought but felt and tasted.

Furthermore, comparing modern culinary sensibilities within the changing sauces of Egypt and Morocco demonstrates the contingency of modernity’s social meanings. Explicitly modern French sauces were by no means the only ways that home cooks created and experienced a sensibility of culinary refinement linked to social class distinctions and a specific moral order associated with the modern figure of the housewife and her role in the nation. The culinary aesthetics through which foods fulfilled these conceptual framings, and became recognizable as “Egyptian” and “Moroccan,” were bundled with very different textures, flavors, techniques and tools. A simmering marqa with fat separated from the liquid and scented with saffron and cinnamon came to do the same conceptual work in Morocco as a smooth béchamel with the fat fully incorporated into the liquid in Egypt.

Together, these arguments suggest that in order to understand the history of public cultures and national identity formation, we must pay as careful attention to the mundane, domestic, and material dimensions of the everyday as we do to the public, official and abstract. Just as it is too simple to say that béchamel makes a cuisine modern by virtue of its conceptual baggage—the examples above paint a far more complex picture of how and what béchamel signifies—it is impossible to understand or explain the desire to be modern without attending to our sensory and material engagements with the world.
Since I began work on this project in 2015 the most common question I am asked is some variation of “why is Moroccan food so good and Egyptian food so bad?” At academic conferences, in cafés, on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa and on the east coast of the United States, I have spun dozens of answers to this question and its underlying impulse to rank one culture or cuisine over another.

My initial response is usually to reject the premise of the question. I have replied by asking whether the person has ever eaten a roast duck prepared by a skilled home cook in Egypt, how they like the seafood in Alexandria, or, for that matter, if they have ever eaten anything at all outside of Cairo. I ask if they have ever tried rafīsa and point out that Moroccan food includes more than the bastīla, lemon and olive chicken, lamb with prunes, and kuskus that dominate restaurant menus and cookbooks and an increasing percentage of Moroccan weddings. Have they eaten braised rabbit at a High Atlas truck stop? What is their stance on fenugreek? I ask what people mean when they invoke national categories of “Egyptian” and “Moroccan” cuisine, and I question what standards or samples they are using to judge whether such a cuisine qualifies as “good.” Is their judgment based on the best food a place has to offer or merely the best food made available for purchase? Sometimes, particularly when speaking to other expats, I point out how easily talking about food can become a smokescreen for prejudice and bigotry—in part because of the way that thoughts and feelings about food, especially intense experiences of pleasure and disgust, are so commonly chalked up to personal preference rather than considered as part of a broader confluence of culture, economy, and politics.
When I engage the replies to these challenges in earnest, however, I always fall back on the tools of comparison. I discuss similarities and differences in the evolution of restaurant cultures, palace kitchens, the education of women, and the writing of cookbooks. I tack between home kitchens and street foods, recipes written in classical Arabic and those that can only really be conveyed through vernacular speech, the restaurant politics of former imperial capitals, and supply chains rooted in rural landscapes that are constantly transforming. The narrative power of explaining one case by connecting and contrasting it with another has been my sturdiest crutch for delivering what are now expected to be expert pronouncements at conference Q&As and dinner parties and command performances in job interviews over the past four years. At the end of six chapters that have crisscrossed North Africa numerous times, this concluding essay offers a few reflections designed to help digest the six chapters and five recipes that precede it. Why should we compare? How should we go about it? What can we see by comparing kitchen histories that we could not see before?

Others

Placing Egypt and Morocco into direct comparison introduces a wrinkle to the conventional anthropological tendency according to which a Western researcher studies a non-Western “other.”1 In the words of Francesca Bray, “we are used always to having ‘Europe’ or ‘the West’

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1 This tendency has been contested and debated within anthropology for several decades. See, for example, Lila Abu-Lughod’s classic critique of the field citing the work of feminist scholars and “halfie” anthropologists, and in a more recent example, Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu’s work on whiteness in Vietnam. Lila Abu-Lughod, “Writing Against Culture,” in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, ed. Richard G. Fox (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1991), 137–62; Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu et al., “White Like Koreans: The Skin of the New Vietnam,” in *Fashion and Beauty in the Time of Asia* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 21–40 The construct of a Western self studying a past or foreign “other” has been less directly challenged in historical or area studies contexts.
as the obvious point of comparison or reference for any other society in world or global history. But must this necessarily be so?”

