EMPIRE AND ITS DISCONTENTS:  
MODERNITY AND SUBALTERN REVOLT IN UPPER EGYPT,  
1700-1920 

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ABSTRACT

Empire is not a supreme entity controlling high-level policies in metropolises: it is a reality translated into the daily lives of the subalterns at the periphery of the periphery of empire, as this microhistory of Qina province during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries argues. Qina is a small place deep in the south of Egypt, and this study looks at the lives of subaltern women and men in this province and then moves beyond southern Egypt to attempt to understand two centuries of imperialism and rebellion in world history. This period marked great transformations as the world moved from “traditional” to “modern” empire, or from “despotic” to allegedly “liberal” discourses and exercises of imperialism. In order to analyze modes of imperial hegemony and modes of subaltern revolt, this study examines four empires in Qina province: the Ottoman (1700s), Muhammad Ali’s (1811-1848), the informal British (1848 to 1882), and finally the formal British (1882-1920).

This study argues that as the world progressed toward modern imperialism and its alleged modernity, Qina province endured irreversible peripheralization and marginalization, a fate that it might have shared with many other small places in the world. While the postcolonial critique of the “consequences of modernity” mostly
focuses on metropolises overtly impacted by European imperialism or rural areas directly affected by capitalist disturbances, this study examines an utterly marginalized space, far away from the centers of events. It shows that the empire was there too, leaving a more profound impact and generating unique modes of resistance.

This study adopts “the empire” as its main unit of analysis, rather than the nation state. It is an inquiry into the empire as the key to understanding the major shifts in modern history, and questions the ability of this unit to generate nuanced conclusions in studying the history of small, marginalized places in the world. Furthermore, this study turns its attention to the rural subalterns of the empires, rather than the urban nationalistic elites, to inquire about the ability of these social groups to reveal an alternative history of those places.
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Upper Egypt
Source: British Library
Source:
INTRODUCTION

Empire, Modernity, and Subaltern Revolt

Three years ago, while conducting my archival research in Cairo, I visited Qina province, a small place deep in the south of Egypt. In the fields bordering the town of Qus, one of the province’s agricultural and industrial centers, I noticed the glorious presence of an enormous silver, cylindrical building that looked alien to its surroundings. Inquiring about its contents, I learned that this was the storage silo for wheat granted by USAID. The controversial American food aid to Egypt, believed by many analysts to be a tool of imperial hegemony through establishing dependency, had made its way to the remotest places in the south. I also learned that the “informal empire” made an appearance in the province through many other ways.1 For instance, the program of economic reform that the Egyptian government has applied for many years, following the neoliberal Washington Consensus and its blueprint designed by the IMF and the World Bank, has deeply hurt the sugarcane cultivators in Qina. The former legal codes of landholding, promulgated by the Arab socialist regime, are now being reversed by a new code of private property, Law 96 of 1992. Peasants are being evicted from land that the state had returned to the pre-1952 elite families of the colonial era. Moreover, the state-

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owned sugar factory in Qus is awaiting its turn for privatization, which will entail the laying off of thousands of the province’s workers.²

As a matter of fact, the southern provinces of Egypt, including Qina, are known to be the most underdeveloped regions in the country’s modern history, as well as the most rebellious and disturbing to the central government. The UNDP’s annual reports on Arab human development show that Upper Egypt is located at the bottom of the ladder of human development, and several World Bank reports allude to the same fact.³ These reports come out while the neoliberal program of economic reform is being persistently applied in Egypt amidst profound opposition from those hurt by it. On the other hand, the gangs of bandits who take refuge in the mountains bordering the two sides of the Nile in Upper Egypt, *matarid al-jabal*, have come to symbolize ruthless crime as well as audacious resistance to the state. Many popular TV series and movies have presented a criminal, yet romantic, image of those bandits. They have even made their appearance recently on Facebook: an oppositional group of youth, resenting the authoritarian regime and its market reforms, named itself after an ever-resonating proclamation by a legendary southern bandit. The story of ‘Izzat ‘Ali Hanafi, whose execution filled the newspapers while I was conducting my archival research, was made into the most popular Egyptian movie of 2008, where he said: “From today, there is no government. I am the

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² Joseph Stiglitz’s *Globalization and Its Discontents* (London; New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003) insists that the US spreads the neoliberal myth of development only through market reform in the third world. On the impact of market reform policies on Qina’s peasants, see the reports of the Land Center of Human Rights, 2000-2008, Cairo.

government” (min el naharda mafish hukuma. ana el hukuma). This fierce political statement is the name of the Facebook opposition group.4

Stories of wheat, sugarcane, liberal economies, bandits’ rebellion, and, more importantly, informal and formal empires constitute the history of the last few centuries in Qina province. Empire is not a supreme entity controlling high-level policies in metropolises: it is a reality translated into the daily lives of the subalterns at the periphery of the periphery of empire, as this microhistory of Qina province during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries argues.5 This study looks at the lives of subaltern women and men in Qina and then moves beyond this hardly-known southern province to attempt to understand two centuries of imperialism and rebellion in world history. This period marked great transformations as the world moved from “traditional” to “modern” empire, or from “despotic” to allegedly “liberal” discourses and exercises of imperialism. In order to analyze modes of imperial hegemony and modes of subaltern revolt, this study examines four empires in Qina province: the Ottoman (1700s), Muhammad Ali’s (1811-1848), the informal British (1848 to 1882), and finally the formal British (1882-1920).

This study argues that as the world progressed toward modern imperialism and its alleged modernity, Qina province, a small place in Upper Egypt,6 endured irreversible peripheralization and marginalization, a fate that it might have shared with many other

4 http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=8412576147. The movie’s title is al-Jazira, and among the popular TV series on Upper Egyptian bandits are Hada’iq al-Shaytan and Dhi’ab al-Jabal.
5 This study uses the term “microhistory” in a different way than its original meaning, proposed by Italian and other foreign historians such as Giovanni Levi, Carlo Ginzburg and Macro Ferrari, which focuses on the peoples and internal dynamics of European small villages and towns. Rather, this study looks at a small place while putting its internal transformations into the larger context of world economy and imperialism.
6 Using the term “small” place here is inspired by Jamaica Kincaid’s provocative and astounding book in post-colonial literature on the Caribbean Island of Antigua: A Small Place (Penguin, 1989).
small places in the world. While the postcolonial critique of the “consequences of modernity” mostly focuses on metropolises overtly impacted by European imperialism or rural areas directly affected by capitalist disturbances, this study examines an utterly marginalized space, far away from the centers of events. It shows that the empire was there too, leaving a more profound impact and generating unique modes of resistance.7

In the eighteenth century, as a tributary province to the Ottoman Empire, Qina was the capital of an autonomous government in Upper Egypt, and, more importantly, was a center of trade and production in an old world system that many world historians today call the “Indian Ocean world economy.”8 Under the laissez-faire mode of imperial hegemony that the Ottomans adopted, this study shows, Qina’s wheat and sugar were indispensable to the imperial granaries in Istanbul, and goods imported from its Red Sea markets and the vast Indian Ocean trading network were re-exported north to sustain Egyptian and Mediterranean commerce. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Muhammad Ali Pasha, the Ottoman viceroy of Egypt, subjugated the autonomous state of Upper Egypt and its capital town in Qina province, sold the southern wheat to Europe during the Napoleonic wars, and monopolized the southern sugar and regional commerce to become very rich and build a short-lived empire. In the wake of these events, a series of massive revolts erupted in Qina province, the only large-scale revolts that the country witnessed at this time, after which Muhammad Ali introduced modern modes of imperial

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7 Rare studies in world history focus on small, marginalized places, among which is Donald R. Wright’s The World and a Very Small Place in Africa: A History of Globalization in Niumi, the Gambia (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2004).
hegemony to Egypt. He reversed Ottoman liberalism with heavy interventionism and protectionism undertaken by modern institutions, yet, this study argues, with an uneven treatment of the rebellious south.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the rising British Empire replaced the old world system in the Indian Ocean with a modern, capitalist European one and imposed visions of modernity on the informally or formally colonized. In the process, Qina province was cut off from its old trade connections in the Indian Ocean, and the center of the Egyptian economy was completely shifted to the north, the Delta, whose cotton was in demand by British textile mills. The cornerstone of the British Empire’s discourse on modernity and practices of hegemony was the market economy. The British called upon colluding regimes in the world to apply free trade agreements, introduce legal codes of private property, and welcome foreign capital and experts. Since the Egyptian government in Cairo was one of those co-opted regimes that happily embraced British modernity, this study demonstrates how free-trade agreements caused the subaltern population of Qina to suffer from severe food shortages and diseases when their wheat was carried away by, or faced competition from, European merchants, and how legal codes of private property and foreign capital turned thousands into landless peasants and seasonal labor on sugarcane plantations of native and foreign propertied elites. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, under informal and later formal British imperialism, the peripheralization of Qina province in the Egyptian and world economy was complete, putting it on a long road toward the isolation that it endures to the present day.
Discontent with empire never stopped during Qina province’s long century of peripheralization, taking the form of either massive revolts or simply everyday resistance. While subaltern women and men of the province endured different modes of imperial hegemony, they showed deep resentment of the empire and its colluding elites. Peasants, female textile weavers, Nile boat captains, camel drivers, factory workers, merchants, etc. all represented subaltern groups that embarked on collective or individual, legal or violently illegal, actions of constant resistance. In addition to the revolt that erupted in Qina under Muhammad Ali’s empire, in 1820, another massive uprising broke out under the hegemony of the informal British Empire in 1864, the only provincial revolt in the entire country. Furthermore, the subalterns of Qina developed their own mode of resistance that took up non-nationalist causes and forms of expression, in which legendary bandits hiding in the mountains played a great role. Qina divorced itself from the nationalist, elitist struggles against colonialism that were taking place in Cairo.

This study adopts “the empire” as its main unit of analysis, rather than the nation state. It is an inquiry into the empire as the key to understanding the major shifts in modern history, and questions the ability of this unit to generate nuanced conclusions in studying the history of small, marginalized places in the world. Furthermore, this study turns its attention to the rural subalterns of the empires, rather than the urban nationalistic elites, to inquire about the ability of these social groups to reveal an alternative history of those places.
On Theoretical Approaches

Informed by various approaches, including world-system theory, Subaltern Studies, and postcolonial theory, this study addresses questions of empire, modernity, and revolt in world history, taking Qina province as a micro case study. Modern imperialism led to a world polarized between industrial, capitalist cores and economically dependent peripheries, as world-system and dependency theories assert. This study builds on ample previous literature on the subject of the peripheralization of certain regions with the advent of modern world economy. This literature is largely informed by Immanuel Wallerstein’s *The Modern World-System*, Andre Gunder Frank’s *Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment*, and Samir Amin’s *Imperialism and Unequal Development*, and other writings. They indicate how the capitalist industrial West’s pursuit of raw material and markets led to external expansion and the rise of modern imperialism and a world economy dominated by Europe. Thus, the world became divided into imperial cores located in Britain and France, for example, and colonized peripheries, located in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The capitalist West co-opted ruling elites and created dependent regimes that colluded with the imperialists out of their own interest, too.9

Judith Tucker’s pioneering study, *Women in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, applies this approach to the study of subaltern women under a state that was being made into a dependent of the British Empire. Tucker shows the impact of the peripheralization of

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Egypt on the lives of female peasants, workers, and slaves in the countryside and the city. Likewise, this study applies Tucker’s approach to follow the lives of subaltern women and men in Qina province while the world economy advanced toward profound European hegemony. Nonetheless, the narrative of Qina province stands as a nuanced case to add to this literature in world history. The emphasis in the world-system historiography is always placed on some main regions, mainly the capital and the areas linked to the empire through commercial agriculture by one cash crop or another. In Egyptian historiography, northern Egypt, the Delta, has enjoyed full attention from historians because it was where cotton was cultivated and heavily demanded by the British Empire. Thus, scholars who sought to explore the process of the peripheralizing of Egypt focused only on the story of cotton and the cotton-producing Delta, and ignored the south, Upper Egyptian provinces, which did not cultivate cotton and were not closely connected to the empire. Remote regions that were not exposed to direct imperial exploitation also have a story to tell, a different story of peripheralization. By excluding them from trade advantages, this study argues, even if those trade ties created dependency, the empire cut off those remote places from their old trade connections when it replaced an old world economy with a modern one and forced these places into complete isolation. They became further peripheralized inside an already peripheral state. Qina province is but one example of such places in the world that need to be studied.

On empire and modernity, this study is largely informed by postcolonial critique of discourses and institutions of power in modern imperialism. As opposed to Ottoman “despotic” imperialism, European empires claimed to be liberating forces wherever they landed. Niall Ferguson insists on differentiating between old empires based on tyranny and military expansion and modern empires based on political representation, rule of law, and market economy.\(^\text{12}\) Perry Anderson clearly categorized the Ottoman Empire as one of those tyrannical governments, a symbol of “oriental despotism” that oppressed its subjects and left no room for political or economic freedom.\(^\text{13}\) On the other hand, the British Empire is viewed by many as a carrier of modernity through the reforms that it brought to the colonized in government institutions, law, and capitalist exchange.\(^\text{14}\) Looking at empire in Qina, this study argues that modern imperialism was not less repressive to the subaltern than the traditional; rather, it was worse. The theoretical insights of Michel Foucault into the modern European state are extended here to the study of the empire, an exercise that many writings in postcolonial theory and Subaltern Studies have undertaken before.

In *The History of Sexuality* and other books, Michel Foucault asserts that although the modern state claims to be less repressive to the bodies and lives of its citizens than the early modern despots, in fact it created more entrenched means to discipline them more efficiently. Thus, Foucault shows how the birth of modern political economy in the

\(^{12}\) Niall Ferguson, *Colossus*, pp.10-11.
eighteenth century accompanied the birth of the modern state that further disciplined the bodies and lives of modern citizens, rather than setting them free from early modern repression. Nineteenth-century states created certain institutions, such as the modern school, prison, hospital, etc. that put its subjects under close surveillance and allowed greater control over their bodies. Postcolonial analysts demonstrate that the modern empire exercised these modern-state strategies, or exported them to the colony, for more entrenched discipline of the colonized, and, likewise, it developed more strategies of discipline in the colony that it exported to the metropolis. This study follows the shift from traditional to modern imperialism and political economy in Qina, stretching from Ottoman rule to British domination, showing how it led to a greater state hegemony and repression of the subalterns of the province.

In particular, relying on Timothy Mitchell’s theoretical insights in *Rule of Experts*, this study focuses on one institution of modernity as advocated by the empire: the market economy. Nineteenth-century imperialism claimed to deliver modernity through its model of government institutions, education, hygiene, gender relations, and, most importantly, the market economy. Mitchell is a leading postcolonial critic of modernity, and he extends his critique to the liberal/neoliberal global political economy. Mitchell asserts that the economy is just another “social construct” produced by modern social sciences—similar to class, nation, gender, race, etc.—yet it is neglected in

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postcolonial critique because of the perception that it is a “universal” and “neutral” truth. Mitchell invites Karl Polanyi to the discussion, who insists that the idea of a “self-regulating market” in European history is a myth that is still perpetuated today: such a market existed for only a very short period and thus is not qualified to be universalized today. Mitchell also references Foucault, who links modern-state repression to the development of modern political economy. Building on these two and other theoretical frameworks, Mitchell shows how the market economy, the conventional wisdom in liberal and neoliberal theories, was introduced to the colonized as an imagined “universal model” that never functioned in the ideal way that the empire claimed. Instead of bringing the long-awaited modernity that European experts and their modern technology promised to deliver, the market economy resulted in only human and environmental catastrophes. In a more contemporary context, international institutions of Western capitalism, mainly the IMF and the World Bank, today still perpetuate the myth and generate more catastrophes to the societies where they insist on applying economic liberalization programs.17

This study applies Mitchell’s approach to Qina, to illustrate how the discourse of modernity and its “universal” and “neutral” market economy damaged the lives of subaltern women and men in the province. The modern empire’s market advertised the great virtues of free trade, laws of private property, and foreign capital in subjugated countries, and the colluding ruling elite of the colonized happily applied this main

package of market reforms. For centuries before the advent of the modern empire, Qina province enjoyed its own form of exchange through its ties in the Indian Ocean world economy. Janet Abu Lughod, for example, affirms that the regions integrated into the “old world” system indiscriminately profited from its trade movement. \(^{18}\) In the seventeenth century, under the Ottomans, a traditional empire, Qina’s regional and international market reached its peak of prosperity, making the province an agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial center, so it became the capital of the autonomous government of Upper Egypt. With the rise of European hegemony over world trade and Western imperialism in the nineteenth century, the rules of the market economy prevailed and substituted new, capitalist modes of exchange, cutting off Qina province from its old trade ties. This study demonstrates how free trade, modern codes of private property, foreign experts, and foreign capital advanced at the expense of subaltern women and men in Qina, resulting in food shortages, land losses, and recurring diseases.

Antonio Gramsci’s concept of “hegemony” is applied in this study to understand discourses and institutions of power deployed by the empire and its colluding elites. Postcolonial theory extends the use of this concept from the study of the European nation-state to understanding empire, an example that this study follows. The Gramscian concept refers to how a nation-state’s ruling elite exercises power through subtle rhetoric and state institutions rather than direct oppression. “Domination is thus exerted not by force, nor even necessarily by active persuasion, but by more subtle and inclusive power over the economy, and over state apparatuses such as education and the media, by which

the ruling class’s interest is presented as the common interest and thus comes to be taken for granted.”¹⁹ For this purpose, the modern state uses certain institutions in subjugating the ruled classes: legislative, judicial, and executive powers are “[n]aturally…organs of political hegemony, but in different degrees,” Gramsci once asserted.²⁰ So did the empire as it promoted similar rhetoric about “public good” and created similar institutions in the colony for hegemonic purposes.

This study advances arguments about the different modes of hegemony exercised by the empire and its co-opted elite, as experienced by the peoples of Qina province. The Ottoman Empire used religious rhetoric to assert legitimacy and maintain the loyalty of its tribute-paying subjects, the ra‘îyya. As an early modern form of government, the Ottoman regime also used legal and bureaucratic institutions to apply less oppressive, or it so imagined, strategies of rule. Muhammad Ali’s empire attempted to introduce modes of modern state hegemony to Upper Egypt and Qina province, a region that he for the most part treated as a tributary or a colony in the empire rather than an integral part of a centralized state called Egypt. The informal and then formal British Empire’s discourse of hegemony was largely based on creating representative institutions and promoting free market.²¹ The co-opted ruling elite in Egypt, eager for modernity, embraced British

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liberal discourse by welcoming free trade, applying codes of private property, and inviting foreign capital and experts. In addition, the colluding ruling elite and the colonizer founded “modern” institutions of hegemony similar to what existed in the imperial core: parliaments, bureaucracies, and courts.

Finally, on revolt, Subaltern Studies affirms that the historiography of resistance of the empire has been elitist: it focuses only on bourgeois nationalist modes of rebellion, led by educated upper classes in the city, and almost ignores the struggles of the countryside and the lower classes. Indian historiography, Ranajit Guha asserts, is dominated by “bourgeois-nationalist elitism,” which is a product of British rule that always emphasized the elite whether on the colonized or colonizer side. Subaltern Studies attempts to restore the voices of those who did not get to speak in the nationalist historiography of the educated, the “laboring population” of groups such as peasants and lower-class women, to write a history of resistance autonomous from the ruling elite.

Although Subaltern Studies borrows the concept of the “subaltern” classes from Antonio Gramsci, it contests the way he viewed the ability of these classes to rebel against the nationalistic ruling elite. Gramsci argued that subaltern groups “are always subject to the authority of the ruling groups even when they rebel and rise up.” These classes deploy subtle discourses of hegemony, rather than oppressive tactics, with nationalist rhetoric in order to mobilize the masses for their own interests. On the

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23 Quotes from Antonio Gramsci’s Selections from the Prison Note Book in David Arnold, “Gramsci and Peasant Subalternity in India,” in Vinayak Ghaturvedi (ed.), Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial, p. 34.
contrary, Guha insists that “during the colonial period in India subaltern politics constituted an ‘autonomous domain’ which ‘neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend upon the latter.’” Guha attributes the roots of this mode of resistance to precolonial political practices that continued to reemerge under the British imperial regime. Subaltern modes of resistance in colonial India took many forms; among them Guha lists rebellion, riots, and popular movements.

Informed by these theoretical insights, this study examines the non-nationalist, non-elitist mode of everyday resistance to empire, and to its colluding ruling elites, as intensively exercised by the people of Qina province. The rebellion here is championed by subaltern women and men in the numerous villages and towns of the province: peasants, female textile weavers, Nile boat captains, camel drivers, factory workers, merchants, etc. Escaping imperial and central government oppression, many of those discontented lower-class actors turned into bandits, taking refuge in the famous mountains of the province. Gangs of *falatiyya* and *shaqi* bandits undertook the most violent and disturbing form of resistance against the empire and the ruling elite. This study explores the causes of banditry to express resentment and narrates the story of legendary gangs and individual bandits in Qina.

As a matter of fact, many studies have gone south before, to Qina province or Upper Egypt at large, in order to investigate questions pertaining to Western colonialism, market economy, or rebellion. Drawing from both history and political economy

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24 David Arnold, “Gramsci and Peasant Subalternity in India,” p. 34.
25 Ibid., pp. 34-35.
approaches, several scholars revisited the nineteenth century and examined the
contemporary conditions of southern provinces in Egypt to present different arguments.

From a Marxian stance, Peter Gran applies the Gramscian concept of the “southern
question” to Upper Egypt in order to understand the historical roots of underdevelopment
in the world in a comparative perspective. He focuses on the process of building a
capitalist nation-state to show how in different places in the world, such as the south of
Italy, Mexico, and Egypt, this resulted in marginalizing a rural south for the interest of an
industrial north. “In…a certain kind of capitalist nation state hegemony,…the Northern
ruling class exploits the Southern peasantry with the collusion and assistance of the
Southern ruling elite by playing the Northern worker against this Southern peasant,”
Gran explains. He argues that, in nineteenth-century Egypt, British capitalism and
colonialism initially created this phenomenon when it introduced commercial agriculture,
in cotton, and created a modern industrial sector in the north, the Delta, and turned Upper
Egypt into a subjugated south.

Similarly, Martina Rieker, a student of Gran, in her dissertation on Upper Egypt
considers issues of nation-state formation to address the “southern question,” while also
applying a Subaltern Studies approach. Rieker argues that during the process of
modernizing Egypt and building a nation-state, the populations of Cairo and Lower Egypt
were made into citizens, while the southern population was made into inferior subalterns
and cheap labor. She illustrates how the making of modern Egypt under a colonial regime

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26 Peter Gran, “Upper Egypt in Modern History: ‘A Southern Question’?” in Nicholas Hopkins and Reem
Saad (eds.), Upper Egypt: Identity and Change (Cairo; New York: American University in Cairo Press,
had “displaced” the southern region “into discrepant temporal and special zones distinct from national linear time and modern urban space within the narration of the modern Egyptian nation-state.”27 This led to many revolts breaking out in Upper Egyptian cities and villages throughout the nineteenth century, Rieker asserts. Fred Lawson attempts to explain the reasons behind some of these revolts, the three massive ones that erupted in Qina under Muhammad Ali’s empire. Lawson applies class analysis to attribute the actions of the rebels to change in the world economy as well as state policies. The economy of Qina province was based mainly on three sectors: grain and sugarcane cultivation, the Red Sea trade, and textile manufacturing. The revolt was a direct result, Lawson argues, of the harm done by European domination over the world economy to peasants, workers, and merchants in these three sectors, and of Muhammad Ali’s state monopolies and modernization policies.28

Many political economy studies have presented arguments about contemporary conditions of underdevelopment in Qina, usually to show fallacies of U.S.-modeled economic reform programs and to undermine the neoliberal theory. Muhammad Abdel ‘Aal’s work on Qina’s sugarcane cultivators argues that human conditions in Upper Egypt have deteriorated since 1992, the date when a market-reform program started to be implemented under the auspices of the World Bank and the IMF. Abdel ‘Aal follows the fatal effects of Law 96/1992, this program’s law of private property that reversed former

socialist codes, on the farmers of Qina and Aswan. They were left landless and lost their sugarcane harvest profit, their only source of income.29 Timothy Mitchell, in the “The Market’s Place,” selects a village in Qina as a case study to question the alleged universality of the capitalist market. Following the daily economic activities of a woman named Zaynab in this village, Mitchell proves that a market economy as applied in Egypt survives on a myriad of “precapitalist” or non-market economic decisions made by the inhabitants of this village.30

Inspired by these previous works, this study explores the same questions, combined. The study takes up the issues of colonialism, transformation in world economy, and liberal and neoliberal political economy; nonetheless, it does not place major emphasis on the nation-state, which has been the main unit of analysis in historiography for a long time. Instead, it focuses on the all-encompassing empire. This study makes the empire its unit of analysis, rather than the nation-state, and explores modes of subaltern, rather than nationalistic, revolt. Colonialism, national identities, nation-state formation, and nationalist movements of resistance have been extensively studied in world history, and minor emphasis is put on empire as a greater system that envelops big and small places everywhere. Empire as a unit of analysis has resurfaced lately in world history historiography.31 Empire is, this study argues, the main unit of

31 Examples for recent literature on empire presenting different approaches and views— from supporting to condemning the empire—see: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); David Abernethy, Dynamics of Global Domination (New Haven: Yale, 2001); Paul Kennedy,
analysis that is capable of explaining how the world functioned in the past, and is the most relevant to understanding how global events progress in the present.

**On Archival Sources**

This study is a story, a rather long one spanning two centuries, whose main protagonists are the female and male subalterns of Qina province and the empire. To depict an alternative picture of how the modern empire and colluding elites marginalized certain places and utterly altered the lives of the subaltern there, this study brings to life the daily narratives of the forgotten peoples of Qina and attempts to give them back their voice. The “subaltern speaks” here to rebel against the empire and the louder voices of native ruling elites and bourgeois leaders of nationalist movements who monopolize historiography. 32 The analysis here is undertaken at three levels: imperial discourses and institutions of hegemony, co-opted centralized regimes and colluding elites, and the lives of the subjugated peoples of the numerous villages and towns of Qina province.

To restore the voices of the subaltern, and parse the hegemonic rhetoric of the empire, this study relies on a wide variety of primary sources from the Egyptian National Archives, *Dar al-Watha’iq al-Qawmiyya*, and the British National Archives (former P.R.O) on Qina province. Most of these sources are being tapped into, or even

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discovered, for the first time here.\textsuperscript{33} Qina in this study refers to a province that consisted of many towns, such as Qina, Qus, Isna, and Farshut, and numerous villages, including Salimiyya, Armant, Qammula, Samhud, etc.\textsuperscript{34} Sources on the province include collections from Islamic court records, official correspondence between the central government in Cairo and provincial bureaucrats, thousands of individual and collective petitions, minutes of the Supreme Court, parliamentary minutes, encyclopedias of legal codes, biographical collections, geographical encyclopedias, British Foreign Office reports, and, finally, French and British travelers’ accounts. Arabic secondary sources were also indispensable in the narrative. Every group of these sources offers a distinct type of knowledge on the questions addressed.

For the period before and during the Ottoman Empire, the records of the shari’a court of the city of Isna and its rural vicinities illuminate political and socioeconomic developments in the province, in terms of government and the relation with the empire, trade and business contracts, landownership, gender relations, Muslim and Christian elite families, etc.\textsuperscript{35} Classical works of history used here include al-Maqrizi’s \textit{al-Khitat}, al-Damurdashi’s \textit{al-Durra al-Musana}, al-Idfawi’s biographical dictionary of Upper Egyptian scholars titled \textit{al-Tali‘ al-Sa‘id}, al-Jabarti’s \textit{‘Aja‘ib al-‘Athar}, and an

\textsuperscript{33} The Egyptian National Archives are currently undertaking an extensive project to create digital databases for millions of unknown, un-catalogued documents. Researchers in this project informed me about thousands of documents particularly on Qina province that were never discovered or touched before, which this study heavily relies on. Great thanks here are due to Dr. ‘Imad Hilal, a supervisor in this project.\textsuperscript{34} During the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the government sometimes split the province into two provinces, \textit{mudiriyyas} of Qina and Isna, for administrative purposes. This study deals with them as one province at all times. Today, Isna is a town in the southern governorate of Aswan.\textsuperscript{35} For Qina province in the Ottoman period, the court of Isna is the only one whose records are accessible now in Egyptian National Archives. Despite references to them in Isna court, court records of other towns and villages in the province are not found.
unpublished manuscript on the Turkish governors of Upper Egypt with the title of *Risala fi man Tawalla al-Sa‘id*. Furthermore, certain secondary sources are essential for understanding the period, such as Layla ‘Abd al-Latif’s study on the most famous autonomous ruler of Upper Egypt, *al-Sa‘id fi ‘Ahd Shaykh al-‘Arab Hammam*. An increasing number of British and French travellers passed by, settled for a while in, or fought battles on the soil of Qina province during the eighteenth century, such as the scientists and officers of the Napoleonic campaign on Egypt whose accounts of the dynamic international market in the province are used here.

As for the period of Muhammad Ali Pasha’s empire, several sources furnish this study with vivid stories and make the voices of subaltern social groups accessible and heard much louder than before. Although shar‘ia court records remain an important source for this period, they give way to the enormous and rich collections of the daily official correspondence between the central government in Cairo and every district and subdistrict in Qina, *Sadir* and *Warid Mudiriyyat* Qina and Isna, which provide elaborate details about the viceroy’s modern imperial institutions of hegemony, the provincial ruling elite, and how the subalterns of the province reacted to them. The people of Qina submitted thousands of petitions, *‘ardhals*, either individually or collectively, directly to Muhammad Ali’s court, the General Inspector of Upper Egypt, or other high-ranking officials in order to complain about ramifications of modern hegemony, and this study heavily relies on these petitions to deliver the voices of subaltern women and men. In addition, the minutes of the modern representative body that the viceroy created, the Council of Consultation, or *Majlis al-Mashura*, serve as an important source for
understanding the Pasha’s modern institutions of imperialism. Legal codes promulgated by this council, such as Laʿihat al-Fallah for the agricultural organization and the Syasatname for the bureaucracy, are analyzed here as discourses of hegemony. Furthermore, a British traveller, J. A. St. John, was an eyewitness to one of the provenience’s massive revolts during this period, and his travelogue delivers a full account of the rebels’ causes and actions.

As for the middle period, of the informal British Empire, the same previous sources—shari’a court records, official correspondence, and petitions—continue to inform the backbone of the narrative, but another source makes the story even richer and more vivid: the minutes of the Council of Rules, or Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, an institution which served as both a supreme court and a legislature in Cairo. Cases that failed to reach a final verdict in the local courts and civil councils in the province were referred to Cairo to be heard in the Council of Rules, which kept extensive minutes, sometimes tens of pages for each case. The lively details in these minutes show a province subject to global market influences and uncover forgotten stories of rebellious bandits and other forms of subaltern resistance. Since there is a special focus on the legal codes in this part of the study, the minutes of the newly established parliament, Majlis Shura al-Nuwwab, show how central and local ruling elite peripheralized the province through the promulgation of modern laws. Filib Jallad’s encyclopedia of modern Egyptian laws, Qamus al-Idara wa-l-Qada’, is another essential primary source in this regard. Furthermore, ‘Ali Mubarak’s geographical and biographical encyclopedia, al-Khitat al-Tawfiqiyya, makes it more possible for this study to follow modern
transformations in the economic and social life in the provinces’ villages. Luckily, an Englishwoman, Lady Lucie Duff-Gordon, happened to live in Qina when the 1864 massive revolt erupted there, and she delivered an interesting account of this revolt in detailed letters to her relatives back home.

Finally, for the British colonial period, in addition to all previous sources in the Cairo archives, records from the British National Archives in Kew are used. The annual administrative and financial reports of Lord Cromer, consuls, and consular agents in Egypt are basic to understand British liberalism as a discourse of hegemony and how it functioned through allegedly democratic and capitalist institutions. Some “confidential” memoranda in the records of the British Foreign Office also reveal some hidden facts about how foreign capital worked. The Egyptian archives also provide this part of the study with a new variety of sources, including the minutes of the cabinet of ministers or Maljis al-Wuzara’, the minutes of the two bodies of the reformed parliament, or Majlis Shura al-Nuwwab and al-Jam‘iyya al-‘Umumiyya, and a collection of a new form of petitions raised to the viceroy’s court called iltimasat. Furthermore, the annual provincial reports, Taqarir al-Mudiriyyat, and published collections of decrees and orders, al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat, show new faces of modernity and rebellion during this period.36

36 The study uses these various types of archival sources with an awareness of their limitations as products of certain political contexts. Many of these documents, such as petitions, rulings of the supreme court, or parliamentary minutes, sometimes were recorded in a way that reflected the power structure in state and society. They were manufactured by the state bureaucracy and were highly contingent, and thus suffer from many issues. They must be contextualized and, in some cases, perceived as state discourses rather than simple bearers of facts. Furthermore, the study was very selective about the documents it chose to consider actions of political rebellion. While archival records deliver tens of thousands of stories that could fall in a
On Empires in Qina: Outline

Across five chapters, this study narrates two hundred years of the history of Qina province, a small place deep in the south of Egypt, and the empire. The first chapter furnishes a historical background spanning a period from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, offering a “non-Eurocentric” vision of Qina’s place in the “Indian Ocean world economy.” This chapter narrates the tale of two cities and two ports in the province. In order to understand the ramifications of “modern” imperialism on Qina, the study reaches back to the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, when one city in the province, Qus, and its Red Sea port, ‘Aydhab, served as an international trade route and great center of production and knowledge in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. In the sixteenth century, after the Ottoman Empire took over the region, this market did not totally collapse due to European intrusions and alleged domination over the Ocean’s trade. Rather, the city of Qina and its port of Qusayr rose as an alternative trade route to Qus and ‘Aydhab and became a great international forum of commerce as well as center of agricultural production and textile manufacturing.

The second chapter treats the Ottoman Empire in Qina province, with a special focus on the eighteenth century and the autonomous “republic” of Shaykh al-‘Arab Hammam in Upper Egypt. Although the region had been officially a tributary to the

vague area between regular crimes and actions of political resistance, this study selected only highly politicized cases to include and analyze as subaltern actions of revenge. The study set specific criteria in making these selections, which included choosing only actions targeting state bureaucrats, state buildings, government money, or the propertied politicians. The criteria also included certain characteristics for the person who committed the action, as in most cases they were peasants, laborers or women whose lives were hurt one way or another by the regime.
empire since the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1516, one Arab confederation, Hawwara, established a dynasty that lasted for three centuries and made Qina province the capital of an autonomous government in the southern provinces. From his seat in Qina, Hammam capitalized on the Empire’s political decentralization and economic liberalization to build what many observers called a republic based on the rule of law and justice for religious minorities. He built his wealth on the sugar industry and the control of the southern wheat and long-distance trade in the south. Hammam’s government was based on a “social contract” with peasants and Copts (Egyptian Orthodox Christians). In 1769, the state of Hammam collapsed, along with the Hawwara dynasty and centuries of autonomous polity in Upper Egypt. Its demise was followed quickly by the French campaign in Egypt. Lasting for only three years, from 1798 to 1801, the French officers made their way to Qina province in an attempt to dominate the Red Sea trade and sugarcane and other crops. The mode of hegemony exercised by the campaign in Qina could be considered as a prelude to the French modern imperialism of the next two centuries. Finally, the Ottomans restored control over Egypt, and soon their declining empire embarked on a project of “modern reform” that was soon applied in Qina province.

The third chapter considers Muhammad Ali Pasha’s empire in Qina. The Pasha, an Ottoman viceroy (r. 1805-1848), founded a short-lived empire that, while introducing modernity and modern modes of imperial hegemony, put the province and Upper Egypt at large on a long road to marginalization. After six years in power, Muhammad Ali finally subjugated the south, monopolized its wheat production and made huge profits exporting it to Europe, and conquered the regional market of Qina in the Red Sea and
monopolized its trade. He made the south a tributary to his ascendant empire, which resulted in a series of massive revolts in Qina. Without completely separating himself from the Ottoman regime, Muhammad Ali reversed Ottoman *laissez-faire* with heavy interventionism, and created institutions of modern-state hegemony, as in Europe, to govern the empire. In the process, Qina paid the price of revolt: he placed the rebellious south in an ambiguous place between a colony in an empire and an integrated part of a centralized government. This policy peripheralized Upper Egypt, and marked the beginning of the province’s long journey, one hundred years, of solitude. The Pasha’s empire finally gave way to the rising British “imperialism of free trade.” He had to adjust his policies in Upper Egypt to fully assimilate the south, but it was already too late when Qina was simmering with different types of subaltern unrest and the *falatiyya* bandits were emerging as a distinct group of fierce resistance.

The fourth chapter deals with the age of the informal British Empire, from 1848 to 1882. The empire preached a discourse on the market economy, which the Egyptian co-opted regimes happily adopted in pursuit of modernity and their own economic interests. Market reforms took the form of applying free trade policies, opening the door for European merchants, promulgating modern codes of private property, and allowing an influx of European experts and labor. This chapter tells six stories of modernity and its market reforms that revolve around steamers, plantations, and mines. In Qina province, free trade allowed the steamships of European merchants to control the province’s commerce, which resulted in food shortages, the codes of private property led to the growth of large plantations and great land losses on the part of female and male peasants,
and European mining experts dragged thousands of the province’s laborers to the desert in futile quest for coal and sulfur. A massive revolt erupted in 1864 along with other numerous actions of subaltern resistance, where the falatiyya bandits continued to disturb foreign intruders and the native ruling elite.

Finally, the last chapter examines the advent of the formal British Empire, in 1882, to Qina province. The empire introduced reformed representative institutions, namely a parliament and local commissions, which only led to the entrenchment of the power of the co-opted ruling elite and silenced the subalterns of Qina. In addition, the large inflow of foreign capital to the province brought about another episode of great land losses for the female and male peasants. Hence, the peripheralization of the province in both the world and Egyptian economy was complete, and the subalterns of Qina’s villages endured food shortages and poor sanitary conditions that resulted in epidemics of cholera and plague. Rebellion in time of cholera, in Qina province, divorced itself from the nationalistic and elitist mode of resistance prevalent in the north. Female and male subalterns of the province developed their own fashion of resistance that invoked both the distant and recent memory of their massive revolts. Bandits returned more fiercely to seek revenge against the empire and its co-opted elite. The study ends in 1920, when the conclusion of WWI marked the advent of an era of new imperial arrangements in the world and nationalist politics in Cairo.
CHAPTER 1
Qina in a Non-Eurocentric World Economy,
1200s-1700s

By the end of the 1700s, Qina province was a center of long-distance commerce in Egypt. It was an important link in the Red Sea regional market encompassing Arabia and East Africa, which was, in turn, a main link in the vast circles of the Indian Ocean trade. During his voyage in Upper Egypt, Vivant Denon, an officer in Napoleon’s 1798 campaign in Egypt, vividly portrayed the province’s extended trade networks.

We left Kous [Qus], and arrived at Keneh [Qina], where we found a number of merchants of all nations. By encountering the natives of very foreign countries, remote distances seems closer. When begin to reckon the days required for the journey, and the necessary means of affecting it, the space to be passed over ceases to be immense. The Red Sea, Gidda, Mecca, seemed like neighboring places to the town where we were; and India itself was but a short way beyond them. In the opposite direction the oases were actually no more than three days journey off us, and ceased to appear to our imagination as an undiscovered country…the journey to Darfur may be accomplished in forty days, a hundred more are required to reach Tombuctoo. A merchant whom I found in Keneh…had often been in Darfur, where the caravans arrive from Tombuctoo …here we also found many Turkish, Meccan and Moorish merchants, come to exchange coffee and Indian cottons for corn.37

As a matter of fact, Qina province had enjoyed this status in the world economy for almost six centuries before the Frenchman’s visit. The history of this thriving market went back to the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, from the 12th century on, when various

internal and international circumstances made Qina province the second most important place in Egypt after Cairo. Qina maintained this central place for more than three centuries to follow, through the Ottoman rule until the end of the eighteenth century, or till the moment that Vivant Denon recorded.

The city of Qina inherited the important position of another city in the province, Qus. “After Fustat [Cairo], there is no other city greater than it [Qus] in Egypt,” a fourteenth-century Syrian historian and ruler, asserted.\(^{38}\) Ayyubid and Mamluk historians described how the pilgrimage and trade road between Qus and its Red Sea port of ‘Aydhab was one of the most frequented routes in the Muslim world, from North Africa to India. In the 12th century, Ibn Jubayr described Qus as “a city full of markets, with extensive facilities and services, full of peoples because of the abundance of the imported and exported commodities brought by Yemeni, Indian, and Abyssinian merchants and pilgrims because it was the stopping place of all, the forum of friends, and the meeting point of the pilgrims of North Africa, Egypt and Alexandria.”\(^{39}\) The glory of Qus faded in the fifteenth century and the city collapsed by the end of the Mamluk era. However, soon afterwards, the city of Qina rose to take its place as a thriving center of trade and production under the Ottoman Empire.

Qina province rose to prominence and maintained this position throughout these centuries mainly, this chapter argues, as a result of its position as an integral part of what


many world historians today call “the Indian Ocean world economy.” Historians such as Janet Abu Lughod and K.N. Chaudhuri assert that before the sixteenth century a single “world-system” unified trade routes in the world around the Indian Ocean. This system incorporated the ports and cities of the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and the Arabian Sea, and carried the Afro-Asian trade. Islam played a major rule as a market-unifying factor in this network of ports and Qina province was at the very heart of this system, as the trade-route maps of this period illustrate.40 (See Maps 1, 2, 3, 4)

More importantly, the prosperous market of Qina province did not collapse between the 16th and the 18th centuries because of the rise of European trade supremacy and imperialism, this chapter argues. Prevailing Eurocentric visions of the history of the modern world, including the writings of Adam Smith and Marx, claim that in the sixteenth century another European-led world system emerged to replace the old one when Portuguese, Dutch, and British empires established their domination over the Indian spice trade.41 Recently, world historians such as Andre Gunder Frank have undermined this presumption and argued that the Indian Ocean world system remained intact and dominant until 1800.42 This chapter extends these contributions in world history to the regional level, in order to show that Qina province also continued to be a thriving market within this system.

42 Ibid.
(1) In the Indian Ocean “World Economy,” 1200s -1400s

After the rise of Islam, the emerging Islamic polities in the realm of the Indian Ocean went through a long process of commercial unification and developed an economic coherence that qualified the region to rise, as many historians argue, into a world system. Under Mamluk rule in Egypt, from the thirteenth century, the Red Sea for various reasons emerged as the most important trade route in the Muslim world and perhaps in world economy at large, thus stimulating Qina province’s development into a commercial hub.

Three centuries after the spread of Islam, K.N. Chaudhuri affirms, the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea coastlines were already integrated into the larger Indian Ocean trade circle. Muslim pilgrims/merchants turned the Hajj roads and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina into grand commercial forums where merchants of India mingled with those of North Africa, Egypt, Syria, East Africa, etc. in an annual, enormous world fair.43 R. J. Barendse looks at the region in the western Indian Ocean after the rise of Islam as a “world economy,” juxtaposing it to an early modern Mediterranean one, controlled by the Italians and Ottomans, and the modern European one. Barendse presents what he calls the “Arabian Seas” market, referring to the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf regions, as a cluster of towns in their surroundings, which he calls natios.44

This world economy witnessed several phases of busts, booms, and shifts in its main trade routes, until, by the thirteenth century, the Red Sea route passing through Qina province became its most important one. Janet Abu Lughod indicates that during this period, the “world system” of the region contained three trade routes between India and the Middle East that also reached Europe: the first passed through Central Asia and Constantinople, the second passed through Baghdad and Basra, and the third was the Qus-‘Aydhab Red Sea route. During the Ayyubid and Mamluk period, “[t]he southern route through the Red Sea became the single thread connecting the two bodies of water [the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean] that constituted the central axis of the then-known world,” Abu Lughod affirms. The crusades as well as the Mongol invasion of Iraq ruined the security of the northern routes ruined and rendered the southern route through the Red Sea safer.45

Before 1260, the old caravan route ran from India to the Persian Gulf, Baghdad, and the Crusader kingdoms, and finally on to Venice and Genoa. This route collapsed after both the Mongol invasion of Baghdad and the fall of the Crusader kingdoms to the Ayyubids and Mamluks. Shortly afterwards, Mamluk Egypt became the center of the Muslim world, and consequently the Indian Ocean trade shifted from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea.46 In addition, the fall of the Abbasid Empire to the Mongols led the Red Sea to gain in trading importance over the Persian Gulf in delivering the East Asian trade. The Red Sea route was safer and, furthermore, had the comparative advantage of

46 Ibid., pp.120-122.
enabling merchants to transport merchandise by sea to ports far nearer to the centers of
trade, as well as consumer markets in the Middle East and Europe, thus minimizing the
need for more difficult, expensive and dangerous land transportation.47

Through the Red Sea trade, the city of Qus became the second grand center of
trade and economic life in Egypt after Cairo. About the spice trade in Mamluk Egypt, W.
Fischel asserts, “Qus, next to Cairo, was the most important commercial center of Egypt
at this period. Because of its central role as a transit station...It was also a center of ship-
building for transportation up the Nile.”48 The city was situated in the heart of an
immediate regional market that consisted of Arabia, Yemen and Abyssinia, with the Red
Sea and the River Nile serving as the connecting waterways. This regional market
received the East Asian trade, which consisted of four main commodities: spices
(especially black pepper), silk, porcelain, and sandalwood.49 Qus re-exported most of
what it received from the Indian Ocean.

In the south, Qus established direct trade contacts with East Africa, through the
Red Sea coastline route and the Nile, and delivered some East African trade to the rest of
the world. The spread of Islam in Ethiopia fostered trade relations between the Middle
East and Abyssinia, where a number of Muslim sultanates were established and Muslim
merchants penetrated parts of Ethiopia. Abyssinian trade relations with the Muslim world
expanded, while a growing class of Abyssinian Muslim merchants played a major role as

a literate elite mediating trade between their own kings and the Muslim rulers. The Horn of Africa was famous for its luxury products such as gold, ivory, precious skins, incense and slaves, which the merchants of Qus received and re-exported northward. 50

On the Mediterranean side, European merchants had no direct access to Qus or the Red Sea trade because of the strong Mamluk state and its commercial monopolies. The Venetian and Genoese merchants, who dominated southern European trade at this time, were dependent on Muslim merchants to reach Indian Ocean commodities. Abu Lughod asserts that European merchants were merely consumers of eastern commodities, and European contribution at large to the Indian Ocean markets was limited. Venetian and Genoese merchants collected European commodities such as textiles, arms, and metal in order to trade for Indian spices, Chinese pottery, Middle Eastern silk, sugar, grain, and slaves, which came to Egypt primarily through the Red Sea route and its forum in Qus.51

One cannot study Muslim traders in this medieval world economy without mentioning the Karimi family of merchants and their business agents. The Karimis monopolized the spice trade in Mamluk Egypt and established their own business communities worldwide as well as in Qus. Karimi merchants were a capitalist class of Cairene long-distance traders, with enormous political influence, who controlled the Indian trade in Egypt and delivered part of it to the Italian merchants in the Mediterranean. By the first half of the fourteenth century, there were about 200 Karimi

merchants shaping a vast trade network in Africa and Asia, with representatives in
Yemen, India, Ethiopia, and Mali. They ran commercial complexes in each of these
regions with representatives in the city of Qus to manage this international network.52
The Karimi ships brought Indian and Yemeni articles from Aden and delivered them to
the ports of ‘Aydhab and Qusayr, and sometimes to other ports such as Suez. In Qus, the
caravans delivered the Karimi’s loads to Nile boats for transport to Fustat (Old Cairo). In
Cairo and Alexandria, they were sold to European merchants from Venice, Genoa, Pisa,
Marseilles or Barcelona. 53

Qus was not, however, merely an importer and re-exporter in this world system. It
also contributed a considerable quantity of its own agricultural and industrial produce to
its immediate regional market and beyond.

(2) The Tale of a City and a Port I: Qus and ‘Aydhab, 1200s-1400s

Under the Ayyubid and Mamluk empires, the city of Qus was the capital of Upper
Egypt. The peoples of Qus were known as industrious laborers: peasants, mill-workers in
sugar, oil, textile, and flour, camel drivers, boat captains, and merchants controlling long-
distance commerce. The Qus-‘Aydhb trade route lived for two centuries, but it was
doomed to decline in the fifteenth century for several reasons.

52 André Raymond, Cairo (London: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 116-117; Muhammad ‘Abdu al-
Commercial Agriculture: Sugar, Grain, and Textiles

The peasants and the capitalist elite of Upper Egypt at large were heavily involved in commercial agriculture; their produce of grain, sugar, flax, indigo, and carthamus were items for local markets and long-distance trade alike. As for grain, it was grown everywhere in Egypt, but it was produced most abundantly in the Upper Egyptian provinces of Minya, Jirja, and Qina.54 The Mamluks established a system of monopolies over Upper Egyptian grain, considering it a “political” crop crucial for the state apparatus. While the Delta paid taxes in cash, Upper Egypt paid its dues in kind – in wheat, barley, and beans – and the state used this annual harvest to pay pensions, maintain households, distribute charities for the poor, and support religious endowments. The remaining surplus was then sold to merchants and brokers, who put it up for sale for local consumption and export. Upper Egyptian grain was shipped to sahil al-ghilal, the Bulaq Nile grain port in Cairo, to be sold in the city or shipped again by Cairene merchants to Syria and the Mediterranean.55

Sugarcane was the most important cash crop of Qina province. Large-scale production of sugar was unique to Upper Egypt, and it was consumed locally in Egypt and exported to Middle Eastern and European countries, including, Italy, southern

France, Catalonia, Flanders, England and Germany.\textsuperscript{56} Eliyahu Ashtor asserts that Upper Egypt was the principle sugar producer in the entire Middle East. Upper Egypt predominated in this market through numerous “capitalist” investors from Mamluk incumbents and native Upper Egyptians.\textsuperscript{57}

Abu al-Fadl al-Idfawi, an Upper Egyptian biographer (d. 748/1347), depicted how the cities and villages around Qus were intensive sugarcane and sugar producers. Qift alone, a town north of Qus, had 40 sugar melting-houses and 6 sugarcane pressing-mills, and a large portion of its population was so affluent because of sugar trade that they built domes above their houses. The village of Samhud had numerous other mills, and was so famous for its strong sugarcane harvest that “mice can never eat its canes.”\textsuperscript{58} This sugar was sold in abundance in Egyptian markets in Cairo and Alexandria at affordable prices, even during the time of economic crises, as al-Maqrizi (d. 1442) recounted.\textsuperscript{59} It was also, Ashtor indicates, a main export article that was shipped to other Arab countries and enjoyed a European market in Italy, southern France, and England.\textsuperscript{60}

The leaders of Hawwara, the Arab tribe that controlled Upper Egypt as fief-holders during a part of the Mamluk period, began their rise to power as sugarcane farm owners and sugar producers. Muhammad al-Maraghi’s history of Upper Egypt indicates that the Mamluk state granted the Hawwara notables large lands in the southern provinces as fiefs.

\textsuperscript{56} Abu Lughod, \textit{Before European Hegemony}, p.232.
\textsuperscript{59} Al-Maqrizi, ‘\textit{Ighathat al-Umma bi-Kashf al-Ghumma} (Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1990), pp.126-130.
\textsuperscript{60} Abu Lughod, \textit{Before European Hegemony}, p. 232.
to cultivate. They succeeded in extensively developing sugarcane farming and established many sugar refineries until they became very wealthy. One of the pioneer Hawwara sugar producers during this period was Muhammad Abu al-Sanun Ibn ‘Umar al-Hawwari, who expanded sugar cultivation and established numerous sugar factories. He amassed a huge fortune that Hawwara built on to create a capitalist sugar monopoly. Many centuries later, during the Ottoman rule, Hawwara used this monopoly to become the autonomous rulers of Upper Egypt.61

Many affluent shari’a law scholars of Qus invested their high salaries in the sugar industry. They owned sugarcane fields and rented them out to peasants by short-term leases, renewed annually, in accordance with Islamic law. Many also carried out businesses in sugar mills and commerce. For example, a shari’a law scholar from Armant, Ahmad Ibn ‘Ali al-Isna’i (d. 704/1304) amassed about 80,000 dirham from his official position as the judge of Isna, and he used this wealth to invest in landed properties and sugarcane farming and established pious endowments for a school in Qus.62 In one incident, Al-Rady the judge loaded a big boat with 2000 ardabb of sugar and sent it for sale in Cairo. He put a few of his young slaves in charge of the immense cargo, but it sank in the Nile. The slaves were so afraid of his punishment that they went at night to the house of shaykh Abu Yahya, a prominent scholar, in Qina to petition to him to mediate between them and their master, and he agreed to do so. The wealthy judge

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was so honored by the visit of the eminent scholar to his house to ask for forgiveness for the slaves that he set them free.\(^63\) Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al-Qina‘i, the judge of Qina, owned a sugarcane pressing mill with such a profitable production that he decided to leave the judiciary and devote all of his time to the sugar business.\(^64\)

Textile weaving in Egypt and Syria was another important sector with a considerable market in the Mediterranean. Textile production there relied on some Upper Egyptian cash crops, namely cotton, flax, and carthamus. Cotton was mostly cultivated in Qina province and the Delta, and to a smaller extent in other areas of Egypt. Flax was uniquely cultivated in Upper Egypt, and it was “the main industrial crop of Egypt…and formed the main object of international trade.”\(^65\) Principle dyestuffs, namely indigo and carthamus (safflower) were also cash crops unique to Upper Egypt. Safflower, used for the manufacture of dyes, was extensively cultivated between Qina province and Cairo. Peasants cultivated the flower on the side with other main crops. It was carried to Asyut where merchants came from Cairo, Damascus, Arabia and elsewhere to buy it.\(^66\)

In Qina province, the two banks of the Nile, as al-Idfawi depicted it, were delightfully decorated with abundant, profitable orchards and palm trees. Boats could sail for seven days up the Nile without reaching an end to the fields of palm trees and orchards, which mounted to around 20,000 acres. Qus produced the best dates which at

\(^{63}\) Ibid., p. 57, p.456.
\(^{64}\) Ibid., p. 481.
this time had no equal in quality except in Iraq, and the city even surpassed Iraq in producing some unique types of dates. Along with Fayyum and the Oasis, the region produced the best dates and doom palms in the country. Isna alone annually harvested 40,000 *ardabb* of dates and 12,000s *ardabb* of raisins. In addition, the region’s production of fruit was famous for its size and sweet taste, according to the testimony of the shari‘a scholars who studied in the schools of Qus and travelers who visited the city.67

*Qus and ‘Aydhab: Rise and Decline*

Qus, the capital of Upper Egypt, was probably a city touched by “*le doux commerce,*” the magical stick that transformed modern European cities in the age of capitalism. Abu Ishaq al-Bayhaqi (d. 1077) noted, “the people of this province are profoundly keen on knowledge, cleverness, religion, leadership, architecture, money collecting, tolerance, beauty, and ornament.”68 Many Arab travelers and geographers visited Qus during its heyday to report on its immense wealth and busy commercial life. Before the rise of Qus, the city of Qift, also in Qina province, had been the pre-Islamic and Islamic trade center of the Red Sea market. Qus succeeded Qift as a commercial hub and inherited its glory around 400/1000. The city rose to prominence and glory during the Ayyubid and Mamluk empires, two highly centralized and prosperous economies.69

68 Ibid., p.29.
In his sizable monograph about Qus as a medieval Islamic center, the French historian Jean-Claude Garcin shows that the city was a military strong point, a center of administration, and the refuge of merchants, some of whom, such as the Karimis, purchased lands in the province. Qus was also, he adds, the home of shari‘a judges and scholars, whose high salaries and private incomes enabled them to establish charitable endowments to support the city’s numerous colleges (madrasas) and other schools. The less affluent elite of Qus, court notaries and judicial assistants, as well as the students of law and religion, came from the surrounding villages and cities. Many of the graduates of Qus’s schools and colleges pursued ambitious careers in Cairo.70

Arab historians and travelers who visited Qus during this period recorded elaborate observations on the volume and movement of trade in the city. For example, Ibn Jubayr (1145-1217) noted in his book of al-Rihla that the city had spacious neighborhoods crowded with plenty of local markets, suqs, and inhabited by people from regions near and far. It was intensively busy with all manner of import and export activities conducted by pilgrims as well as Yemeni, Indian, and Abyssinian merchants. He added that it was the place where caravans landed and the forum where the Hajj pilgrims and merchants of North African, Egyptian, and “whoever came in contact with them” met. From Qus they headed towards the Red Sea port of ‘Aydhab to depart to Holy places, and passed by the city again in their return journey. The Syrian geographer Yaqut al-Hamwai (1179-1229) also provided an account of the city in his famous encyclopedia

of Islamic cities and places, affirming that it was the capital of Upper Egypt and was a glorious, vast city.\textsuperscript{71}

In the fourteenth century, according to Abu al-Fadl al-‘Umari (1301-1349), the city had two large commercial complexes, or wikalas, where international merchants stayed and found stables to shelter their animals. It also had an abundance of inns, or funduqs, and luxurious houses, as well as baths, schools of higher education, orchards, gardens, and vegetable farms. It was inhabited by craftsmen and skillful people of various professions, in addition to merchants, shari‘a scholars, and wealthy Muslims and Copts who owned real estate and various properties. The city also had a large market where textile, silk, meat, vegetables, etc. were displayed for sale. It had about five oil mills processing lettuce seeds. Its agricultural land extended over about six thousand faddans cultivated by wheat and barley. Al-‘Umari concluded that the city was a center of knowledge and the refuge of shari‘a scholars.\textsuperscript{72}

Qus served as an educational center for shari‘a scholars who came from all over the Muslim world to read with famous scholars in its numerous schools. The city had by far the largest number of colleges and schools in the country—sixteen, and one of them was a prestigious center of hadith (Prophetic traditions) studies. Shari‘a scholars residing in Qus and its suburbs came from Andalusia, Morocco, Syria, Hijaz, and Yemen, in addition to Cairo and other cities and villages of Egypt. Many of the eminent scholars of this period were either natives of Qus or graduates of its schools, and sometimes settled

\textsuperscript{71} Al-Idfawi, \textit{al-Tali‘ al-Sa‘id}, pp. 13-14, fn.5.
in the city to teach at its schools. Ibn Daqiq al-‘Id (d. 667/1268), a native of Qus, was a Sunni icon credited with implementing Saladin’s policy of eradicating the Shi‘i faith from Egypt after the termination of the Shi‘i Fatimid Empire.73

The schools of Islamic law that dominated in Upper Egypt developed along the lines of the trade flow. The vast majority of Upper Egyptian shari‘a scholars adhered to the Maliki and the Shafi‘i schools of law, and so did the regions they were connected to by trade. While North Africa, Hijaz and the Sudan adhered to the Maliki school, Cairo and Yemen adhered to the Shafi‘i one. Al-Idfawi’s biographies of Upper Egyptian shari‘a scholars reveal that most jurists embraced a dual identity that combined these two schools. In the education they received at Qus’ schools, they read the books of the Shafi‘ites and the Malikites and applied the two schools of law in courts and in issuing fatawa.

Similarly, the academic movement of Upper Egypt’s shari‘a scholars reflected the flow of caravans and commodities. In Islamic history, scholars seeking knowledge joined trade and hajj caravans to move between the centers of education, which were also centers of trade. As al-Idfawi recounted, they traveled between North Africa, the Sudan, Yemen, and Hijaz to study and teach. In addition, shari‘a scholars originally from Andalusia and Morocco settled in to teach in the cities of Qus and Qina. This included names such as Muhammad al-Qurtubi al-Qina‘i, a scholar from Cordoba who settled in

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Qina, and Muhammad Ibn Iqbal al-Maghribi al-Qusi who came from Morocco and settled in Qus.\textsuperscript{74}

Urban life in Qina province flourished around Qus and its international market. The population of cities like Isna, Qina, Farshut, Samhud, Bahjura, Hu, and Dandara sometimes reached 10,000 families, a large number for a medieval city.\textsuperscript{75} Isna had about 13,000 houses and some seventy poets. Abdlfeda, a thirteenth-century historian, recounted, “Esna is remarkable for its public baths and trade, is built on the Western bank of the Nile between Aswan and Cous but nearer to the latter. Founded by the Copts, its well cultivated lands abound in corn and palm trees, and its precincts in gardens and fruit trees.”\textsuperscript{76}

As for the Red Sea port of ‘Aydhab, travellers did not find it an impressive town as it was not surrounded by walls and did not have luxury houses. Nevertheless, it was one of the most important ports in the world, as al-Maqrizi recounted. In ‘Aydhab, Indian and Yemeni ships coming from Aden, a great port at this time, unloaded cargoes while pilgrims’ ships sailed back and forth to Jeddah. The caravans’ journey between ‘Aydhab and Qus usually took twelve days, the same period needed to get from Cairo to Aswan, and this journey was made possible by the many water wells that the caravans en route passed by and the advanced camel transportation technology they utilized. From Qus, the

\textsuperscript{74} Al-Idfawi, \textit{Al-Tali` al-sa‘id}, p.484, p.529
\textsuperscript{75} Al-Maqrizi, \textit{Al-Khitat}, vol. 1, p.237.
\textsuperscript{76} Quoted in: M. Claude Savary, \textit{Lettres sur l’Égypte: où l'on offre le parallèle des moeurs anciennes et modernes de ses habitans, où l'on décrit l'état, le commerce, l'agriculture, le gouvernement du pays} (Paris: Onfroi, 1785-86), vol. 2, pp.147-149.
shipments set sail to Cairo down the Nile. Some spice shipments unloaded in Cairo, while others continued the journey to reach Mediterranean destinations.77

The ‘Aydhab-Qus route was eventually doomed to decline. Although this route remained heavily frequented for almost two centuries from 450s/1060s to 660s/1260s, it was diverted after an acute economic crisis hit the country. Low Nile floods and consequent famines resulted in the interruption of the pilgrimage journey for many years. Merchants, however, continued to use the ‘Aydhab-Qus road, until they finally deserted it around 760/1358. This trade route gradually faded till it vanished, and the glory of Qus vanished with it.78

The decline of Qus took place due to several internal and external factors. Firstly, a severe crisis of low Nile inundation (sharaqi water shortage) occurred under the Mamluk empire. Al-Maqrizi lamented that Upper Egypt up until the reign of al-Nasir Ibn Qalawun (693-741/1293-1341) was such a prosperous province that esteemed scholars could embark on a long journey from Cairo to Aswan without the need to carry any money or provisions. There were generous hosts to accommodate travelers in every city and village with an abundance of food and places to stay for them and their horses or camels for extensive stays. However, the first low Nile inundation year in 776/1374 caused a severe decline in Upper Egyptian resources, and another more acute water

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77 The other Red Sea port, al-Qalzam which later became Suez, was also active in trade but al-Maqrizi did not consider it a great world port compared to ‘Aydhab. The port of Qusayr also functioned as a Red Sea port during this period in connection with Qus, but it was secondary after ‘Aydhab and saw a modest volume of traffic. Al-Maqrizi, al-Khitat, vol.1, pp.202-203, p. 213; Cf Li Guo, _Commerce, Culture and Community in a Red Sea Port in the Thirteenth century_ (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

78 Al-Maqrizi, _Al-Khitat_, vol.1, pp.202-203.
shortage occurred in 806/1403 resulting in a huge famine that killed 17,000 people in Qus alone. Al-Maqrizi also recounted that sugarcane cultivation diminished during this crisis and less of its harvest was refined, especially around 807/1404-808/1405. 79

Secondly, the misfortunes of Qus took place during a larger economic crisis in Egypt. André Raymond shows that during the fifteenth century the institutions of the Mamluk state were in decline and recurrent epidemics broke out in Egypt. The plague reoccurred numerous times and resulted in a demographic decline and economic depression. Finally, the European discovery of new sea routes around Africa had an inevitable impact on the Egyptian spice trade. European merchants found direct access to Indian spices, through the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, and this sector of trade was soon damaged in Egypt. 80 Furthermore, Abu Lughod asserts that the entirety of Middle Eastern trade faced many other damaging factors. For example, Middle Eastern industrial production declined when Italian merchants started to buy flax, cotton, and sugar as raw material to be processed in European factories. The Mediterranean market demand for Egyptian and Syrian textiles declined in the second half of the fourteenth century because of increased European competition. In addition, the Karimi merchants lost their monopolies over the market with the diversion of the spice trade route. 81

In the late eighteenth century, European travelers who visited Qus were not very impressed by its conditions, but they did recount that there was a movement of trade in the city through the port of Qusayr. Some visitors condemned Mamluk oppression for

80 Raymond, Cairo, pp. 165-169.
81 Abu Lughod, Before European Hegemony, p.234-237.
worsening the city’s conditions. “Cous has undergone the same fate as her rivals, her trade is ruined by the oppression of government, her glory eclipsed, and her buildings reduced to a few huts inhabited by a small number of Copts and Arabs.” Others presented a brighter image of the city and found it still a prosperous and beautiful one. Nevertheless, even if Qus witnessed some days of prosperity after the economic crisis, there is no doubt that it collapsed in the eighteenth century. As an English traveler in the 1740s noted, “The port of Cous is a miserable town built of unburnt brick…a flat country full of doom trees.”

(3) A Market Decline Myth? New Ottoman Order, 1500s-1700s

“Qina has succeeded Qus, as Qus has succeeded Qift.” This is a statement that repeatedly appeared in the accounts of Egyptian historians and European travelers alike in the eighteenth century. In the 1700s, the city of Qina, to the north of Qus, was without doubt an “international trade” center where Asia, Africa, and the Mediterranean were intensively connected. The city of Qina and its Red Sea port of Qusayr rose to fame by establishing a new Nile-Red Sea trade route substituting the medieval Qus-‘Aydhab one. The Indian Ocean trade system did not decline after the sixteenth century when European merchants and imperialists made some ambitious appearances there, and neither did Qina’s regional market. Although this market experienced moments of bust

83 Denon, *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte*, p. 207.
and others of boom after the collapse of the Qus-‘Aydhab route, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were generally times of great expansion.

André Gunder Frank asserts that the Indian Ocean trade system continued to be the single dominant world economy from 1500 to 1800, despite European attempts to intrude. Eurocentric narratives claim that when Western explorers reached the Cape of Good Hope, a European-led world economy replaced the older Indian Ocean trade system. The Portuguese and the Dutch established hegemony over the Indian spice and the Horn of Africa trade, supplanting Arab, Indian, Persian, and Mongol control.

Undermining these narratives, Frank argues,

[C]ontrary to widespread doubts and denials, there was a single global world economy with a worldwide division of labor and multilateral trade from 1500 onwards. This world economy had what can be identified as its own systemic characters and dynamic, whose roots in Afro-Eurasia extended back for millennia. It was this world political economic structure and its dynamic that had motivated Europeans to seek greater access to the economically dominant Asia ever since the European Crusades. The same Asia magnet led to the “discovery” and incorporation of the Western Hemisphere “New” World into the Old World economy and system after the 1492 voyage of Columbus and to closer European Asian relations after the 1498 circum-African voyage of Vasco da Gama…The world economy continued to be dominated by Asians for at least three centuries more, until about 1800. Europe’s relative and absolute marginality in the world economy continued… 86

After a brief period of bust resulted from the misfortunes of Qus and the decline of the spice trade in Egypt, the sixteenth century brought about a new boom in Qina’s market. The immediate regional market of Qina province – Arabia, Yemen, and East

86 Frank, ReOrient, pp. 52-53.
Africa—underwent a series of fundamental political changes leading to the development of new trade patterns. Two of these changes will be emphasized here. First, the sixteenth century witnessed the integration of Egypt into a new Ottoman polity and order of trade, which opened new Mediterranean horizons for the Red Sea trade. The Ottomans abolished the Mamluk commercial monopolies and allowed *laissez-faire* trade, which further encouraged the Middle Eastern market. Second, when medieval trade with Abyssinia was negatively impacted by Portuguese and Dutch intrusions, two Islamic kingdoms emerged in the Sudan in the same century to create a new momentum in African trade with Egypt. Dar Fur and Sinnar kingdoms brought a new momentum to the market, as their merchants were connected with close ties to Qina province and their commodities were in high demand by Ottomans and Europeans in the north.

*A New Trade Boom: Coffee and Sugar*

The integration of Egypt into an Ottoman regime and order of trade, as many historians assert, led to the emergence of new trade patterns in the Egyptian market that helped overcome the decline in the spice trade. Egypt picked up in two new sectors of trade that rescued the regional economy: coffee and sugar. André Raymond affirms that the Ottoman Empire opened an enormous market for Egypt in the north; this market evolved around coffee and reached its peak in the seventeenth century. Yemeni coffee was imported and then re-exported to the
Mediterranean through Qina’s port of Qusayr and the port of Suez. Raymond asserts,

The spice trade was without doubt severely damaged by European competition, which had henceforth the possibility of obtaining these valuable products at the very source of production….But Egyptian Eastern trade was due to be rescued by the entry of a new product – coffee — originating in Yemen…The overwhelming success of coffee mitigated for Egypt the troubling results of the eclipse of the spice business…Around 1700, nearly 100,000 of 200,000 quintals exported by Yemen were laden for Egypt via Suez and Qusayr, the larger portions then shipped out again to Europe and the provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Thus if the sixteenth century was without doubt a difficult period for large-scale Egyptian commerce, the following century was a period of development in this domain until around 1700, a year that marked the apogee of Oriental commerce…

It was only by the end of the eighteenth century that the coffee trade started to experience competition from European merchants, when France succeeded in growing coffee in the Antilles. During the last years of the 1700s, French ports expanded their imports of non-Yemeni coffee, causing Egyptian coffee re-exports to shrink. Nevertheless, Egypt sustained itself on the Ottoman Empire’s consumption.

Similarly, Nelly Hanna’s study of Egyptian merchants in the 16th century affirms the coffee thesis, and, furthermore, she adds sugar as another commodity that rescued Egyptian trade. Hanna illustrates that a major shift in the trade patterns of Egypt took place when sugar and coffee replaced Indian spices and became the main articles of commerce in Ottoman Egypt. The high demand for sugar in Ottoman and European markets led Egyptian merchants of this period to place considerable emphasis on this

87 André Raymond, Arab Cities in the Ottoman Period: Cairo, Syria, and the Maghreb (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2002), pp.183-184.
88 Raymond, Arab Cities in the Ottoman Period, pp. 194-195.
export. Hanna asserts that the economic policy of the Ottoman Empire played a major role in this shift towards sugar and the consequent boom. The new regime abolished the Mamluk monopolies over trade in the Red Sea and replaced it with a liberal economy, and consequently Egyptian merchants emerged as a distinct social group independent of the state bureaucracy. These merchants accumulated enough wealth to provide security to new trade ventures. Egyptian merchants “adjusted their trading patterns so as to include investments in commercial agriculture and productive activities, which thus enabled them to link the sources of production to demand in the export market.”

Although some world historians agree that Portuguese, Dutch and British merchants influenced trade in the Indian Ocean by dominating the spice trade, they still assert that the region’s trade only experienced a degree of rearrangement rather than an overall decline. R.J. Barendse’s study of what he called the “Arabian Seas,” or the market that incorporated the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf, illustrates how intrusions of European merchants led to new substitutes for spices to rise as major commodities of trade in the Middle East. Sugar and coffee were among them, he adds.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century the contribution of the Arabian Seas to world trade mainly centered on bullion, gold, pearls, diamonds, pepper and to some extent silk. By the end of the seventeenth century, worldwide trade had emerged in various bulk products from the Arabian Seas demanding a massive outlay of land and labor, including sugar, indigo, coffee, saltpeter, tobacco, cotton, and even rice and grains, as well as bulk-manufactured goods like calicoes.

Qina province played a central role in this new market boom. The province was traditionally and continued to be a chief sugarcane producer. Sugarcane was mainly cultivated in the province’s fields, and sugar refineries were concentrated there and in Upper Egypt at large. The Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul annually requested and received hundreds of qintars of Upper Egyptian sugar, and the sugar of Farshut, in Qina province, was the best that Istanbul received. Likewise, Qina province was the first trade station of Yemeni coffee through Qusayr port, whose importance far surpassed that of the other Red Sea port of Suez in this regard. In addition, Qina province and Upper Egypt at large were major grain producers; most of the grain that sustained Istanbul and the Holy Cities of Hijaz came from Upper Egypt. Furthermore, the province was a major producer of indigo, cotton, tobacco and textiles, exporting them along with other manufactures to its immediate regional market and beyond.

New Sudanese Kingdoms, New Trade Routes

The second factor that led to a new period of boom in the Upper Egyptian market is the emergence of two Islamic kingdoms in the Sudan during the sixteenth century, Dar Fur and Sinnar, that gave a new momentum to the region’s trade. By the end of the fifteenth century and continuing through the sixteenth century, trade between Abyssinia

and Qina province was stymied by military confrontations between Ottoman-supported Ethiopians and Yemeni Muslims on one hand and Christian Ethiopians on the other. In the early 16\textsuperscript{th} century, the Imams of Yemen and the Ottoman army controlling Egypt launched wars of Jihad against Abyssinia. The wars at first erupted for commercial and political motives but later turned into a religious cause for both sides. The Portuguese fleet assisted the Christian emperor in 1541, and consequently the influence of Portuguese merchants and missionaries expanded in the Indian Ocean-African trade. The influence of Dutch merchants also shortly followed. These events limited the inflow of Abyssinian trade to Qina’s market.\textsuperscript{93}

Luckily enough, during the same period, Qina and Upper Egypt established new trade connections with two newly founded Muslim kingdoms in the Sudan. Sinnar (founded c.1500) was first established as an African pagan monarchy, but its kings later converted to Islam “for the sake of trade with Cairo,” and intermarried with Arabs. \textsuperscript{94} Similarly, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the sultanate of Dar Fur was established in western Sudan by the Keira kings, who intermarried with Arab clans and carried out an Islamicization process in the region that also influenced its trade relations. Qina’s merchants, Muslims and Christians, became active partners in the kingdom’s trade with Egypt and settled in its commercial centers.\textsuperscript{95} The Sudanese system of trade was for

\textsuperscript{94} James Bruce, \textit{Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, in the years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, and 1773} (Edinburgh: printed by J. Ruthven, for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, London, 1790), vol.4, 458-459.
centuries based on the *jallaba* merchants, who were most often employed by the king as agents exporting and importing on their monarch’s behalf. It was common for the *jallaba* to enter into partnerships with Egyptian merchants.\(^96\)

Terence Walz’s study on trade between Egypt and the Sudan indicates that the annual caravans of the two kingdoms took two routes through Upper Egypt, one from the west of the Sudan and the other from the east. The eastern caravan route started in the kingdom of Sinnar and traveled along the Red Sea coast of the Sudan through the Eastern desert to reach Isna and Farshut in Qina province. The western one was the famous “Forty-Day Road,” “*darb al-arba‘in*,” that began in the kingdom of Dar Fur and ended in Asyut in northern Upper Egypt, and it transported slaves, ostrich, feathers and ivory from Tropical Africa. Sinnar’s caravans also took a sub-route called *darb al-jallaba*, which branched off the Forty-Day Road to land in Qina province, in the two Nile ports of Isna and Farshut. Another sub-route passed through Nubia and reached Daraw before Isna.\(^97\)

To Qina province, Sinnar’s caravans brought slaves, camels and gum from the Horn of Africa. Many of these were re-exported to the north, including slaves to Istanbul and feathers and gum to Europe. For its part, Qina province exported its own textile woven in the city of Isna and clothes made in Nagada, and its own sugar. Upper Egypt re-exported other eastern caravans’ commodities to the two kingdoms, such as woolens,

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silks from Syria and Indian textiles. The province also re-exported coffee and spices to the two kingdoms.98

(4) The Tale of a City and a Port II: Qina and Qusayr, 1500s-1700s

Qusayr: The Rise of a Port

European travelers unanimously viewed the port of Qusayr as Egypt’s main Red Sea port in the eighteenth century. As Qina replaced Qus and inherited its commercial glory, Qusayr succeeded ‘Aydhab as the Red Sea port of Egypt. Being located far north of ‘Aydhab, Qusayr made the sea journey from Aden longer, but it did cut the land journey in the desert to the Nile ports from twelve to three days. Qusayr, from a French point of view, became “the best known port in the Red Sea…that it is the point of contact between Asia and Africa, and might become [the French envisioned for themselves] the entrepôt of the merchandise of these parts of the world.”99

Qusayr was not the deepest or safest harbor, yet it naturally grew into the position of the central trade port in Egypt in this period, Shaw asserts, despite the emphasis that Cairo’s Ottoman government placed on Suez instead. In the seventeenth century, the Ottoman state aimed at controlling the Indian, Yemeni, and Arabian trade customs revenue, so it compelled ships to come through the port of Suez, rather than Qusayr port which was dominated by the autonomous Arab government of Upper Egypt.

98 Ibid., pp.1-39; pp.40-44.

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Nevertheless, Ottoman high customs charges in Suez made merchants naturally prefer Qusayr. Shaw indicates, “the high customs duties and extra legal and illegal charges on the goods which were submitted to the customs of Suez gradually caused much of this trade to be diverted to the port of Qusayr in Upper Egypt, where the duties and charges were lower.” In addition, the state in the north could not protect caravans from the bedouin raids, which the Arab government of Upper Egypt was more able to manage. 100

For Arabia and the Holy Places in Hijaz, Upper Egyptian grain was probably the most important item exported through Qusayr. In fact, Hijaz and to a certain extent Yemen survived on this annual supply of grain. The Arab rulers of Upper Egypt controlled the eastern trade reaching Arabia as they “supplied all the western parts of Arabia, Felix [Yemen], Mecca, and Gedda, to which ports they annually carried about twenty shiploads of corn and rice, and from thence they returned loaded with spices and coffee.” 101

On the other hand, Yemeni coffee was the most important item coming from Arabia through Qusayr at least as far as Egyptian and Mediterranean merchants were concerned. The city of Mocha, a main Yemeni coffee producer, exported its coffee to Europe through the Qusayr-Qina route, and Qina then was known to be the only place in the world where one could drink the best coffee before merchants mixed it with other lower quality coffee during its long journey to Europe. C. S. Sonnini, an engineer in the French navy, recorded some observations about the coffee trade from Mocha to

Marseilles. “Persons wishing to lay in a stock of the best coffee, must fetch it from one of these places [Qusayr and Qina]. Once it had reached Cairo, either it was sent down the Nile, it was no longer pure, merchants being there in waiting to mix it with common West Indian coffee. At Alexandria it underwent a second mixture in the hands of the factors who exported it to Marseilles...” 102

Daniel Crecelius affirms that political instability in Cairo under rival Mamluk factions, forced native and European merchants alike to consider Qusayr as their main access point to Egypt on the Red Sea instead of Suez. “The interest of both the native and European merchants was...focused on Qusayr during the period between the pillage of the English cargo in 1779 and the French invasion of 1798,” Crecelius affirms.103 He indicates that when ‘Ali Bek and his successors seized power in Egypt and established independence from the Ottomans, between 1768 and 1773, they established control over the Red Sea trade. They encouraged European merchants to harbor in Suez, an opportunity which European merchants capitalized on, building relationships with the separatist Mamluks. This created political tension between the Ottoman state and the British and French governments, leading a group of European officers and travelers to suggest that their governments rely only on Qusayr. European official reports and travelogues of that period elaborated on how Qusayr port had many advantages over

Suez. For example, it was available throughout the year to sailing ships, while prevailing winds in Suez closed it half of the year for northbound ships.\textsuperscript{104}

Thus, there is no doubt that the volume of coffee and spices traded in Qusayr during the 1780s and 1790s exceeded what was imported at Suez. By the end of the eighteenth century, Qusayr was visited by ten to twenty ships every month, while Suez received no more than sixty ships the whole year. Shaw indicates,

Between 1785 and 1798, the coffee traffic of Suez fell from 30,000 to 17,000 \textit{ferdas}, while that of Qusayr increased proportionately…Goods arriving at Qusayr were immediately loaded on camels and sent across the desert to the Nile, usually to Qena, where they were sold at market or directly sent on Nile boats to Cairo and beyond. In addition, Qusayr handled an increasing amount of grains sent annually from Egypt to the Holy Cities, since most of these came from Upper Egypt.\textsuperscript{105}

The Qina-Qusayr journey took only three days by camel, and was safer and more agreeable than the old Qus-‘Aydhab one. Although the desert road was always hot under the burning sun, there were many water wells, and the scene of the vast valley of porphyry, emerald, and marble stones added to the delights of the journey. The road was frequented by merchants and pilgrims who sometimes carried trade too. On his camel voyage from Qina to Qusayr, the British traveler James Bruce encountered Turks going to perform the Hajj pilgrimage. They were neighbors and companions coming from Asia Minor, and like all Turkish pilgrims, they carried money to Mecca to buy merchandise.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p.56. For example, James Capper who worked in the East India Company proposed this idea in: \textit{Observations on the Passgae to India through Egypt} (London: printed for W. Faden, J. Robson; and R. Sewell, 1785).

\textsuperscript{105} Shaw’s translation notes on Huseyn Efendi, \textit{Ottoman Egypt in the Age of the French Revolution}, pp. 138-139.
Despite its many advantages, the road was still subject to bedouin raids attacking the caravans and taking their grain and other merchandise as booty.\textsuperscript{106}

Visitors did not find Qusayr a very impressive town, despite its importance as a port. It was a small area enclosed by a mud wall and built upon the shore among small hills of floating sand. It was defended by a square fort built of stone, with square towers containing three small cannon of iron to deter the bedouins from plundering the town, or especially to protect Mecca’s grain. The port was in the southeast of the town and was simply a big rock that, along with the mud wall, protected the vessels from various types of wind. It had a large enclosure within another high mud wall where every merchant had a magazine for his corn and merchandise. Every year, thousands of camels loaded with wheat from Upper Egypt arrived there to be shipped to Mecca.\textsuperscript{107}

\textit{Qina: A Trade Hub and Productive Province}

On the eve of the nineteenth century, a French traveler observed, “after Alexandria, Damietta, Rosetta and Cairo, [Qina] is probably the most important city in Egypt.”\textsuperscript{108} Aside from being a trade hub, Qina province was heavily involved in commercial agriculture activities and the manufacturing of tradable commodities. Qina was a prosperous city that some European travelers found comparable to Paris. It was a white,  

\textsuperscript{106} Bruce, \textit{Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile}, vol. 1, pp.174-175.  
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 195-196, p.200, or Ch.8.  
graceful city with high buildings, built upon an eminence on the eastern bank of the Nile.
Edouard de Montulé visited Qina in 1819, and, with the eyes of a French voyager who had been in many other places in Europe and America, was impressed by the luxurious life style of the city. Its bazaars were well furnished with goods, and its restaurants were similar to those of Paris: on each street were many adroit grill and bakery places.109

While trade through Qusayr expanded, the city of Qina and the other towns of the province gradually became among the most important international trade center in Egypt. Fred Lawson illustrates,

Several Upper Egyptian cities served as bases for this trading network at the turn of the century. Arguably the most significant of these was Qina, a major transshipment point on the Nile river... The older merchant center at Qus was also active in the Red Sea grain and cloth trade during the 1790s, while Farshut and Nagada maintained trading relations with the Hijaz... Any mention of the Sudan requires consideration of the second major commercial network of which Qina province was a part during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century- the trade between Sinnar, Dar Fur, and Abyssinia to the south with Cairo and Europe to the north. This network extended over a vast expanse of territory and handled a variety of commodities.110

The majority of North African and Egyptian, in addition to some Turkish, pilgrims passed through Qina and then Qusayr en route to the holy places in Hijaz, and took the same journey back. Pilgrimage caravans landed and stayed in the city’s caravanserais for a few days to obtain comfort and food supplies, as well as to buy and sell merchandise. In the city they found all the commodities they wanted and enjoyed a pleasant stay. The city had a great Nile harbor that was always full of passenger and commercial boats. The Hajj

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season was the busiest time of the year in the city, during which all local markets of surrounding villages witnessed great movement and camel drivers, Nile boat captains, artisans, and scribes of the city found abundant work. Because the city needed enormous food supplies for the large number of guests coming and going, the villages surrounding it, even as far away as six hours walking, provided it with fruits, vegetables, butter, milk, cheese, firewood, etc.111

Meanwhile, Qina province grew into a great center of commercial agriculture. Lawson asserts,

[T]here can be no doubt that Upper Egypt in general, and Qina province in particular, was a significant agricultural and food-producing region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its fields supplied produce to the Capital, to the Delta, and to Europe even during years of greatest political instability and anarchy in the country.112

The capitalist elite of Qina province ran their own commercial businesses in grain and sugar. Shaykh al-‘Arab Hammam, the autonomous ruler of Upper Egypt from the Hawwara dynasty (see chapter 2), ran a large business in grain commerce. He traded in the grain collected from his own large tax farms, aside from the grain tax he had to submit to the Imperial treasury. Shaykh al-‘Arab Hammam had deputies in villages, mostly Coptic accountants, who collected grain from peasants and stored it, while he hired boat captains to ship it to Cairo.113 Shaykh Hammam hired Nile boat captains,

111 ‘Ali Mubarak, *al-Khitat al-Tawfiqiyya*, vol.14, p.120.
113 Isna court, sijill 1, case 59, p.48., 12 Rabi’ Akhir, 1170; Isna court, sijill 1, case 66, p.54., 8 Rabi’ Akhir, 1170.
rayyis to transport his grain to Cairo’s Nile ports for sale, and boat captains received their wages in kind as one percent of the grain they carried.\textsuperscript{114}

A large industrial sector grew in Qina during this period in textile, sugar, food oil and pottery. The cotton harvest of the province was used in a thriving textile sector, which was one of the important manufacturing activities in the province. This sector was mainly carried out by the women in the households of Isna, Qus, and Qina, and was exported north and south. The garments of the Coptic women of Nagada dominated the local market and were exported to the Sudan, Abyssinia, and even Europe. In addition, sugar refineries remained the largest industry in the province; they existed in abundance in almost every town in the province and shipped their produce to Cairo and beyond to Istanbul and the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{115}

The sesame harvest of Egypt came mainly from Qina, which made the province a large producer of cooking oil. Upper and middle-class families of Copts and Muslims alike ran numerous oil mills with special machinery.\textsuperscript{116} Moreover, pottery-making was a widespread industry unique to Qina in particular because of the special clay obtained only in the province’s neighborhoods. Pottery was shipped to Cairo on Nile floats for large sales at high prices.\textsuperscript{117} The village of Ballas in particular was a unique producer of

\textsuperscript{114} Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no.7, case 67, 16 Rajab 1173, p.36; case 74, 28 Rajab 1173, p.39; Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no.7, case 67, 16 Rajab 1173, p.36; case 74, 28 Rajab 1173, p.39; Sijill 13, part 1, case 79, 20 Sha’ban 1177, p.56.
\textsuperscript{117} Al-Tukhi, Sa’id Misr fi ‘Ahd al-Hamla, p. 61; Savary, Lettres sur l’Egypte, vol. 2, pp. 145-146.
water jars used in every Egyptian household. A French traveler noted that the village of Ballas was “a commercial village, owing to the great quantity of earthen pots which are manufactured. These vessels have no other name than that of the place where they are made. They are of middling size, and have two handles.”