In a series of research trips split between Egypt and Morocco I lugged bags of cookbooks and memoirs and novels between opposite ends of North Africa, fumbling between dialects and displacing the sensory experience of immersion in one place not with that of “home” but with another immersive experience in a “foreign” society. In the context of a comparative project, even the research I conducted in imperial archives worked against straightforward pairings of colony and metropole: in French colonial archives I sifted through memos detailing British policies and in the British National Archives I read about English officials’ anxieties about French cultural hegemony in Egypt. Putting myself “out of place” in a more complicated way complicated the archive that I constructed and the narratives that emerged from it. Working in a constant state of transition between multiple places, I often felt stretched thin. But it also meant I worked with a heightened sensitivity to Egyptian references in Moroccan libraries and vestiges of Moroccan foodways in Egyptian archives. I was more attuned to the ways Egypt and Morocco were connected than I might have been had I been organizing my research in terms of national or colonial categories alone.

As a result, the chapters of this dissertation challenge a center-periphery approach to the study of North African societies that has tended to locate the center in Paris or London. In some ways, the preceding pages depict Cairo as an alternate Arab “center” with Morocco occupying a position on its margins. Moroccan feminists and nationalists cite Egyptian activists as models,

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3 This approach is inspired in part by Olivia C. Harrison’s observation that “critics have tended to privilege the Maghreb’s relation to France,” along with the work of other scholars including David Stenner and Eric Calderwood who are calling for a shift towards transnational framings in the study of modern Morocco. Olivia C. Harrison, Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 7.
Moroccan students travel to study in Cairo during and after the colonial period, and Moroccan educators import Egyptian cookbooks and textbooks as references.

But the study of food also makes plain that tracing the circulation of discursive material and motifs expressed in written classical Arabic between Egypt and Morocco is not enough to account for the complexities of kitchen histories. This is because the history of food and its preparation bridges another axis of comparison: between officially sanctioned or dominant ideologies (state-sponsored or colonial cookbooks, for instance, or state regulations) and the embodied knowledge of culinary practice. The latter sphere is far more commonplace in the context of lived experience but more elusive to the would-be researcher. Yet working comparatively along this second axis helps to temper the explanatory power of the center-periphery model. Comparing official discourse to lived practice exposes the limitations of both state power and of the influence of the “center,” wherever it is located. For example, even though tenets of a particular form of reformist gender ideology were expressed in Arabic-language journals in both Egypt and Morocco, tracing how these ideas manifested in lived experience highlights divergences rather than similarities: domestic science blossomed in Egyptian institutions but not Moroccan ones. Despite the clear influence of Egyptian gender ideology on the writing of Moroccan educators and reformists, domestic science education found few (if any) footholds in Morocco in practice. The gender ideology of the Egyptian “center” can thus only be read as paradigmatic and influential in limited, conditional ways. Comparing two sites not typically understood as “centers” in the conventional sense, and compounding that comparison with the juxtaposition of very different types of sources and evidence, reveals kitchen histories to be manifold, nonlinear, and contingent.
Similarities

In an essay on the purposes of comparative history, Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers point to the value of “the parallel demonstration of theory,” or exploring how a given theory or hypothesis plays out in different circumstances. Doing so, they argue, helps to clarify a theory’s “ability convincingly to order the evidence.” In other words, comparisons can draw our attention to similarities that occur across differences in context, underscoring their power and significance. This dissertation has traced two such phenomena across different contexts: namely, the creation of national cuisines and the emergence of the nuclear family household as a key site of the production of the nation. I have further argued that these two phenomena are linked—that is, that the nuclear family home was a key site where national cuisines were produced, and cuisine is essential to our understanding of how precisely the family came to produce the nation. Tracing how this connection unfolded and functioned through both Egyptian and Moroccan history points to the broader implications of the comparison.