**Conclusion**

This chapter has narrated the tale of two cities and two ports in Qina province. Together, they served for centuries as international centers of trade and production. They reached this position due to their central place in the Red Sea’s regional market, which was, in turn, a main link in the “Indian Ocean world economy.” Euro-centric visions of world history draw a picture of a world dominated by European merchants since the sixteenth century. They claim that the Indian Ocean trade, including its Middle Eastern circles, declined when Portuguese, Dutch, and English merchants made their imperial appearance in the Indian Ocean, after establishing control over the spice trade. Nonetheless, as many world historians argue today, the Indian Ocean continued to be the dominant “world system” until the end of the eighteenth century, and European merchants were merely active customers in it. Middle Eastern trade, a circle in this system, soon adjusted to European intrusions in the spice trade by shifting to new trade patterns, particularly in sugar and coffee. In Qina province, the city of Qus and its port of ‘Aydhab formed a main trade route in the Indian Ocean trade under the Ayyubid and the

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Mamluk Empires. This trade route declined in the fifteenth century, but shortly afterwards another route rose, also in Qina province, to replace it under the Ottoman Empire. The city of Qina and its port of Qusayr rose to be great centers of coffee trade and sugar production in the Red Sea regional market and beyond. Their rise can be only attributed to the continuity of the Indian Ocean old trade system and the liberal commercial arrangements of the Ottoman Empire, which generated political implications to be addresses in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 2

The “Republic” of Upper Egypt:
Under the Ottoman Empire, 1700s

Around the year 1700, the Hawwara dynasty, the autonomous rulers of Upper Egypt, renewed their discontent with the Ottoman Empire by staging another militant rebellion. When the Ottoman armies conquered Cairo and northern Egypt in 1517, they could not invade the southern provinces under the domination of the Hawwara Arab clan, who took Qina province as their capital. The Ottoman Sultan succeeded only in concluding peace treaties with Hawwara which compelled them to pay him an annual tribute. Hawwara generally paid this tribute, but for the following two centuries they did not miss a chance to disturb the empire through reoccurring military separatist actions in alliance with other oppositional factions in Cairo. During this last rebellion, al-Damurdashi reported, “they turned the villages [whose revenue went in full to the Ottoman governor] into their own tax farms and disobeyed the Sultan. They have agents among the notables of Cairo...and the imperial granaries do not receive a single ardabb of wheat from the Hawwara.” 119 Soon after this rebellion, the Ottoman Sultan issued a decree which sent a Mamluk army equipped with the latest Ottoman military technology from Cairo to Upper Egypt in order to retain these villages and terminate the separatist government. After several rounds of victory and defeat, Hawwara and its troops,

composed of peasants and Nubians, lost the battle. The dynasty’s capital city in Qina province, Farshut, was occupied and its residents were replaced by others from Cairo. Furthermore, the Mamluk soldiers plundered the properties, mills, and machinery of its leaders and kidnapped their women.

Dissatisfied with the severe damage that Hawwara’s military confrontations inflicted on their villages, the farmers of Qina province visited the dynasty’s commanders, telling them: “We are people of plowing and harvesting, and more than half of us died [in the battles]. We will no longer fight and disobey the sultanate.” In response to this proclamation of the peasantry, Hawwara leaders gathered their belongings and families and fled to the western mountains. However, utilizing their strong alliances in Cairo, it did not take long for them to return and restore full governance over Upper Egypt. They reconciled with the Sultan, accepting partial payment of the disputed tribute.

A few decades after this rebellion, the Hawwara leader Shaykh al-‘Arab Hammam (r. 1720s-1769) came to power. He was the last and greatest autonomous ruler of Upper Egypt. From his seat in Qina province, Hammam created what later observers called a qualified “republic,” or jumhuriyya. Creating a government that lasted half a century, he established a unique relationship with the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul, allied with the Cairene Mamluk factions oppositional to that very Sultan, and, more importantly, founded a social contract with the peoples of Qina and his southern

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“republic.” Rather than reporting to the Ottoman governor in Cairo, Hammam maintained direct contact with Istanbul, and, meanwhile, gave refuge to Cairene rebels who opposed the Sultan or attempted to create independent states in Egypt. Hammam governed Upper Egypt on the foundation of a social contract with peasants, Copts, shari’a judges, etc., actualized by means of public councils and legal institutions.

This chapter revisits Hammam’s state in order to tell the story of a ruler, a “traditional” empire, and the peoples of Qina province in the eighteenth century. Hammam’s state was a tributary to an empire long accused of being a symbol of “oriental despotism.” On the eve of the nineteenth century, the Napoleonic campaign arrived in Egypt on a “civilizing mission”: to remove Ottoman despotism and replace it with an egalitarian government. This chapter looks at the state of Hammam and its peoples under an allegedly tyrannical empire and revises the prevailing assumptions about this empire. The chapter also explores the events of the Napoleonic campaign as they progressed in Qina, in addition to the subsequent reform efforts of the Ottoman Empire as applied in the province.

(1) Hammam in an “Absolutist” Empire?

One of the most prominent figures in eighteenth-century Egypt was Shaykh al-‘Arab Hammam Ibn Yusuf. Hammam was born in Farshut, in Qina province, around 1709 to the Hawwara ruler and was raised to inherit his father’s seat. For the officers of the French expedition, Hammam’s state was a model to follow in creating a “national”
and “just” government in Egypt comparable to the French Republic.\footnote{George A. Haddad, “A Project of the Independence of Egypt, 1801,” \textit{Journal of the American Oriental Society}, vol. 90, no. 2 (Apr.-Jun., 1970), p.174.} For Rifa’a al-Tahtawi, the nineteenth-century Egyptian intellectual and translator of French legal codes, Hammam’s state was not less modern than the republican system that he studied in France. He called it “\textit{jumhuriyya iltizamiyya}” or a republic governed through tax farming.\footnote{Layla ‘Abd al-Latif Ahmad, \textit{al-Said fi ‘Ahd Shaykh al-‘Arab Hammam}, p. 21.} Hammam’s state emerged in a vast Ottoman Empire that extended throughout the Arab lands to Eastern Europe, and its establishment was made possible due to certain attributes unique to the Ottoman imperial system.

The Ottoman Empire has long been perceived as a “traditional” government: marked by an “oriental absolutism” which tyrannically monopolized the produce of its territories. Perry Anderson’s assessment of the Ottoman regime as a case of eastern absolutism stigmatized the study of this empire.\footnote{Perry Anderson, \textit{Lineages of the Absolutist State} (UK: Verso, 1974).} However, many historians have recently revised his visions to show a decentralized, liberal empire, defying accusations of oriental absolutism. For example, Bruce McGowan’s work on provincial notables, \textit{a’yan}, in the Arab provinces demonstrates how the Sultan delegated power to autonomous polities in his empire; likewise, Ariel Salzman’s work on Ottoman political economy illustrates how these polities functioned on a liberal imperial system of trade and private property.\footnote{Bruce McGowan, “the Age of the Ayans, 1699-1812,” in: Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert (eds.) (et. al), \textit{An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1914} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 637-758; Ariel Salzman, “An Ancien Regime Revisited: ‘Privatization’ and Political Economy in the Eighteenth Century Ottoman Empire,” \textit{Politics and Society}, 1993 21(4): 393-423.} Hammam’s independent government in Upper Egypt emerged in
a decentralized, *laissez-faire* empire. Yet he sometimes rebelled against it seeking even more autonomy.

Hammam was a descendant of the Hawwara, one among several Arab notable families that took control of Ottoman provinces under the non-interventionist imperial regime. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, transformations took place in the Ottoman Empire leading to a limited role for Istanbul in governing the provinces and the rise of autonomous polities. European, Anatolian, and Arab provinces, *wilayas*, were dominated by local notable families who ruled quasi-independently from the Sublime Porte. These dynasts did not generally rebel against the Sultan or seek full independence from the empire. Rather, they paid an annual tribute to Istanbul and sometimes sent troops to fight in the Ottoman wars; moreover, they continued to recognize the Sultan as the caliph of Muslims. These families were of varied political origins: appointees of the Sultan who maintained their power for a long course of time, Mamluk households that had held power before the Ottomans, or native elites that maintained authority after the Ottoman conquest.  

The Hawwara of Upper Egypt was but another of those notable families; it created a dynasty in south Egypt that effectively made the region its own province, *Wilayat al-Sa‘id*. The Hawwara were part of the last group, natives who maintained control, as they built their regime well before the Ottoman conquest and imposed it de facto on the empire. Before the Ottomans, the Mamluk state granted Hawwara the lands

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of Upper Egypt as fiefs, *iqta’s*, where they extended sugarcane cultivation and the sugar industry, eventually emerging as a wealthy ruling elite. The Ottomans failed during the conquest to execute a military victory over the Hawwara armies. Therefore, Sultan Salim I concluded peace treaties with the family that maintained its control over the region. While the Sultan installed co-opted Mamluk factions left over from the former Mamluk state as a ruling elite in Cairo and the Delta, the Hawwara were the sole autonomous rulers of Upper Egypt. When Sultan Sulayman promulgated the code of administrative and military organization in Egypt, *Qanunname-i Misir*, he officially recognized the autonomous rule of Hawwara over Upper Egypt, albeit as a tributary of the empire. The law stated that Hawwara’s duties were to administer agriculture and irrigation matters, guard the security and safety of caravans, and collect the taxes for the imperial treasury.¹²⁷

Notable families in the provinces based their power on an important shift in the imperial financial organization: life-time tax farming as a system of landholding and taxation. In the seventeenth century, Istanbul developed a new type of landownership, *malikane*, by which the Sultan granted to individual tax farmers life-time rights to collect taxes and pay the land’s dues to the imperial treasury. This system of semi-private property rights allowed large landholders to evolve as ruling elites and dynastic families in the provinces and to establish and consolidate their power. Some historians argue that

this was a “privatization” process marking the empire’s transition towards a liberal economy, leading eventually to an entrenching of the authority of provincial notables.128

Hammam rose to power as the largest tax farmer in Upper Egypt as had his Hawwara predecessors. The Sultan granted the Hawwara tax farmers, multazims, hereditary rights to their landholdings in return for a fixed annual tax in cash and in kind. On the eve of the seventeenth century, Hawwara leaders controlled about 65 percent of the lands in all Upper Egypt; the remaining 35 percent was left to Mamluk tax farmers in Cairo. Hammam eventually unified Upper Egypt under one tax farmer by inheriting lands from his father and accumulating more during the 1720s and 30s. By 1749, Hammam practically became the sole tax farmer in the entirety of Upper Egypt from Asyut, through Qina, to Aswan. His lands were officially considered lifetime tax farms.129

As sole tax farmer and ruler of Upper Egypt, Hammam established direct relations with Istanbul. James Bruce, a contemporary British traveler who attended Hammam’s court, observed the following:

This Shekh was a man of immense riches, and, little by little, had united in his own person, all the separate districts of Upper Egypt, each of which formerly had its particular prince [from the Hawwara leaders]. But his interest was great at Constantinople, where he applied directly for what he wanted, insomuch as to give a jealousy to the Beys of Cairo. He had in farm from the Grand Signior

128 Quataert The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922, pp. 48-50; Ariel Salzman, “An Ancien Regime Revisited: ‘Privatization’ and Political Economy in the Eighteenth Century Ottoman Empire.”
It is not a historical accident that Hammam’s state took shape just when the trade route of Qina-Qusayr reached its peak prosperity during the eighteenth century. After the diversion of the Indian spice trade route, items of trade in Egypt were limited to the coffee and sugar sectors. The annexation by the Ottoman Empire opened new markets for Egypt in the north, and the laissez-faire system of the empire eased the flow of trade after centuries of Mamluk monopolies and protectionism. Qina province and its Red Sea port of Qusayr were important players in Red Sea trade. The province imported and re-exported coffee and Sudanese merchandise and exported its own produce of wheat, sugar, and textiles.\(^\text{131}\) The maturity of Qina’s market in the eighteenth century contributed to the consolidation of Hammam’s state. No wonder that Hammam, and Hawwara at large, made the province their capital.

In this thriving southern market, Hammam’s power was based on two economic pillars: commercial agriculture in sugarcane and grain, and the long-distance trade of the Red Sea. As the largest tax farmer, Hammam established monopolies over the agricultural produce of Upper Egypt, yet sending the imperial granaries their dues.\(^\text{132}\) Hammam established his native town of Farshut as the seat of his province, a town

\(^{130}\) Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, vol.1, pp. 117-118.

\(^{131}\) Indicated in chapter 1.

famous in Upper Egypt for its vast sugarcane and wheat fields as well as sugar mills.\textsuperscript{133} Farshut’s sugar was an effective competitor to colonial American sugar in Istanbul, the Levant, and elsewhere in the East. Henry Light, a captain of the British royal artillery, noted that Farshut was the area “where the greatest quantity of sugar is made,” and added,

\begin{quote}
[T]he Levant chiefly derives its sugar from it [Farshut]. In no part of the East, which I visited, was colonial sugar to be found; that for the use of the seraglio at Constantinople comes from Fairshoot, and is refined with extraordinary care.\textsuperscript{134}
\end{quote}

Hammam owned 12,000 bulls solely for purposes of sugarcane cultivation. For his agricultural businesses at large, he employed massive plowing machinery, waterwheels, flour mills, cows and oxen, etc. He built countless storehouses filled with commercial crops such as grains, sugar, and dates.\textsuperscript{135}

Farshut was a strategic location for Hammam’s capital as he could control the Arabian and the Sudanese trade from this point. Farshut was the final destination of the darb al-jallaba caravan coming from the Sinnar kingdom of the Sudan, and Hammam monopolized much of the East African trade flowing through the town. He also established his control over the Red Sea port of Qusayr, where he acquired an old castle in the port and utilized it as a lodge for his guests. His own businesses carried cargos of wheat from Qina through Qusayr to the port of Jedda in Arabia. Hammam secured and

\textsuperscript{133} Bruce, \textit{Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile in the years}, vol 1, 116-118.

\textsuperscript{134} Henry Light, \textit{Travels in Egypt, Nubia, Holy lands, Mount Lebanon and Cyprus in the Year 1814} (London: Rodwell and Martin, 1818), p.48.

protected the trade route between the Red Sea and Qina by winning the loyalties of certain Arab tribes, the bedouin highway raiders, who were roaming the road. He assigned to the tribe of ‘Ulayqat the duty of securing the Qusayr route.  

Like the Ottoman Sultan and the Mamluk elite in Cairo, Hammam attempted to base his political legitimacy on a religious discourse and institutions of hegemony. The Sultan, the caliph of the Muslims, used religious charitable endowments, *awqaf*, as an institution to support the poor and establish legitimacy in the eyes of his subjects. The Sultan and his family endowed the revenues of lands of entire villages, thousands of faddans, to the poor as well as to the holy places in Mecca and Medina — the Hawwara rulers did the same. In the mid-seventeenth century, the Hawwara ruler endowed 1300 faddans as a *waqf* endowment to support the Prophet’s mosque in Medina. Hammam established many charitable endowments in the area of Farshut and elsewhere in Upper Egypt. He used these endowments in supporting poor Muslims, such as feeding them, curing them of illnesses, and giving them funds to purchase animals.  

It is worth mentioning that the Hawwara built their own system of regional relations around Qina’s trade routes. The traditional method of forming external alliances took place through intermarriages between dynasties, an act in which Hawwara family members participated with other ruling families in their Arab trade network. Hawwara family members married the daughters of the Sharif of Mecca and became in-laws of the Hijaz ruling elite. The Meccan wives owned properties back home in the Hijaz that the

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Hawwara husbands ran on their behalves. Al-Sharifa Fatima, the daughter of the Sharif of Mecca, inherited properties from her father in the port of Yanbu’, near Mecca, and her Hawwara husband collected the rents and revenues for her. Interestingly enough, the family had an influence in North Africa to the extent that the Hawwara dynast was also at some point the ruler of Cyrenaica, the western Libyan province. Hammam himself carried the title of amir al-Saʿid wa Barqa, or the commander of Upper Egypt and Cyrenaica.138

Although the Ottoman Sultan attempted to maintain some control over Upper Egypt through the Ottoman governor of Egypt and another governor appointed for the south, the power of Hawwara was beyond the authority of these officials. Hammam subjugated these governors to his rules. Upper Egypt, Wilayat al-Saʿid, was among the most important provinces in the Ottoman Empire as far as the Imperial Granaries in Istanbul and the Sultan himself were concerned. While the Lower Egyptian provinces in the Delta submitted their taxes only in cash, Upper Egypt submitted taxes both in cash and kind. The Imperial Granaries relied heavily on Upper Egyptian grain tax, especially wheat, to sustain its immense annual needs. As Stanford Shaw asserts, “most of the muqataʿat [districts] of Upper Egypt were obliged to deliver their land taxes entirely in grain, and it was these grain payments which provided the entire supply used by the Imperial Treasury to maintain those depending on it for sustenance.”139 In addition, it was the grain of Upper Egypt that the Sultan, or the caliph of the Muslims, relied on to feed

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139 Shaw, The Financial and Administrative Organization, p.78.
the inhabitants and pilgrims of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina annually. Grain was shipped from Qina to Qusayr port, landed at the port of Jidda, and was transferred from there to Mecca and Medina.\textsuperscript{140}

Furthermore, the sugar of Upper Egypt arrived in Istanbul and Anatolia by land and sea in ever-increasing quantities in order to sustain the needs of the major Ottoman cities, as Shaw also asserts. Istanbul annually requested and received hundreds of \textit{qintars} of Upper Egyptian sugar. The Empire also received its essential provisions of Yemeni coffee and African commodities, including gold and slaves, from the Upper Egyptian Red Sea and Nile trade routes. Yemeni coffee came from the port of Mocha to Qusayr and Qina, and from there was shipped north. A large portion of the gold and African slaves imported by Istanbul arrived via Upper Egyptian trade routes with the Sudan and Abyssinia.\textsuperscript{141}

For all these considerations, it was necessary for the Ottoman government in Cairo to appoint a powerful governor in Upper Egypt to limit the Hawwara’s control over resources and secure the Sultan’s provisions. However, this governor, usually a Mamluk officer, was subjugated by the Hawwara and enjoyed limited authorities, which never went beyond tax collection and holding some villages as tax farms. The governor’s seat was located in the town of Jirja, to the north of Qina province; Upper Egypt, therefore was also officially known as \textit{Wilayat} Jirja after the Ottoman governor’s place of residence. The governorship of Jirja was the second most prestigious position in Egypt

\textsuperscript{140} Ahmad Pasha Cezzar, \textit{Ottoman Egypt in the Eighteenth Century: The Nizamname-i Misir}, p.41

\textsuperscript{141} Haridi, \textit{al-Sa’id fi Misr al-’Uthmaniyya}, p. 263; Shaw’s translation notes on Huseyn Efendi, \textit{Ottoman Egypt in the Age of the French Revolution}, pp. 138-139.
after that of the governor of Cairo (Shaykh al-Balad), and whoever held it was the second wealthiest officer in the country. Mamluk factions fiercely struggled against each other to obtain this post.142

Hawwara controlled the process of appointing the governor of Jirja. When they did not approve of a governor, they blocked the grain tax intended for Cairo. The Ottoman governor and the Mamluk elite in Grand Cairo were always forced to concede to the Hawwara’s preferences. In one incident, in 1107/1696, Hawwara vetoed the candidacy of Mustafa bey by threatening to forgo sending any grain to the holy cities in Hijaz, which would damage the Sultan’s image as the caliph of Muslims. The administrative council in Cairo, the Diwan, headed by the Ottoman governor, thereafter replaced this candidate with another. Furthermore, when Hawwara did not approve of a governor already in office, they did not hesitate to terminate his tenure by ending his life.143 In general, each Mamluk governor of Jirja stayed in power for an average period of one to three years. When the state sent a powerful governor who managed to stay longer and exercise more power, his tenure was ended abruptly by predominant bloody means. One governor was killed after five and a half years in office for his despotic policies, around 1069/1659, and his successor was similarly overthrown and murdered.144

142 Layla ‘Abd al-Latif Ahmad, Al-Idara fi Misr fi-l-‘Asr al-‘Uthmani, pp. 382-383; p.402. Wilayat Jirja in the beginning included Upper Egyptian provinces and part of Middle Egypt from Minya to Aswan. Asyut and Atfih were annexed to it in 1106/1694 and then Minya, Aswan and Manfalut were annexed in 1109/1697 for Jirja to take its complete form as a wilaya this year and continued to be so till the end of the 18th century.

143 Haridi, Dawr al-Sa‘id fi Misr al-‘Uthmaniyya, pp. 168-169.

144 Muhammad Ibn Abd Allah al-Amir al-Maliki, Risala fi man Tawalla al-Sa‘id min al-‘Umara al-Jarakisa, unpublished manuscript in al-Azhar Library, No. 6686, pp. 5-7
Inheriting the power of Hawwara, Hammam exerted his authority over the regime in Cairo. The Ottoman governor was forced to submit to Hammam’s demands even if this was at the expense of the Mamluk elite. Ignoring Hammam’s demands meant preventing the grain of Upper Egypt from reaching the Sultan. In one incident, Hammam mortgaged the lands of a village to a Mamluk officer stipulating that he would relinquish his property rights to this village after a certain deadline. Hammam did not pay back the loan in time yet refused to give up the village. Furthermore, he sent an emissary to the Ottoman governor in Cairo demanding him not to issue any firman decrees acknowledging the officer’s right to the mortgaged lands. Hammam threatened the governor that should he issue such decree, no more grain or cash provisions would be sent to Cairo. The Mamluk officer never managed to acquire the village.145

Despite his aggressive exercise of power over Cairo’s elite, Hammam built political alliances with certain Mamluk factions. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, Cairo had two primary Mamluk factions, the Faqariyya and the Qasimiyya, who struggled to achieve power and attempted to gain the Hawwara of Upper Egypt as strategic allies. Winning the governorship of Jirja was crucial in the Faqariyya-Qasimiyya rivalry because of both the richness of the south and the potential political benefits of being close to Hawwara. Mamluk rebels opposing the Ottoman regime traditionally

selected Upper Egypt for logistic exile, where they joined forces with Hawwara and launched wars against their rivals in Cairo.¹⁴⁶

Hammam chose the Qasimiyya faction as his allies. This group later staged a military coup against the empire and, with his military and financial help, overthrew the Ottoman governor. Oppositional Mamluk officers and their soldiers who took refuge at Hammam’s court were Arabized, or adopted Arabic language and customs, and became part of his own army.¹⁴⁷ A prominent member of this faction, Salih bey al-Qasimi, the head of the Pilgrimage Department, was a close friend of Hammam and acted as his business proxy in Cairo. Salih bey was a large tax farmer in northern Upper Egypt, outside of Hammam’s territory, and his soldiers stayed for prolonged periods in Hawwara’s army and learned the clan’s high code of ethics in war and daily life. During the pilgrimage season every year, Hammam sent his friend in Cairo a gift of three hundred camels and various other provisions for the caravan going to Arabia via the port of Suez. Saleh bey later fled Cairo in the wake of political tension and took refuge in Hammam’s court, where they jointly planned the successful military coup against Ottoman governor.¹⁴⁸

Hammam supported the most radical action against the Sultan when he backed the military coup of ‘Ali Bek al-Kabir, the governor of Cairo. In the 1760s, this coup was the product of an alliance between Ali Bek, the Qasimiyya faction, and Hammam, and it

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succeeded in making Egypt a state independent from the Ottoman Empire for few years. Ali Bek, a rebel against the Ottomans, fled Cairo to the south where Hammam gave him both refuge and logistic support. Hammam at this time was also sheltering Qasmiyya rebels who were made into his own soldiers, including his friend Salih bey, and he blocked grain and cash provisions from reaching Cairo and Istanbul. Upon receiving ‘Ali bek, Hammam mediated between the two groups of rebels to create a unified front. Hammam’s military and financial support was more than crucial for ‘Ali bek’s success in taking full control over Cairo in 1768. ‘Ali bek remained the sole ruler of Egypt for the following five years until an Ottoman army took back the country.149

(2) The “Republic” of Hammam

The government and life of Hammam captured the attention of contemporary historians and European travelers, who recorded detailed accounts of his manners and his court. In praise of Hammam, Al-Jabarti, the eighteenth-century Cairene chronicler, said:

The honorable excellency; the magnificent refuge; the noble and royal in origin; the shelter of the poor and princes; the station and comforter of travelers and caravans; the commander; the most affluent and generous whose generosity covered the near and the far; the honor of the state; and the grand ruler of Upper Egypt.150

During the day, Hammam governed Upper Egypt through a public council that received people, both poor and rich, all day long, and he spent a good part of the night with the government accountants attending to the financial matters of his state. “He encompassed in his mind the knowledge of all the matters of Upper Egypt,” al-Jabarti added. 151

James Bruce, a British traveler, had the pleasure of visiting the town of Farshut and making an acquaintance with Hammam in the late 1760s. The Scottish man was impressed by the refined manners of this ruler: “We waited upon Shekh Hamam; who was a big, tall handsome man, I apprehended not far from sixty. He was dressed in alrage fox-skin pelisse over the rest of his cloaths, and had a yellow India shawl wrapt about his head, like a turban. He received me with great politeness and condescension, made me sit down by him, and asked me more about Cairo than about Europe.” 152 Richard Pococke, another British voyager, was similarly impressed by Hammam’s manners upon meeting him in person. Pococke was accompanied by an Armenian interpreter and an Aleppine merchant doing business in Upper Egypt. When they arrived to Farshut, Hammam’s secretary escorted them to his court. “The Sheikh was sitting in the corner of his room by a pan of coals: He rose both when I came and when I left him; his dress was after the Arab manner.” Hammam asked the traveler many questions “with a good-natured smile.” 153

151 Ibid.
152 Bruce, Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, vol. 117-118.
As a matter of fact, Hammam gained a reputable, respected image in Egyptian chronicles and European records alike because of the just government he founded in Upper Egypt. Hammam established a “social contract” with many social groups in Upper Egypt which represented a power-sharing structure, the ultimate goal of which was to sustain agricultural production, secure the movement of trade, and ensure political stability. Hammam’s contract incorporated peasants producing the commercial crops of the south, educated Copts managing the finances of the state, and bedouins carrying the southern trade on their camels and protecting trade routes. The service of each one of these groups was indispensable for the maintenance of Hammam’s state. Moreover, he based his government on both shari‘a law and local Arab traditions. He held a daily council attended by peasants and elites alike, and he made shari‘a court the supreme authority for resolving communal disputes and registering properties.

_A Social Contract: Peasants, Copts and Bedouins_

Peasants were arguably the most important social group to which Hammam granted political agency—upon their grain and sugar the wealth and power of the dynasty was based. The peasants of Upper Egypt were largely from either Arab tribal descent or Copts. The distinction between “Arabs” and “Copts” here applies only to this period, relying on the contemporary literature. Later developments and historical interpretations render the line drawn between the two groups inaccurate.
the ruling elite on individual terms; rather, the entire clan inhabiting one village or another dealt collectively with their tax farmers. This tribal arrangement provided Arab peasants with considerable leverage vis-à-vis Hawwara; the only way to deal with them was through negotiating and responding to their demands.

The social contract with Arab peasants stipulated that they would cultivate grain and sugar cane and pay their dues to the Hawwara tax farmer. In return, Hawwara was obliged to provide security by protecting the villages against the raids of bedouins. Hawwara generally managed more successfully against bedouin attacks than did Mamluk tax farmers in the Delta. Shaw affirms, “their [Upper Egyptian peasants] lot was never as hard as that of the cultivators in Lower Egypt, for their masters were much better able to protect them from raids of other Arab tribes than was the central government.” Security was without question the main concern of peasants. When Hawwara failed to deliver security, the very legitimacy of the dynasty was threatened. This was the case in the aforementioned military coup around 1700, when the peasants expressed their dissatisfaction with Hawwara’s war against the Ottomans and demanded that they leave, thus forcing the Hawwara to collect their properties and flee to the western mountains.

Whereas the relationship between the Mamluk tax farmer and the peasants of Lower Egypt was notoriously oppressive, Upper Egyptian peasants enjoyed a more dignified experience. Shaw indicates that “[t]he administration of this tribe [Hawwara]...
was equitable and beneficent; cultivation was maintained and the welfare of the peasants promoted far better than in Lower Egypt.\textsuperscript{158} The peasants in the Delta were forced to pay various types of additional taxes to the Mamluk elite, such as the \textit{barrani} and \textit{firda}; Upper Egyptians peasants only paid the regular \textit{kharaj} tax. In addition, peasants in the Delta were forced into corvée labor on the private farms of the Mamluk elite, which Upper Egyptian peasants never experienced under Hawwara.\textsuperscript{159} Hammam was established a system of fair treatment of peasants from different tribal or religious origins. Under Hammam, farmers from Hawwara, other Arab tribes, and Copts all received equal treatment mandated by Arab tribal customs. Hammam also developed an efficient system for the construction and maintenance of canals and barrages and extended seed credits to facilitate farming.\textsuperscript{160}

Hammam continued the Hawwara tradition of holding a public council for villagers, town dwellers and bedouins to discuss occurrences and solve disputes through collective consultation. The council, held in Hammam’s huge house in Farshut, was open and frequented daily. Attendees casually came and left the council as they pleased and were served breakfast and lunch from the affluent kitchen of the residence of Hammam.\textsuperscript{161} In this council, peasants saw Hammam as a respected authority to whom they could appeal regarding land disputes on usufruct rights, either between individual

\textsuperscript{158} Shaw translation notes on Huseyn Efendi, \textit{Ottoman Egypt in the Age of the French Revolution}, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{159} Haridi, \textit{Dawr al-Sa’id fi Misr al-‘Uthmaniyya}, pp. 154-159.
\textsuperscript{160} Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 17, part 1, case 29, p.20, 12 Dhu al-Qi’da 1179; Layla ‘Abd al-Latif Ahmad, \textit{al-Sa’id fi ‘Ahd Shaykh al-‘Arab Hammam}, p. 117.
peasants or whole villages. The verdicts he issued in his council had the power of legal
documents and were taken to the shari’a court to be notarized by the judge.162

Coptic peasants experienced a golden age under the rule of Hammam as both
eighteenth-century Arabic and foreign sources affirm. During the time of the Napoleonic
campaign in Egypt (1798-1801), French scientists and officers asserted that they
encountered pleasant memories of Hammam among wealthy and poor Copts of Qina
province three decades after he had died. Copts told the French that they were missing
Hammam’s days of security and justice.163 A Coptic notable who accompanied the
returning French forces to France compiled a treatise on freeing Egypt from the Ottomans
and founding an independent republic. The new government that he and his French
supporters envisioned was to be “just…and national, like that of Sheikh Hammam in
Upper Egypt.”164

The second group with which Hammam founded a social contract was elite Copts,
especially educated accountants. Replicating the model of the Imperial Treasury and
Mamluk households in Cairo, Hawwara was dependant on Coptic expertise in running
the administrative system in Upper Egypt. Hawwara hired Coptic mu'allims to manage
the finances of the tax farms and private commercial business as well.165 Nevertheless,
the Coptic administrators were sometimes subject to persecution when their influence and

162 Qina Court, portfolio no.2, no date. Cited from: Haridi, *Dawr al-Sa‘id fi Misr al-‘Uthmaniyya*,
appendix no. 13, p.422.
163 Muhammad ‘Afifi, *Al-‘Aqbat fi Misr fi al-‘Asr al-Uthmani* (Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriya al-‘Amma lil-
165 Pococke, *A Description of the East*, vol. 1, p.89; Isna court, sijill 1, case 59, p.48., 12 Rabi‘ Akhir, 1170;
Isna court, sijill 1, case 66, p.54., 8 Rabi‘ Akhir, 1170.
fortune grew beyond the limits that Hawwara permitted. Hammam’s government was composed of many departments, each of which had its own Coptic bureaucrats and accountants working day and night. After spending the day and two-thirds of the night meeting with the people who frequented his public council, Hammam spent the third part of the night with his Coptic bureaucrats dealing with finances and attending to administrative affairs. Hammam’s Coptic secretaries acted as his deputies in villages, collecting the grain tax from peasants and shipping it to Cairo. For example, he charged the brothers Bulus and Jirijis, the sons of Manqaryus, with collecting the grain taxes and sending them north. The same two brothers also managed, as his agents, his financial transactions.

Finally, the bedouins were another important social group with whom a political pact was necessary for ensuring the stability of Hammam’s state. The ‘Ababida bedouins were the main tribe roaming Qina province. They attacked villages and towns during daylight, plundered people in market places, and freed prisoners from jail. Despite their criminal actions, ‘Ababida and their shaykhs, as many European observers acquainted with them pointed out, were not naturally immoral people. They committed these crimes mostly in response to state injustices against them. The tribe’s shaykhs were fine men known for their generosity and hospitality; they kept their word and fulfilled

168 Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 15, part 1, 1178; Isna court, sijill 1, case 59, p.48., 12 Rabi’ Akhir, 1170; Isna court, sijill 1, case 66, p.54., 8 Rabi’ Akhir, 1170.
170 Haridi, *Dawr al-SA’id fi Misr al-’Uthmaniyya*, pp. 159-172.
their promises, as contemporary European visitors asserted. Hawwara co-opted the ‘Ababida and concluded peace agreements which placed them in charge of security matters, such as the protection of villages and trade routes from the raids of other bedouins.171

Hammam even had the ‘Ababida settle in villages and towns in order to put a halt to highway robbery. After a quarter of a century of a life of plunder, Shaykh Nimr, the tribal chief of the ‘Ababida, finally settled in the city of Draw, becoming a friend and trading partner of Hammam. “[F]or the first twenty seven-years of his life, he never had seen the Nile, unless upon some plundering party; that he had been constantly at war with the people of the cultivated part of Egypt, and reduced them often to the state of starving; but now...he was old, a friend to Shekh Hamam, and was resident near the Nile.” The two leaders formed a company for Red Sea trade. Hammam and Nimr’s caravans carried cargos of wheat from Qina through Qusayr to Jedda, and of course their caravans were the safest of all caravans passing in the desert between Qina and Qusayr.172

The Rule of Law: Shari’a Courts and ‘Urf

Hammam governed and regulated the economic, political, and social life of Upper Egypt primarily through two institutions: Islamic law and ‘urf, or the code of local traditions. These were the two frameworks for adjudication adopted in every other province in the Ottoman Empire, and shari’a courts were the place of application. There

171 Bruce, Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, 1768-1773, vo.1, pp.146-149.
172 Ibid., vo.1, p. 147, p. 151.
were four schools of Islamic law applied throughout the empire, and the courts of each province adopted the school most prominent among the local population. Shari’a scholars considered ‘urf, local customs and traditions, in law-making and shari‘a judges officially applied them in court.173 Whereas Istanbul adopted the Hanafi school of shari‘a law as its official legal stance, the Maliki school prevailed in Upper Egyptian courts along with the Shafi‘i school to a lesser degree. Under Hammam, Qina province maintained several shari‘a courts that he himself attended or sent agents to, and, similarly, other provinces in Upper Egypt had their own local courts. ‘Urf in Upper Egypt was primarily the Arab tribal code of ethics and collective government as practiced in the Arab public councils, majalis al-‘arab, and it was also considered in shari‘a courts. Hammam applied ‘urf in his supreme public council, as he utilized the Arab codes of ethics for resolving individual and communal disputes.

Shari’a courts of Upper Egypt reflected the autonomous status of the south, and their relationship with Cairo’s regime was different than that of the Delta courts. The provincial courts of Grand Cairo and the Delta were part of the state apparatus and their judges often acted as part of the state bureaucracy. They adopted the Hanafi School of jurisprudence as the official legal framework, published the Sultan’s firmans and other important administrative decrees, and recorded grand military victories and political events in the empire. Among the duties of the provincial judge in the Delta was solving disputes among Mamluk tax farmers and investigating the reasons why certain lands

remained uncultivated, whether this was because of low Nile inundation or the negligence of village shaykhs and Mamluk district governors.\textsuperscript{174} The case was different in Qina province’s courts under Hammam. Throughout the eighteenth century, the court of the town of Isna, for instance, was totally independent of Cairo. Its registers had no first page (preamble or \textit{dibaja}) to show an official affiliation of this court with the Ottoman regime in the north. They did not publish any Ottoman decrees, as they were not obliged to apply them, and did not record any Ottoman or Mamluk events, since they were rendered irrelevant to political matters in the province.\textsuperscript{175}

Nonetheless, the legal system in Qina’s shari‘a courts followed the universal Islamic court system applied elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire. Shari‘a court as an institution consisted of judges, scribes, and credible witnesses. They generally applied the Maliki School of law. The Shafi‘i school came second, and the Hanafi school existed in the province albeit with a minor role. At any given moment, there was at least one Maliki and one Shafi‘i jurisconsult, or \textit{mufti}, residing in the province whose legal opinions, \textit{fatawa}s, were highly influential in court.\textsuperscript{176} The court generally accepted legal opinions issued by jurists from the four schools of law and considered them in the final verdict. The judge even accepted \textit{fatwa} opinions from jurists residing in other cities in the

\textsuperscript{175} See: Isna Court, Sijillat Ishhadat 1172-1215.
\textsuperscript{176} See for example: Isna Court, Ishhadat Sijill 53, case 137, p. 74, 15 Rabi‘ Thani 1216.
province rather than those exclusively from the host city of the court. The judge of Isna, for instance, accepted the legal opinions of a jurisconsult from Qus.177

Hammam respected the shari’a court and abided by its rules in political life and private business. He relied on the court for administrative matters such as collecting grain taxes from villages, as well as for notarizing his private businesses.178 Village and town shaykhs were always attending court sessions that dealt with economic transactions and aspects of the social life of the province’s inhabitants. They also registered personal transactions in the court and attended it as witnesses, apparently in order to give validity to important deeds. Hawwara leaders either attended court or sent agents to represent them. In some cases, Hammam sent notarized letters to the judge with trusted employees. His deputies in large towns attended, on his behalf, cases regarding different types of tax registration, business transactions, and social matters.179

The Shari’a court in Qina was a place of adjudication for Muslims and Copts alike. Copts attended the shari’a court to register their transactions and had Muslim village shaykhs as witnesses. Copts from the clergy and laypeople from all social classes registered their properties in shar‘ia court. Transactions such as buying, selling, inheritance, etc. were registered in shari’a court. Marriage contracts, however, were

177 For example: Isna Court, Ishhadat Sijill 15, part 1, case 133, p. 90-91, 22 Muharram 1178.
178 Examples: Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 15, part 1, 1178; Isna court, sijill 1, case 59, p.48., 12 Rabi‘ Akhir, 1170; Isna Court, Sijill 1, case 66, p.54., 8 Rabi‘ Akhir, 1170.
179 For example: Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 6, case 224, p.121, 21 Jumada al-Awwal 1172; from the same sijill and the same year case 58, p.36; Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no.15, part 1, case 94, p. 78, 12 Muharram 1178.
exclusively under the Coptic Orthodox Church’s jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{180} Copts went to shari‘a court even for personal status matters pertaining to inheritance.\textsuperscript{181} Hammam treated elite Copts with whom he had transactions as his legal equals in shari‘a court. He exchanged real estate properties with them and registered these transactions in shari‘a court.\textsuperscript{182}

The Arab tribal code of ‘\textit{urf} was an integral part of the communal life of Upper Egypt. It was generally applied to resolve disputes and impose punishments on transgressors. For example, in one incident, a large group of shaykhs from several villages throughout Upper Egypt, from Suhaj through Qina to Aswan, including the villages of Kulh, Busayla, and Sa‘ayda, in addition to the ‘Ababida bedouin shaykhs, met to agree on a punishment for the people of the village of Silwa. Apparently, the people of this village had repeatedly committed repulsive crimes, thus warranting a merciless sentence for the entire village. The council ruled that the houses of the people of Silwa should be destroyed and their members killed and robbed at once upon sight. Any tribe or village that allied itself with Silwa was to face the same punishment. The ruling was taken to be registered in shari‘a court.\textsuperscript{183}

Hammam relied on Arab tribal ‘\textit{urf} to resolve communal and individual disputes in his supreme public council, and the verdicts issued in the council were registered in shari‘a court. To distinguish them from small local councils, the Arab councils of Hawwara rulers were called \textit{hukuma}, or government, and were held wherever the ruler

\textsuperscript{180} Isna Court, Sijillat Ishhadat 1-80, years 1170-1231.
\textsuperscript{181} Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat, no. 52, case 7, p. 6, 1 Muharram 1215.
\textsuperscript{182} Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 6, case 224, p.121, 21 Jumada al-Awwal 1172.
\textsuperscript{183} Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no.53, case 327, p. 145, 27 Sha‘ban 1216.
resided, which, in Hammam’s case was in Qina province. In 1757, the people of two villages, Nimsa and Misariyya, violently assaulted each other and subsequently appealed to Hammam’s council to resolve the dispute. Hammam settled the case and a peace accord was concluded between the two parties and registered in court. The accord deed stated that the people of the two villages should first pay their land treasury dues, kharaj, and then comply with Hammam’s verdict. If one side killed one person from the other side, the latter would be entitled to avenge by killing four persons in addition to receiving 10 akyas of blood money. Neither of the two sides should cross the water canal that separated the two villages, and whoever transgressed would be mercilessly punished by Hammam. On Sunday, which was the local market day, the two parties should mind their own respective affairs in the market and commit no transgressions against each other; otherwise, severe punishment would be inflicted on transgressors. The Hawwara deputy tax farmers in the two villages were in charge of executing punishments. The notable shaykhs of each village accepted the accord and consented to its stipulations, and the document was finally registered in shari’a court.

Copts also frequented Hammam’s council to resolve their disputes. In 1173/1759, two Coptic brothers, Manqaryus and Sidarus, the sons of Shunuda the goldsmith, quarreled with another Copt by the name of Habash Mikha’il over their respective shares in a house that the two brothers inherited from their mother, Ghazal, who was the daughter of Jirjis the priest. Ghazal had inherited a share of the house of her father, who

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184 Muhammad Ibn Abd Allah al-Amir al-Maliki, Risala fi Man Tawalla al-Sa’id min al-’Umara al-Jarakis, manuscript in al-Azhar Liberary, No. 6686, pp.2-3
185 Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 1, case 148, p.107, 17 Rajab 1170.
bought it almost seventy years earlier and registered his property in the shari‘a court. The disputing parties presented the case before Hammam, who ruled that Manqaryus and Sidarus should retain their property rights to the house, a ruling that the two brothers took to the shari‘a judge to notarize.186

Hawwara tax farmers organized their relationship with peasants under Islamic law in the same as in the Delta.187 All the land of tax farmers was theoretically the property of the state, and was variously termed *kharajiiya* or *’athariyya* land. Hawwara tax farmers leased out land to peasants through sharecropping contracts, according to which the farmer was obliged to pay the land’s tax and hand in a share of the crops to the tax farmer. In addition, Qina’s peasants held usufruct rights to the land and could pass it down to their heirs. They exercised the rights to buy and sell agricultural land, which took the form of obtaining or relinquishing usufruct rights (*furugh wa nuzul*), and they also enjoyed the right to mortgage their landholdings. In addition, peasants rented plots from Hawwara notables who held usufruct rights to large farms, and the lease periods in these cases were as short as one year and as long as nine years. Justice was carried out in shari‘a courts to obstruct the attempts of tax farmers to exploit peasants.188

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186 Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no.5, part 1, case 7, 8 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1173, p.3.
187 Some historians mistakenly claim that the land between Asyut and Aswan was communal or “*masha‘*,” to which peasants enjoyed no usufruct rights and the Arab Shaykhs/large tax farmers distributed different plots on them each year. This differed from the *’athariyya* land known in Lower and Middle Egypt. The *’athariyya* is enclosed with borders that divided the land of one peasant from that of another. These borders did not change from year to the other as the same peasant kept the same holding each year, unless any sort of transactions took place among peasants. Ahmad al-Hitta, *Tarikh Misr al-‘Iqtisadi* (Alexandria: Matba ‘at al-Misri, 1967), pp.5-6. Nonetheless, court records of Isna and Qina show that the same system of landholding was applied in Upper Egypt as in the Delta.
188 Example: Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no.7, case 70, 12 Rajab 1173, p.37; Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 14, part 2, case 63, p.42, 1177; Sijill Ishhadat no. 15, part 1, case 129, p.87, 1178; ; Isna Court, Sijill
Like their fellow Muslims, the Coptic peasants of Upper Egypt enjoyed usufruct rights to the land and rented land from the tax farmers. Transactions in landholding occurred indiscriminately between Copts and Muslims. Elite Copts exchanged landed properties with the elite Muslim families of the province. For instance, Karas Salib inherited twenty faddans of ‘athariyya land from his father, a piece of land that was adjacent to another belonging to the Habatirs – a notable family — and he later sold it to Hajj Yunus Mansur, another elite figure in Isna who owned many businesses.

Nevertheless, this system of justice was not complete. Female heirs were deprived of usufruct rights to land, which was a violation of the Islamic code of inheritance. Women were allowed only to inherit other types of land, such as gardens and palm trees. While male heirs received shares of the house and the land of the father, female heirs did not enjoy access to landed inheritance and in most cases were married off to their cousins to keep other properties inside the extended patirachal family. Nephews continued to control land, thus depriving their aunts of landholding rights. Many disputes occurred between sisters and their brothers or aunts and nephews for these reasons. In one case, three sisters, Bakhita, Sharifa and Jindiyya Ras, inherited land and a house from their

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190 Isna Court, Ishhadat Sijill 53, case 317, p. 143, 10 Ramadan 1216; Sijill Ishhadat no.52, case 294, p. 146, 7 Sha‘ban 1215.
father. Their brother Ahmad appointed himself as their agent and sold the land and the house without their consent.\footnote{For example: Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 16, part 2, case 161, p.80, 15 Safar 1179; Sijill Ishhadat 15, part 1, case 41, pp. 30-31, 1178; Sijill Ishhadat 17, part 1, case 27, p.19, 12 Dhu al-Qi‘da, 1179; Sijill Ishhadat no. 52, case 419, p. 217, 8 Muharram 1215. Since Isna is a town, its court registers contained very few records about exchange in agricultural land. However, among these few cases women did not appear as landholders. Surveying the records of 1178 and 1179, for example, yielded no results with regard to women.}

Under Hammam, some Ashraf notable families, claiming Prophetic lineage, monopolized the judgeships of the shari‘a courts of Qina province. The shari‘a scholars from the Habatirs family were the only holders of judgeships in Isna court throughout the eighteenth century and eventually transformed it into a hereditary office maintained within the family and passed from fathers to sons or nephews. They continued to monopolize this post for part of the nineteenth century under Muhammad ‘Ali. In 1104/1692, Qadi Ahmad ‘Ali Habatir was the official judge, “khalifat al-shar’” in Isna court, and almost a century and half afterwards, in 1255/1839, his great-grandson, Husayn Mustafa Khidr Ahmad Habatir, inherited the same position in the same court after many of his grand uncles and cousins succeeded in holding it. This elite family enjoyed immense wealth from different types of businesses and assets such as houses and land. They often exchanged assets such as usufruct rights to agricultural land with the Hawwara family.\footnote{For example: Isna Court, Ishhadat Sijill 53, case 180, p. 67, 11 Jumad Awwal 1216.}

Thus, for almost half a century, Shaykh al-ʿArab Hammam, the Hawwara ruler, took advantage of Ottoman political decentralization and liberal economy to found a just
regime in Upper Egypt. From his seat in Farshut, his hometown in Qina province, Hammam controlled southern agricultural and commercial resources and established a government founded on social contracts with important ethnic and religious groups based on the rule of law.

(3) Things Fall Apart: The French and a Reformed Empire

Hammam’s Tragic Death

Hammam committed a fatal mistake by giving refuge to an ambitious Mamluk oppositional leader, ‘Ali Bek al-Kabir, which resulted in the collapse of the entire Hawwara dynasty. As mentioned above, in 1760s, Ali Bek, the Mamluk governor of Cairo, joined forces with Hammam and a Mamluk faction exiled in Upper Egypt to overthrow the Ottoman governor and declare Egypt independent from the Ottoman Empire. ‘Ali bek fled Cairo and took refuge in Hammam’s court, where he received extensive military and financial support, eventually staging his military coup successfully in 1768.193

Shortly afterwards, ‘Ali Bek perceived Hammam’s state in the south as a significant threat to his independent state in the north. He accused Hammam of sheltering other Mamluk dissidents and supporting them against Cairo. Thus, in 1769, he sent forces to Upper Egypt to terminate the Mamluk rebels and undermine the power of Hammam. ‘Ali Bek’s army formed a secret alliance with an ambitious cousin of Hammam, Isma’il

193 Crecelius, The Roots of Modern Egypt, p.51, pp.59-61
‘Abd Allah, who fought on the side of the Mamluk troops. In the wake of the betrayal and at his unexpected defeat, Hammam withdrew from Farshut and fled southwards to the village of Qammula. Later that year in this very village, Hammam died in his bed, at the age of 60, stricken with a deep sense of grief. His sons were carried to Cairo and publicly displayed in the streets, and the humiliation of Hawwara was combined with the seizure of most of their tax farms. Some Hawwara leaders maintained large tax farms, but the dynasty was overthrown and the clan never rose to power again.194

After the termination of Hammam’s state, and after three centuries of autonomous rule, Upper Egypt became subjugated to the Cairene Mamluk elite. The independent state of ‘Ali bek lasted only a few years before the Ottomans restored full control over Egypt in 1773. The Sultan then placed the whole country under Cairo’s Mamluk regime. The collapse of the Hawwara dynasty in the last quarter of the eighteenth century shattered the social contract that existed between Hammam and the peoples of Upper Egypt. The south experienced political chaos and instability, and discontented social groups demonstrated aggressive forms of resistance.

During the few years of the absolutist Mamluk rule, chaotic events led to rebellious actions on the part of the social groups most affected by the new situation. Only four years after Hammam passed away, groups of Arab peasants challenged the authority of the state and the remaining Hawwara tax farmers by refusing to pay the land tax. The peasants of the Busayla village did not pay the kharaj tax in cash or in grain,

194 Layla ‘Abd al-Latif Ahmad, al-Sa‘id fi ‘Ahd Shaykh al-‘Arab Hammam, pp.146-147; Crecelius, The Roots of Modern Egypt, p.60-62; Denon, Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte, pp. 255-256
which was due to be collected by their tax farmer, Isma‘il ibn ‘Ali of Hawwara. Shaykhs of other villages intermediated between Busayla and the tax farmer to have them pay and threatened that the state would punish them by destroying their houses. On the other hand, Mamluk officers decreased security payments to the ‘Ababida bedouins for the protection of villages and trade routes. The tribe immediately reacted by attacking travellers and plundering villages, and later launched a war against the Mamluks. It was difficult for the Mamluk officers to subdue the ‘Ababida bedouins. At every defeat they managed to quickly reassemble themselves, in a few days, and return to fight even more fiercely.

Prelude to French Imperialism

In 1798, Napoleon’s three-year campaign in Egypt began, during which the French exacerbated the existing chaos in Qina province and Upper Egypt. Qina province captured the attention of the French officers for its agricultural resources and, more importantly, for its Red Sea trade connections. As France was experiencing difficulties and failures in its sugar plantations in the Americas, Frenchmen speculated that Upper Egypt might be lucrative in this regard. At this time, as the crops of the West Indies failed to deliver, the scientists of the campaign wrote “[t]he conformity of the climate [of Egypt] with that of South America during a large portion of the year, promises new sources of riches in the sugar-cane, indigo, and cotton; perhaps the coffee tree….”

195 Qina Court, portfolio no. 1, 10 Sha‘ban 1187, in: Haridi, Dawr al-Sa‘id fi Misr al-‘Uthmaniyya, appendix no.14, pp. 423-425.
sugar-cane, indigo, and cotton, are, in fact, already reared in this country, but with so small a portion of success, or, more properly speaking, with so little skill and encouragement, that they may be fairly considered as a new branch."

In 1786, M. Claude Savary, the famous French traveler, whose letters on Egypt depicted an inviting picture of a future French colony and later encouraged the Napoleonic campaign, lamented that Arab and Mamluk behavior discouraged trade through Qusayr. Mamluk control of the port after Hammam’s demise made it difficult for Europeans to benefit from its commerce. Qusayr was placed under the authority of the Mamluk governor of Qina, who imposed a high duty of ten percent. Mamluks failed to secure the port, and the recurring raids of Arab bedouins worsened the situation there. However, as Savary asserted, the port was still favorable for international commerce. He said that under an enlightened government, by which he meant France, the trade route of Qusayr would be safer and more lucrative. Obstacles to trade at this port could be removed by any powerful maritime nation at a small expense. Savary also proposed that France should consider cutting a canal between the Nile and the port, which should be more advantageous, he thought, than a canal between Cairo and Suez. This canal should shorten the journey of Indian ships, and thus the cloths of Bengal, the perfumes of Yemen, and the gold dust of Abyssinia would soon be more abundant in Qusayr. The

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corn, linen, and various products of Egypt would be exchanged there in return, Savary added.\(^{199}\)

As soon as the French arrived in Egypt, their troops headed southwards to Upper Egypt in order to fight the Mamluk factions and occupy the region. The colonial policy in Upper Egypt was indeed a prelude to future French imperialism. As the French landed in Egypt with their “civilizing mission,” that is, to bring about a just, egalitarian government, they claimed to be supporting religious minorities. The French attempted to co-opt the Copts of Upper Egypt on the pretext of alleviating the oriental oppression of the Ottomans and Mamluks. The French officers hired the Coptic accountants in their brief administration in Upper Egypt and employed them in tax collection. The French, not yet an empire in the Middle East, exercised with the Copts what they would exercise thirty years later with the Berbers of North Africa: the incitement of ethnic or religious divisions in order to secure loyalty and thus rule more efficiently.\(^{200}\)

When the French officers were fighting the Mamluks in Qina, the Coptic peasants of the province sided with them. Vivant Denon asserted that commoner Copts showed much sympathy with the French army due to extreme hate for the Mamluk troops who had plundered Coptic villages, such as Nagada, during the war. Denon reports, “[the Copts’] zeal induced them to come and give us all the intelligence which they had been able to collect, and they accompanied us in person, and followed us with their good wishes to the very confines of their territory…without concealing from us any of the

\(^{199}\) Ibid., vol.2, pp. 114-115.  
dangers which we were exposed, [they] advised us with great judgment on every
particular which could render the encounter less fatal to us.”

Similarly, the ‘Ababida bedouins decided to side with the French against the Mamluks during the battles. As Vivant Denon reported, amidst a battle in Qusayr, “we entirely gained their [the Ababida’s] friendship by exercising with them in mock charges, and showing so much confidence in them, as to accompany them all day at a distance from Cosseir and riding with them at the rate of a league in less than a quarter of an hour.”

An Empire Reformed

By 1801, Napoleon and his campaign had departed from Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire restored power over the country with the help of the British. Once more, the Sultan installed the Mamluk military elite as rulers of Upper Egypt. Nonetheless, the French campaign in Egypt was but one manifestation of the weakness of the Ottoman Empire and its steady decline. The so called “Eastern Question” raised in Europe referred to an empire continually losing territories and military power both to Europeans and to political actors within its own provinces. On the eve of the nineteenth century, two Sultans, Selim III (r. 1789-1807) and Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839), attempted to introduce “modern” reforms to the Empire, which included more centralized bureaucracy and the

201 Denon, *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte*, pp. 207-208 ; p.217.
202 Ibid., pp. 250-251.
extension of civil rights to religious minorities. These modern reforms reached Qina province early in the nineteenth century after the departure of the French.

As part of his centralization project, Sultan Selim III sent a series of decrees to Qina and the other provinces of Upper Egypt to appease and co-opt the different social groups. The Sultan deployed a religious discourse of hegemony as the caliph of the Muslims who defeated infidel invaders. The Shari’a courts of Upper Egypt were now incorporated into the more centralized state apparatus and were used to disseminate these decrees. Immediately after the departure of the French, an important firman decree expounded the Sultan’s policy of reconciliation with the peasants and bedouins of Qina, after the massive destruction that the Mamluk armies inflicted on them while fighting the French. The same decree also aimed at incorporating all power groups in Upper Egypt into a new Ottoman order.

The elaborate firman decree was addressed to shari‘a law scholars, judges, ashraf notables, mufti jurisconsults, Arab tribal leaders, village shaykhs, and peasants. It sought to declare the victory of the state over the French and to appease the peasants who were suffering from Mamluk tyranny. The Sultan affirmed that it was his duty to protect and guard the poor inhabitants of the country, a mission entrusted to him by God as the caliph of Muslims. The Mamluk soldiers arbitrarily accused some peasants, Arab tribal leaders, and bedouins of collusion with the French and confiscated their grain, animals and wealth. The harmed groups expected the Sultan to apply a firm punishment to the

203 C.f: Quataert, The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922, ch. 4.
transgressive soldiers. Instead, to reward them for fighting the French, the Sultan decided to bestow lands and houses outside Egypt upon those Mamluks.\textsuperscript{204}

Another Sultanic decree dealt with the issue of Copts as a religious minority. Upper Egyptian Copts who supported the French were clearly in trouble both with the Mamluks, who had reasserted authority, and the local Muslim population as well. These Copts were now displaced from their homes and their properties were confiscated. Thus, they raised a petition to the Ottoman Sultan for protection and the retention of their properties. In response, in 1801, Sultan Salim III promulgated a \textit{firman} decree, also disseminated through Qina’s and other provincial shari‘a courts, commanding the Muslim inhabitants of Upper Egypt to pardon the Copts who supported the infidel French. The decree implored religious dignitaries, laypeople, and peasants to treat Copts with dignity and respect, indicating the belief that they had only cooperated with the French out of fear and wanted to protect their families and properties. The Sultan asserted that they followed and obeyed the French only by force. He stipulated that they must return to their homes in peace and resume the tranquil life they had enjoyed before the political turmoil.

A \textit{firman} from his majesty Sultan Salim, may God give him victory…to the authorized court deputies [local judges]…and the country shaykhs…that during the French infidels’ seizure time, the Copts coercively followed the French infidels in order to protect their honor [\textit{a‘aradahum}, i.e., families] and fortunes. Even if what they did was not accepted, they shall return to their home places and live in their houses in comfort and safety as they were in the past. Because they are in all cases the subjects [\textit{ra‘iyya}] of our Sublime state and they petition for protection against all matters. From now on, nobody should intrude upon them because of their support of

\textsuperscript{204} Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no.53, case 286, p.123, Jumada al-Akhir 1216.
the French. They should buy and sell and take and give [freely] as they used to do in the past…

Conclusion

During the eighteenth century, under the Ottoman Empire, Hammam emerged as the greatest independent ruler of Upper Egypt. Hammam belonged to Hawwara, the tribe that had established an autonomous dynasty in Upper Egypt for three centuries as a tributary regime to the Ottoman Sultan. Taking Qina province as his capital, he established what later observers termed a “republic,” which was based on the rule of law and equal rights for tribal Arabs and Copts. The prosperous long-distance trade as well as sugar and wheat commercial agriculture in Upper Egypt, and especially in Qina province, allowed for the formation of such a state. Hammam’s autonomous government functioned within an Ottoman imperial system that was politically decentralized, thus permitting semi-independent dynasts to grow and rule over the provinces, and economically liberalized, thus allowing the markets of these autonomous provinces to prosper. Hawwara dynasty collapsed with the tragic death of Hammam, and soon afterwards the French “civilizing mission” arrived to rescue the country from “oriental despotism.” The French made it to Qina province with this mission, and applied there was what could be considered a prelude to nineteenth-century French imperialism. The Ottomans defeated the French and forced them out of Egypt, yet the already declining

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205 Isna Shari’a Court, Ishhadat, Sijill 53, case 269, p.113, Rabi ‘Awwal 1216.
The empire was forced to embark on “modern” reforms that made their way to Qina province as early as the French left.

A few years after the Ottomans retained control of Egypt, Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha was appointed as the new viceroy. As the next chapter indicates, the forty-year reign of this ambitious pasha witnessed the rise and fall of his empire, as well as massive rebellions in Qina province.
Between 1820 and 1824, a series of unprecedented massive revolts erupted in Qina province in order to overthrow the government of Muhammad Ali Pasha. Throughout the long, rigid forty-year reign of Muhammad Ali, Egypt never witnessed such outbreaks, whether in the north or the south of the country. Ahmad al-Salah, an Arab shaykh, led the first and by far largest revolt, mobilizing about 40,000 followers of peasants and Arab tribal shaykhs for his cause. From his home village of al-Salimiyya, al-Salah emerged as a sufi mystic and a self-proclaimed messiah and declared a holy war against the Pasha, claiming that he had received orders from the Ottoman Sultan to execute his mission. He seized the state treasury and storehouses and hired his own administrators to rule over Qina for two months. A British eyewitness to this revolt, J. A. St John, recounted,

The composition of the revolters, their hopes and the grounds of them, were eminently characteristic...At their head was a Sheikh, who, having assumed the title of a prophet, promised them victory in the name of heaven...It appeared, nonetheless, that they were by no means dazzled by his divine pretensions. They did not believe him to be inspired; and regarded the miracles related by his enthusiastic companions as so many pious frauds. Taxation, however, pressed heavily upon them; and what was wanting in credulity was compensated by discontent... 206

Muhammad Ali soon sent an army from Cairo to terminate the separatist state. Under the command of a young Turkish officer, villages were burned, houses were destroyed, women and children were displaced, and the rebels were exterminated. Lured by handsome rewards, locals followed the rebels into the mountains and handed the heads of the defiant horde to the Pasha’s officer in exchange for a generous prize that had been promised. The revolt was crushed, and al-Salah fled to the port of Qusayr and from there to Hijaz, where nobody heard of him again.\textsuperscript{207} Two other massive revolts followed, emerging from other adjacent villages in Qina, and were similarly brutally crushed. For many decades to follow, Upper Egypt paid the price of revolt.

A few years passed after the uprising, and life in Qina province appeared to be changing under the “modern” interventionist hand of Muhammad Ali Pasha. Turkish bureaucrats arrived from Cairo to take full control of the province’s administrative and economic matters, sending meticulous daily reports to the Pasha about every small or large incident in every district and subdistrict of the province. Back in Cairo, the Pasha responded to these reports in person, with equally detailed orders on how to handle every important or minute affair in the province. Modern irrigation engineers also arrived from Cairo, and they immediately busied themselves with organizing water timetables and recruiting corvée labor for new canals, dikes, and embankments. Modern doctors were dispatched to the province in order to administer smallpox shots to the people, and they filled in swamps with earth for public health purposes. In the province’s Nile ports, a

tremendous number of imported Sudanese oxen was unloaded every month to be used as a source of energy to run the Pasha’s three working textile factories in Qina. Others were sold at subsidized prices to peasants to use in farming, which would secure their tax payments.

In the villages of Qina, peasants were compulsorily assigned small plots to cultivate and pay their dues in cash and kind every season to the numerous state storehouses scattered in every subdistrict in the province. From those peasants, the village shaykhs collected corvée laborers, who spent months on public work sites away from their home villages, and shaykhs also conscripted soldiers for the modernized army of the Pasha, who sometimes never returned. As the wives of levied peasants had to suffer from their prolonged absence or complete disappearance, many of them sustained their households by taking charge of the small plots of the family and paying their dues to the Pasha. In the towns, the province provided cash, food provisions, and laborers to the three textile factories the Pasha built in Qina. The one thousand male workers who were employed in the town of Qina’s factory lived nearby in the surrounding areas half an hour or an hour away from the mill. They worked everyday, except Friday, from half an hour after sunrise to a little before sunset under the rigid supervision of state bureaucrats.208

This heavy intervention of the Pasha in people’s daily lives in Qina, in fact, did succeed in preventing more uprisings; nevertheless, it did not mean that Qina, and Upper Egypt at large, became integrated parts of his rising centralized and modernized state.

Rather, the region was maintained on the periphery of a rising empire. Muhammad Ali Pasha (r. 1805-1848) built a very short-lived empire. He expanded within the Ottoman Empire’s territories, carving out from the tributaries of the Sultan, while still asserting that he was a faithful servant of this very Sultan. Muhammad Ali started his imperial career by conquering Upper Egypt from the Mamluk factions in 1811, six years after he came to power as an Ottoman viceroy in Cairo. This was followed by a series of prolonged military campaigns to conquer Hijaz, the Sudan, Greece, Syria, and Yemen, again while still affirming his loyalty to the Sultan. As a rising world hegemon, Great Britain was dissatisfied with Muhammad Ali’s commercial monopolies in the lands he annexed, in the age in which the Liberal British advocated the virtues of free trade. Britain supported the Ottoman Sultan’s effort to terminate Muhammad Ali’s empire by forcing him to comply with the Anglo-Turkish free trade agreement of 1838. This was followed by the 1841 London Treaty that forced him to relinquish the lands he had conquered, except for Egypt and the Sudan.

Throughout its four decades, the mode of hegemony and political economy of Muhammad Ali’s empire evolved in the following manner. The Pasha started out as an Ottoman-fashioned imperialist, deploying religious rhetoric and dealing with his subjects as Ottoman ra‘iyya. He later adopted a modern-state hegemonic discourse in Gramscian terms, by introducing modern governing institutions, proclaiming his interest in the welfare of citizens, and conciliating elite interests in the name of the public good. Muhammad Ali’s empire was one of heavy interventionism and central planning, as opposed to the laissez-faire Ottoman Empire to which the Pasha originally belonged. In
his imperial career, Muhammad Ali first reversed Ottoman economic liberalism to older systems of monopolies. He later moved to modern-state heavy central planning supported by protectionism, until he was forced to submit to the impositions of international free trade.

In the empire of Muhammad Ali, this chapter argues, Upper Egypt moved from a tributary region, to a semi-colony, and finally to an assimilated part of a centralized state. When Muhammad Ali was appointed as the Ottoman viceroy of Egypt, he finally conquered the southern provinces after several years of fierce battles with the Mamluks. Given its three centuries as an autonomous state, Muhammad Ali for more than a decade applied coercive rule over Upper Egypt which served as the first tributary to his expanding empire. The end of this decade witnessed the three massive revolts of Qina. Thus, between the 1820s and 1830s, when the Pasha launched an ambitious project to build a “modern” state in Egypt, Upper Egypt had to pay the price of Qina’s revolt: Muhammad Ali maintained the south in an ambivalent status between a colony of the empire and an integrated part of the centralized government. The Pasha extended a modern-state mode of hegemony and economic interventionism over the rebellious region, yet he deprived it of political representation. This probably qualifies him as an early contributor to modern imperialism. Finally, after 1838, when Muhammad Ali lost his empire to the rising British Empire, the Pasha attempted to adjust to new global and internal realities by fully assimilating Upper Egypt into the centralized state.

Qina was probably the province most hurt by the Pasha’s imperial hegemonic policies, which might explain why it was the only place in Egypt that produced massive
revolts. As indicated in the first two chapters, Qina was the capital of an autonomous state in Ottoman Upper Egypt, and it was, along with the other Upper Egyptian provinces, a center of commercial agriculture especially for sugar and grain, and a hub of textile production. Moreover, the province and its port of Qusayr served as an international trade forum in the Red Sea regional market, encompassing Arabia and East Africa, and beyond in the Indian Ocean world economy. Muhammad Ali Pasha fully subjugated Upper Egypt and placed commercial monopolies over Qina’s grain, sugar, textiles, etc. Furthermore, Muhammad Ali expanded his empire in Qina’s old Red Sea market, and established his commercial monopolies over Yemeni coffee and Sudanese trade. While keeping Upper Egypt in an ambivalent place in his empire, the Pasha applied heavy interventionist policies over Qina’s provincial economy, and imposed a system of modern hegemony over its subaltern groups through a class of provincial ruling elite.

In each stage of the development of the Pasha’s mode of imperial hegemony, the subaltern women and men of Qina showed deep discontent that sometimes escalated to a revolt. During the first decade, social groups composed of peasants, female textile weavers, Nile boat captains, camel drivers, Arab long-distance merchants, and educated Copts were all hurt in the process. Most of these groups participated in the three revolts to overthrow the government of the Pasha. After the revolts were crushed, Qina’s subaltern resistance failed to organize further insurrections, but the province was always simmering with other modes of rebellion. The discontented either wrote petitions and raised them to the Pasha, fled their villages and the Pasha’s factories, or simply attacked the human and material symbols of the empire. The falatiyya bandits were probably the
most disturbing group to the Pasha’s hegemony, hiding in Qina’s mountains and
destroying every chance for political stability in the province.

(1) Subjugation and Revolt: “What the Mongols did”

The first decade of Muhammad Ali Pasha’s rule over Upper Egypt, between 1811
and 1824, was a period of subjugation and revolt. The subjugation was carried out by the
Pasha’s famous warrior son, Ibrahim, who also conquered the southern provinces and the
Red Sea market for his father. Upper Egypt was made into a tributary region, the first one
among the newly annexed lands of the Pasha’s rising empire. As many social groups in
the province were put out of business by the Pasha’s agricultural and commercial
monopolies, revolt broke out by the end of this decade.

Subjugation

Upon coming to power, Muhammad Ali Pasha faced increasing pressure from
Cairene long-distance merchants—who were his internal allies at this time — to conquer
Upper Egypt in order to restore the Red Sea trade. In 1811, Ibrahim, the Pasha’s eldest
son, finally conquered the southern provinces for his father from the Mamluks, who had
made the city of Isna in Qina province their capital of political opposition. Ibrahim
concluded his last decisive battles in Qina, and was immediately rewarded by being
appointed, in the holy month of Ramadan, as the governor of Upper Egypt, Wilayat al-
Sa‘id.\textsuperscript{209} Ibrahim “did to the peoples of the south what the Mongols did when they invaded the countries. He humiliated the nobility and behaved in the worst manner with the people, robbing their harvests and money, taking their cows and sheep…and imposing unbearable taxes on them,” recounted the contemporary chronicler al-Jabarti.\textsuperscript{210}

Emphasizing the importance of Upper Egypt among his new tributaries, Muhammad Ali wrote to the Ottoman Sultan to inform him that, as his faithful servant, he had appointed his three sons, whom he “considered his own soul,” for the following: the first to govern the Hijaz, the second to lead the Sudan campaigns, and the third to organize Upper Egypt which had been ruined by Mamluk tyranny.\textsuperscript{211} Muhammad Ali placed Upper Egypt in a special status. The Pasha indeed considered it a newly annexed tributary region, just as Hijaz and the Sudan would be, and administered it differently from Cairo and Lower Egypt.

Muhammad Ali affirmed to the Ottoman court that he appointed Ibrahim, his minister of finance, as the governor of Upper Egypt mainly in order to restore prosperity to its people who had suffered from the destruction of their villages and had been dispersed by the Mamluks.\textsuperscript{212} As a matter of fact, Ibrahim was younger than twenty years of age, and his father taught him only one value: to collect as much tax as he could by any means possible, as al-Jabarti attests.

\textsuperscript{210} Al-Jabarti, ‘\textit{Aja’ib al-’Athar}, vol. 7, pp. 234-235.
\textsuperscript{212} \textit{Al-’Awamir wa-l-Mukatabat}, vol. 1, p. 23.
He imposed enormous amounts of money [taxes] on them [Upper Egyptian people] that was impossible for them to pay, and urged them to pay soon. When they failed to pay, he applied different means of torturing, beating, hanging, and burning to them...he once tied a man’s feet to a long board of wood which two other men held from the two ends and they rolled him over fire like *kabab*...He humiliated the people of Upper Egypt and disgraced them...  

Ibrahim settled in Qina province, in the two towns of Qina and Qus, from where he governed Upper Egypt, while keeping his position in Cairo as the minister of finance. In Upper Egypt, the minister and governor developed a system of administration that reversed Ottoman *laissez-faire* political economy and established heavy centralization and interventionism, and this system was soon applied to the Delta. Ibrahim immediately surveyed the land of Upper Egypt with southern Coptic experts, and set the tax system. He abolished tax farming and confiscated the land from large Arab tax farmers, including the remaining leaders of the Hawwara dynasty, rendering them all powerless and humiliated. He also confiscated the previously untaxed vast farms endowed for religious establishments, the *waqf* land, from shari‘a law scholars. He subsumed this land under taxation and state control, which rendered Islamic law scholars powerless. After that, Ibrahim brought Upper Egyptian expertise to the Delta in order to apply this new system in the north, as about sixty land surveyors, *massahin*, accompanied him to the Delta provinces. When Ibrahim received his post, the size of cultivated land in Upper Egypt exceeded that of the Delta by at least an extra 200,000 faddans, so the taxes

he extracted from the wealthier south exceeded that of the north by more than 150,000
pounds.\textsuperscript{215}

Muhammad Ali deployed a religiously-based Ottoman discourse of hegemony, which
subjugated the subalterns in order to rule over Upper Egypt. While the Pasha expanded his empire by carving out land from Ottoman territories, he continued to
present himself as a faithful servant of the Sultan. He vowed that he undertook the
conquests to return the lost lands to the Sultan, a claim that ensured him the support of
the Sublime Port.\textsuperscript{216} Muhammad Ali portrayed himself as a Muslim conqueror fighting
for the caliph of Muslims and abiding by the shari‘a and Qanun of the Sultan. He sought
fatwas from loyal shari‘a jurists in Cairo from the four sunni schools of law that would
support his wars of expansion.\textsuperscript{217} Meanwhile, he perceived the peoples of Upper Egypt as
an Ottoman ra‘iyya, inferior and obedient tribute payers. In the beginning of 1814, a
firman imperial edict arrived from Cairo to announce to the ra‘iyya and the dignitaries of
Qina and Isna provinces that the Ottoman sultan had renewed Muhammad Ali Pasha’s
tenure as viceroy of Egypt and delegated him to administer the country’s affairs.\textsuperscript{218}

In Qina province, Ibrahim reorganized the agricultural administration. He
distributed seeds to every peasant in the beginning of every season and forced them to

\textsuperscript{215}Al-Jabarti, \textit{‘Aja‘ib al-‘Athar}, vol. 7, p. 178, p. 233; Amin Sami, \textit{Taqwim al-Nil} (Cairo: Matba‘at Dar al-
\textsuperscript{216}Khaled Fahmy affirms that Muhammad Ali, in fact, did not aim at founding a separate empire from the
Ottoman Empire. He regarded himself as part of the Ottoman system and maintained his loyalty to the
Sultan because that, in politically pragmatic terms, provided him with international leverage and relative
protection against European powers. See: \textit{All the Pasha’s Men} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1997).
\textsuperscript{217}See: \textit{Al-‘Awamir wa-l-Mukatabat}, vol. 1, pp. 1-21.
\textsuperscript{218}Isna Court, Ishhadat Sijill 94, part 1, case 188, p. 80, 5 Safar 1230.
farm an assigned size of land, which sometimes exceeded the capacity of what the peasant and his family could handle. For this purpose, the government built numerous state storehouses to distribute seeds to villages, and later to collect the harvest.\textsuperscript{219} Ibrahim also established a system to punish those who left any of this assigned land uncultivated and did not submit its tax revenue. “If you leave any wasteland this year, I will collect four times as much tax from it,” Ibrahim swore in one of his strict decrees.\textsuperscript{220} Some peasants did not work because they simply did not have enough draft animals to help them farm the land, or so they told Ibrahim. Thus, Ibrahim extended state funds to them to buy animals, but, in order to first ensure that they were not lying, he put them in jail and tortured them.\textsuperscript{221}

The first thing that Muhammad Ali did after conquering Upper Egypt was to confiscate the famous grain of the south that had sustained Istanbul for centuries, and to export it to Europe during the Napoleonic wars at much higher prices. Within a few years, this grain made him “the richest Pasha in the Ottoman Empire,” a French consul asserted.\textsuperscript{222} In 1812, the Pasha ordered all the Turkish governors of Upper Egypt to confiscate wheat from merchants and forbid them to buy or sell grain. They also collected grain from peasants, even if it was stored in their home granaries for household sustenance. His officials broke into the peasants’ homes seizing any amounts of grain they found, whether a lot or little, without paying, claiming that this would be deducted.

\textsuperscript{219} Isna Court, Ishhadat, Sijill 80, case 41, p.16, 4 Dhu al-Hijja 1231.
\textsuperscript{220} Isna Court, Ishhadat, Sijill 94, part.1, case 66, p.23, end of Dhu al-Qi‘da 1229.
\textsuperscript{221} Isna Court, Ishhadat, Sijill 94, part.1, case 75, p.27, 6 Dhu al-Hijja 1229.
from the following year’s taxes. The officials then loaded the Pasha’s grain ships—new ones built especially for this purpose—and sent them north. The exact same thing happened the year after. In 1816, Al-Jabarti witnessed the repeated scene: “Ships from Upper Egypt come to Bulaq and Old Cairo ports. They unload huge cargoes very high into the air and then the ships come from the north to take them to Alexandria and in the morning you would not find any of it left in the site.”

The Ottoman ships now came to Alexandria in order to carry the Sublime Port’s grain but went back empty, while British ships harboring adjacent to them were heavily loaded with Upper Egyptian wheat and were setting sail for Europe. The Sultan’s complaints did not stop the ambitious viceroy from accumulating huge capital. Europe was desperate for wheat during the Napoleonic wars, so the Pasha dictated his own prices. “These sales generated considerable income for the central treasury…Sa’idi [Upper Egyptian] wheat was being exported for between sixty-two and eighty piasters per ardabb at the beginning of 1811, a price some five times that in the local market; nevertheless, British buyers were not dissuaded from increasing their purchases.” Meanwhile, the Pasha’s monopoly over grain without doubt put many long-distance merchants of Upper Egypt out of business.

The wheat of Qina’s peasants sustained the troops of Muhammad Ali in Hijaz, in addition to supporting the holy places and the pilgrims. In the following years, as a

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British official impressively reported, “Keneh has gradually sent large quantities of wheat to Arabia; sometimes as much as 200,000 ardabbs, or a million bushels per annum.”227 One of the main tasks of the Turkish governor of Qina and Isna was to ensure the regular flow of grain shipments and secure them on their way to the troops in the Hijaz. Harsh punishment awaited the governor of the province who did not fulfill this important duty. In their itinerary from Qina to the Qusayr port, these grain shipments were constantly attacked by Arab tribes and oftentimes did not make it to the Pasha’s camps, which was a great source of anger for the Pasha. His orders to arrest the Arab tribal attackers did not succeed in ending this problem.228

After grain, sugar was the second chief Upper Egyptian commodity annexed into the Pasha’s system of monopolies and sold abroad. Al-Jabarti reported that sugar monopolies started as soon as the conquest was completed. Within a few years, Ibrahim controlled all the sugar that came from Upper Egypt, which was the main source of sugar in the country, as al-Jabarti asserted. Ibrahim also started to advance credit to private sugar refineries and shared the profit with them, tremendously expanding sugar plantations and mills. Ibrahim established a sugar refinery near his large plantation in Middle Egypt, and Upper Egyptian sugarcane provided it with more supplies. Later on, Muhammad Ali restricted sugarcane cultivation to Upper Egypt, issuing decrees that no sugarcane should be cultivated in Lower Egypt.229

European observers reported how the Pasha’s huge and ever growing capital from grain sales inspired him to invest in his famous “modern” reforms. “The next step of accumulating this capital was to invest it in projects that would increase the acreage of land under cultivation and increase production as well as introduce new money-making crops,” a French consul asserted.230 Before the decade ended, Muhammad Ali universalized the abolition of tax farming, consolidated his agricultural monopolies, constructed new canals, dikes, embankments, etc, modernized the army, founded modern textile factories bringing in European expertise, sent students for education in Europe, and, above all, introduced long-staple cotton to Lower Egypt.231

Within a few years of the conquest of Upper Egypt, the Pasha appropriated Qina’s old Red Sea market and established monopolies over its commerce. Ibrahim led the southern military campaigns to conquer the Sudan, Hijaz, and Yemen, taking Qina province and its port of Qusayr as his logistic base and relying on its peasants’ grain and taxes. Along with Upper Egypt, these regions formed one uniform market, and capturing them put the Pasha in control of the Red Sea trade routes and ports that had helped sustain the Cairene economy for centuries. Therefore, Muhammad Ali appointed Ibrahim as the governor of the new southern tributes along with Upper Egypt. Dreaming of conquering this market all the way to East Africa, Ibrahim even carried the title of the governor of Abyssinia without actually invading it.232 Muhammad Ali immediately

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232 *Al-'Awamir wa-l-Mukatabat*, vol. 1, p. 75. For the campaigns see: Al-Jabarti, *'Aja’ib al-'Ahtar*, vol. 7.
established monopolies over Yemeni coffee and other trade that came from the ports of Mocha and Jeddah through Qusayr to Qina, and established other monopolies over the Sudanese slave trade and East African trade that came to the province through its Nile ports of Isna and Farshut, as well as overland caravan routes.233

Moreover, by controlling the Red Sea market, Muhammad Ali appropriated Qina’s textile market in East Africa and Arabia, which was maintained for centuries by the exports of the province’s women and Coptic weavers. Muhammad Ali founded three modern textile factories in Qina province, in the towns of Isna, Qina and Farshut, and ordered the provinces of Upper Egypt to expand cotton cultivation. Qina’s factories excluded women entirely and hired only male Muslim and Coptic workers. In 1820, the Pasha issued a decree to ban the operation of any private weaving and textile mills in Egypt, leaving no room for the female textile weavers of Qina to carry on their traditional profession. As part of the arrangements to control the market with his manufactures, Muhammad Ali paid his Sudanese soldiers partly in cotton clothes.234 Interestingly enough, it was the Pasha’s three factories in Qina province that posed a threat to British textile merchants in East Africa and Arabia, since Qina secured a traditional old market in this region. Lamenting the inability of British textiles to compete with Qina’s garments, John Bowring’s report gave special attention to the Qina town factory stating,

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The cotton manufactory at Keneh is on a large scale, and carried on in a building erected for the purpose. There are nearly 1,000 persons employed in it…[The produced pieces] are very readily disposed of, and, in fact, this species of goods is to be found in the bazaars of all towns in Egypt…Though there would seem to be no difficulty in the fabric, it would appear we have not succeeded in imitating the articles in England, and that the native article is much preferred.\(^{235}\)

*Revolt*

At the end of a long decade of subjugation, three massive revolts erupted in Upper Egypt, all in Qina province. They emerged from various villages and spread throughout in the entirety of the province between 1820 and 1824. When the first revolt broke out, Ibrahim had already resettled in Cairo where he lived as a great conqueror, owning several affluently decorated palaces with vast gardens and mills for his court and wives.\(^{236}\) Qina had already endured the coercion of several other Turkish governors who followed him. Uprisings were rare under Muhammad Ali, and those of Qina were the only massive rebellions that Egypt witnessed under the Pasha, aside from two bedouin insurrections by Arab tribes in the Delta.\(^{237}\)

The three revolts have captured the attention of many historians who sought to analyze their causes and social composition. Some historians perceive them as rural actions and attribute them to over taxation, corvée labor, and army conscription imposed on peasants. Others view them as workers’ revolts that erupted when Qina’s textile weavers and merchants lost their market to the Pasha’s modern factories or foreign


\(^{236}\) Al-Jabarti, *‘Aja’ib al-‘Athar*, vol. 7, p. 481.

competition. In any case, the fact that only Qina province witnessed such widespread actions of protest suggests that Qina was the province most hurt by Muhammad Ali’s imperial policies in Egypt.