Food scholars have described the emergence of national cuisines as a function of rural-to-urban migration and the rise of a salaried middle class, and highlighted the significance of cookbooks, cooking schools, and restaurants as key factors influencing people’s connection to new national culinary categories. Arjun Appadurai puts forth a more specific model drawn from the case of India, and suggests that it may also shed light on the making of national cuisines in other postcolonial societies like Mexico, Indonesia, and Nigeria. Appadurai suggests that in certain societies, national cuisines emerge in urban contexts within a “spatially mobile class of

5 Ibid., 176.
professionals, along with their more stable class peers” who make up a “small but important class of consumers characterized by its multiethnic, multicastr, polyglot, and Westernized tastes.”

He also posits that it is not merely through print culture or institutions but through social interactions within this class of consumers and the “oral exchange of recipes,” particularly among cooks hailing from different regional culinary traditions, that this process takes place.

Appadurai’s insights show us that in order to understand how national cuisines gain historical force not only symbolically, but in everyday affects and experience, we must attend to the everyday labor of women working within their home kitchens. In the Arabic-speaking world this requires us to study “kitchen Arabic” or “kitchen history.” This is why the kitchen offers a unique perspective on the relationship between the modern nuclear family and contemporary nation-states. That a certain type of modern family is the building block of the nation-state was (and remains, in many instances) a common refrain of both normative civics textbooks and critical scholarship on nationalism, gender, and sexuality. But how does this connection between family and nation unfold, and what do we gain from studying it?

Beshara Doumani points out that one of the advantages of the family as a unit of analysis is its ability to connect materialist and discursive frameworks. Studying the productive and reproductive labor that cooking entails makes the most of this advantage, demonstrating how the family produces the nation not only symbolically but in material ways. Through the hands of

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8 Ibid., 6.
9 Ibid.
10 To cite just two scholarly examples among many, Ann Laura Stoler’s work shows how intimacy and reproduction within the family produced modern ideas about the way national categories and racial boundaries were policed and contested; Partha Chatterjee demonstrates how in the context of anticolonial nationalist movements women in particular were called upon to fulfill gendered roles as mothers and wives of a modern independent nation. More normative assertions of this idea abound in the historical evidence cited in this dissertation, perhaps most directly in the 1926 Egyptian civics textbook that explained that “According to most modern scholars, the family is the basic unit of the state,” cited in Chapter Two. al-Masri, al-Tarbiya al-Waṭaniyya ḥasab al-manhaj al-jadīd alladhī qararatuhu Wizārat al-Ma ’ārif li-l-madāris al-thānawiyya wa-l-ibtidā’iyya wa-l-ibtidā’iyya, 4.
mothers, dishes of diverse origins once made by minorities, immigrants, and elites were recast as family traditions intended to feed families while nourishing the nation as a tangible and everyday entity. Over the course of a crucial two or three generations the domestic labor of (mostly) women cooking at home performed most of the work of culinary nationalization, creating new ways of feeling and tasting Egyptian and Moroccan—while subsuming, eliding, and redirecting other historical narratives in the process.

Despite significant differences between the Egyptian and Moroccan cases, the contours of the emergent national cuisines explained in this dissertation largely affirm the model Appadurai describes while providing a succinct illustration of how family produces the nation. In the specific case of North Africa, however, the model includes an additional significant factor shared between two seemingly disparate culinary histories. In addition to the forging of national cuisines through the interplay of different regional cuisines in a given landmass (e.g., the Indian subcontinent or the Nile Valley), examples from Egypt and Morocco illustrate the importance of the exchange and transfer of cuisines bordering a particular body of water—in this case, the Mediterranean Sea. That is to say, Egyptian and Moroccan national cuisines were invented based on the selective marshalling not only of locally rooted foodways, but also of dishes and techniques from around the Mediterranean, under the banner of a single national category.