In the first and by far the largest uprising, Ahmad al-Salah, an old Arab shaykh, mobilized about 40,000 angry peasants in an attempt to overthrow the government of Muhammad Ali. Luckily, the tragic events of this revolt were meticulously recorded by a British eyewitness, J. A. St. John, who happened to be in Qina during the outbreak as he was traveling up the Nile. The leader called himself al-Mahdi, or the long-awaited messiah, and preached to villagers who soon elected him their religious and political leader. Despite al-Salah’s religious rhetoric, he was originally a merchant with no religious training except for an acquired mysticism. He was one of the many long-distance merchants hurt by the Pasha’s monopolies, and started his political career when he, coming back from Mecca with his shipments, refused to pay taxes to the Pasha’s duty officers at the port of Qusayr. Ahmad al-Salah originated from the village of Salimiyya, whose peasants lived by cultivating wheat and beans. His movement spread quickly and, when the number of the rebels expanded to tens of thousands, he proclaimed a coup d’état. Elite Arab shaykhs shortly joined him, such as those of Luxor and Karnak,

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239 ‘Ali Barakat, an Egyptian historian, argues that St. John was not in fact an eyewitness of the revolt; he only delivered second-hand account of it. Personal communication, summer 2007.
240 Marsot, Egypt in the Reign, p.133-134.
and the Pasha’s Turkish governor fled the province after surviving an attempt on his life by the rebels. 241

As soon as the Turkish governor fled, al-Salah installed himself as the governor of Qina and Qus. Interestingly enough, he claimed that the Ottoman Sultan had delegated this holy mission to him, or that “he had an order from God and the Grand Signor to dethrone Muhammad Ali Pasha.” 242 He immediately seized the government treasury and storehouses and set a new administration for a separatist state. His original plan was to expand his government down the Nile to encompass all Upper Egypt to the province of Asyut. As for the majority of his followers, the wretched villagers of Qina, St. John observed that they apparently were not fooled by his alleged spiritual revelations, but heavy taxes pressed them to join the rebels. “It appeared, nonetheless, that they were by no means dazzled by his divine pretensions. They did not believe him to be inspired; and regarded the miracles related by his enthusiastic companions as so many pious frauds. Taxation, however, pressed heavily upon them; and what was wanting in credulity was compensated by discontent…” 243

In spite of al-Salah’s messianic pretensions, he appeared to be a skilled statesman who knew how to build internal alliances and watch issues of foreign relations. He maintained religious rhetoric while carefully limiting the side effects that religious fanaticism might generate. When some of his fanatic followers proposed decapitating the

243 Ibid., pp.380-381.
Coptic population of the province, he promptly halted the action. Aware of the Ottoman foreign relations, Al-Salah neither preached nor led aggressive actions against the Europeans in the province, especially the British who were the Sultan’s allies against the French. When a group of rebels held a meeting in the village of Armant to plan the murder of the Englishmen, he condemned and stopped the action. St. John recounted,

[D]uring his audience, some of the Prophet’s more zealous followers handed in a requisition to be allowed to decapitate all the Copts, to which the saint answered by an exhortation to general forbearance, urging the propriety of not injuring any one unless compelled. “If you are attacked,” said he, “you may kill, but not otherwise”... he solemnly declared “that the English were his friends, and that he was their friend, and would protect them.” Nay, more, he swore by the Koran and the sword, “that if any one robbed an Englishman, even of the cord of a camel or an ass, he would restore them a camel or an ass in its place”...Two men came from Erment, where there had been a large public meeting, in which it had been proposed to murder the Englishmen. The Prophet however, severely rebuked the person who advised the sanguinary proceeding; and so far from giving it any countenance, sent us a letter assuring us of his friendship, and promising us protection.244

Barely two months had passed with Al-Salah in power when Muhammad Ali sent a large body of troops with gunpowder cannons to Qina to terminate the rebellion. It was already a hard year on the Pasha with the invasion of the plague in Cairo and his wars to subjugate the rebels of Greece; however, he still sent a great number of soldiers to the south from his modernized army, his source of pride. Under the command of Ahmad Pasha, a young Turk no less aggressive than Ibrahim, the troops advanced to Qina, terrorizing the inhabitants of the villages and making women, children and men flee their homes to seek refuge in the Pharaonic temples or in the mountains. Ahmad Pasha tried to

244 Ibid., pp.379, p. 381.
persuade the rebels to return to their villages by promises of exemption from next year’s taxes. As persuasion failed, the war started.

Through many battles and rounds of victory and defeat, Ahmad Pasha and the troops burned entire villages, destroyed houses, and displaced thousands of women and children. In one village, they put “every soul they met—man, woman and child—to the sword.”

Interestingly enough, there were natives of these very villages among the disciplined soldiers of the Pasha’s troops. Finding themselves in a position where they were ordered to kill their own fathers or kin, many of them decided to desert the Pasha’s camps and join the rebels. The village of Qammula was turned into a symbolic place for the rebels: it was where former independent ruler Shaykh al-Arab Hammam died out of grief at his defeat by the Mamluks of Cairo and was buried. One morning, Al-Salah recruited thousands of his followers and advanced to Qammula where he fiercely attacked the soldiers achieving a great victory over one of the Pasha’s garrisons there. Nonetheless, this was but one victory among repeated defeats. While al-Salah still claimed to be fighting with the support of the angels and of Prophet Muhammad, his followers already started to question his heavenly powers. He realized his inability to expand north to the province of Asyut – his original plan – so he told his followers that he had not received the orders to do so; it is not clear whether these orders were expected to come from God or the Sultan.

245 Ibid., p. 382.
247 J. A. St. John, Egypt and Nubia, pp. 382-384.
Finally, the rebels of al-Salah were crushed. Concluding his mission, Ahmad Pasha offered two to three dollars for the life of every rebel. Volunteer bedouins searched the mountains for fugitive rebels; they came back with heads and received the handsome reward. St. Joseph recounted a bloody scene of Ahmad Pasha buying the heads. “The bedouins in his service scoured the mountains, with considerable success, in search of victims, whose heads were brought down and sold according to the tariff established by the youthful Ahmad.” As for al-Salah, he fled to Qusayr, and from there to Hijaz where nobody heard from him again.248

Two other uprisings followed this one in Qina province, and were similarly crushed. Some historical accounts insist that Qina’s revolts find their causes in the collapse of the province’s textile industry, due to both the Pasha’s modern factories and to European competition. Qina province, as indicated in the last chapter, included many important centers of textile manufacturing in Nagada, Isna and Farshut and enjoyed a vast market. The Pasha’s factories and textile monopolies in East Africa, in addition to European competition, ruined the small businesses of a considerable number of women and Coptic textile weavers and merchants. While historians largely view the three outbreaks as “peasant revolts,” Lawson insists that “these rebellions should instead be seen as revolts by village artisans and pieceworkers against the supervisors and merchants in whose hands the control of the local sugar, wheat, and cloth industries rested. Not only were the urban centers in which these supervisors and merchants had their residences and their markets – such as Farshut, Qina, and Isna – the objects of the

rebel offenses, but also the organization of rebel activity can be seen to reflect artisan interests and sensitivities." Marsot seconds this vision by asserting that the last revolt, led by Ahmad the Moroccan, was a one of textile artisans and merchants. Nonetheless, archival evidence does not provide much support to the suppositions of Lawson and Marsot.

(2) An Ambivalent Province: Hegemony and Unrest

Upon terminating the outbreaks, Muhammad Ali sent an urgent decree to all the Turkish governors of the districts and sub-districts of Upper Egypt to restructure the agricultural organization in the province. To the governors of Qina, Qus, Isna, Jirja, Suhaj, etc. the Pasha decreed, “It is imperative to organize the lands that would be cultivated this year. Bring what they need from machines and cattle, erect waterwheels and everything else...[the Pasha] appointed a special official to work with you on this matter...lands should be assigned in accordance with number of their inhabitants, and village shaykhs should be urged to serve the crops and erect waterwheels, and registers should be kept...” This was the first decree of its kind to reach Qina province and Upper Egypt at large. In fact, it marked a new era of “reform” in the Pasha’s political economy, a shift towards heavy interventionism and the introduction of a modern discourse and institutions of hegemony.

250 Marsot, Egypt in the Reign, p. 134.
Nonetheless, despite the attention that the Pasha gave to the south in the wake of the outbreaks, Upper Egypt lived through two decades of integration without representation. Between the 1820s and 1830s, Upper Egypt had to pay the price for Qina’s revolts, as the Pasha maintained it in an ambivalent place between an assimilated region in a modernized, centralized state on the one hand, and another colony in his empire on the other. The Pasha extended the discourse and institutions of modern hegemony to the semi-colony of Upper Egypt, which qualified him as a contributor to modern imperialism.

*Provincial Hegemony*

In order to remove the “oriental despotism” stigma from the face of his nascent empire, Muhammad Ali attempted to develop modern hegemonic rhetoric and policies. In Gramscian terms, the Pasha followed the book in establishing modern hegemonic rule over Egypt. He radically diverged from Ottoman traditions, which were also under deep revisions by Istanbul’s reformist Sultan. He developed a discourse and governing system that promoted his own imperial and state interests as the “greater good,” in an attempt to introduce subtle yet inclusive control over the economy. Rather than addressing his industrious subjects as merely inferior *ra’iyya*, he adopted the respectful and compassionate term “*al-ahali*,” the populace, and declared that the goal of his

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252 Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony as exercised by the modern state uses certain institutions in subjugating the ruled classes to the ruling elite, who promote their interests as the interests of all, or as the greater good, by subtle and inclusive control over the economy rather than by force. Gramsci considered the legislature, judiciary and executive institutions “[n]aturally…organs of political hegemony, but in different degrees.” Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 246.
policies and laws was to achieve the “prosperity” of the country and the “welfare of the populace,” or “rafahiyyat al-ahali”. Muhammad Ali expressed rhetorical appreciation for the work of laborers and peasants stating that “the sources of my blessed riches are two: the first is Sultan Mahmud and the second is the peasant.”

The Pasha’s new hegemonic discourse was institutionalized through founding three separate institutions: a legislative council, a modernized bureaucracy, and a reformed shari’a court system. In Qina, however, these institutions functioned differently than they did in the Delta, maintaining the ambivalent place of the province. Muhammad Ali founded the Council of Consultation, Majlis al-Mashura, in 1824 and delegated law-making authorities to it, but the council was also heavily involved in provincial administrative affairs. The Pasha expanded the council in 1829 to open the door for more representation of village shaykhs, announcing in his newly published official gazette that his goal was to embark on “the prosperity of the state and religion and the comfort of the people of the provinces.” The appointed members of the reformed council were Turkish provincial governors, village shaykhs, shari’a law scholars, and other dignitaries. The Pasha’s students who returned from France with degrees in law, engineering, etc. were appointed as presidents of the council. The council issued principal civil laws regulating

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253 For example, he adopts the term ahali in his newly published official gazette: Al-Waqa’i’ al-Misriyya, Issue no. 49, 8 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1245.
Qina province was not represented in this council, neither were any of the Upper Egyptian provinces south of Asyut. Muhammad Ali did not appoint any of the shaykhs of Upper Egyptian villages, whereas all the Delta provinces were handsomely represented in the council. Despite this, the council exercised intensive power of central planning and state interventionism in every aspect of the economic, administrative, and financial life of Qina. It assumed supreme authority over provincial government officials, and took charge of organizing land cultivation, digging canals, building dikes, erecting state storehouses, hiring laborers, managing the state factories, and placing limitations on private grain merchants. Due to the lack of southern representation, the council had to summon a number of important shaykhs from Middle and Upper Egypt to prepare the section on Upper Egypt in the statute when it issued the principle statute organizing Egyptian agriculture, *La‘ihat Zira‘at al-Fallah*. Thus, in this code of seminal importance, the conditions in the Delta set the norm while Upper Egypt was defined as the remote


Because of Upper Egypt’s lack of representation, the number of public works that the council decided to undertake in the region noticeably decreased.

The second institution that embodied the Pasha’s provincial hegemonic discourse and policies was his modernized bureaucracy. Muhammad Ali created a highly centralized government that replaced the Ottoman administrative system and grew rapidly to exert great authority over the provinces. The Syasatname, the comprehensive law that the Council of Consultation prepared for Muhammad Ali to promulgate in 1837, crystallized the structure and function of this new bureaucracy. Muhammad Ali asserted that the law aimed to improve “the prosperity of the country and the welfare of the people and the provinces.” On the provincial level, the bureaucracy employed mainly Turkish officials, with the titles of aghas and beks, and below them ranked native Egyptian village shaykhs, Coptic treasury clerks, village watchmen, etc.

The bureaucracy in Qina was highly centralized: all high officials were Turkish and appointed from Cairo. While the general inspector of Upper Egypt undertook basic supervising duties, the province and district governors were in charge of detailed executive affairs in Qina. Officials at all levels in Qina reported directly to Muhammad

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262 Hunter, Egypt under the Khedives, 1805-1879, pp. 17-32.
Ali, who closely followed their work on a daily basis. When Muhammad Ali applied a new, yet limited, policy to incorporate native Egyptians into the high-ranking bureaucratic offices, native Upper Egyptians were excluded from the process. The Pasha promoted several large shaykhs from villages to positions as district governor, and then further to provincial governor. He apparently applied this policy only in the Delta provinces, namely in Sharqiyya, Daqahliyya and Buhayra. Qina’s shaykhs could not rise within the state apparatus, and, once again, the province was excluded from representation.

The third institution that carried out Muhammad Ali’s provincial hegemonic policies was the shari’a court. The Pasha integrated Qina’s shari’a courts into the state apparatus and made them a part of the administrative system. The judges of Qina’s local courts were officially appointed by the state and, in addition to undertaking the regular tasks of Islamic courts, they carried out bureaucratic duties and were obliged to apply the new civil codes that the state issued. Court registers in Qina doubled in size and multiplied in number. In order to accommodate the expanding number of administrative cases, new local courts were founded in Qina. The court sijill registers were now used to notarize official transactions between bureaucrats and village shaykhs, peasants, factory workers, camel drivers, etc., in accordance with new legal stipulations. Village shaykhs went to the shari’a judge to register money received from the state treasury to spend on

263 Ma’iyya San’iyya, microfilm 24, 17 Safar 1245, 7 Shawwal 1251, end of Muharram 1252, 5 Safar 1252. during this period, Upper Egypt was divided into two provinces, and the southern second one, Nisf Thani Qibli, included Qina and Isna and their rural vicinities.
provincial public works, or money they received from the tax collectors on its way to the treasury. Coptic treasury clerks took their disputes with dishonest grain-measurers in the state warehouses to shari‘a courts, and brought village shaykhs as witnesses. Although agricultural land codes experienced tremendous, rapid changes under Muhammad Ali, land transactions and disputes continued to be administered by the shari‘a courts, which were obliged to apply the latest modifications in the civil codes.265

Qina’s local scholarly community of shari‘a jurists was excluded from participation in these developments, unless they changed the school of law they adhered to. The majority of Qina’s shari‘a law scholars belonged to the Maliki school of law, with a minority belonging to the Shafi‘i school, but Muhammad Ali decided to make the Hanafi school the official and only school of law applied in the province’s courts. Previously, in Isna court, the Maliki and Shafi‘i muftis, or jurisconsults, attended different cases, even those which involved administrative matters, and there were no official state muftis resident in court. The fatwas, the legal opinions, of any trustworthy mufti in the city according to any school of law was accepted by the judge.266 The state worked on gradually transforming the legal system until, in 1839, the Turkish governor of the province sent a letter to the Maliki mufti in Isna indicating that it was now the state policy that fatawa should only be issued by the official Hanafi mufti sitting inside the court when both litigants and defendants were present before the judge. The governor’s pretext

266 Isna Court Ishahdat, Sijill 94, part 1, case 100, p. 204, 3 Rabi‘ al-Thani 1252; case 176, p. 75, 5 Jumada al-Awwal 1252.
was that ‘ulama outside court used to issue *fatawa* to litigants without hearing defendants and these *fatawa* caused confusion and generated more disputes when they surfaced inside the courtroom. He asserted that there was no need to bring non-Hanafi *fatawa* to court since the official judge was Hanafi and ruled only according to his own official school.267

*Old Elite, New Elite*

Muhammad Ali’s hegemonic institutions produced a provincial ruling elite that carried out his policies. It was a product of an alliance between the old elite of the province, of Arab shaykhs and shari‘a judges, and Coptic and Muslim merchants, and the new elite of Turkish bureaucrats. The new and old elite intermarried, became business partners, subjugated the subaltern, and broke the civil codes of *Syasatname* together. A business contract that was concluded in Isna’s shari‘a court, in 1836, reveals these new socio-economic realities emerging in Qina province out of the hegemonic policies of Muhammad Ali. Four parties were involved in one contract, a Turkish bureaucrat, the chief of Isna city merchants, a Coptic merchant, and a Muslim merchant to form a company for commercial Nile transportation. Hijjo Agha, working for the office of the city governor, appointed Shaykh Ibrahim al-Fawi, the chief of the merchants’ guild in the city of Isna, as his legal agent to buy on his behalf a share in a Nile commercial boat, *qiyaṣa*, that could carry up to 70 *ardabbs* of goods and its equipment from the company of Khalil Ibrahim the Copt and Hajj Ahmad ‘Isa al-Asyuti. By concluding this deal, the

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267 Isna Court, Ishhadat Sijill 97, part 1, case 139, pp.82-83, Rabi‘ al-Akhir 1255.
Turkish bureaucrat, the Copt, and Muslim partners each owned one third of the boat that would carry cargoes up and down the Nile.\footnote{See: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina and Isna, 1261-1263; Isna Court Ishhadat, Sijill 94, part 1, case 247, p.270, 14 Sha‘ban 1252.}

This elite gained power and influence contrary to the Pasha’s will: it emerged in spite of his attempts to suppress provincial authorities at the expense of the absolutist central government in Cairo. As the above-mentioned type of commercial companies became a common practice, Muhammad Ali legally banned them. Only one year after this contract was concluded, the Pasha’s civil code of the \textit{Syasatname} prohibited bureaucrats from undertaking commercial activities in grain or any other crops.\footnote{\textit{Qanun al-Syasatname}, p.71, p. 50.}

Nonetheless, this new class evolved and grew in power and wealth in Qina, and the strict system of punishment for corruption and misuse of power that the Pasha laid out in the code of \textit{Syasatname} did not prevent their evolution. Elite women were the glue that held the new elite together, thanks to extensive intermarriage between the old and the new political factions in the province.\footnote{Examples of cases of elite intermarriages: Isna Court Ishhadat, Sijill 94, part 1, case 275, p.281, 12 Ramadan 1252; Sijill 96, part 1, case 38, p.18, 22 Muharram 1254; case 73, p.35, 9 Safar 1254, case 323, pp. 168-169, 17 Sha‘ban 1254.}

The Turkish bureaucrats were the most important and powerful group in the new elite. Coming from Cairo, bureaucrats holding the titles of \textit{agha} and \textit{bek}, and their wives, daughters and sisters, played an instrumental role in changing the socio-economic map of the province. The Turkish elite purchased large residences and settled in the big cities of Qina, ran commercial Nile boats, and owned private boats, houseboats from which they
managed administrative affairs in the summers of a hot province. Their commercial companies with Coptic and Muslim merchants undertook internal businesses in grain and also imported Sudanese slaves who were exchanged with textile manufactures. Sometimes they were partners in these companies by only owning a share in the capital or extending credit, and other times they were fully involved with their commercial boats and crews. They concluded different types of business contracts in accordance with shari’a law, such as *qirad* and *mudaraba* contracts, through which the bureaucrat advanced credit in return for a share of the profit.271

In addition, the state co-opted certain groups from the old elite of men and women in Qina, among which were Arab tribal shaykhs and *ashraf* shari’a judges,272 who survived most political changes. Turkish bureaucrats in Qina intermarried with the wealthy families of local Arab shaykhs and judges.273 The largest co-opted group by far was that of Arab tribal shaykhs, whom the government appointed as village shaykhs making them responsible for organizing agriculture, supervising public works undertaken by corvée labor, collecting taxes, conscripting young males for the army, and more. The oppressive power of Arab village shaykhs grew to the extent that they violently overtaxed

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271 See for examples: Sijllat Sadir and Warid Mudiriyyat Qina and Isna, 1260-1264; Isna Court Ishhadat, Sijills 94-97, 1252-1256; Sijll 94, part 1, case 121, pp.213-215, 9 Rabi‘ al-Thani 1252; Sijll 95, part 1, case 38, p.21, 5 Dhu al-Hijja 1253; case 43, p.23, 4 Dhu al-Hijja 1253; Sijll 96, part 1, case 102, p. 48, end of Shawwal 1253; Sijll 95, part 1, case 2, pp. 1-2, 22 Ramadan 1253; Qina Court, Sijill Murafa‘at, cases 384-392, p.88, 1 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1262; case 91, p. 23, 15 Sha‘ban 1262.

272 *Ashraf* are the families that allegedly enjoy a Prophetic lineage.

farmers, seized their lands, stole their harvest, or forced peasant laborers to work on their private farms without wages.274

The old families of local judges, which had dominated judgeship in shari‘a courts since the early eighteenth century, were another elite group co-opted by the state in the process of integrating shari‘a courts into the state apparatus. Some of these families, who accepted and submitted to the new positive codes of the Pasha, remained wealthy and politically influential. Families such as the Habatirs, the ‘Ibadas, and the Jubayrs still dominated the positions of judges and court scribes who were appointed by the state, and enjoyed immense wealth in the form of various types of properties. The Habatirs, who also claimed to be *ashraf* of Prophetic noble lineage and dominated Isna court during the eighteenth century, continued in their positions as judges in the same court throughout Muhammad Ali’s era and survived all types of changes in the court system. The women of the Habatirs and other jurist families were married off to Arab tribal shaykhs and Turkish bureaucrats. One of the female Habatirs married the brother of the aforementioned chief of the guild of Isna’s merchants, who enjoyed strong business ties with the bureaucracy. On the other hand, some shari‘a scholars married the ex-wives of Turkish bureaucrats, which gave them access to the high society of the Turkish elite.275

The educated and merchant Copts of Qina rose to power through the same process, in a province with a critical Coptic minority. The indispensable expertise of the Coptic accountants and land surveyors rendered them one of the most important co-opted

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274 Examples: Ma‘iyya Saniyya Turkish (Arabic summaries), daftar 23, no. 219, 6 Muharram 1242; Diwan Khidiwi Turkish (Arabic summaries), daftar 771, no. 122 and 323, 5 and 6 Jumada al-Awwal 1246.

275 See: Isna Court years 1231-1265.
groups in the new system, not only in Upper Egypt but in the entire country. Considering the criticism that the Ottomans received from Europeans about suppressing religious minorities, the Pasha attempted to advocate a modernized discourse that did not discriminate against Copts and assimilated them into his system, yet only for the interest of the system. For example, he employed them in the state enterprises and recruited them into his army. Muhammad Ali hired the Copts of Qina as treasury clerks, but laid out strict codes to punish them if they dared to commit fraud or embezzlement with the province’s accounts.276

Although Coptic merchants lost a considerable part of their businesses under the Pasha’s monopolies, a group of them quickly adjusted to new realities and worked with the Turkish bureaucrats. Some Coptic merchants conducted business with bureaucrats and other Muslim merchants and entrusted them with textiles to exchange for Sudanese slaves, in return for a share of the profit.277 Originally from the province of Asyut but residing in Qina, Mu‘allim Khayr Dus al-Jawhari was probably the largest Coptic textile merchant in the province. Coptic merchants either owned their own commercial boats or hired Nile boat captains to transport commodities for them. In the latter situation, they were strict with the hired captains: when in some cases transported goods were damaged due to unexpected accidents, the captains were obliged to pay compensation to the Coptic owner of merchandise.278

277 Isna Court Ishhadat, Sijill 95, part 1, case 2, pp. 1-2, 22 Ramadan 1253.
278 Qina Court, Sijill Murafa’at, case 438, p. 95, 18 Jumada al-Thani 1263; Qina Court, Sijill Murafa’at, case 112, p.28, 22 Safar 1263.
**Living through Unrest**

After the early 1820s’ revolts were crushed, no other massive rebellion took place in Qina as long as the Pasha was alive. The modernized army of Muhammad Ali, with disciplined soldiers and gunpowder weaponry, defeated troops in far away lands in Europe and almost reached the door of Istanbul. So, for both the elite and the subalterns of Qina, it was virtually impossible even to contemplate the possibility of overthrowing the Pasha’s government. The numerous actions of discontent undertaken by women, peasants, boat captains, and camel drivers never amounted to a massive revolt. Whereas some subaltern women and men in the province expressed resentment through legal channels, namely by raising individual and collective petitions to the Pasha and high-ranking officials, others opted to avenge their losses by violent means upsetting the security and political stability of the province.

The peasants of Qina sometimes resisted coercion simply by deliberate negligence of the Pasha’s orders, and when interrogated they fabricated excuses. Nonetheless, in many other instances, they violently attacked state buildings and employees alike. For instance, a group of villagers from Farshut attacked the state postman traveling with some state funds; they cut his bag and stole the small amount of money that was in it. At receiving the news, Muhammad Ali was very furious because this was not the first time such a thing happened. In another incident, a revolt almost broke out in the town of

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\text{279} \text{ Al-‘Awamir wa-l-Mukatabat, vol.2, 24 Rajab 1253.}
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\text{280} \text{ Al-‘Awamir wa-l-Mukatabat, vol. 2, p. 30, 14 Rajab 1251.}
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Qift when the people of the village of Ballas not only refused to pay their dues to the treasury but also attempted to kill a state official. In 1836, after refusing to submit their dues, the peasants of Ballas attempted to kill the bureaucrat as he tried to collect corvée laborers for public work in canals. The Pasha immediately sent troops to the rebellious village and they captured the shaykhs who had plotted with the peasants against the state.  

Without a doubt, the farmers of the village of Armant were among the most rebellious peasant communities in the history of the province. They carried out reoccurring actions of rebellion that continued even through the next century. Many villages in Qina province were transformed into plantations cifilik for Muhammad Ali and the royal family cultivating grain and sugar, and the lands of Armant were among them. They were administered by state officials who employed peasants as seasonal labor and sharecroppers. Large groups of peasants from Armant, one of the ancient sites of Qina whose people were still living on a high hill beside the Pharaonic temple, worked on the plantation as sharecroppers. Unhappy with their conditions, they occasionally raised complaints and attempted to bargain with the state to increase their share in the harvest. Before the beginning of the winter grain season of 1835, realizing the vulnerability of the state in matters concerning grain, the peasants of the plantation sent a petition to the governor of the province asking for an increase in their share of the harvest from one sixth to one third. Apparently the request took an aggressive form and a crisis mounted inside the plantation between a weak administrator on one hand and the farmers on the

other. Eventually, they met halfway when the governor decided to increase their share to one fourth of the harvest. This was not the end of the story, however. Two years later, the farmers of Armant refused to pay their dues to the weak administrator and, moreover, proposed to take control of the administration of the plantation. Information reached the general inspector of the Upper Egypt that this administrator was inefficient, ignorant of state laws, and, more importantly, not on good terms with the farmers, who took advantage of his weakness by refusing to submit the harvest and delaying their works. The governor declined the farmers’ proposal to manage the plantation and instead replaced the administrator.\textsuperscript{282}

Besides losing their textile businesses, women in rural households were affected by the heavy hand of the state when their husbands disappeared—either because they had been conscripted into the Pasha’s army or because they had fled the land after failing to pay overdue taxes. Like many other women, Saliha bint Salama financially suffered during her husband’s absence from the house for over a year; not knowing where he went, she had to run his businesses and the household on her own.\textsuperscript{283} Some husbands disappeared in the Sudan, probably with the Pasha’s army, and wives like Fatima were left for years without any source of income. No one wanted to lend them money to sustain their households.\textsuperscript{284}

Some of Qina’s women attempted to use legal channels of resistance by raising numerous petitions, ‘\textit{ardhals}, against coercive village shaykhs and corrupt bureaucrats.

\textsuperscript{282} Ma’\textsuperscript{iy}ya Saniyya, microfilm 24, p.45, 17 Jumada al-Akhir, 1251.
\textsuperscript{283} Isna Court, Ishhadat, case 9, 1 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1249.
\textsuperscript{284} Isna Court, Sjill 95, part 1, case 4, p. 4, 20 Shawwal 1253.
Umm Muhammad, of the village of Hamidiyya, volunteered on behalf of all the inhabitants of her village to raise a petition against her village’s shaykh. The shaykhs had attacked the peasants of Hamidiyya and the responsible treasury official had not investigated the case. With the dispute simmering and escalating to a crisis in the village, Umm Muhammad hurried to address a petition to the general inspector of Upper Egypt. She informed him in detail about the shaykhs and bureaucrat’s coercive actions and requested an investigation. The inspector responded to Umm Muhammad by issuing orders to examine the incident and identify the transgressing parties.\textsuperscript{285}

Many small Nile boat captains lost their private businesses, because of the Pasha’s commercial monopolies and Turkish bureaucrats’ control of trade, and had to work primarily for the state under unfavorable conditions. The Nile boat captains, \textit{marakbiyya}, were critical to the state for the transportation of Upper Egyptian grain and other commodities from the south to Cairo, so the \textit{Syasatname} gave them special consideration. The boat captains were fully responsible for delivering the state’s commodities from Upper Egypt to Cairo intact, but sometimes accidents happened and they prompted large investigations that often resulted in punishments. When the state hired the boat captains of Qina and Isna, it gave itself the liberty of cutting wages and the food provisions for captains and their crews, which caused occasional complaints. In one

incident, their negotiations with the state, conducted through a petition, succeeded and
the government agreed to give the captains one third of their wages in advance.286

Similarly, the camel drivers of the province lost most of their private commercial
businesses, especially transporting goods between Qina and Qusayr or the Sudan, with
the Pasha’s monopolies and the Turkish bureaucrats controlling trade. Camel drivers,
*jammala*, belonged to bedouin tribes that Muhammad Ali had forced to settle in Qina’s
villages to become farmers, an occupation they considered a disgrace. Thus, many of
them migrated north to join seasonal laborers with their camels in Cairo. Since the state
needed the service of camel drivers as wage laborers in transportation, they were
sometimes able to negotiate with the government to raise their wages. Probably, those
who opted to leave Qina and settle in Cairo, a city full of immigrant workers, enjoyed
less leverage in these negotiations than *jammala* who still worked in the desert. When the
camel drivers who transported loads from Suez to Cairo demanded a raise of five
piasters, they were granted it. The same year, the shaykh of camel drivers carrying Upper
Egyptian sugar and black honey (sugarcane molasses, a staple Egyptian food) from the
Upper Egyptian boats at Bulak, a Nile port in Cairo, to the state’s shop in the city
petitioned with similar demands. His request was refused. Although the shaykh countered
that the shop was very far away from the port, the Pasha replied that the shipments were
not very heavy anyway and asserted that the state already paid workers handsomely.287

286 Diwan Mu’awana, daftar 278, 22 Muharram 1254; daftar 284, 1257; Isna Court Ishhadat, Sijill 96, part
1, case 230, p.113, 12 Jumada al-Awwal 1254.
287 Diwan Malakiyya Turksih (Arabic summaries), portfolio no.5, 13 Rajab 1252; Diwan Khidiwi Turkish
(Arabic summaries), portfolio no. 813, 5 Safar 1252.
Highway robbery evolved into a common act of resistance among village inhabitants and the bedouin members of settled tribes, creating a serious security problem for the government in Qina. They frequently targeted state officials and buildings, Coptic treasury clerks, and wealthy Muslims and Copts. Highway robbers were oftentimes the product of an alliance between two oppressed groups: peasants and bedouins. Some bedouin communities sheltered rebellious peasants who ran away from their home villages to escape taxes or army conscription and built them dwellings.288 Coming from three different villages, bandits Farraj Ahmad, Muhammad Rayyan and Muhammad ‘Awad joined to form a highway robbery gang. They committed various crimes from theft to murder, until they were finally arrested and brought to court. Personally concerned about this high-profile security case, the general inspector of Upper Egypt had them swear an oath on the Holy Qur’an to quit criminal actions and repent. He warned them that shari’a punishment awaited them should they break the oath and return to sinning; he threatened them with crucifixion, lashing, or amputation of their hands and legs.289

(3) Things Fall Apart: Bandits, Runaways, and Petitioners

During his last few years of reign, Muhammad Ali lost his empire to British hegemony, or to the “imperialism of free trade.” By the mid-nineteenth century, the British completed their hegemony over the old world economy of the Indian Ocean and

289 Isna Court Ishhadat, Sijill 94 part 1, case 356, p.320, 22 Dhu al-Qi’da 1252.
imposed free trade agreements on many world powers. Ending his commercial monopolies, Muhammad Ali was subjected to one such free trade agreement, and shortly afterwards he was forced to return most of the Ottoman territories he had conquered from the Sultan. Only then did Muhammad Ali attempt to fully assimilate Upper Egypt into the central government as one way to adjust to new free market realities.

Nonetheless, this attempt at adjustment failed in Qina: it was too late for a province constantly simmering with subaltern resentment. Subaltern women and men continued to resist the hegemony of the Pasha either by petitioning to ease oppression, or by running away altogether from their villages to escape taxes, corvée work, and army conscription. Moreover, an important rebellious group appeared in the province: the *falatiyya* bandits. Gangs of outlaws and fugitives from the Pasha’s state stood as the most disturbing threat to his rule during this period.

*Things Fall Apart*

Throughout 1820s and 1830s, the British were the power most discontented with Muhammad Ali’s imperial control over the old ports and trade routes of the Red Sea market. His control over the ports of Mocha, Jeddah and Qusayr and over the Arabian and East African commerce routes hindered British trade schemes in the region, especially with regard to textile exports. Eager to control the entirety of the old Indian Ocean world economy, British official reports and merchants’ and travelers’ accounts during the last few years of 1830s showed deep dissatisfaction with the Pasha’s
Between 1837 and 1841, the “Liberal” Lord Palmerston, Her Majesty’s Foreign Minister, launched an extensive foreign policy campaign against Muhammad Ali with the pretext of defending the Ottoman Sultan and Turkey against a “rebel” and separatist Pasha.

When a crisis brewed between Muhammad Ali and Istanbul over Syria, which was already part of the Pasha’s empire, the British capitalized on it bring about two treaties that terminated Muhammad Ali’s control over the southern market. The 1838 Balta Liman free trade treaty abolished Muhammad Ali’s commercial monopolies throughout the territories he occupied and opened them to British textile exports. It was followed by the 1841 London treaty, which compelled him to withdraw from all the territories he conquered except Egypt and Sudan and to diminish the size of his army. For Britain, this crisis was the long-awaited excuse to establish hegemony over the Red Sea trade routes and ports and to conclude her century-old struggle to control the entirety of the Indian Ocean’s world economy, or in fact to undo this world economy and replace it with a European-led one. As Michael Pearson puts it, describing how Britain concluded its hegemony over the Ocean in the nineteenth century, “in the Indian

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Ocean...there was a very old and elaborate existing system which had to be undercut and replaced. This was achieved."292

Having no empire to rule over and no power to monopolize the southern market, Muhammad Ali attempted to adjust to change in Upper Egypt in order to continue controlling the region’s production and trade. In Qina, the Pasha paid extensive attention to irrigation and drainage projects, leading him to dispatch from Cairo more modern irrigation chief engineers, bashmuhandis, to supervise the building of new dams and the digging of new canals, while the shaykhs were constantly collecting corvée laborers to finish all types of construction works. The Pasha even tried to introduce new crops and industries to the province. In addition, Muhammad Ali paid increasing attention to the three textile factories of Qina province attempting to increase their production and expand their market. He applied a new strict policy to regularly provide them with oxen to run the machines, recruit workers, undertake occasional maintenance works, etc., and punished supervisors and workers alike for laziness or negligence.293

Furthermore, the Pasha attempted to introduce new political traditions to Qina to provide political agency to the natives of the province, or at least natives elites, in contrast to the Turkish bureaucrats coming from Cairo. For example, he introduced a new political procedure to elect the official managers of the 'uhdas, lands of runaway peasants that the government confiscated and turned into state-owned plantations, instead of


293 See: Sadir and Warid Mudiriyyat Qina and Isna Sijills, 1260-1264.
appointing them. An election process was actually carried out in the town of Qift, in 1846, to have the shaykhs choose a new ‘uhda plantation manager under whose jurisdiction their villages fell. Yusuf Afandi presented himself as a candidate to occupy the vacant position, and village shaykhs supported his candidacy by sending a petition to the Pasha. The voting shaykhs emphasized that they represented the peasants of their villages, not only themselves. The Pasha issued his orders that all the plantation managers in the province and the shaykhs of the concerned area should hold a meeting in Qina’s government premises to discuss whether the candidate was capable of running the land affairs and paying its dues to the treasury and to accept or reject his proposed tenure. Shari‘a judges attended the election and took detailed minutes, recorded the results, and had the voters put their signets at the end of the record.\textsuperscript{294} Another election took place in the same month also in the town of Qift. The shaykhs and ‘umdas also supported the candidacy of a bureaucrat to be a plantation manager. The minutes of this election went as following:

\textbf{Question:} from his eminence the Pasha the governor of Qina to the shaykhs and ‘umdas of Qift whose names are written above, upon the order received from his Excellency the Pasha the general governor of Upper Egypt…about your request and ask you whether you all agree to enter under the management of his eminent Musa Afandi the tax assistant in Qina or not…the order requires that we ask you again about your consent or disapproval…

\textbf{Answer:} of the abovementioned shaykhs and ‘umdas…we were informed…and with our consent and our petition…we want his management of our area and none of our peoples [\textit{ahalina} i.e. the villagers] in the area disapproves this…\textsuperscript{295}

\textsuperscript{294} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, p. 246, 12 Jumada al-Awwal 1262; p. 250, 17 Jumada al-Awwal 1262.

\textsuperscript{295} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, p. 250, 17 Jumada al-Awwal 1262.
Muhammad Ali tried to manipulate free trade realities in Qina through different tactics to allow private merchants less access to the market, especially to grain, which he needed internally and still exported to Europe. The Pasha pressured the village shaykhs in the province to tighten their hold on peasants who owed overdue taxes, and then to inform them that the state would accept their grain in return for waiving their dues. Moreover, he offered peasants higher prices for their grain than what private merchants offered, which meant that submitting this grain would exempt them from more of their due cash tax. Furthermore, the Pasha manipulated the system by placing more emphasis on his own private plantations in Qina and dedicating more of the state resources and public work to serve them. The state officials in the province were focusing most of their attention on securing seeds, irrigation water, and labor for the *ciftiks* plantations. To persuade the sharecroppers of his plantations to work harder and secure him more private harvest of grain, Muhammad Ali decided to increase their share in the harvest to one half. “As long as they wish to do so,” the Pasha asserted, thereby emphasizing the agency of the plantation’s peasants and suggesting that his ultimate goal was simply their “welfare.”

However, during these last few years of the Pasha’s reign, private capital grew stronger than the state in the provincial economy, and the power of the provincial ruling elite irreversibly expanded to surpass that of the central government. Turkish bureaucrats invested more in the Sudan and Hijaz long-distance trade of slaves, textile manufactures,

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and grain, employing bedouins from the ‘Ababida tribe and partnering with Coptic merchants.\textsuperscript{298} They also expanded their business partnerships with village shaykhs in grain and sugar trade, making thousands of piasters of profit every year. Ahmad Agha, the district chief, shared twenty faddans of a sugar cane farm with a rich village shaykh in Qift, ten faddans for each. They annually sold a harvest worth almost two thousand piasters, and they also shared another business in grain.\textsuperscript{299}

Moreover, Turkish bureaucrats grew into plantation owners. When Muhammad Ali bestowed lands on them for reclamation at reduced taxes, \textit{ab’adiyya} lands, they turned them into plantations and employed seasonal labor from the province. They hired families of daily laborers and Sudanese slaves to work on their plantations, and many of the free and enslaved laborers ran away with their families because of oppressive treatment. The bureaucrats also used the animals of the peasants to plow these plantations without paying rents. These plantations tremendously expanded in the last few years of the Pasha’s life.\textsuperscript{300}

With the growth of their wealth, the arbitrary, coercive power of Turkish bureaucrats grew vis-à-vis the central government in Cairo. The district chief put ‘Abdalla, a Nile boat captain \textit{rayyis} from Karnak, in jail for six days only because the latter did not respond when the official sent the village watchman to summon him.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Qina Court, Sijill Murafa’at, cases 384-392, p.88, 1 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1262; case 91, p. 23, 15 Sha’ban 1262.
\item Qina Court, Sijill Murafa’at, case 360, pp. 80-81, 27 Rajab 1262; ‘Ali Mubarak, \textit{Al-Khitat al-Tawfiqiyya}, vol. 14, p. 104.
\item Sadir ‘Ardhalat Mufattish ‘Umum Qibli, p. 385, 16 Rabi‘ al-Thani 1263. Bureaucrats did not enjoy property rights to these lands; they were still state property. This would change in a later period when private property laws were introduced.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
‘Abdalla’s foot was, in fact, injured and it was impossible for him to walk to the bureaucrat’s office, but the bureaucrat’s orders were expected to be unquestionably obeyed in all circumstances. In another bloody incident, a villager by the name of Musa Hamad insisted that another district chief had taken his brother, ‘Uthman, and gave orders have him beaten with a thick stick. Eight days later, the brother died from the unhealed wounds. Before the shari‘a judge, the bureaucrat totally denied, that he gave any orders to beat the deceased brother and swore an oath on the holy Qur‘an that he was innocent of the crime. The case ended with Musa, the litigant, forgiving the Turkish bureaucrat, an act that he was probably forced to undertake.  

Similarly, the shaykhs of the province expanded their landed properties to hundreds of faddans and grew into a coercive class. One of the important sources of this was appropriating the lands of the runaway peasants, mutasahhibs, who fled their village to escape over taxation, corvée labor, or army conscription. The lands of the runaways should by law be distributed among the peasants of the village to cultivate and pay taxes, but the shaykhs, under an old and weaker Pasha, took the liberty of annexing it to their own properties. Moreover, on their farms, village shaykhs forced peasants into corvée labor, hired seasonal laborers without paying them wages, took peasants’ cattle and machines to use without paying rent, and employed camel drivers to transport crops without paying wages.  

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301 Qina Court, Sijill Murafa‘at, case 375, p. 86, 8 Jumada al-Awwal 1263; Sadir Mudiriyyat Isna, p.8, 9 Ramadan 1260.

302 Qina Court, Sijill Murafa‘at, cases 208-211, p. 47, Shawwal 1262; Sadir ‘Ardhalat Mufattish ‘Umum Qibli, no. 257, p. 32, 24 Shawwal 1264.
In most cases runaway peasants did not come back and the land remained in the shaykhs’ hands, but in some cases they did return to dispute their property rights. After they fled their village, the two brothers Muhammad and Sayyid lost their plot to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahim. The two brothers returned after four years and claimed their land, but the shaykh refused to evacuate. They took the shaykh to court and insisted, showing all supporting legal documents, that they had inherited this land from their father. The shaykh claimed that the father and one of the brothers actually sold it to him, but when the judge asked him for legal proof he said that he had lost the purchase deed. After a long dispute, the court finally ruled in favor of the two brothers.303

Coptic treasury clerks also expanded their wealth and power during this period, mainly through corruption. When the government fired him, Bishai Ghurbal, a Coptic accountant, had occupied the position of a tax collector for many years in his village. He lost his job because, in fact, he failed to submit the amount of money he owed according to his tax records. His nephew, Jirjis Butrus, took over this position after the uncle, but he was young, untried, and, as the people of the village complained, did not even know how to write and assigned them taxes for lands they did not own. Five years later, events revealed that the young nephew used to give the tax money every year to Butrus, his own father and the brother of the former corrupt treasurer, who used it for his private business ventures. The father bought garments from the Farshut textile factory, sold them making a decent profit, and at the end of year returned the money to the treasury.304

303 Qina Court, Sijill Murafa’at, case 26, p. 14, 2 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1262.
Seekers of Comfort, Runaways, and Bandits

Signing always with one formula, “and we seek comfort” (wa nurid al-raha), subaltern women and men raised an ever-increasing number of petitions during this period against the coercive local elite of shaykhs, bureaucrats, and tax collectors. Some peasant leaders always volunteered to draft those petitions, especially the collective ones, and submit them to the state on behalf of the village. ‘Abd al-Rahim, a peasant working on one of the state-owned plantations in Qina, was the village expert in compiling requests and complaints on behalf of his family and fellow peasants and in submitting them to the general inspector of Upper Egypt.305

Petitions sometimes worked, especially when the state’s attempt at justice matched the modern image it was publicizing. In Luxor, where a large Coptic merchant community resided, a group of Christians petitioned in 1847 to complain about the new extra tax imposed on them while they were already suffering from other taxes particular to Christians.306 The same thing happened the year after, when the shaykhs of the town of Qina imposed extra taxes on at least two Christian owners of oil mills, a type of business usually owned by Copts. They complained that the revenue they made was barely enough to pay the wages of workers and they sought comfort against the shaykhs. In response, the general inspector of Upper Egypt prohibited the shaykhs from harassing

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them if they had already paid their dues to the treasury, probably in an attempt on the part of the state to improve its international image by easing up on religious discrimination.307

Nevertheless, justice was not always guaranteed for the weak through this legal channel of protest, especially given the fact that the local ruling elite controlled the judicial system. Challenging the authority of both village shaykhs and male relatives alike, a woman from Nagada, Amina, raised a petition against Shaykh Hasan who took her palm trees and against her stepfather who had sold them to the shaykh. In the petition submitted to a high-ranking official, Amina insisted that her stepfather did not enjoy legal rights to sell the palm trees on the field of her own mother to the mother of Hasan, who granted them to her son, the shaykh. The official passed the petition down to the Turkish district chief and the shari’a judge to investigate the case, and the two requested that Amina bring certain documents to prove her claim. She had to travel to Qus, crossing the Nile by boat, with her son to bring the required documents with the signatures and stamps of many ‘ulama there. Eventually, she failed to submit the evidence that the Turkish bureaucrat and the judge demanded, and she lost the palm trees to the apparently well-connected shaykh.308

Running away from one’s village in order to escape overdue taxes, corvée labor, or army conscription became one of the most common acts of resistance in Qina during this period. Entire families of peasants and their wives and children carried their animals and small properties to run away and hide in other remote villages as fugitives from the

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308 Qina Court, Murafa’at Sijill, case 249, p. 57, 29 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1263.
government. Workers also fled from the state-owned factories for similar reasons. The issue of fleeing, known as *tasahhub*, was not new in Qina or the country then, but it noticeably increased with the growing oppression of the local elite.\(^{309}\) Interestingly enough, running away sometimes turned into a method of negotiating with the state to improve one’s condition.

During the first few days of the holy month of Ramadan in 1844, several workers ran away from the state’s textile factory in Isna and other government jobs. The workers fled unjust conditions in the factory, where they were paid small daily wages and state taxes were directly subtracted from these wages, and, ironically, these taxes oftentimes exceeded the wages they received. Thus, a few days after this incident, probably also inspired by the generous spiritual atmosphere of the month of Ramadan, the governor of Isna decided to raise the daily wages of workers for their comfort, and to end the problem of flight. Furthermore, the governor decided to reform the entire system of payment regulations obliging only workers who served for 12 months and ten days to pay taxes, and in the new system the tax equaled the wage of only one month of work. The governor had to make such a decision when the factories needed to recruit more workers from villages.\(^{310}\) This was not the first or last incident of workers running away where the officials responded by raising their wages; the Nagada runaway laborers were granted the

\(^{309}\) See: Sadir Mudiriyyat Isna, years 1260-1263.

\(^{310}\) Sadir Mudiriyyat Isna, p. 7, 3 Ramadan 1260; p. 19, p. 29, 5 Ramadan 1260; 6 Ramadan 1260; p.19, 23 Ramadan and 12 Shawwal 1260.
same benefits when the district chief decided to modify their taxes in accordance with
their wages.311

When it was reported that a peasant from the state-owned plantation of Armant
ran away, taking with him his animals and properties, the orders of the province governor
were strict: to arrest him with everything he had and send him back to the plantation
administrator. Shaykhs and officials always followed fleeing peasants and tried to bring
them back by force to work on their lands and pay their dues. The women and children of
the runaways were first carried back by force to their original villages, in order to
pressure the hiding breadwinner to return.312 However, the governor of the province
decided to revise this policy and study the issue. The governor gave orders to prepare
reports that included names of runaways, dates of their flight, and reasons of deserting the
village. The reports also included suggestions on how to resolve the problem. This was an
initial endeavor to find other solutions when coercion failed to end or reduce the high
frequency of flight.313

In 1847, the situation dramatically escalated on the Pasha’s plantation, in the
village of Ruzayqat, where the farmers murdered many bureaucrats and soldiers and
injured others. The entire village united in this act against the bureaucrats and the village
shaykhs conspired with the villagers to hide the murderers.314 The same year, in a less
violent incident in the small village of Ballas, where most pottery ware artisans resided

311Sadir Mudiriyyat Isna, p. 399, 4 Rajab 1261.
312 Sadir Mudiriyyat Isna, p. 7, 1 and 3 Ramadan 1260; p. 12, 23 Ramadan 1260; Sadir Mudiriyyat Isna,
p.389, 2 Jumada al-Thani 1260.
and had to pay considerable taxes for each pottery workshop, two laborers by the names of Ahmad and Isma‘il attacked the tax collector of the ‘uhda state-owned plantation, which was managed by Mustafa bek. They took back the 800 piasters that the tax collector had levied from them.315

Finally, the falatiyya bandits emerged in Qina province during this period to carry out the most radical form of rebellion. The falatiyya bandits formed small lawless groups in almost every village and town in the province to attack government bureaucrats, disturb the province’s security, and prevent the ruling elite from enjoying their wealth. One of the most prominent topographical characteristics of Qina is that mountains border its villages and towns along the eastern and the western coasts of the Nile. Where the village ends, mountains begin, and it was in these mountains that the falatiyya bandits found refuge. Bandit communities were fed by the fugitive peasants and factory workers who escaped to hide in the mountains, where no village shaykh could capture them and return them by force to do the work they had run away from.

One night in 1846, the falatiyya bandits attacked the house of a tax collector and his brothers and stole the state money along with the property of the attacked family. The house was in the center of Samhud East, a big town located close to the western mountains with a large elite community and a weekly market. The bandits killed one person, and some villagers were injured by accident during the attack.316 The falatiyya of

Karnak made the state plantation managed by Salih Bek their constant target. They took advantage of the Luxor area’s geography, which comprised mountains with Pharaonic temples and people’s dwellings. For some reason the plantation watchmen were ordered to shoot at the bandits only after sunset in the mountain where they hid.\textsuperscript{317} Some \textit{falatiyya} from Qina even joined forces with fellows from other Upper Egyptian provinces and ran operations against bureaucrats outside their own provinces. This was the case when the state-owned plantation managed by Hasan Bek and the house of the tax collector in Asyut were attacked by a group of \textit{falatiyya} from Qina and elsewhere in the southern provinces.\textsuperscript{318}

Because it was a high-profile security matter of utmost urgency, in 1846, the state had all the governors, department heads, district chiefs, shaykhs, etc. of Qina province sign a pledge in shari’a court that legally compelled them to shoot the \textit{falatiyya} and arrest them alive or dead wherever they were found. The pledge exempted the signatories from the blood money owed by shari’a law, for the murdered \textit{falatiyya} families. If caught alive, the bandit was to be crucified or sent for hard labor in Alexandria, and those villagers who granted them refuge were to receive the exact same punishment.\textsuperscript{319}

For many dark years, Haridi al-Rujayl (Haridi the petite man) posed the most disturbing threat to the province’s officials with his armed group of dozens of \textit{falatiyya}, who largely targeted the property of state bureaucrats. Haridi collected his group of rebels/thieves in an audacious fashion: whenever he passed by corvée laborers doing

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\textsuperscript{317} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, p. 301, 4 Sha‘ban 1262.
\textsuperscript{318} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, p. 271, 24 Jumada al-Thani 1262.
\textsuperscript{319} Qina Court, Sijill Murafa’at, case 100, p. 26, 7 Muharram 1263.
\end{flushright}
public work, he would call out and take a few of them before the eyes of the village
shaykhs. In this way, he added about thirty-five men from different villages to his group,
largely from al-Samata village, and equipped them with guns. He was often seen with his
armed group, and he stole cows and donkeys from villages and sold them in the north to
purchase the guns. Village shaykhs feared him and did not dare to approach his men or
capture him; they could only inform the governor of the province that his power was
increasing. Constantly followed by the orders of the vice-general inspector of Upper
Egypt to capture him, Haridi once claimed that he met with Muhammad Ali Pasha
himself during his visit to Isna and the Pasha pardoned all his old crimes, exempted him
from any obligations towards the government, and gave him, Haridi continued, a
permission to do whatever he wished in the province. This was a fabricated story that the
vice general inspector furiously denied and ordered his capture.\footnote{Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, p. 209, 11 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1262.} In 1846, Haridi and his
men mounted a big operation against Muhammad Agha, a bureaucrat working for the
state plantation in Samata, the village from which many of his men came. At night, they
attacked the bureaucrat’s house, stole furniture, weapons, money, etc. Upon reporting the
incident, the government summoned Haridi, his younger brother, and five of their fellow
falatiyya for interrogation. Haridi defended himself as the following.

He started by thanking and praising God and Muhammad Ali Pasha. Then, Haridi
asserted that, first of all, his brother was too young to be involved in such a crime. He
again repeated the fabricated story of meeting with Muhammad Ali Pasha who pardoned
his old crimes, and confessed that this was one of these old crimes that he already
repented of and the Pasha had already forgiven. He admitted that he did go to al-Samata with the five *falatiyya* to steal things from houses, but they did not target the bureaucrat’s house on purpose and did not realize that it was among the raided places. He added that they already sold everything they stole and nothing remained to return. At the end, he concluded his confession by thanking God again for redeeming him from old sins and Muhammad Ali Pasha for forgiving him. Only one month after the interrogation, Haridi and fifty to sixty armed men from Qina, Isna and Asyut attacked the local market of Dishna, which was a large urban center where many state enterprises existed, and extorted tributes. The district chief had to go himself to the market to ensure security and restore stability. In a weak state, Haridi al-Rujayl’s name continued to disturbingly appear in the government papers, where he remained the ultimate undefeatable threat to the province’s ruling elite. 

**Conclusion**

Muhammad Ali Pasha, an Ottoman viceroy, took full control of Egypt and attempted to build an empire for himself, moving from “traditional” to “modern” modes of imperial hegemony. In the process, he subjugated Upper Egypt, after its many centuries of autonomous government under the Ottomans, and monopolized the southern long-distance commerce and agricultural and industrial produce. During the first decade of his forty-year reign, Muhammad Ali turned Upper Egypt into the first tributary region

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in his expanding empire, where he applied an Ottoman-fashioned discourse of hegemony but reversed the Sultan’s laissez-faire system with monopolies and heavy interventionism. By the early 1820s, Qina province, the former capital of the Upper Egyptian state, violently rebelled against the Pasha and its subjugated peasants and merchants led unprecedented massive revolts that were not equaled anywhere else in the country. In the following two decades, when Muhammad Ali introduced modern reforms to Egypt in order to remove the stigma of oriental despotism from his nascent state and empire, Upper Egypt paid an expensive price for Qina’s revolts. The Pasha’s modern institutions of hegemony maintained the rebellious south in an ambiguous place between a semi-colony and an integral part of a centralized state, and Qina province experienced long years of integration without representation. Finally, the province was only fully integrated into the centralized state in the last few years of the Pasha’s life, in the early 1840s, after he lost his other colonies and his empire fell to the rising British domination over world trade and politics. Muhammad Ali’s modern discourse and institutions of hegemony produced a provincial ruling elite in Qina that suppressed subaltern women and men in the province. While this local elite was growing in power and wealth, the peoples of the province showed constant discontent and embarked on daily resistance against the imperial regime. Submitting petitions, running away from one’s land or state’s factories, or turning into bandits were only a few of the forms in which Qina’s subaltern women and men expressed their political resentment.

The next chapter is about the “informal” British Empire in Qina. Muhammad Ali’s empire eventually fell to the British “imperialism of free trade,” rising in the mid-
nineteenth century. The informal British Empire based its discourse and practices of hegemony on “liberalism.” Economic and political liberalization applied in Egypt, a co-opted regime and a dependent state of the empire, further peripheralized Qina. Hence, the province continued living through marginalization and long years of solitude.
In 1864, the second massive Egyptian revolt of the century erupted once more in Qina province. Ahmad al-Tayyib did what his father had done forty years earlier during Muhammad Ali’s reign: he led the rebellion of tens of thousands of peasants in an attempt to overthrow the government. The rebels attacked the steamboats of foreign merchants, Turkish plantation owners, rich Copts, and, more importantly, called for land redistribution. Originally from the village of al-Salimiyya, Al-Tayyib, like his father, was a sufi mystic and self-proclaimed messiah; he used religious rhetoric to mobilize the rural masses who were discontented over land loss, over-taxation, and state oppression. A special campaign, led by Fadl Pasha, arrived from Cairo on steamers and armed with gunpowder weapons in order to crush the rebels. An English traveler, Lady Lucie Duff-Gordon, happened to be staying in the province to recover from an illness at the time the revolt broke out. Based on accounts from her elite friends in the province, Duff-Gordon described the incidents as follows,

[A] Prussian boat had been attacked, all on board murdered, and the boat burnt; then...ten villages were in open revolt...a crazy darweesh has made a disturbance...he did as his father likewise did...by repeating one of the appellations of God, such as “ya Lateef,” three thousand times every night for three years, which rendered him invulnerable. He then made friends with a Jinn,
who taught him many other tricks...He then deluded the people of the Desert [the mountain falatiyya bandits], giving himself out as “El-Mahdee” [messiah]...and proclaimed a revolt against the Turks. Three villages below Kiné...took part in the disturbance, upon which Fadl Pasha came up with troops in steamboats, shot about hundred men, and devastated the fields...We heard a thousand were shot...The women and children will be distributed among other villages. The darweesh, some say, was killed, others that he is gone off into the Desert. 322

The Englishwoman characterized the leader of the revolt as a “communist” because “he wants to divide all property equally.” One of her friends, an affluent shari‘a scholar, had just returned from al-Salimiyia and showed utter disdain for the rebels and their leader, arguing that he was a fanatic who called for the redistribution of wealth as well as the undermining of the authority of shar‘ia scholars. Al-Tayyib was not dead, and, after the government campaign, the revolt went on for months to follow. Fadl Pasha returned the next year to end it with an unprecedented massacre; he chopped the bodies of the rebels with the axes of their own leaders.323

On the eve of the revolt, Qina witnessed trappings of modernity that appeared in the province through steamships, telegraph, modern engineers, and a hospital with a resident doctor assisted by local barber-surgeons and midwives. The bashmuhandis engineers were occupied with organizing the water and drainage systems, as well as managing the existing dikes, canals and embankments or recruiting corvée labor to construct new ones. The hakimbashi doctors in the isbitalia hospitals gave smallpox vaccinations to the inhabitants and, for sanitary purposes, recruited corvée labor to drain

the swamps. The telegraph reached Qina in 1862, and the state hired a professional telegraphist in the province to manage government correspondence. The telegraph expedited the collection of taxes and the recruitment of corvée workers. The state also used steamships to speed up sending the taxes, whether cash and grain, to Cairo and to facilitate corvée labor recruitment and replacement.

Nonetheless, the most important sign of modernity was the market economy, advocated by the “informal empire.” It was not accidental that this revolt took place during the years of the American civil war (1861-1865), when Great Britain had a great demand for cotton from Egypt. The center of the Egyptian economy shifted to the north, the Delta, where cotton was cultivated and exported to Great Britain; consequently, Upper Egypt was peripheralized. Great Britain emerged as a world hegemon—a informal empire—in the mid-nineteenth century and exercised its power over Egypt and the world economy at large through preaching free trade and legal reforms in service of the market. The British used economic “liberalism” as a discourse of hegemony, and the ruling elite in Cairo, already subjugated to the empire, embraced this discourse as part of an alleged modernization process. Qina’s revolt was in response to the project of modernity of an empire and a dependant state, in which the market economy was a cornerstone.

324 See: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, year 1275.
325 Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 7, p. 26, 22 Dhu al-Qi‘da 1278; part 1, p. 59, 21 Rabi‘ al-‘Akhir 1279; p. 95, 18 Rabi‘ al-Akhir; Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 1, p. 73, 27 Rabi‘ al-Akhir 1279.
The informal empire preached economic liberalism to the world as a great step towards modernization, which translated into free trade, modern codes of private property, and movement of large numbers of European experts and laborers to countries eager for westernization. Applying the market economy in Egypt from 1838 on meant opening the door for European merchants owning modern steamers to act freely both in the north and the south, promulgating new private property codes in agricultural land, creating a large propertied class, and inviting European experts to undertake modern projects, such as mining in search of coal in a new world run by steam engines. Qina’s revolt was a reaction against the ramifications that these ‘liberal’ reforms brought about to the subaltern women and men, peasants and workers, in the villages and towns of the province. It was an act of resistance against both the informal empire and its dependant state that contributed to peripheralizing the south.

The three decades covered in this chapter, from 1848 to 1882, were indeed a period of “great transformation.” They include the regimes of Khedives ‘Abbas (r. 1848-1854), Sa’id (r. 1854-1863), and Isma’il (r. 1863-1879). The short-lived regime of ‘Abbas, the grandson of Muhammad ‘Ali, followed the subjugation of his grandfather’s regime to new global realities of the imperialism of free trade. The new viceroy, at any rate, was not as ambitious in his pursuit of interventionist policies as his grandfather was. The regimes of Sa’id and Isma’il allegedly applied economic liberalization policies, ending Muhammad Ali’s heavy-handed interventionism, which transformed Egypt into a peripheral state of the imperial core. These policies were sometimes ambiguous, mixing interventionism with liberalism for the interest of the state. They eventually led the
country into severe foreign debt crisis, dual British-French control over the country’s finance in 1879, and, British colonialism in 1882. In the meantime, economic liberalization brought radical changes to Qina’s society that delivered the province to utter peripheralization in the Egyptian and world economy, severely harming subaltern women and men in the process.

This chapter tells six stories of the coming of modernity and its market economy as experienced by the peoples of Qina. These stories revolve around steamers, plantations and mines, and how they, as major players in market change, affected the lives of the subalterns of the province. The six stories focus only on a few aspects of the changes that the market economy brought about, and in which the village of Salimiyya, where the revolt broke out, is a main player. In chronological order, the first story recounts how free trade and modern steamers found their way to Qina and altered the lives of people there. The second narrates how, under the modern legal codes of private property, the peasants of Qina became landless and the elite established plantations in the villages of the province. The third tells how foreign experts in coal and sulfur mining added to the deterioration of the lives of the people of those villages. The fourth stops, for a while, at the moment of the revolt to narrate how events escalated. The fifth is the story of the subaltern women of the province who lost their small plots of land to modern codes of private property and a paternalist regime. Finally, the life on the sugarcane plantations

and the sugar mills of the Khedive is depicted, as an example of how the life of the subaltern looked on the province’s vast plantations, which concludes the last episode of landlessness and oppression under the informal empire and its dependent liberalized regimes.

(1) Steamships on the Nile

The first pillar of modernization and its market economy was free trade. Great Britain preached free trade in the world as part of its discourse of hegemony, and the British “imperialism of free trade” was translated into laissez-faire agreements with the subjugated nations. In 1838, Muhammad ‘Ali was forced to comply with the Anglo-Turkish Balta Liman treaty, which ended his commercial monopolies. As subjects of the informal empire eager to modernize, the successors of Muhammad ‘Ali committed themselves to free trade, especially Sai’d Pasha (r. 1854-1863) whose regime applied liberal economic policies, which resulted later in the build up of a debt crisis.328 From the first month of his rule, Sa‘id Pasha was committed to opening Egyptian markets and urged government officials to facilitate the activities of European merchants in Egypt. The Pasha firmly gave the following orders to his government officials:

Despite the obligation of free trade as stipulated by the treaties…problems arose in transactions in some districts that violated freedom and principles. From now on, it is a duty to ease transactions and [to prevent] dishonesty and difficulties between the buyer and the seller.329

In a world of open markets, European merchants quickly found their way to Qina with the help of their steamships. While passenger steamers carrying tourists and mail passed by Qina every fortnight, commercial steamers were uploading and offloading commodities all week long. As the British domination over the Red Sea market cut Qina off from its traditional regional market, and as its textile industry was destroyed, European merchants turned the province into a big vendor of one main cash crop: grain. Their Nile steamships carried Qina’s grain north for exportation. Europeans also traded in Sudanese commodities inside the province. Those who were involved in trade included consuls or consular agents of countries such as Britain, France, Austria, and the U.S. Elite Copts were usually hired as European consular agents in the province. A community of Europeans settled in the towns of Luxor and Qus, where they bought houses, and hired workers and managed their businesses from there. Greek merchants were the largest foreign community in the province, and they received special attention from the state. Orders were sent from Cairo to the governor of Qina to protect them against potential attacks by the populace.

The government facilitated European commercial businesses by all possible means. When they were recruiting corvée labor, officials in Qina also recruited cheap workers to provide private services to the consuls and consular agents. In one incident, a consul sent to the governor of Qina to request four laborers to construct his ships, and the

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331 Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 10, p. 9, 29 Safar 1279; part 1, p. 34, 4 Safar 1275; part 2, Safar 1275; part 7, p. 88, 15 al-Hijja 1278; Majlis al-Ahkam, Sadir al-Aqalim al-Qibliyya, microfilm 367, p. 6, 19 Muharram 1276.
332 For example: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, p. 118, 13 Sha'ban 1270.
governor immediately responded. He sent the consul the requested workers but only after confirming that their wages were to be paid by the consul and not from the treasury, lest those laborers might confuse this job with government tasks and turn to him for payments. Similarly, officials granted another European merchant a number of camel drivers for his trade with the Sudan. While European merchants enjoyed all the financial benefits that come with hiring cheap local labor, these laborers did not enjoy any financial privileges for being employed by foreigners. Their wages were not any higher than those paid by government or local jobs, because their payments were determined by the existing local rates. The agent of the French consul hired workers from al-Salimiyya and other villages for his businesses, and, apparently due to low wages, they were late in paying their government taxes. The guild chiefs, *shaykhs*, of the laborer’s villages were held responsible for collecting these overdue taxes. 333

As for the grain trade, consuls and consular agents paid unfair prices for what they collected from the province. Wholesale merchants sometimes organized strikes to conclude fairer deals. In 1858, the agent of the French consul had a huge dispute with Farshut’s grain wholesalers who refused to load his ships. In the local markets of the town, the agent had made a business deal with them to collect the grain of surrounding villages, but apparently they discovered that he paid them an unfair price and refused to send the grain to his ships waiting at the port. The agent insisted that the local merchants did not have the right to strike since local business customs specified that the payment

made in the market at the time of the purchase was final. On the other hand, the local merchants still insisted that they had not received what they deserved.334

The state, in fact, was in fierce competition with European merchants for Qina’s grain. The state collected taxes from the province in cash and in kind, and the latter was in the form of grains submitted to the state’s numerous storehouses in the province. The government relied on this grain for different purposes, including sustaining the supply to Cairo and the Hijaz and partial payment of labor wages. Prohibited by the British free trade agreement from pricing grain, which was against the norms of the market economy, the state closely followed the rise and fall of prices in Qina’s local markets by preparing lists every ten days. The state attempted to encourage peasants to submit their grain as taxes— instead of selling to Europeans— by buying their grain according to the market prices. In other words, peasants used their grain to pay taxes instead of selling it because the government applied the rather high market prices, which covered a big portion of the peasants’ tax burden.335

Exporting grain resulted in severe food shortages in the whole country, which sometimes forced the state to take strong interventionist actions. In 1853, the state issued a decree that prohibited the export of grain to Europe when there was need for it inside the country. The decree stated that the people had lately suffered from severe grain shortage and a radical increase in prices because most of the harvest had been shipped to Alexandria to be exported. Thus, the decree banned European consuls and their citizens

334 See for example: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 2, p. 12, Safar 1275; Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, 1272.
335 See: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, year 1270.
from purchasing any grain, either from the provinces or Cairo’s markets. The governors of provinces were ordered to prevent the purchase of grain by European merchants in their areas of jurisdiction.\footnote{Zayn al-‘Abidin Sham al-Din Najm (ed.), Daftar Majmu‘ ’Idara wa-’Ijra’at, 1240-1280 /1825-1863 (Watha’iql Tarikh Misr wa-l-‘Arab al-Hadith) (Cairo: 2003), p. 401.}

Competition between European merchants and the state over the grain of Qina did not benefit the peasants of the province. As a matter of fact, Coptic and Muslim wholesale grain merchants usually extended credit to peasants and collected their harvest at the end of the season, two to four months after payment. According to shari‘a law, this type of credit was allowed through \textit{salam} contracts. Thus, in most cases profit went to the moneylender rather than the peasant.\footnote{For example: Farshut Court, Sijill Ishadat no. 1, p. 3, Jumada al-Thani 1273; Farshut and Naj’ Hammadi Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 1, case 516, p. 56, 14 Muharram 1274. \textit{Salam} is a type of loan contracts accepted by shari‘a law and was a common practice in rural areas in the Muslim world.} In addition, at this time, grain was almost the peasants’ only cash crop in demand at a decent price in the global market, so they sold this crop at the expense of their own sustenance. The households of Qina were emptied of wheat, and wheat bread became precious — offered to guests as an expression of generosity. Baking a loaf of bread with a handful of wheat became a source of pride for affluent families. An ever-increasing number of peasant women sued their husbands in shari‘a court for not providing the family with enough staple foodstuffs. Watfa, for instance, like numerous other women, took her husband to court in order to compel him to pay her a set amount of wheat and corn every month.\footnote{Duff-Gordon, \textit{Letters from Egypt}, p. 45; ‘Ali Mubarak, \textit{Al-Khitat al-Tawfiqiyya}, vol. 8, p. 175; Farshut and Naj’ Hammadi Court, Sijill 2, p. 1, case 3, 12 Jumada al-Awwal 1273.}
(2) Private Property, Losing Property

The second pillar of modernity and its market economy was the reformed codes of property law with regards to agricultural land. In Qina province, the advent of these modern codes helped elites to win private property rights while peasants lost them. These codes expanded the propertied class in the province to include Turkish and native government bureaucrats, Europeans, Coptic agents of European consuls, village shaykhs, ‘umdas, and shari’a law scholars. They accumulated land at the expense of thousands of peasants, who were dispossessed in the process and turned into seasonal laborers on the plantations of the new landlords. The village of Salimiyya, where the revolt erupted, fell under the grip of many prominent members of the growing propertied class.

Following shari’a law, both the Ottoman and Muhammad Ali’s rule regarded the bulk of Egyptian land as state property and was referred to as miri land. Nevertheless, peasants who worked on this land enjoyed usufruct rights and passed these rights to their heirs in accordance with the inheritance provisions in shari’a law. Peasants perceived the lands of their villages as their own property and fiercely disputed state officials when they changed the borders of the fields. In 1837, when Ahmad Agha, the district chief, carved 900 faddans from the village of Abu Manna‘ North to annex it for administrative reasons to the village of Abu Manna‘ South, the inhabitants of the former fiercely objected. The annexation generated serious disputes between the farmers of the two villages that went on for many years.339

The subjugation of Muhammad Ali to the informal empire and the decline of his state interventionism resulted in the growth of the landowning elite of bureaucrats and village shaykhs. They established *de facto* control over the *miri* land. Under the idle, decentralized state of his successor, Khedive ‘Abbas (r. 1848-1854), the road towards modernization through codes of private property meant the consolidation of the property of the new landed elite. In 1849, ‘Abbas responded to the political pressure of landed bureaucrats who complained about the central government’s control over their management of state-owned plantations. ‘Abbas satisfied them by issuing a decree according to which he withdrew from the administration of all types of state land, ending the state’s heavy-handed interventionism. He decided to retain control only of the administration of the royal family’s plantations. The same decree provided the managers of the state lands with a great degree of administrative independence. The following year, ‘Abbas granted some bureaucrats absolute property rights to the state-owned plantations they managed, and gave others extended usufruct rights to theirs. In this process, for instance, the peasants of the island of Naqnaq lost 300 faddans to ‘Abd al-Rahman Salim, their district chief.

340 See chapter 3.
341 Archival records of Qina province reflect the idleness and decentralization of the state during the reign of ‘Abbas Pasha. As opposed to Muhammad Ali’s state, the administrative and central planning activities in Qina were drastically reduced and the matters were left to provincial bureaucrats. See: Sadir and Warid Mudiriyyat Qina wa Isna Sijills, years 1265, 1269, and 1270. Ehud Toledano attempted to present a positive vision on that viceroy in *State and Society in Mid-nineteenth Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
343 Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina wa Isna, part 2, Jumada al-Awwal, 1270.
Khedive Sa‘id promulgated the new land code of 1858 that introduced private property, a law that is largely perceived as a great step towards the country’s modernization. Sa‘id’s law, known as al-La‘iha al-Sa‘idiyya, was a product of internal pressures by bureaucrats/landowners to consolidate their properties, coupled with the empire’s advocacy of private property as a pillar in the modern project of the market economy. Sa‘id Pasha consulted with high-ranking bureaucrats, such as governors of provinces from Upper and Lower Egypt, to design the code. The new law regulated ownership of three main categories of land: kharajiya or athariyya, which was taxable peasants’ land, but legally state property; ab‘adiyya plantations, which was the previously uncultivated state land leased out to incumbents for reclamation at a reduced tax rate; and ‘uhda state-owned plantations, which was originally the land of runaway peasants who fled after failing to pay taxes or to escape corvée labor confiscated by the state and assigned to bureaucrats to manage and ensure its cultivation.

The code granted the bureaucrats absolute property rights to the ab‘adiyya plantations. The law also decreed the sale of ab‘adiyya land to government officials, Europeans, and whoever could buy them and pay their taxes. More importantly, the law gave bureaucrats and village shaykhs property rights to the lands they seized from runaway peasants. The law stated that if a peasant was absent from his land, tasahhab, for

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three years, he would lose his property rights, and whoever possessed and cultivated it for
five years would have the right to the land. Peasants returned to their villages to find their
lands confiscated and registered under other people’s names. Parts of the peasant land,
kharajiyya plots, had already been seized by village shaykhs who became the landlords,
under the new law, and refused to give it back to the original owners. In other incidents,
whole villages were transformed into ‘uhda state-owned plantations administered by
appointed bureaucrats. The new code gave those administrators ownership rights to these
plantations.345 Therefore, under Sa’id’s law, while a propertied class tremendously
expanded, another class of dispossessed peasants was rapidly growing.

Public auctions were held all year long in Qina to lease or sell ab‘adīyya
plantations, where bureaucrats, such as the manager of the sulfur mine and district chiefs,
gained thousands of faddans. In one auction in the village of Salimiyya, for example, the
governor of Qina won an ab‘adīyya plantation of about 200 faddans. Some peasants in
the village placed their bid against him, claiming this land to be originally theirs, but they
lost the auction to the influential governor.346 Furthermore, the office-holding owners of
‘uhda plantations employed dispossessed peasants and Sudanese slaves as laborers. They

345 Filib Jallad, Qamus al-Idara wa-l-Qada’ (Iskandariyah: Al-Matba‘ah al-Bukhariyyah, Yani Lagudakis,
1989-), vol. 1, pp. 182-190; Zayn al-‘Abidin Shams al-Din Najm, Mu’jam al-Alfaz wa-l-Mustalahat al-
346 See: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina wa Isna, 1269-1270; pp. 130-131, 22 Sha‘ban 1270. Village shaykhs also
rented medium-sized ab‘adīyyas while peasants rented small ab‘adīyyas of a few faddans. It is worth
mentioning that peasants bid to buy small ab‘adīyyas of less than five faddans, or a group of them shared
small farms. See for examples: Farshut and Naj‘ Hammadi Shari‘a Court, Sijill Ishhadat no 1 and 2, 1273.
forced them to reside and work on these plantations for extensive periods of time, which is what the governor of Isna, for example, did with his ‘uhda’.347

The governor of Isna, ‘Abd al-Ghafur Afandi, held possession of two ab‘adiyyas and one ‘uhda plantation, each of which spanned over hundreds of faddans. One of them, the ab‘adiyya of the town of Farshut where vast sugarcane fields existed, used to be the property of Mustafa Bek, the former governor of Qina, who had won it in an auction. While expanding his ab‘adiyyas, the Afandi violated the rights of numerous peasants, who attempted to take their revenge through various means. Farshut peasants released their cattle and sheep to graze in his fields and damage parts of his harvest. ‘Abd al-Ghafur Afandi hired seasonal labor to work on his ab‘adiyyas, and appointed his office-holding nephew as the manager. The Afandi sometimes drafted slave workers from the gunpowder factory in the province, in Karnak, to perform temporary jobs on his plantations.348 He took advantage of his position in the government and always delayed or completely avoided paying taxes. Furthermore, he acted as a moneylender giving out loans for peasants and subsequently appropriating their lands when they failed to pay back their debts. Farmers from Karnak, for example, mortgaged 400 faddans to him. He attempted to evict them from their lands or establish sharecropping contracts with them before the cultivation season, even after they had paid him installments of the debt in cash and kind. They raised petitions to the government to stop him from taking such actions and to redeem their property rights. Ironically, Abd al-Ghafur Afandi tried to

347 For example: Majlis al-Ahkam, sijill sin 7/1/4, no. 140, 17 Dhu al-Qi‘da 1265.
348 Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 434, case 842, pp. 77, 18 Shawwal 1275.
maintain a religious and pious life style, as he “abstained from mundane matters and sought charitable deeds” by donating to the great mosque of Qus. He funded a huge project to reconstruct the mosque, paying for construction material and labor.\textsuperscript{349}

As owner of several plantations of thousands of faddans, Bishara ‘Ubayd, the Copt agent of the French consul for many years, was without a doubt the wealthiest person in the province. His medium-size and large \textit{ab’adiyyas} expanded in almost every village in Qina. Through the public auctions of a single year only, 1862, he purchased 1,654 faddans in Qus, followed by 1,166 faddans in seven different villages, 81 faddans of which were in the village of Salimiyya. He then made another purchase of 425 faddans in the same village. In Qus, the government gave him the authority to appoint four ‘umdas in the villages where he purchased fields to survey and enclose the land for him and to force the peasants to evacuate and deliver their plots to the new landlord. The help of the former chief of the district of Qus, Ahmad Agha, was indispensable in this matter. In Salimiyya, he hired laborers to work on his \textit{ab’adiyyas} for small wages, insufficient to pay for their taxes. His \textit{ab’adiyyas} were great resources for the state storehouses as they supplied them with different provisions. Furthermore, ‘Ubayd established control over a significant share of the province’s trade, especially in grain. He owned boats to run the

\textsuperscript{349} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, p. 237, 21 Safar 1272; 2 and 9 Safar 1275; p. 245, 23 Safar 1272; p. 257, 28 Safar 1272; p. 1, 1 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1275; p. 257, 28 Safar 1272.
grain trade, and used to conclude deals with wholesale merchants to buy the grain of the province from them.\textsuperscript{350}

A small number of Europeans owned vast plantations in Qina, and, through being supported by the government, they enjoyed immense authority in the province. The consuls and consular agents of the Austrians, the French, the British, and others in Luxor purchased lands in the villages of the province. A Greek community formed the majority of foreign plantation owners, whose ab’adiyyas mounted to hundreds of faddans. They introduced several Greek luxury grocery stores, which sold European food and beverages and competed with the town’s small local businesses.\textsuperscript{351} The French administrator of the sulfur mine of Qina, khawaja Monier, was probably the largest foreign landowner in the province. In 1862, Monier bid at auction for a 3,318 faddan plantation in the district of Mata’na, an area rich in sugarcane fields. He paid a very low price of only three piasters per faddan. He also made a small purchase of another 11 faddans from the peasants of the same district, but he had problems with this transaction. The peasants apparently complained to the government that he forced or tricked them into selling the land. The state declined the peasants’ claim and deemed the khawaja’s property deed valid.\textsuperscript{352} Monier resided in a palace in the city of Luxor, to the north of his plantation, and he appropriated a piece of land in the same city to build storehouses, horse stables, a garden, and a waterwheel. The khawaja drafted local construction workers and artisans to erect


\textsuperscript{351} For example: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 1, p. 29, 23 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1279; Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, sijill 663, microfilm 434, case 162, 1 Muharram 1275.

\textsuperscript{352} Awamir Karima, no. 1898, 23 Jumada al-Akhir 1278; no. 1905, 24 Rabi‘ al-Thani 1279.
these buildings without paying them wages. Some of the city’s inhabitants disputed his possession asserting that the land was their own property and that he did not have the right to seize it. Investigations revealed that he had obtained a permit from local state officials. In the middle of the dispute, Monier contracted an illness and had to travel north to receive treatment. The inhabitants of the city thought that he had gone back to his country to die there, but he soon returned to the province to buy more land and further expand his plantation.  

The village of Salimiyya witnessed one of the most acute cases of conflict over mortgaged lands between village ‘umda creditors and indebted peasants. As shaykhhs and ‘umdas seized the land of absent peasants and were active participants in public auctions winning medium-size ab’adiyyas, they also extended credit to peasants as a way to seize their plots. The ‘umda of Salimiyya, Hasan ‘Abd Allah, and his father and uncles held possession of another 337 faddans that the peasants of Salimiyya mortgaged to them for cash and grain. The heirs of the owners were now reclaiming the land, as they were ready to pay back the mortgage. The shaykh refused to return the land, and petitioned for government support in his case.

Shari’a scholars constituted a new class of medium landowners in this process. They were rewarded for their collaboration with the regime as they issued new shari’a law rulings supporting the new civil land code and bestowing legitimacy on it. The

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353 Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 1, p. 98, 21 Safar 1275; part 2, p. 72, 25 Safar 1275; part 13, 17 Ramadan 1275.
354 For example: Sadir ‘Ardhalat Taftish ‘Umum Qibli, p. 32, 3 Safar 1273; Farshut and Naj’ Hammadi Shari’a Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 43, 1277-1278.
state’s Hanafi mufti issued a collection of new fatwas addressing the new code and creating harmony between it and shari’a law. In addition, a Maliki jurist compiled a whole treatise, which the state press published, on land matters that justified the new code. Corrupt shari’a judges in Qina province in particular were rewarded for their collaboration with the provincial bureaucracy because they registered new land titles in the Islamic court, as it was the only place to obtain property deeds. The same year the land code was promulgated, Sai’d Pasha granted Shaykh Muhammad Abu Shanab, a Hanafi jurist, an *ab’adiyya* plantation of 100 faddans in Qina. Shaykh ‘Uthman Taha owned 37 faddans in Farshut that he rented out to peasants. The wealth of shari’a judges was second only to that of bureaucrats, and when they died they left their heirs great fortunes.