Elements of Andalusi cuisine, originating in Iberia, were incorporated into Moroccan cuisine; Italian and Greek dishes became staples of Egyptian cuisine. Aspects of high Ottoman cuisine made their way into both places (albeit in differing ways), from the thin filo pastry of Moroccan basṭila and brīwāt to the stuffed vegetables and sharkasiyya made in Egypt. Despite the different culinary aesthetics that underpinned the modernization of Egyptian and Moroccan
cuisines (detailed in Chapter Six) it is nevertheless striking that both came from lands and cultures situated on the northern shores of the Mediterranean.

This relatively localized similarity, specific to the Mediterranean, raises important questions about the creation of “North Africa” as a distinct conceptual and geographic category. What work does the label “North Africa” perform that “Southern Mediterranean” does not, for instance? How can food and foodways illuminate the stakes of the differentiation of North Africa from so-called “sub-Saharan” or “black” Africa? What historical evidence can cuisine offer for revisiting historical links both on the African continent and throughout the Mediterranean basin?

Differences

Skocpol and Somers point out that similarities are not the only virtues of comparison. They also highlight the power of difference and contrast, the “unique features of each particular case” and the way that they impact and inflect broad historical processes.¹² One way to think about the analytical power of difference is through the logic of metaphor: comparing two unlike things (say, Egyptian food and Moroccan food) in order to see each of them in a new way. By using the kitchen (rather than the school, the press, or the clinic) to frame my narrative, I draw out the sensory and material differences between nearly parallel emergence of modernity in middle-class and national cultures. A new kind of Moroccan food wherein the separation of fat from sauce remained an ideal was produced on a Butagaz stove in clay ِتَوَاحِين or a French-made cocotte, while a new kind of Egyptian food relied upon aluminum saucepans and casserole dishes and sauces that emulsified fat completely. A shared vocabulary of modernity and bourgeois refinement, printed in classical Arabic across North Africa, was embodied in cinnamon and

¹² Skocpol and Somers, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry,” 178.
saffron in Morocco and the subtler flavors of French white sauces and Circassian walnut sauces in Egypt. Because these differences in texture, taste, and smell can diverge materially in their expression of similar or identical concepts, they provide concrete examples of historical contingency. Starting with an obviously and self-consciously modern sauce like bechamel opens up the question of what is modern about the seemingly traditional saucing of a ṭajīn. As Kenneth Burke puts it, the direct comparison invoked by metaphor “brings out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this,” granting the observer a new perspective.13 Directly comparing the different manifestations of a common socio-historical process adds a dimension of depth to what otherwise might be collapsed into a simpler teleological narrative—whether that be the story of the globalization of French culinary hegemony or the way that women in colonial societies become cast as both vehicles of progress and targets of reform. Maarten Asscher likens this kind of analysis to a “stereoscopic” view produced by “two slightly different photographs that together produce a single combined image…Thanks to the difference between the two photographs, the resulting image acquires depth, a third dimension.”14

Key differences in the role of gender in anticolonial and nationalist movements, to take another example, can be parsed through the pen names of Malak Hifni Nasif and Malika al-Fasi—two prominent reformists discussed in the dissertation. In Egypt, Nasif wrote as Bahithat al-Badiya: a “seeker” in the “desert” or “countryside.” In Morocco a generation later, al-Fasi published essays a generation later as Bahithat al-Hadira, “seeker in the city.” Beyond one name’s echoing of the other, the two names mark a key distinction between the way that Egyptians and Moroccans drew upon gendered practices and spaces like cooking and kitchens as

sites of national authenticity. We can read Nasif’s pen name as standing in for the uncomfortable relationship between Egypt’s urban reformists and rural Egypt—where the peasant, like the woman, was both a potent symbol of national identity and the subject of reform.\textsuperscript{15} In the kitchen this translated into an eclectic national culinary repertoire that mixed baladī foods like fūl mudammas, mulūkhiyya, and locally bred poultry with more cosmopolitan dishes introduced through urban milieus. Meanwhile al-Fasi’s invocation of ḥādira is a gesture towards the central role the urban heritage of a handful of Moroccan cities played in articulations of modern Moroccan identity. In the culinary sphere this translated into an emphasis on the foods of cities like Fes as cornerstones of mainstream national cuisine.

Thus a general narrative of nationalism can be read, through the kitchen, as running parallel to an axis of a common agenda of gendered reformism—but in two distinct dimensions: Egyptian and Moroccan. Comparison makes clear that however much they might be framed similarly in broad discursive terms or flows of reformist thought, these narratives did not unfold in identical or necessarily similar ways. Translating broad narratives of nationalism and reform into their everyday and sensory manifestations is a practical strategy for responding to Chandra Mohanty’s critique of Western feminist scholarship’s tendencies to identify “a composite, singular ‘third-world woman.’”\textsuperscript{16} Close attention to the kitchen prevents us from reducing the experiences of Moroccan and Egyptian women to conceptions of universal womanhood, middle-classness, Arab or Muslim experience.

Beyond Comparison

One of the most compelling arguments about comparison is Inderpal Grewal’s caution against it. Rather than conducting comparative analysis, she writes, we should instead examine the geopolitical circumstances and forces that make the conditions of comparison possible in the first place.\(^{17}\) I have aimed to explain not only the construction of national categories that render comparison legible but also the circuits and flows between Egypt and Morocco that cross or even defy those categories. In part this is achieved through tracing the movement of key reformist and nationalist ideas from Egypt to Morocco: reading the Egyptian cookbooks that were consulted by Moroccan activists, the anticolonial nationalist ideas written in classical Arabic and smuggled through the British postal service, and the speeches of Moroccan elites that situate reform in pan-Arab and pan-Islamic contexts. But it also works to unravel the assumptions that ordered my research questions and process as a whole. In tipping the siloed histories of the nation over onto their sides, the dissertation has also raised questions that its parameters, periodization, and sources cannot answer. What is the story of the perfusion of *kuskus* across North Africa, and what would it mean (or what would it take) to center the role of the Imazighen in that history over the *longue durée*? What happened to Sephardi foodways as they were deterritorialized after 1492 and reintegrated into the urban cuisines of Tetouan, Alexandria, Aleppo, and Istanbul? What is the history of the tomato on the southern shores of the Mediterranean? These questions must wait for the next project, but they are worth asking as I continue to consider Grewal’s challenge to check and investigate the impulse to compare.

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\(^{17}\) Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 17. She notes that she also discusses this approach in the introduction to *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, co-authored with Caren Kaplan.
Applying Grewal’s resistance to comparison to the conundrum that opened this essay recalls a question raised by Lila Abu-Lughod: “does difference always smuggle in hierarchy?”

Why is it that Egyptian cuisine and Moroccan cuisine must or can be compared and ranked against one another at all? At its best, comparison can account for differences without conceding that explaining them implies that someone or something must be inferior.

Doing “kitchen history” mines the everyday, affective, and embodied side of history in the hopes of moving beyond the fixation with categorizing and ranking. It invites a response to this tendency that is not so much the flattening of analysis into lists of differences and similarities, but rather renewed attention to the long arcs of historical connections that bring similarities and differences into being and render them legible in the first place. Edward Said wrote that “survival is in fact about the connections between things.” Thinking in this way, he goes on to say, “means not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how ‘our’ culture or country”—or, here I will interject, cuisine—“is number one (or not number one, for that matter).” It is this kind of thinking that shifts a conversation from one about food as “good” or “bad” to a conversation that is more instructive and delightful by far.

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19 Said, Culture and Imperialism, 336.
20 Ibid.
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