The plantation owners managed their land with dispossessed peasants as labor, either through leasing, sharecropping, or hiring them as seasonal wage or corvée labor, along with using Sudanese slaves. Sharecroppers gave a set share of the harvest every year to the landlord, who sometimes provided them with capital and machinery. Dozens of landless farmers in each village used to gather every season, seek jobs on near and far plantations, and then return to the village with their small wages. The manager of

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358 Awamir Karima, no. 1891, 18 Jumada al-Thani, 1275; Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 1, p. 67, 23 Rabi’ al-Akhir 1279.
359 See: Mudiriyyat Qina Shari’a Court, Sijill Tarikat, no. 10, years 1277-1278.
360 See: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 1, year 1279.
the ‘uhda plantation of Husayn bek, the vice chief of the district of Qus, recruited dozens of seasonal laborers from outside the village of Khawalid, where the ‘uhda land existed. Apparently he had to resort to outside labor when a few of the original inhabitants of the plantation agreed to work with him. Husayn bek, in fact, was not on good terms with the peasants of the village as a result of his frequent illegal annexing of trees, waterwheels, and areas of their fields to his properties. Some of the peasant laborers worked for the whole year on this ‘uhda and others worked for only one or two seasons. Not only did they cultivate the land, they also worked in the sugar mills of the plantations. The manager paid peasants their wages in wheat, maize, beans, etc. from the plantation’s storehouse, and he also paid them a small amount of cash, which they needed to pay the state dues. The cash wages they received never provided them with enough capital to save and buy their own land.361

Landlords sometimes used corvée labor on their plantation. Corvée was initially a state institution that only served public works, but it apparently evolved into a private institution serving private businesses of bureaucrats during this period. Officials used their authority to draft corvée laborers for their private works. As the winter cultivation season was approaching, a high-ranking official, posted in the Sudan, recruited fifteen landless peasants from the village of al-Rizqa to work on his 250 faddan ab’adiyya in Farshut. The governor of Farshut assisted him in assembling the laborers he needed. Similarly, Mustafa Agha, the manager of the state storehouse in the town of Qina, used

361 Farshut and Naj’ Hammadi Shari’a Court, Sijill 45, case 1, p. 1, 28 Safar 1277; case 4, p. 1, 28 Safar 1277; case 5, p. 1, 29 Safar 1277; case 9, p. 2, 29 Safar 1277; case 21, p. 3, 2 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1277; Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 2, p. 73, 26 Safar 1275.
the help of the province’s officials to recruit laborers for his plantation. Furthermore, the state continued to recruit corvée laborers for public work in canals, dikes, embankments, etc. that mainly benefited the owners of plantations. Government officials punished those who were late appearing at the public worksite by forcing them to work a longer period of 31 days, instead of a fortnight, before they were dismissed and replaced.

(3) Mines, Khawajas, and Workers

The informal empire opened the door for an early stage of globalization, where the movement of foreign experts and skilled labor increased tremendously. The international mobility of European experts expanded throughout the world, facilitated by the removal of legal obstacles to migration and cheaper and quicker means of transportation. In addition, British imperialism introduced new technologies in steamships, railways, and factories to colonies or countries eager for modernization, and these technologies called for new sources of energy, namely coal. These developments also called for the need for European experts and professional labor. Coal mines were essential modern sites for state modernization schemes, which required migrant European experts, who were highly trusted and exercised great authority.

362 Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, p. 45, 5 Safar 1275; Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, p. 256, 26 Safar 1272.
In 1850s, the attempt at coal mining in Qina province failed. Despite the trust the state gave to foreign experts in order to find coal to run all the steam engines it imported, the project was a failure, and it was workers and taxpayers of Qina who paid the price.\(^3\)

The conspicuous deficiencies in Qina’s mining enterprise illustrate the inefficiency of western capitalism and foreign experts, and, thus, question the mythical abilities of the empire’s modernity. Moreover, workers’ resistance to such endeavor suggests that the informal empire had difficulties establishing control over the laborers of the regions it subjugated. The limits of imperial hegemony were reflected in native laborers’ discontent and rebellion, as Qina’s mine shows.

In 1820, Louis Michel, a French scientist, suggested to Muhammad Ali that he should search for soft coal in Upper Egypt. When he came with the French expedition to Egypt more than a quarter of a century earlier, the scientist had heard that there were potential soft coal deposits there. Because he had no sources of energy for steam engines, Muhammad Ali powered his modern manufactures by oxen imported from the Sudan. Michel asked the viceroy to hire him as the chief commander of a search mission in the deserts of Qina province. Muhammad Ali granted him the position with all the facilities needed to start mining. Initially, the initiative was rather limited, as he was sent to the excavation sites with only one assistant. The project did not yield fruit for many years, yet it continued to receive the state’s support in the form of funds, more miners, and

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\(^3\) On modernity and trust of European experts see: Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), Ch.3. Giddens discusses how “traditional” societies’ trust of modernity as an abstract system comes with blind trust of European professional expertise. Timothy Mitchell’s *Rule of Experts* uses these theoretical insights to illustrate how trustworthy western experts and their technology most of the time only brought about human and environmental catastrophes where they went.
tools. Some Austrian engineers came to join the project but they were discouraged from journeying to Upper Egypt by the excessively hot weather. The state kept hiring one French commander after the other with no results satisfying Muhammad Ali. The project continued to work with recharged hopes even after the Pasha died.  

In 1858, the project gained a new momentum that brought it to life again under Sa‘id Pasha. Urged to join the modern world of fast commerce run by railways and steamships, Sa‘id had to search for internal sources of energy. Rather than merely hiring foreign experts to manage the mine, Sa‘id made them the state’s business partners. Sa‘id applied extensive economic liberalization policies, invited European expertise, and embarked on many large European-Egyptian ventures that involved state funds and European experts. The Suez Canal was one of those ventures initiated by French experts that ended up with heavy indebtedness on the part of Sa‘id and his successors, and the coal mine of Qina was another one of them. The purpose of the enterprise was to search for soft coal in the eastern desert between the province of Qina and al-Qusayr port.

Employing about 100 people, including foreign experts, clerks, mining workers, camel drivers, and water carriers, it became a relatively big enterprise for its time and place. Khawaja De Francis was the state’s business partner, but he stayed in Cairo and hired a deputy miner, khawaja Barbarous, to manage work at the mining site. The state granted a small steamship to De Francis so he could go to Qina to inspect the mine and all costs were paid by the state treasury. The mine workers were recruited from the

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366 Ma‘iyya Saniyya Turkish (Arabic summaries), no. 3, 4 Dhu al-Qi‘da 1234; 18 Dhu al-Hijja 1241; no. 67, 28 Rajab 1251; Diwan Khidiwi Turkish (Arabic summaries), no. 729, 28 Dhu Qi‘da 1241; no. 779, 5 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1248; Ma‘iyya Saniyya Arabic, no. 63, 28 Sha‘ban 1267.
villages and towns of Qina, and the chief camel driver, Shaykh Zayd Khamis, was responsible for hiring camel drivers to deliver laborers to the excavation site. The governor of Qina was officially the highest authority in the enterprise, as he allocated all the needed funds and resources to the mine from the storehouses of the province. Although the terms of the contract of this “company” were not clear in the records, it seems that the *khawaja* contributed only his expertise without a share in capital.\(^{367}\)

The taxpayers of Qina province carried the financial burden of this costly enterprise. All the provisions were supplied by Qina’s storehouses, where peasants, artisans, merchants, and other social groups had to submit their dues to the state treasury in kind or cash. The mine administrators requested their daily provisions from the governor of Qina, who ordered them from the reserves or collected them from the people of the province according to strict deadlines. Such provisions included bread, butter, lentils, baskets, mining tools, wood, water skins, cash for wages, transport fares, etc.\(^{368}\) Camel drivers regularly carried shipments of provisions to the mine, and were paid twelve piasters per qintar. A group of camel drivers had to write a petition to the governor of Qina in order to receive allowances of food supplies for the trip in addition to their wages. The governor agreed to this request, but he subtracted the food they received from their wages or from the transport fares the state paid them.\(^{369}\)

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\(^{367}\) Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina and Isna, part 1, p. 8 and p. 26, 3 Safar 1275; p. 14, 7 Safar 1275; Awamir Karima, Sijill 1889, 10 Dhu al-Qi‘da 1274; 24 Shawwal 1274.

\(^{368}\) Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina and Isna, part 1, p. 86, 27 Safar 1275.

\(^{369}\) Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina and Isna, part 1, p. 26, 3 Safar 1275.
Qina’s workers formed the workforce at the mine. Although the number of workers in the mine at any given time did not exceed one hundred, the mine affected the lives of thousands of laborers throughout its years of operation. A system of regular replacement consistently substituted new laborers for fatigued ones, making it almost impossible for the laborers of the province to escape serving in the mine. Through forced conscription, builders, blacksmiths, carpenters, and water carriers were all sent to the mine. They received wages along with food and transportation supplies. Each sub-district in Qina had to contribute its share of laborers. Conscription took place through the guild chiefs, or *shaykh al-ta’ifa*. For example, when there was a need for carpenters, the chief carpenter, or the *shaykh al-najjarin*, in each sub-district was officially ordered to send an assigned number of carpenters from the area under his chiefdom. Each individual artisan in each guild was registered by name in the state official files area by area, so he was requested by name when it was his turn to go serve in the mine. According to the applied labor law, workers in state enterprises and public works had to be replaced every given period, usually a fortnight, before they lost their energy and became too fatigued to work. In the mine, workers’ replacement was carried out in regular terms, but they were not all replaced at the same time. Some workers preferred permanent wage labor at the mine and expressed their wish to stay for full-time jobs, which they were mostly permitted to do.\(^{370}\)

After being recruited by the guild shaykh, a mine worker had to undertake a long, hazardous journey to reach the excavation site in the middle of the eastern desert, carry out the assigned tasks, and return home safely, if he was lucky. First, he had to carry his

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own work tools, if required, and deliver himself to Hamad Muhammad, the camel driver of the mine from the ‘Ababida tribe, who was officially responsible for delivering him and was acquainted with all the routes in the desert due to his bedouin origins. The worker was provided with food for the road, namely one qintar of crackers, *buqsumat*. He had to sign a receipt for receiving this snack in order to have it deducted from his future wage. Upon arrival at the mining site, the camel driver handed him over to the chief miner, who then would send a letter to the governor of Qina confirming the delivery. The chief miner then assigned the newly arrived worker his tasks at once. After that, there were two possible scenarios: he either stayed to finish the job and, in rare cases, liked it and applied to be hired full time, or he ran away. Running away was a fatal decision if it was not arranged with secretive help from an expert camel driver; it was easy to get lost and die in the vast desert. Even the most skilled camel drivers sometimes got lost in the desert on their way to or back from the digging site. If the worker had enough luck, he would be replaced after a reasonable period before his physical condition deteriorated. Eventually, he returned home to his family with his small wage in hand.371

In one incident, workers protested the irregularity of their pay. Wages were suspended on some days because of long pauses in digging. It was not possible then for the miners to go find side jobs to make their living for the lost time: there was nothing around them but desert. Thus, they complained and requested that they get paid all weekdays regardless of the current state of work. The governor of Qina affirmed that it

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was the responsibility of the enterprise to find them tasks to do on a daily basis and to pay them regular wages. He established new rules for regular payment and sent them to the khawaja. The rules entailed paying wages for all weekdays, except for the weekly holiday, Friday. Eventually, it was decided that workers were to be paid monthly, probably to force them to think twice before running away.\textsuperscript{372}

As at all mining sites in the world in the nineteenth century, safety measures were a crucial problem with high rates of injuries and accidental deaths among mine workers. In Qina’s coal mine, the foreign miners chose a specific point to excavate, and they trained the workers to carry out digging for mining purposes. One day, a disaster almost happened when the walls of the pit collapsed on the workers, but, luckily, nobody was injured. This accident disturbed Sa‘id Pasha and he issued strict orders to the khawaja to find a safe method of digging. Interestingly enough, the khawaja was asked to study the issue with the workers in order to reach the best technique. He was ordered to agree with them on a secure method for their own safety as well as for expediting the work. The governor of Qina affirmed: “think with them [the workers] about the appropriate technique until you reach an easy one…that will not delay the course of work or cause any harm to the workers.”\textsuperscript{373} They decided to build wooden walls for the pit during the digging process to prevent the collapse of the sand walls. Khawaja De Francis confirmed to Sa‘id Pasha that this was the best method reached by his deputy khawaja, Barbarous; it was commonly applied in European mines during this period. Wood was shipped from

\textsuperscript{372} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina and Isna, part 4, p. 6, 17 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1275.
\textsuperscript{373} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina and Isna, part 2, p. 14, 7 Safar 1275.
Cairo to Qina’s storehouses specifically for this purpose, with firm instructions to the
khawaja to use them for the safety of workers.374

As time was passing with no signs of progress, Sa‘id Pasha showed his
dissatisfaction with the work of khawaja De Francis, who was asking for more time and
state support to finish the search. A few weeks after the collapse of the pit’s walls, and
without waiting for the work at this one site to be finished, the khawaja began digging
another. The governor of Qina requested an explanation for the waste of resources. The
difficult search for soft coal eventually failed to yield any fruits. Sa‘id Pasha finally
issued a royal decree giving a deadline for the khawaja: before the beginning of the holy
month of Ramadan of 1858, he must present satisfying samples or terminate the search.
The venture was closed down six months after the pit incident. The decree stated that the
state would not accept the allegations of khawaja De Francis and his accompanying
Egyptian miners that soft coal existed in the province, or respond to their request to
continue the search at the state’s expense.375 Obviously, the only losers in the entire
venture were the people of Qina province who had to pay for the failure of foreign
experts and the wrong decisions of a liberalized state.

It is worth mentioning that the coal enterprise was not the only failed mine that
the state and foreign experts inflicted on the workers and taxpayers of the province. To
join the world of modern weaponry, the state ran a sulfur mine in the mountains close to
Qusayr port, and the produce of this mine was processed in the four state-owned

374 Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina and Isna, part 2, p. 21, 19 Safar 1275; p. 42, 23 Safar 1275.
375 Awamir Karima, no. 1891, 8 Sha’ban 1275.
gunpowder factories in the province, in the towns of Karnak, Qift, Dandara, and Hu. It was Muhammad Ali who started this enterprise by founding the Karnak gunpowder factory. It was also managed by European experts, namely Monsieur Monier, who owned large plantations in Qina, jointly with Italian miners. Foreign experts were business partners as, according to the company contract, they enjoyed the right to one-quarter of the mine’s revenue. European consuls and newspapers attacked the project because its produce was not of a high quality and its Italian miners were gradually deserting to go back to their country.376

The sulfur mine also conscripted the laborers of the province to serve there and endure the same harsh conditions that the coal miners lived through. It maintained eight hundred workers at any given time, and replaced them regularly. Many workers, builders, carpenters, blacksmiths, etc., either ran away before or after arriving there. In one incident, the foreman of workers himself, from a village in Qina, ran away from the mine to Cairo, but he was arrested and carried back to the province. Luckily, as he undoubtedly would agree, the government decided not to hire him again.377 The gunpowder factories, kahrijilla or jibba khanas, which received the mine’s produce employed Qina’s workers as wage labor as well as Sudanese slaves.378

The workers of the sulfur mine endured hazardous conditions and unfair treatment similar to that of their fellows in the coal mine. One accident in the mine killed

376 Ma‘iyya Saniyya Turkish (Arabic summaries), Sijill 45, 7 and 19 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1286.
377 Ma‘iyya Saniyya Turkish (Arabic summaries), Sijill 3, 7 Dhu al-Qi‘da 1270; Sadir al-Ma‘iyya Arabic, Sijill 135, part 8, 24 Rajab 1270; Majlis al-Ahkam, Sijill 1880-1881, 3 Sha‘ban 1271; 16 Jumada al-Awwal 1271; Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, p. 29, 4 Rabi‘ al- Awwal 1274.
378 Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 434, case 842, p. 77, 18 Shawwal 1275; Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 2, p. 33, 2 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1275.
a worker and injured four others, when a cave in the excavation mountain collapsed during the shift. One of the two Italian *khawajas* who were responsible for supervising the work and securing the safety of workers in that shift claimed that the cave collapsed before he arrived at the site and the other claimed that he was away fetching water.\(^{379}\)

One of the European experts, and a shareholder in the mine company, significantly reduced the wages of workers, by one fifth, and laid off others to balance the mine’s budget. The governor of Qina also received several reports about corruption in the mine, and was convinced that the *khawaja* was unfair to workers; he ordered him to change his policy and return to the original rate of wages.\(^{380}\)

**(4) A “Communist” Revolt**

Under these conditions, a second massive revolt broke out in the province. The 1864-65 revolt erupted one year after Sa‘id died and Khedive Isma‘il came to the throne. Although the revolt seems almost identical to the one occurring in 1820 under Muhammad Ali, particularly in having religious leaders who used spiritual rhetoric to mobilize peasants, it had completely different conditions and causes. While the former was against the repression of a central government and a heavily interventionist empire, the latter was against the global market economy of an informal empire had brought about in Qina province.

\(^{379}\) Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, p. 290, 11 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1272.

Two new crucial conditions in the global market stimulated the uprising. First, the years of the American Civil War (1861-1865) increased British demand for Egyptian long staple cotton tremendously. Sa‘id and Isma‘il both capitalized on this opportunity to maximize their profits in European markets. The war raised cotton prices in Alexandria, and exports surged to 2.5 million qantars in 1865. As a result, the state placed its focus on cotton cultivation in the north, the Delta, and Upper Egypt was economically marginalized in the process. Although Qina province was traditionally a cotton producer, the cultivation of this cash crop shifted to the Delta due to this region’s proximity to the world’s hegemon in Europe. 381

Second, the other main cash crop of the country, the wheat which largely came from Upper Egypt, was facing fierce competition from the rising producers in Europe and the Americas. The grain of Europe and the Americas witnessed an immense boom due to the application of modern technologies in agricultural machinery, including steam engines in irrigation. More importantly, despite preaching *laissez-faire* policies in the world, Britain and other European countries applied protectionist policies to rescue their agricultural producers from outside competition: “Once the great investments in the building of steamships and railroads came to fruition, whole continents were opened up and an avalanche of grain descended upon unhappy Europe.” 382 Thus, Europe turned to protectionism, avoided foreign competition, and many governments, including Britain,


introduced corn laws that closed the door in the face of grain imports. This decreased European demand for Upper Egyptian wheat that had reached its peak during the Napoleonic Wars. ‘Ali Mubarak, the Egyptian statesman and chronicler, lamented this reality: “farming in European, American, and other countries advanced and their grain production grew. They fulfilled their needs and their demand for Egyptian wheat decreased…which would harm the people of Upper Egypt.” Therefore, Qina province lost its profits from grain sales which further peripheralized it.

Political resentment accumulated in the province leading to rebellion against the propertied classes and the Europeans. The same year the Sa‘id land code was enforced, in 1858, an uprising led by falatiyya bandits broke out in Isna that forced the Pasha to reform the entire administrative system in the province. The uprising apparently involved attacks on Europeans, who reacted by randomly shooting at the inhabitants. As usual, the rebels escaped to the mountains where they hid from the government. The police forces failed to arrest them and, consequently, the governor of Isna lost his job for his incompetence. Sa‘id Pasha became so concerned about political unrest in Qina that he established a new administrative system in the province: he decided to merge Qina and Isna under one governor and to replace all Turkish district chiefs with Egyptian ones, but not necessarily natives of the province. To facilitate his movement inside the wide province, extending in great length on the two banks of the Nile, the new governor was

granted one of the steamships the state ran in the south for his own use. The steamship was supposed to ease his task of inspecting for any disobedience in the province. In addition, a special army force was brought from the north and put under his command. The Pasha affirmed that this province was a place where European tourists passed, and securing them and protecting public safety must be the priority of the governor. As for Europeans who might commit crimes, such as shooting again at the inhabitants, the Pasha added that they should be handled gently and escorted to their respective consuls.\footnote{Amin Sami, Taqvim al-Nil, vol. 1, part 3, p. 298.}

Incidents occurred every day: the steamships of European merchants were raided, lands of the propertied class robbed, and government bureaucrats attacked. Some\textit{ falatiyya} bandits specialized in raiding the commercial boats of Greek merchants that shipped the grain of the province to the north. At midnight, in one incident in 1859, some Nile bandits shot at the commercial boat of a Greek \textit{khawaja} by the name of Georgie Anton. They attacked the boat crew and stole money and goods from them.\footnote{Majlis al-Ahkam, Sadir al-Aqalim al-Qibliyya, microfilm 367, p. 6, 19 Muharram 1276.} Similarly, as soon as it arrived at the town of Isna, the loaded commercial boat of a \textit{khawaja} was raided on its way from Aswan to Qina.\footnote{Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 434, Sijill 666, case 690, 16 Rajab 1275.} Moreover, the Nile boat captains, who lost their businesses to the steamships of European merchants, turned into \textit{falatiyya} bandits, raiding plantations and stealing from government bureaucrats. At the coffee house of a freed slave in the town of Qina, a bandit, ‘Uthman, stole the attire and a purse full of cash of a bureaucrat. He was a member of a gang of bandits that had been committing robbery and escaping from jail for years. ‘Uthman was, in fact, a former \textit{marakbi} boat captain who
apparently lost his business in Nile transportation due to the dominance of steamers. He was also unfortunate to have been from the village of Abu Manna‘ that was turned into a ‘uhda plantation leaving no landed properties for its inhabitants to live on.\footnote{Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 434, Sijill 663, case 115, pp. 52, 20 Safar 1274.}

In the year of the revolt, attacks against foreigners increased, leading an American merchant residing in Luxor to demand that the government enhance security measures in the town. Apparently he raised the issue after an assault took place in the area where foreigners lived. He complained that the ghafir watchmen in the areas surrounding the town were insufficient, both in number and in efficiency, to provide protection to the inhabitants. The Supreme Court in Cairo, acting also as a legislature, had issued a decree ordering provincial governors to assign competent watchmen and have village shaykhs and watchmen sign legal documents making them fully responsible for maintaining public safety. The American resident called for a rigorous application of this decree.\footnote{Sadir Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 367, p. 125, 23 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1280.}

Some villagers refused to leave their land and give it over to new office-holding landlords who bought it in auctions.\footnote{For example: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 10, p. 56, 14 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1279.} Refusing to pay rent to the new landlords became a common practice among peasants, so landowners resorted to the government’s help to collect rent.\footnote{For example: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 1, p. 53, 4 Rabi‘ al-Akhir 1279.} Another common practice was to block irrigation water from reaching the lands of the new landlords, especially Europeans or agents of European consuls, by damaging dikes and embankments that served their lands. The peasants of the village of Marashda blocked the canal that carried water to the land of the agent of the Prussian
consul, so his land missed its turn of receiving irrigation water that season and remained fallow. He complained to the governor of Qina who ordered peasants to open the canal, but it was too late.\textsuperscript{392} Armed \textit{falatiyya} gangs raided the houses of village shaykhs to steal cash, clothes, jewelry, etc. and they did not hesitate to shoot at the shaykhs and their family members.\textsuperscript{393} In addition, corvée labor continued to run away from the sites of public work.\textsuperscript{394}

Abd al-Ghafur Afandi faced aggressive resistance from peasants. The peasants of a village where one of his plantations was located attacked his land to prevent the seasonal labor he brought from other villages from farming it, and some of them damaged its crops. After Abd al-Ghafur Afandi died, the peasants of Karnak seized their former lands from his plantation, and they even refused to sign a lease and pay rent or conclude a sharecropping agreement. Moreover, they refused to pay the remaining taxes to the government. The manager of the plantation had to ask for the help of the chief of the district of Qus to deal with this situation.\textsuperscript{395} As For Bishara ‘Ubayd, peasants used to let their cattle and sheep graze on his land in order to ruin his harvest. He lost the produce of eight faddans this way in the village of Faw.\textsuperscript{396}

The coal and sulfur mines produced severe discontent among those families who lost laborers. Many workers did not come back from the mines, and their families never heard from them again. They either died of fatigue in the mines or got lost in the desert.

\textsuperscript{392} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 1, pp. 32-33, 25 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1279.
\textsuperscript{393} For example: Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 434, Sijill 666, case 682, p. 123, Rajab 1275.
\textsuperscript{394} For example: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 1, p. 14, 19 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1279.
\textsuperscript{395} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, p. 239, 23 Safar 1272; part 1, p. 13, 19 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1279.
\textsuperscript{396} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina, part 13, p. 67, 8 Shawwal 1275.
while attempting to run away. One way these families reacted was by filing lawsuits against the guild or village shaykhs who recruited and sent workers to the mines. The brother of Ahmad Isma’il, from the village of Kalahin, was sent to the sulfur mine and never came back. Ahmad heard rumors about the death of his missing brother, so he sued his village shaykh in the Supreme Court, holding him responsible. The shaykh argued that this worker in fact had run away only two days after his arrival at the mine, and an intensive search for him had not yielded any results.397

The four state-owned gunpowder factories standing in the towns of the province did not escape the wave of revenge, not only for their connection with the mine but also for employing workers on oppressive terms. To make things worse, the kahrijilla gunpowder factory of Karnak was close to the plantation of Abd al-Ghafur Afandi. Thus, it was surrounded by angry landless peasants, some of whom were made wage laborers at this factory. The workers at the factory frequently ran away, but the government always brought them back, if they had not gone far, and forced them to continue working. Promising to pay their belated wages or even actually making payments did not always succeed in encouraging them to stay: many found a way to run off again despite all the efforts of the factory manager to monitor them. The factory was the target of other forms of villagers’ revenge against the government. The cousin and land partner of the chief donkey driver at the factory embezzled thousands of piasters, among other things. The donkey driver was arrested and put in jail until his cousin returned what he had taken. This hurt the factory’s work causing considerable delays and losses, because he ran a

special team of five donkey drivers whose work was vital in the factory and nobody managed the drivers on his behalf when he was jailed.398

On the eve of the revolt in 1864, the village of Salimiyya, where the leader of the rebels declared his messianic revelations and preached rebellion, was simmering with political unrest. The village was already one of the growing centers of falatiyya gangs that attacked the ghafir watchmen of the village.399 As detailed above, Turkish bureaucrats and Europeans owned vast plantations in this village at the expense of its peasants. The peasants of Salimiyya, who were losing lands to high-bidding bureaucrats in frequent auctions, tried legal channels to redeem them without success. Murad ‘Abd Al-Rahim owned only one faddan of sugarcane, which apparently was not enough to sustain his family. He had to find a job as a construction worker on the irrigation steam engines of a state-owned plantation. One day, after he was late to work as he was finishing harvesting and pressing his sugarcane, the Turkish manager of the plantation, ‘Abd Allah Agha, ruthlessly beat him. On his way back, he ran into two other farmers from his village drafting a complaint against the same Turkish manager protesting his numerous crimes. When the state held a public auction to rent out some of the plantation’s land, he collaborated with other partners to seize a medium-sized piece of land in the village, and won it through fraud. He also supported many other village shaykhs in their efforts to seize lands and harvests from peasants. In addition, he beat some peasants, stopped their waterwheels to damage their crops, and put them in jail.

398 Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 434, case 842, pp. 77-82, 18 Shawwal 1275.
399 For example: Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 434, Sijill 668, case 1217, 23 Jumada al-Awwal 1275.
Although Murad himself had nothing to do with any of these cases, he decided to put his signet on the complaint to take his own revenge.  

Women with small properties were the most vulnerable, as they were losing very small pieces of land, sometimes fractions of a faddan, to new landlords. Again, their only available means of resistance was resorting to ‘ardhal petitions. Three sisters, Fatima, Zaynab, and Amina, inherited three qirats (1/8 faddan) with a waterwheel from their uncle. The Turkish subdistrict head collaborated with a village shaykh to take part of this piece. The three sisters raised a petition to the general inspector of Upper Egypt, who ordered an investigation of the case and applied the latest land code, which, at this point, allowed women limited property rights to land.

Finally, the revolt erupted. Its leader, Ahmad al-Tayyib, came from the village of al-Salimiyya. In addition to the thousands of dispossessed villagers, Ahmad al-Tayyib managed to mobilize falatiyya bandits from their secret hiding places in the mountains. Like the 1820 revolt, this one deployed religious rhetoric and took on a spiritual tone, yet its aims went beyond alleviating high taxation or overthrowing the Khedive in Cairo. Rebels developed a discourse against the propertied class and foreign commercial domination making their uprising a “communist” one, as Duff-Gordon suggested.

Unfortunately, Duff-Gordon’s account is the only full record available for the revolt. One must notice that the Lady’s friends in Luxor were Turkish bureaucrats, an

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400 Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 421, 12 Dhu al-Qi’da 1288.
401 Sadir ‘Ardhalat Taftish ‘Umum Qibli, p. 60, Rajab 1280. This happened before the state and its elite of bureaucrats and landowners promulgated a law depriving women from inheritance rights in land, which will be explained in the next section of this chapter.
affluent shari‘a scholar, and a rich Copt who was a British consular agent, so she received and delivered a rather unsympathetic, and somewhat simplified, account of the revolt.

‘Ali Mubarak, the state’s chronicler of the period, also provided a politically biased and brief account of the revolt. He characterized Ahmad al-Tayyib as a sinful, subversive man who led people to disobey God and commit sins. He transgressed shari‘a law, Mubarak suggested, because he disobeyed the “imam” of Muslims, i.e., the Khedive. He added that God punished the inhabitants of village of Faw, who followed him, for their sins; they were being “punished” for their sins when Isma‘il Pasha sent soldiers and Turkish officers to kill most of them, destroy their houses, and confiscate their money.402

The revolt arose, Duff-Gordon recounted, from one incident that involved a rich Copt and then spread throughout the province. Rich Copts were commonly believed to be working with Europeans and concerned only with pleasing Europeans. The Copt in question owned a Muslim slave-girl, who read the Qur’an and was pious herself, and wanted to take her as his concubine. She refused because this was forbidden by shari‘a law, and went to Ahmad Al-Tayyib who offered the Coptic master money for her: “He refused it and insisted on his rights, backed by the government whereupon Ahmad proclaimed the revolt.”403 The rebels then attacked a boat that belonged to Greek merchants, but nobody was hurt, although Duff-Gordon asserted elsewhere that the boat was plundered by a party of forty rebels, and the steersman was killed. The state sent Fadl

402 ‘Ali Mubarak, Al-Khitat al-Tawfiqiyya, vol.14, p. 95. He misspells the name of the village as Qaw but the actual name of the village that existed in Qina is Faw.
403 Duff-Gordon, Letters from Egypt, p. 364. It seems that Duff-Gordon had received confusing accounts here since a Copt was not allowed to buy a Muslim female slave according to shari‘a law.
Pasha with an army from Cairo by steamship to crush the rebels. Al-Tayyib was thought to have been killed in the battle, but in fact he managed to flee to the desert to take refuge with the *falatiyya* bandits.

Duff-Gordon recorded opinions of different social groups about the rebellion. On the one hand, her shari‘a law scholar friend, Shaykh Yusuf, made a visit to al-Salimiyya and returned to show his criticism of the rebels.

Shaykh Yoosuf returned from a visit to Essalimeeyeh last night. He tells me the darweesh, Ahmad et-Teiyib, is not dead; he believed that he is a mad fanatic and a communist. He wants to divide all property equally, and to kill all the Ulama and destroy all theological teaching by learned men, and to preach a sort of revelation or interpretation of the Koran of his own. “He would break up your pretty clock,” said Yoosuf, “and give every man a broken wheel out of it; and so with all things.”

On the other hand, villagers were already expressing great discontent because Isma‘il Pasha regulated the price of wheat, bringing about a famine in the province, in the same year of the outbreak. Furthermore, Duff-Gordon explained, “only Cairo could do anything, and everything is done to please the Cairene at the expense of the Fellaheen.”

In irrigation, use of steam engines and their coal was only for the rich. “The great folks get steam-engines, but the laborers work with no better implements than their bare hands and a rush basket, and it takes six men to do the work of one who has good tools.”

Thus, even though some ordinary villagers did not participate in the revolt, believing that al-Tayyib was a madman, they supported the rebel’s cause and spoke up about all forms of injustice. Duff-Gordon recounted,

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405 Ibid., pp. 346-347.
One Muhammad, a most respectable, quite young man, sat before me on the floor the other day, and told me the horrible details he had heard from those who had come up the river. “Thou knowest, O our lady that we are people of peace in this place; and behold, now, if one madman should come, and a few idle fellows go out to the Mountain (desert) with him, Efendeena will send his soldiers to destroy the place, and spoil our poor little girls, and hang us: is that right, O lady? And Ahmad-el-Berberee saw Europeans with hats in the steamer with Efendeena and the soldiers. Truly, in all the world none are miserable like us Arabs. The Turks beat us, and the Europeans hate us and say ‘quite right.’ By God, we had better lay our heads in dust (die), and let the strangers take our land and grow cotton for themselves. As for me, I am tired of this miserable life, and of fearing for my poor girls. Mohammad was really eloquent…he threw his meláyeh over his face and sobbed…

As a fugitive exiled in the mountains, Ahmad al-Tayyib joined the *falatiyya* bandits in their hiding places. His followers visited him there to listen to his speeches and receive his instructions. Duff-Gordon affirmed that Khedive Isma‘il himself came with steamboats and soldiers to terminate the uprising. The steamers were also supposed to evacuate all Europeans if things got out of control. Al-Tayyib’s brother, Muhammad, and his father’s father-in-law were taken prisoner. The Pasha confiscated the properties of all suspected rebels, including innocent villagers. A village shaykh assisted the government in capturing the rebels. In 1865, Fadl Pasha, a Turk, perpetrated a massacre where he “had the men laid down by ten at a time, and chopped with the pioneers’ axes.” The pasha murdered at least 1600 men, women, and children. As soon as the revolt was crushed, every man, woman, or child related to Ahmad Al-Tayyib by blood was taken in chains and jailed in the town of Qina.

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(5) No Land for Women

The women of Qina paid an extra price for modern legal codes of private property and the formation of plantations under the informal empire. The 1858 code deprived women of the right to control the agricultural land they inherited. Another code, issued in 1869, deprived women of land inheritance rights altogether. Male plantation owners played an essential role in pressing for these two codes, both of which violated shari‘a law provisions on women’s inheritance rights. In the villages of Qina, women who owned modest properties, sometimes as small as fractions of a faddan, were severely hurt by such laws and expressed their resentment against male relatives who transgressed their inheritance rights.

With an increasing British domination that brought about the expansion of cotton cultivation, northern families involved in commercial agriculture achieved political ascent. They constituted the main political unit in a growing paternalist regime. Through the alleged political liberalization process, the male heads of plantation-owning families not only constituted the regime incumbents, but they also became the lawmakers in modern legislative institutions, namely the Council of Rules and the Parliament.409 They pressured the state to issue laws depriving women of land inheritance rights in Egypt.

Copying the British code of primogeniture enshrined in the “family settlement” law,410

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409 For example, Delta families such as the Abazas and the Shawarbis. For details about officials and parliamentarians and their elite families see: Sami Amin, *Taqwim al-Nil*, part 3, vol. 2; Muhammad Khalil Subhi, *Tarih al-Haya al-Niyabiyya fi Misr*, vol. 6.

the male landed elite of Egypt helped to promulgate a series of similar laws between the
1850s and the early 1880s.

Under the old land laws of Muhammad ‘Ali, when land was legally considered
state property, women enjoyed usufruct rights, provided they were able to farm the land
and pay taxes to the treasury. Muhammad Ali’s state suppressed the social power of local
families and limited their wealth, allowing them only minor influence on lawmaking.
Thus, the pragmatic state showed little legal gender bias as long as the landowner,
whether male or female, cultivated the land and paid the tax. With the increasing number
of runaway peasants who fled their land due to failure to pay taxes, many women took
over the control of small and sometimes minuscule parcels to sustain their households.
Empowered by shari’a and civil law, women during this period took their male siblings
and relatives to court to claim their right to inherit agricultural land. Nonetheless,
patriarchal traditions oftentimes limited women’s access to landed properties already
controlled by their oldest brothers, and they were generally allowed to inherit other
properties such as palm trees, cattle, shops, mills, houses, etc.411

During the first year of Sa’id’s reign, some women from Qina disputed their
disinheritance, and the state supported their claims. Fatma took control of the five
faddans her deceased husband left to her, their three daughters, and son. She leased the
land to farmers who cultivated it and paid its dues to the government. When the cousin of
her children attempted to assert his control over the parcel, she submitted a petition
against him to the general inspector of Upper Egypt. The inspector supported her right to

411 See: Isna Shari’a Court, Sijill 96, part 1, 1254; Qina Shari’a Court, Murafa’at, Sijill 1, 1262-1263.
keep the land, only provided that it was cultivated and its taxes were paid, and Fatma complied. In similar cases, the local officials always consulted the land code, applied at this time, which obliged them to grant land to widows.\footnote{412 Sadir ‘Ardhalat Taftish ‘Umum Qibli, p. 103, 19 Safar 1271; p. 110, 25 Safar 1271.} Only a few months before the 1858 law was issued, Si’da, a widow from Samhud village, asserted her right and the rights of her two daughters and one son to the land of her deceased husband, in a case she won against two male villagers. She went to the shari’a court with her son to sue the two farmers who attempted to build a waterwheel on her land. The dispute was resolved and the family retained its property.\footnote{413 Farshut and Naj’ Hammadi Shari’a Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 13, case 13, p. 3, 22 Shawwal 1274.}

The Council of Rules issued the 1858 private property code, which deprived women of their right to control their inherited agricultural land. The Council, called \textit{Majlis al-Ahkam}, functioned both as a supreme court and a legislature, and male members of elite families served in it. It was founded by Khedive ‘Abbas in 1849, and Sa‘id restored it in 1856, after a short period of suspension. The members of the council were high-ranking Turkish bureaucrats, army and police officers, the state mufti, and eminent shari’a law scholars. From Qina, for example, Ahmad bek Muhammad, a member of an elite landed family in Abu Manna‘ village and an army general, maintained membership in the Council. Provincial councils, composed of village shaykhs and ‘umdas, were founded later in the Delta and Upper Egypt to adjudicate local disputes and refer unresolved cases to the Council as the Supreme Court. In most cases, the

\footnote{412 Sadir ‘Ardhalat Taftish ‘Umum Qibli, p. 103, 19 Safar 1271; p. 110, 25 Safar 1271.} \footnote{413 Farshut and Naj’ Hammadi Shari’a Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 13, case 13, p. 3, 22 Shawwal 1274.}
promulgation of new codes or changing of existing ones took place in response to unresolved provincial cases.\textsuperscript{414}

The 1858 code ruled that the land of a deceased father should be registered only under the name of the eldest male in the family that lived together in one household. The law was intended to keep properties intact under the control of older men and prevent the division of land amongst heirs. It allowed women to inherit land, but it deprived them of having it registered under their names. The eldest male, \textit{arshad al-‘a’ila}, was responsible for farming the land, sustaining the family, and paying the tax. He was required to keep listings of the assigned land shares of the family members, male and female, and their respective revenues. Family members had the right to sue him if he failed in fulfilling these duties or was financially unfair to them. The code also compelled women who already had agricultural land titles to change the status of their properties in accordance with the new law, even if they had fulfilled their tax obligations.\textsuperscript{415}

The law was put into effect and immediately harmed the lives of peasant women holding small properties in Qina. Male siblings, uncles, and nephews deployed this law to exclude women from sharing land. Two sisters, Umm Hasan and Umm Husayn from al-Hamidat Island, lost the four faddans their father left them. They were each entitled to two faddans; yet, their brother and nephew complained in court about the two women’s possession of landed inheritance and insisted on applying the new law. The sisters claimed, in total, only one third of the twelve faddans that their father had left them.


\textsuperscript{415} Filib Jallad, \textit{Qamus al-Idara wa-l-Qada’}, vol. 1, p. 183.
Their brother and nephew, son of another deceased brother, took control of the whole property and divided it equally among themselves. Moreover, they submitted a petition to the government complaining about women’s attempts to share the land with them. In the shari’a court of Qina, they stood before the judge to demand the application of the new civil code, by which the judge had to abide despite its violation of shari’a law. The court ruled in favor of the male members of the family, and the two sisters, in addition to the wife and the daughters of the deceased brother, were all excluded from receiving any landed properties.416

In 1866, the newly founded parliament of Khedive Isma’il, Majlis Shura al-Nuwwab, issued a law that completely deprived women of inheritance rights over agricultural land. As a matter of fact, the modern legislature was little more than an institution created to consolidate the power of plantation-owning families and entrench a paternalist regime. The members of this parliament came from the male members of the large landowning families, such as the Abazas of al-Sharqiyya province and the Shawarbis of al-Qaliyubiyya province in the Delta. They were all either bureaucrats, with the title of afandis and bek, or village shaykhs and ‘umdas. Qina’s members of parliament, for example, included Shaykh Muhammad Abu Sihli, a large owner of two thousand faddans of sugarcane in Farshut; he also served as the ‘umda of al-Salimiyya village, the president of the provincial local council, and the ‘umda of Abu Manna’.


In 1869, some parliamentarians proposed a law to exclude women from inheriting agricultural land altogether and allow them to inherit real estate and other properties only, rendering the male members of the family the only heirs entitled to inherit the land. The rest of the parliament did not take long to discuss this law: after brief consideration, the code was approved by all the members who commented on the proposal and voted. The rationale behind it was twofold: landed property in the family should be kept intact and women were not capable of farming. Ironically, they argued that this would enhance the economic and social status of the patriarch of the family and work best for its welfare. The eldest female member of the family was allowed to control the land only if no male heirs were alive, and she was compelled to appoint a male agent, such as her husband, as the farm manager. The Khedive approved the proposal and promulgated this law the same year; it was, no doubt, beneficial for the royal family too.\footnote{Hunsni (ed.), \textit{Mahadir Majlis Shura al-Nuwwab}, vol. 1, pp. 156-161; Ma‘iyya Saniyya Arabic, no. 23, part 1, 24 Dhu al-Hijja 1285.}

Thus, for many years to follow, the eldest male of the family that lived in the same household, or \textit{fi ma‘isha wahida}, took control of land, whether he was a brother, uncle, cousin, nephew or an in-law. It was a traditional social practice for extended families to live in one household, and this law further subjugated women in these households to male relatives. Some women in the villages of Qina refused to comply, but
taking their cases to court only affirmed the authority of the male landholder over them. Women who tried to claim their rights faced violent attacks by their male relatives that could possibly escalate to shooting at them. Sitt al-Ahl bint ‘Awad was shot by her nephews, while she and her sister were sleeping in their late father’s house, for establishing control over the inheritance of the family.\textsuperscript{419}

During these dark years, mysterious cases of deaths of female peasants appeared with unprecedented frequency in the province. Although these cases were recorded in state files to appear as honor killing crimes, their high frequency during this period suggests that other causes were behind them, which probably had to do with land inheritance disputes. The state usually registered honor killings as accidents of women catching fire or drowning in a local canal, in order to close the case without investigation and leave the killers without punishment, respecting local customs that did not consider these deaths as crimes. During this period, in recurrent cases, dead bodies of women were found floating in canals or burnt inside their houses, and the family insisted that the death was accidental.\textsuperscript{420} These women were probably killed by their male relatives in land disputes, and their families made it appear to the state as an honor killing to get away without punishment.

This law was abolished in 1881, and a new one was issued ordaining the division of landed property among heirs according to shari’a law provisions: two shares for the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{419} Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 429, Sijill 889, case 14, 11 Rabi‘ al-Akhir 1302.}\textsuperscript{420} See: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina and Isna, part 1-2, year 1287.
brother, one share for the sister, and one-eighth for the wife. As soon as this law was abolished, the women of Qina hurried to shari’a courts and the Supreme Court in Cairo to redeem their long-lost properties, which they were finally granted.

(6) The Bitter Sugar

The modern legal codes of private property, coupled with global market transformations, turned whole villages in Qina province into the private sugarcane plantations of Khedive Isma‘il and the royal family. Thousands of Qina’s peasants worked on those plantations, and the sugar factories attached to them employed other thousands of workers from the province. Their stories depict part of the reality of the plantations that shaped the lives of the subaltern inhabitants.

By the 1870s, Khedive Isma‘il and the royal family transformed whole villages in Qina into their own vast sugarcane plantations. After the end of the American war, cotton exports went through a period of decline, but still constituted half of the country’s revenue. To compensate for losses in the cotton market, Isma‘il Pasha envisioned making sugar for Upper Egypt what cotton was for the Delta. He expanded sugar cultivation in the southern provinces, primarily for his own private profit. While Isma‘il left the majority of cotton fields in the Delta to private landowners, the Pasha and the royal family established a monopoly over the sugarcane fields in the south, especially in Qina province. Thousands of faddans were annexed to the plantations that the royal family

421 Filib Jallad, *Qamus al-Idara waal-Qada‘*, vol. 1, p. 190.
422 For example: Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 428, Sijill 876, case 15, 23 Rajab 1301.
already owned, and modern sugar mills were built on them. As a result, all state actions in Upper Egypt revolved around the Pasha’s sugar.

By 1876, the royal family’s land leased to peasants amounted to more than 12,000 faddans in Qina and Isna, while it leased only a total of around 3000 faddans in all the Delta provinces. Small peasants lost more land to the Khedive’s plantations, called the Daira Saniyya, and many villages in the province became almost the private property of the royal family. While Naj‘ Hammadi had 32,000 faddan for the Daira, some of which were leased out and the rest employed seasonal labor, the area of Farshut had 12,000 faddans farmed mainly by seasonal labor.\textsuperscript{424} In 1870, the Khedive’s mother annexed a total of 3,531 faddans in five villages in the province to the Daira plantations, and the peasants of these villages were forced to surrender their fields to the government. In the official papers, the state claimed that the farmers and shaykhs of those villages submitted a petition to the state to relinquish their property rights to Isma‘il’s mother, who in turn agreed to purchase the land. Some peasants accepted the prices that the Mother Pasha offered for their land, and others requested that she replace these plots with others elsewhere. Soon afterwards, Bishara ‘Ubayd, the Copt agent of the French consul and owner of several plantations, rented hundreds of faddans of this land through an auction; he outbid the shaykhs and ‘umdas of those villages.\textsuperscript{425}

The Khedive annexed the small peasants’ land to his plantation through legal strategies. He reissued the decree that his predecessor promulgated about the small

\textsuperscript{425} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina and Isna, part 1, p. 95, 15 Rajab 1287.
properties of the runaway peasants. In 1865, the law affirmed that the *mutasahhib* runaway peasants who left their lands for more than three years would lose their right to it; either his heirs would take it or the state would declare it public property. In many cases the state confiscated the land from the legal heirs and annexed it to the Khedive’s plantations. In addition, to consolidate the plantations, the Daira exchanged fields with other large landowners. For example, Bishara ‘Ubayd gave up 950 faddans of his fields to the Daira in Armant in return for replacing them with land in another village. The royal family’s plantations expanded exponentially in the main regions of sugarcane cultivation in the province, such as Mata‘na, Armant, Dab‘iyya, and Naj‘ Hammadi.

The province had several large-scale modern sugar factories designed and run by French experts. The French *fabriqa* factories operated with steam engines and were fueled with coal, and the state recruited the province’s workers to construct them. They operated twenty-four hours a day; laborers worked according to a shifts system. They employed wage workers from the villages of the province, who were harshly punished if they showed any negligence in doing their job or were suspected of theft in the sugar mills. The modern factories of the Khedive hurt the traditional sugar industry of the province, which used deep and wide melting pots. The older sugar mills could not compete and gradually disappeared from the province. The modern mills relied on the

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426 Majlis Khususi (summaries), no. 71, 20 Jumada al-Thani 1282; Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 429, Sijill 885, case 454, 2 Muharram 1301.
427 Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina and Isna, part 1, p. 80, 11 Rajab 1287.
traditional sector only for supplying pottery containers (*ballas*) for the storage of molasses.\textsuperscript{429}

In Qina province, the government public works of irrigation, drainage, and transportation projects – all powered by steam engines – fully focused on the sugar plantations of the royal family. The only place where steam irrigation pumps and short railroads were constructed in the province was on these plantations, leaving the small plots of peasants to traditional farming methods. Modern engineers put the designs of new canals, dikes, and embankment projects and the state collected corvée labor to carry out work on the Khedive’s fields. In one incident, 6000 corvée workers from almost every single village in the province were drafted to finish one project in the Daira.\textsuperscript{430} Corvée laborers had no choice; they had to do the jobs assigned to them or they would be punished. The only thing they could ask for was to be assigned tasks in nearby villages. The laborers of the village of Mahamid had their shaykhs and ‘umdas submit a petition to ask for employment in the construction of irrigation steam pumps on the Armant plantation instead of Mata‘na’s, because the former was closer to their home village.\textsuperscript{431}

Life seemed the same in the villages where the Khedive’s plantations and their factories existed, as manifested in the common structural pattern of the villages and the daily activities of its peasants and workers. Mata‘na was a mother village that consisted of a cluster of five villages and a few hamlets on the west bank of the Nile. The

\textsuperscript{429} For example: Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina wa Isna, part 3, p. 91, 27 Ramadan 1287. Court records of this period show the decline of the native traditional sugar businesses.
\textsuperscript{430} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina wa Isna, part 3, p. 57, 26 Shawwal 1287.
\textsuperscript{431} Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina wa Isna, part 1, p. 73, 12 Ramadan 1287.
population of Mata’na farmed their own lands while working on the Daira. While some of the wage labor on the plantation worked full time, others were only seasonal laborers who worked on breaking and peeling sugarcane during the harvest time. To serve his plantations in Mata’na, the Khedive built a seven-eyed barrage, a canal, enormous steam irrigation pumps, and a sugar mill powered by steam engines, which had large stores of sugar and black honey (molasses used as basic Egyptian food) attached to it. Adjacent to the sugar mill were the mud-walled and brick houses of its workers and employees. The storehouses, the administrative offices, and the horse stable of the mill were located north of it. In the southern part of the village, the covered local market (qisariyya), shops, and coffee houses were located, and to the west were the houses of the village’s inhabitants. In the far north, there was a great palace with a vast garden enclosed with a fence, which apparently was the residence of the royal family.  

Armant was an ancient town with many villages attached to it. It had several royal family plantations, including that of the brother of the Khedive with its two sugar mills. The Pasha’s brother built a great mosque with a minaret in the town, which also had special residences for the plantations’ employees, and several flourishing local markets.  

In the village of Dab‘iyya, the ten thousand faddans of the Daira were irrigated by steam pumps, and two French sugar mills were built on them. A special railway line transported sugarcane to the two mills that worked around the clock, day and night. The mill had a steam light generator that lit the production lines, machines, and

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storage rooms. The mills of Dab’iyya worked only five months per year, the harvest
months, during which it squeezed sixty-six faddans of sugarcane daily and produced
eighty-eight qintars of refined white sugar and other four hundred qintars of brown sugar
in funnel shape. Part of the molasses was carried to the Greek factory in Mata’na to be
used in the production of ethanol.\footnote{Ibid., vol. 13, pp. 78-79.}

The town of Farshut served as one of the great commercial centers of the province
where European sugar-mill experts, employees, and workers of the Daira found their
needs met. After the textile factory that Muhammad Ali built in the town was closed
down, the town resorted to commerce. Farshut expanded into a town with two covered
markets, four commercial complexes, shops, coffee houses, and two houses serving
alcoholic beverages, as well as many mosques, and a Coptic church.\footnote{Ibid., vol. 14, pp. 68-69.} In Naj‘ Hammadi,
to the north of the province, the Daira cultivated 11,000 faddan of sugarcane, and the rest
of its 32,000 faddan plantation farmed grain. Sugarcane was irrigated by steam pumps
installed on the two banks of the Nile, and two canals were dug to increase access to
water resources. While some fields hired camels to transport the sugarcane from the
farms to the mill of the plantation, others used boats dragged by steam engines that the
state allocated especially for this plantation.\footnote{Ibid., vol. 9, p. 263.}

Although the years that followed the termination of the revolt did not witness any
novel uprisings in Qina, the subalterns of the Khedive’s plantations showed constant
resentment at their conditions. For the people of Qina, the telegraph was not a sign of an

\footnote{Ibid., vol. 13, pp. 78-79.}
\footnote{Ibid., vol. 14, pp. 68-69.}
\footnote{Ibid., vol. 9, p. 263.}
incoming benign modernity; it was rather the disciplining machine that brought the orders
to recruit corvée labor and collect taxes. Through the telegraph, the Daira requested
workers for labor on any part of the Pasha’s plantations. In 1870, only a few days after
the sugar mill in Mata’na sent orders to collect carpenters and construction workers, the
inhabitants of Naqada damaged two wooden pillars carrying the wires of the telegraph
line. 437 European merchants carried out large-scale commercial transactions in service for
the plantations, and the local marakbiyya boat captains were employed as wage-workers
for transportation purposes. The falatiyya bandits launched occasional attacks against
European merchants dealing with the plantations and stole their money. 438

In 1873, Jahin and his three landless brothers were restless falatiyya bandits in the
sugarcane fields and the steam pumps area of Mata’na. Their story began when the
shaykh of the fields attempted to force them into corvée labor. Refusing to go, they shot
at the shaykh, who ran away in fear, and fled with the sons of one of them and two other
villagers forming a gang of bandits that hid in the mountains. Since they were armed, it
was difficult to arrest them; the police force that chased after them into the mountain
returned to the governor of Mata’na empty handed. The governor sent reinforcements
composed of nine police soldiers to arrest them, and they also returned empty-handed
after they were threatened by the armed gang. They regularly raided the sugarcane fields
and beat their ghafir village watchmen, and the police could not reach them in their

437 Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina wa Isna, part 1, p. 25, p. 30, 21 and 24 Jumada al-Thani 1287; part 2, p. 24, 24
Rajab 1287.
438 Sadir Mudiriyyat Qina wa Isna, part 2, p. 30, 25 Jumada al-Thani 1285; part 1, p. 44, p. 49, 3 Rajab
1287.

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hiding place in the mountain. One of the brothers was killed, apparently during one of the raids. In order to take his long-awaited revenge on the abovementioned shaykh, Jahin accused him of killing the brother, and, moreover, accused him of attacking their house in the village and stealing wheat and corn. On his donkey, Jahin carried the body of his brother to the police to accuse the shaykh and the ghafir watchmen of the steam pumps of shooting him. Jahin claimed that he and his brother had been carrying, on that donkey, a half ardabb of barley and were on their way to sell it to pay their tax. As soon as they had arrived in the area of the Mata’na steam pumps to the east of the canal, Jahin added, the watchmen and their shaykhs killed his brother and stole the barley from him. The shaykh was put in jail for a prolonged period, but investigations proved that Jahin’s story was fabricated: they did not even have any land to cultivate barley. Nevertheless, finding no hard evidence against them, the police could not arrest the brothers and failed to convict them for any of their crimes on the plantation.439

In the same year, three workers from Mata’na attacked a shaykh with a knife and long, heavy sticks (nababit traditionally used in fighting as well as dancing) before they ran away. The shaykh was collecting corvée labor with the help of a ghafir village watchman to work on the steam pumps in Armant when he was attacked. Investigations revealed that the three workers in fact had run away from this job at the steam pumps and the shaykh was looking for other laborers to replace them. As soon as they saw him passing by, they panicked, injured him, and fled again. Following the incident, the houses

in the area were searched for weapons, and many knives and eight nababit heavy sticks were found and confiscated to prevent similar incidents in the future.\textsuperscript{440}

**Conclusion**

Qina’s revolt was a direct result of the hegemony of an informal empire exercising indirect control over Egypt. When the British Empire advocated modernity and the market economy, in the mid-nineteenth century, the Khedives of Egypt and their regimes, both subjugated to and co-opted by the Empire, embarked on modernization through economic liberalization applying many reforms: opening the door for free trade, promulgating new codes of private property in agricultural land, and inviting European experts to undertake many modern projects. However, the state violated liberal doctrines when they contradicted with the interests of the ruling elite. The rebels of Qina province rose against the steamers of dominant European merchants, who were empowered by free trade agreements. They acted against the plantations of the propertied class, Turkish bureaucrats, native elites, and Europeans, undergirded by modern laws of private property, and against the mines of foreign experts, who in turn dragged native workers into failing projects to search for coal and sulfur in the desert. All these tragic ramifications of the informal empire’s market economy affected the village of Salimiyya, in particular, and thus it was the place where the revolt erupted and consequently spread throughout the province.

\textsuperscript{440} Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 422, 5 Rabi’ Akhir 1299.
After the rebels were crushed, more market developments were still taking place in Qina, which added to the sufferings of the subalterns of the province. When the paternalist regime, pressured by the male heads of large landowning families issued new legal codes of private property, women became deprived of inheritance rights of agricultural land. In addition, in search of global markets, the Khedive transformed entire villages in Qina into his own private sugar plantations, turning thousands of peasants and workers in the province into seasonal laborers. Subaltern unrest in Qina never stopped, even when it was difficult for new revolts to erupt. The falatiyya bandits continued to play the main role in disturbing the dependent regime. British colonialism finally arrived to Egypt by the end of this era, in 1882, allegedly to bring political liberalization accompanied by more the market economy reforms, and provoke more bitter subaltern rebellion, as the next chapter will show.
CHAPTER 5
Rebellion in the Time of Cholera:
Under the British Empire, 1882-1920

In 1885, three years after the British colonized Egypt, an incident that appeared to be an ordinary theft in the local market of the village of Armant revealed the existence of a gang of bandits specialized in attacking Qina’s propertied politicians. The house of ‘Ali Afandi Ibrahim – a parliament member whose son later inherited his seat— was raided. Ibrahim was overseeing his plantation when a messenger sent by his son delivered the bad news: money and jewelry had been stolen from his house, along with the invaluable medal bestowed upon him by the Khedive in Cairo. After a few days, the police arrested two bandits by the names of Sa‘id and Ahmad in the market of Armant where they were trying to sell the stolen goods, but the Khedival medal was missing. Sa‘id and Ahmad completely denied the charges, and, despite their infamous reputation as bandits, insisted that they were only poor peasants. It was a five-hour trip from their village to the house of Ibrahim, in the city of Qus, and the road was surrounded by village watchmen as well as the police station, they asserted. As they alleged, this would make it impossible for them to reach the parliamentarian’s house for a raid. They did not even know where that house was, they added. Moreover, they alleged that it was a village watchman who stole the items and that after the crime he spent the night at their house before they all went to the market the next morning. They only went to keep him company, and to do some of
their own business as well. The reason the stolen things were found on them, they added, rather than with the watchman in the market was that he left his belongings with them and went for a walk. Nonetheless, the mystery was finally resolved: the missing medal resurfaced to provide undisputable evidence against the two bandits. They had taken it to a textile store and mortgaged it for garments. The local legal council did not find their account convincing, and sentenced Sa‘id and Ahmad to two years in jail.441

On the eve of the twentieth century, after two decades of British colonialism in Egypt, Qina looked quite different from the province that existed a quarter of a century before. Thanks to a liberal government and its urban planning, many signs of “modern” life appeared in the large towns of the province. Walking through the streets and alleys of the towns of Luxor, Naj’ Hammadi, and Qina, one would pass by new schools, a modern sugar factory, a civil court, a police station, a post office, a railroad station, a Catholic missionary school, European-modeled hotels, and new hospitals. Elite households with political influence and wealth took up residence in streets that carried the names of their families. Elite Copts in towns lived in their own streets too, adjacent to those of the well-to-do Muslims. Passing by the alleys of licensed prostitutes and belly dancers, along with special stops for donkeys and carts used for transportation in each town, one would notice the state’s keen attention to matters of urban organization. The streets were clean, well-lit

441 Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 43, Sijill 897, 20 Muharram 1303.
with new technology, and provided with clean drinking water. The state moved the local markets, especially those for cattle, to remote places for reasons of public sanitation.\textsuperscript{442}

Nonetheless, these signs of modernity did not mean much for the subaltern women and men inhabiting the numerous villages of the province. These were amenities which only the elite and European inhabitants of Qina’s towns enjoyed. The British Empire’s modern projects served only the propertied elite and advanced at the expense of subaltern women and men, this chapter argues. British colonialism officially began in Egypt in 1882 in the wake of the country’s debt crisis. Khedive Isma’il (r. 1862-1879) borrowed heavily from European creditors and failed to pay them back; as a result the British and French established dual control over Egyptian finances. They dethroned Isma’il and replaced him with Tawfiq (r. 1879-1892). Soon afterwards, high-ranking military officers and large landowners launched the ‘Urabi military coup, attempting to end European control, but the British army suppressed it and colonized Egypt. As soon as the British administration established itself as the sole colonizer, it claimed to embark on “liberal” reforms, reintroducing representative institutions and the market economy to the country as a great step toward building a Modern Egypt.\textsuperscript{443}

The British Empire’s political reforms included the formation of new representative institutions, primarily a new parliament in Cairo and local commissions in the provinces. A great inflow of foreign capital in the form of European companies and

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\textsuperscript{442} See for example: \textit{Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1900} (Cairo: al-Matba’a al-Amiriyya, 1889-), p. 191, p. 350-351, p. 381-382; \textit{Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi, 1904}, pp.146-151, p. 295; \textit{Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1902}, p. 30, p. 77, pp. 308-309.
\end{flushright}
banks marked the new economic liberalism. Nonetheless, as this chapter illustrates the Empire violated its own liberal rules when they contradicted with its interests, which created a state of ambiguous liberalisms in the country. Moreover, Cairo's parliament, elected local councils, and foreign capital, manifested by a sugar company and an agricultural bank, further peripheralized Qina province. Subaltern women and men in Qina endured episodes of the corruption of the co-opted elite who represented them in allegedly democratic institutions, land losses on the part of small peasants to foreign capital, and, finally, recurring epidemics of cholera and the plague. In response, the subalterns of Qina continued to rebel against the Empire and its co-opted elite. It was a rebellion of their own fashion; non-nationalist in character, which instead invoked the memory of the old massive revolts of the province and revived the legacy of its great late bandits.

(1) Political Peripheralization

With the military occupation of Egypt, the British created a new regime and called for the removal of the old despotic, corrupt government. Regardless of its liberal discourse, the British colonial order of things was largely a continuation of the ancien régime it purported to support. Cairene politics continued to be dominated by the same northern elite of large cotton-producing landowners whose interest was closely tied to that of British textile industrialists. Democratic reforms, manifested in the elections of a new parliament and the formation of local representative commissions resulted in the same elite families, re-co-opted by the colonizer, maintaining their seats in modernized
legislative councils. The situation in Qina only reflected the continuity of the old regime, at the expense of the subalterns of the province.

*The Parliament of the Rich*

British electoral reforms, promulgated in the May 1883 Law, reserved the right to run for parliamentary elections for male members of the large wealthy families. Existing legislations had restricted parliamentary seats to large landowners who could pay a land tax of 500 piasters or more; the new British electoral law raised this amount to 5000 piasters. More importantly, the same old members won the seats of the province regardless of their legacy of oppression and popular opposition to their rule.

An example of the continuity of the old regime in Qina is Tay‘ Salama, the ‘umda (mayor) of the village of Qamula South in Qus, who held a seat in the parliament from 1876 to 1890. In October 1883, Salama was elected to the new reformed legislative council of 1883. Only three months later, in January, the people of Qus raised a complaint to the parliament asserting that Salama did not have the right to represent the province. He had violently seized land when he was a member of the previous legislative council, and had been convicted and sentenced to jail twice; all his crimes were recorded in the minutes of Qina’s provincial council. Peasants had filed many other lawsuits against him for seizing their lands, and some of them had already obtained court

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decisions against him while others were still pending. The people of the province had raised a petition against him to the Ministry of Interior while the elections were still in progress, but they received no response. The northern members of the parliament responded that it was too late to raise such a complaint, since he was already a member now, and that this matter was outside their realm of jurisdiction. In the end, nothing changed: Salama not only remained in this council but he was also elected to the subsequent parliament in 1889. Moreover, the corrupt reign of the Salama family continued for the next generation through his son, al-Hibashi, who, like his father, expropriated the lands of peasants by force.

Another example is Muhammad bek ‘Umar bek, member of parliament from 1896 to 1901. He was, like many other parliamentarians, involved in money lending to small peasants and confiscated their lands when they defaulted. This practice was largely one of the ways in which ‘Umar expanded the landed properties of his family. He came from a large family in Abu Manna’, al-Jaharid, which was part of the co-opted elite of Khedive Sa‘id’s and Isma‘il’s regimes. The history of this family can be traced back to the Ottoman period when they were tax farmers with political influence. Under Sa‘id and Isma‘il, the family expanded its property under the new land codes and many of the members of the family attained high ranking positions in the army and the government.

For example, several secured positions as district administrators. Ahmad bek Muhammad

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448 ‘Abdin, Iltimasat, portfolio 473, 27 January 1921.
(d. 1862) was an army colonel and a member of the Supreme Court in Cairo, two of his sons became the vice-governors of Qina and Isna provinces, and his other son ‘Umar bek (d.1873) became the governor of Jirja and then Asyut province. The parliamentarian Muhammad ‘Umar, his son who obtained the highly prestigious title of bek, collaborated with village shaykhs and ‘umdas and other beks in the province in oppressing small peasants and taking their lands. Peasants complained to the cabinet of ministers in Cairo, but he was influential enough to keep possession of what he had stolen.

Khalil Ahmad al-‘Udaysi, another parliament member, came from one of the most corrupt, oppressive families in the province. His own father was an infamous local tyrant. “Ahmad bek al-‘Udaysi…was an oppressive man with power and abilities. All authorities feared him and helped him in any action he took.” Al-‘Udaysi was the former governor of Isna and al-Salmiyya districts and was also hired as the manager of the royal plantations in Armant and Mata‘na. Before he died, he transferred the lands of one Ahmad Muhammad, from al-Salimiyya south, to his own son who also carried the name of Ahmad Muhammad. The new property deed simply added the title bek to the name of the original owner, making the 100 faddans the property of the son of al-‘Udaysis. The real Ahmad filed lawsuits in courts and submitted complaints to different authorities in the province, but nothing worked against the powerful bek. After al-‘Udaysi died, Ahmad thought that he could finally get back his land by filing a complaint against his heirs, but

452 ‘Abdin, Iltimasat, Qadaya, portfolio 515, 24 September 1907; Subhi, Tarikh al-Haya al-Niyabiyya fi Misr, vol. 6, p.42.
the sons were as devious as the deceased father. To make things worse, their uncle was a village ‘umda and supported his nephews with violent means. The hopeless Ahmad had to raise his petition to the Ottoman Sultan ‘Abd Al-Hamid himself and to the Egyptian government in Cairo.\textsuperscript{453}

The rich provincial elite not only monopolized parliamentary seats in Cairo, but also the seats of local councils. Starting from 1890, when the local commissions, \textit{al-majalis al-mahaliyya}, were founded in Qina as one of the great liberal achievements of the colonial administration,\textsuperscript{454} the same wealthy elite dominated them and exploited their position to further their own interests. Subalterns of the middle- and low-class groups in the province rejected the establishment and work of these commissions, and even called for their dissolution. For example, in 1922, Coptic and Muslim peasants and merchants of Farshut petitioned the Khedive in Cairo to abolish the town’s new commission, asserting that the council did not represent their interests. “Those who promoted this project [the commission] are no more than classes advancing personal interests. They are people who have no goal but harming us...” There was a single agenda behind the founding of this commission, that is, to repair one road and fill in the swamps around it. The project was funded by the tax money of the town but benefited only the members of the commission, the petitioners charged.\textsuperscript{455}

The local commission of the city of Qina began a series of projects that met with the angry rejection of the women and men of the city. In April of 1921, four women,\textsuperscript{456} 

\textsuperscript{453} Ibid. The source does not indicate how the case ended. 
\textsuperscript{454} Majlisi al-Wuzara’, Nizarat al-Dakhiliyya, Majalis al-Mudiriyya, 27 December 1890. 
\textsuperscript{455} ‘Abdin, Iltimasat, portfolio 473, no. 29, 12 Jan 1922.
Nabiha, Sabrin, ʿAziza and Zahra, signed a petition together with four men to object to the constitution of a new town square. They requested the government disapprove the project because it would entail knocking down their commercial properties for no real benefit to the city. Cairo ordered officials in Qina to open an investigation.\textsuperscript{456} The same year, the commission began constructing a new long street splitting the city in two, east and west. It also required razing about two hundred houses inhabited by five thousand people, in addition to shops, banks, windmills, and gardens. Prominent Muslim and Coptic merchants, the leader of the Ashraf dignitaries, a Coptic priest, a lawyer, a teacher, and other inhabitants filed a petition against launching the project. They were on the verge of losing their houses and their businesses. The petitioners insisted that the members of the council chose to develop this street because it would do no harm to them; none of the members’ residences or businesses would be hurt by the new street.\textsuperscript{457}

\textit{Economic Reform, not for Qina}

Despite the wealth and power it enjoyed in the south, the co-opted elite of Qina, was, in fact, a second-class elite in the colonial regime. The first-class was comprised of those more closely tied to the colonizer by strong economic interests: the much wealthier cotton cultivators in the Delta who exported their precious cash crop to the British textile mills. By failing to do anything in the parliament to pursue the interests of the subalterns of Qina, the voice of the southern second-class elite was muted. As they were themselves

\textsuperscript{456}ʿAbdin, Ittimasat, portfolio 473, no. 23, 13 April 1921.
\textsuperscript{457}ʿAbdin, Ittimasat, portfolio 473, no. 12, 2 December 1921.
marginalized in the regime, they contributed to furthering the economic marginalization and peripheralization of the south. That becomes clear upon looking at issues affecting taxation, the irrigation system, railways, and corvée labor in Qina province.

In February 1886, the parliamentarians of Upper Egypt presented a proposal to modify the timetable of tax collection in the southern provinces. According to the government’s pre-set timetable, landowners paid the required annual tax in monthly installments— two-thirds of which were to be collected over the course of the three months of the winter grain harvest. Upper Egyptian parliamentarians proposed modifying this timetable asserting, “the situation in Upper Egypt is apparent to the public: its crops are not sufficient to fulfill the required taxes and its population lives in extreme misery and poverty. The government should consider the comfort of the people and what benefits them in modifying the tax timetable.” At the same time, the parliament members of the Delta made a similar request for Lower Egypt. The parliament submitted the two proposals to the government, but, ironically, the government considered only the Delta’s and completely ignored that of Upper Egypt; it did not even refer to the southern request in its correspondence with the parliament. A prominent Delta member, ‘Abd al-Ghaffar Pasha of Munufiyya province, attempted to justify the government’s position by suggesting that it might have thought it reasonable to collect the largest portion of taxes during the grain harvest time, because this was the main crop cultivated in Upper Egypt. In the meantime, Upper Egyptian members did not persist, apparently convinced by that rationale. Six months later, in August of the same year, the cabinet issued its final decree approving the proposal of the Delta and completely rejecting the request of Upper Egypt.
Moreover, two years later, the parliament approved a modification of Upper Egypt’s tax timetable which was exactly the opposite of what Upper Egyptians had requested: it doubled the amount of tax collected during the winter harvest months. Interestingly enough, it was the prominent Delta parliament members who voted to pass this decree while the voices of Upper Egyptian members were totally silent. 458

Without doubt, this caused more misery for the peasants of Upper Egypt. Only two months after the new decree was passed, an Upper Egyptian parliamentarian asserted that the market for the winter harvest of grain in the south was suffering from stagnation and the peasants could not pay their taxes. As a result, the government confiscated their lands, and imposed extra fines, until they settled their debts. The issue was never resolved. Once more, in 1890, Upper Egyptian parliament members renewed their complaints about the tax timetable, and requested that a committee of ‘umdas and shaykhs in each province design a proposal for a new one. In the Delta, by contrast, the members were content with their tax timetable and thought the government to be fair. 459

Reforming the irrigation system for cotton cultivation purposes was a top priority for the colonial administration. Under the supervision of the British Inspector-General of the Ministry of Public Works, Colonel Scott Moncrieff, extensive projects were undertaken in the Delta during the 1880s to transform the system from basin to perennial

459 Mahadir Jalasat Majlis Shura al-Qawanin, 3 Sha‘ban 1305-14 April 1888; 27 Rabi‘ Thani 1308-2 December 1890, pp. 87-89.
irrigation. Meanwhile, the Delta elite sabotaged early calls to reform the irrigation system in Upper Egypt, apparently in order to prevent the region from competing with the north in cotton production. Upper Egypt from Asyut southwards did not benefit from any irrigation reforms which affected the productivity of the region at large. In 1893, after more than ten years of British colonialism, when the parliament member of Jiza province, in Middle Egypt, raised the issue of introducing new canals for summer cultivation, an Asyut member finally took the opportunity to raise the issue of Upper Egypt too. He said that the provinces of Upper Egypt were deprived of water for summer cultivation and did not make as much annual income as the cotton-cultivating north did. Upper Egypt had to pay higher taxes that did not correspond to the marginal profits from other cash crops. He asked to attach his request to introduce public works for summer cultivation to the proposal of the member from Jiza. The Delta members not only unanimously voted to decline the two proposals, but also decided not to inform the government about them on grounds that the government’s budget could not cover their high costs.

If there were any irrigation reforms taking place in Upper Egypt, they were limited to The Daira Saniyya, the plantations of the Khedive and the royal family. In 1895, Lord Cromer was made aware of the impact on the peasantry.

The peasants cannot raise cotton or sugar-cane except to a very limited extent by means of irrigation by hand (shadoofs) because their lands are not embanked; they are however tantalized by seeing splendid crops of both these profitable staples.

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460 See for example: Memorandum on Egyptian Affairs, 1884, FO 881/4906, p. 8.
grown in their neighborhood on the Daira estates and where the farms are embanked, and where steam pumps furnished plenty of water.  

The situation did not improve over the next ten years. In 1904, the peasants of Isna brought a petition to the government to complain about the lack of irrigation pumps in their villages, the absence of which caused great hardship for farmers and plunged their lives into misery.  

While railways were widely constructed in the Delta, Alexandria and Port Said throughout the 1880s and 90s, Qina province went without railroads until nearly the end of the century. Rail lines went everywhere in the north, heavily used in the transportation of agricultural produce, primarily cotton to Alexandria. In addition to the main railways the government constructed by public funds in the north, the rich Delta parliament members promulgated a “Railways Law,” which mandated the construction of short private railroads at their expense to help transport their own produce. This was a law that members of the poorer elite of Qina could not use for the lack of capital in a province that did not enjoy big cotton profits. In 1890, the Railways Department submitted a proposal to the cabinet of ministers requesting LE3000 to prepare a plan for a railroad line from Jirja province to Luxor crossing through Qina, and another line from Qina to its Red Sea port of Qusayr crossing through the desert in order to serve regional trade. The Ministry of Public Works rejected the Qina-Qusayr line, insisting that it would not

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463 Abdin Arabic, microfilm 476, Sijill 4, p. 133, 20 December 1904.  
464 Majlis al-Wuzara, Majlis Shura al-Qawanin, portfolio 3/2/B, 22 October 1890.
generate enough profit to justify its cost. The Ministry thought that the Luxor line would be more beneficial, given the foreign communities that settled in the town, but still rejected it, on the grounds that it needed to do more research to ensure that this line would be profitable. The Department of Railways proposed that the funds needed for the plan be extracted from the revenue of the department itself and not from the government budget, which the British-led financial committee vetoed since the railways’ revenue was a major item in the budget earmarked for the service of foreign debt.\(^{465}\)

Aside from a limited line for the mail service, Qina province continued for the following six years without railways. Finally, the project was only approved when the French-British sugar company, the Société Générale des Sucreries, proposed it. In 1896, the cabinet approved the proposal submitted by the Ministry of Public Works to license the sugar company for constructing narrow agricultural railroads crossing over the canals and barrages in Farshut and its suburbs to transport sugarcane to the factory in the city of Naj‘ Hammadi, in the north of Qina province. At last, the line from Naj‘ Hammadi to Qina was completed and opened for business.\(^{466}\) This railway was a private line that probably benefited the population of the province very little. The same year the colonial administration also decided to construct railways between Qina and northern Sudan, to

\(^{465}\) Majlis al-Wuzara’, Jalast Majlis al-Nuzzar, portfolio 5/L, 5 June 1890; portfolio 5/M, 9 July 1890; 24 July 1890.

Halfa, but primarily in order to serve the military campaign in Dunqula.\footnote{Majlis al-Wuzara’, Jalast Majlis al-Nuzzar, portfolio 5/S, 30 April 1896.} Once again, this was another line not designed to serve the population of the province.

When it came to abolishing corvée labor in the country, the British liberal, humanist call did not affect the subalterns of Qina. In 1883, as soon as British occupation took hold, a broad public debate occurred in the government and the parliament about abolishing one of the most despotic practices of the old regime in Egypt, that of corvée labor. Both British administrators and large landowners in the Delta fiercely supported a law for partial corvée abolition, according to which peasants could pay \textit{badaliyya} fees to be exempted from this work.\footnote{Nathan Brown argues that it was only the British who should be credited for the abolition of corvée labor. It was the landed elite in the north that needed wage labor in their estates and did not want the government to take this labor for public work in the seasons they were most needed. Nathan Brown, “Who Abolished Corvée Labour in Egypt and Why?,” \textit{Past & Present}, August, 1994. pp. 116-137.} An extra tax was levied from the owners of the large estates that benefited from public works and previously profited from corvée labor, and the state used this tax to hire contractors of wage laborers. In 1888, in the Delta, the fees were collected from all the inhabitants of the Sharqiyya province, and only 2,804 corvée laborers were recruited in Munfuuiyya and Gharbiyya provinces together. On the other hand, the government collected no exemption fees from the laborers of Qina and forced 13,740 of them to work for one hundred days.\footnote{\textit{Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1889}, table no. 296.} The abolition took place gradually; in the beginning whoever paid the fees was exempted, and then the 1889 law was passed to completely ban corvée. Between 1898 and 1901, corvée labor completely disappeared in the Delta provinces; none of the six provinces in Lower Egypt had records of a single
corvée worker. In Upper Egypt, corvée labor persisted. In Qina, the number decreased from 1,370 to 802, but it continued to exist particularly in the royal family plantations.\textsuperscript{470}

The corvée workers of Upper Egypt gradually became cheap labor for public works in the prosperous north. For a full five months during the summer, the laborers of Upper Egypt were unemployed, because the government did not expand summer cultivation, mainly cotton, into the southern provinces. In 1889, the governor of Asyut province proposed that the Ministry of Public Works recruit these laborers to dig canals and build bridges in the country using contractors to collect them.\textsuperscript{471} In 1902, the government alleged that it recruited corvée laborers from the southern part of Upper Egypt (Suhaj and Qina provinces) in order to prevent Upper Egyptian people from vandalizing the state irrigation projects in the south.\textsuperscript{472}

\textit{The Nation Goes South}

Despite this absolute marginalization, northern nationalistic discourse insisted on incorporating the south into the project of an imagined nation. The second-class treatment of Qina’s co-opted elite did not stop them from embracing the northern elite’s national rhetoric and imposing it on the subalterns of the peripheralized province. It was the same corrupt local figures that were now introducing a new discourse of northern hegemony.

\textsuperscript{470} \textit{Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1902}, p. 503.
\textsuperscript{472} \textit{Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1902}, p. 504.
The subalterns of Qina probably had their first encounter with the northern nationalist discourse in the wake of the ‘Urabi military coup (1881-1882), which erupted after the debt crisis and the subsequent British/French dual control of the country’s finances. Qina’s inhabitants did not see any benefit for themselves in the new government. The nationalist colonels of the coup maintained the same northern and southern elite families of landowners in the government and the parliament. Tay’ Salama and Ahmad ‘Ali al-‘Udaysis bek, two of the most corrupt parliament members in the ancien régime, preserved their seats in the parliament under the allegedly liberating new regime.473

If education was a main tool deployed in elite invention and diffusion of a national identity, according to post-colonial theorists,474 the local elite of Qina followed the rules. When the Khedive founded a modern Islamic school in the city of Qina, the local elite hurried to establish charitable waqf endowments to support this school. They asserted that their goal was primarily to serve the “nation.” In 1899, Muhammad Afandi ibn ‘Ali endowed one faddan to support the Khedival modern school in the province, “al-Madrasa al-Khairiyya al-Islamiyya,” named after the crown prince. The school was to teach both Islamic and modern sciences. In the waqf deed, Muhammad Afandi asserted that his goal was “to serve the sons of the nation” (li khidmat abna’ al-watan).

Interestingly enough, Tay’a Salama, the parliament member against whom thousands of

peasants petitioned, was appointed as the waqf manager under the supervision of the Muslim governor of Qina.475

Similarly, Ibrahim Ahmad bek endowed three faddans to support the same school. Ahmad bek came from the same wealthy and politically influential family of ‘Umar bek the parliament member, in Abu Manna‘ South in Dishna. He also asserted that the goal of his charitable endowment was to improve the status of “the sons of the nation” (abna‘ al-watan) and also assigned Tay‘ Salama as the endowment manager.476 Other members of politically influential families, who themselves or whose fathers or brothers were parliament members or high-ranking officials, endowed even larger tracts of land. It almost turned into a contest between families to endow land to support the national cause of the Khedival school.477

Thus, in Qina province, village and town landed notables, a’yan, carrying the titles of Shaykhs, ‘umdas, afandis, and beks were co-opted by the colonizer and the native northern ruling elite alike. Through elections, the regime made provincial corrupt oppressors parliament members and founders of local commissions. They adopted the nationalist rhetoric forged by the northern elite and advanced it among the subalterns of the province. The non-cotton cultivating, and consequently considerably less rich, elite of Qina in fact remained on the margin of the regime, as it was regarded in Cairo as a second-class elite. Their economic demands for the south were ignored in the interest of

475 Qina Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 125, case 92, p. 61-62, 4 November 1899.
476 Dishna Court, Sijill Ishhadat, Murafa‘at, Mubaya‘at and Tarikat no. 141, case 100, pp. 86-87, 22 July 1900.
477 Dishna Court, Sijill Ishhadat, Murafa‘at, Mubaya‘at and Tarikat no. 141, case 39, pp. 36-38, 24 March 1900.
the cotton-producing north. The colonial administration and the northern ruling elite economically peripheralized Qina, and the local co-opted elite contributed to this peripheralization.

(2) Foreign Capital: The Great Land Losses

The British liberal emphasis on the principles of market economics in Egypt was another tool of hegemony that enhanced the peripheralization of Upper Egypt. Economic historians of the British Empire consider the free market to be one of the great gifts that the empire presented to its colonies, and the free inflow of foreign capital was one of the main components of this economic liberalization. Upper Egypt remained isolated from any inflow of foreign capital for a long time, as foreign investments in estates and industries were concentrated in the cotton producing north. Finally, at the turn of the century, two main capitalist foreign institutions decided to penetrate Qina: a sugar company and a rural bank. Their intrusions in the province resulted in massive land losses and severe poverty.

The Sugar Company: Losing Land

In the last few years of the 1890s, a foreign sugar company appeared in Qina’s villages and purchased thousands of acres from the sugar plantations of the royal family, generating massive unrest among the peasants of the province. The Société Générale des

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Sucreries et de la Raffineries d’Égypte, a joint French-British venture, started out in Qina province by founding a factory in the city of Naj‘ Hammadi, in the north of the province closer to the large sugarcane fields in Farshut. The company purchased the sugar plantations of the Daira Sanīyya (the royal family’s estates) that were privatized as part of the fiscal reform policy to pay off the country’s debt. By 1902, the company had already purchased the Daira’s fields, sugar factories, irrigation engines, animals, etc. in Qina and elsewhere in Middle and Upper Egypt.

In May of 1898, the 35,000 farmers of the villages of Armant, Maris, Rayyaniyya, and Ruzayqat sent an urgent telegram to Lord Cromer and the parliament in Cairo to complain about the sale of the Daira plantations on which they worked. The peasants who rented these lands insisted that the government in the past had confiscated it from their ancestors, so they had been reduced to tenants on their own lands. In Armant, for example, tenants were annually exempted from half of the rent in return for half for the harvest. The Daira provided them with the irrigation water from the steam pump, while peasants had to provide labor, seeds, fertilizers, etc. Peasants were made to sign pledges stating that they were obliged to pay the rent of the land they left uncultivated as compensation for their negligence. In 1883, the lawyer of the Daira sued twelve peasants renting 250 faddans of the plantation land for rent after leaving it uncultivated. The Supreme Court ruled that they pay rent and other costs.479 From the 1860s on, thousands of peasants forfeited their plots to the Daira in Qina. Landlessness and employment in the sugar industry became the norm in the province. For example, in 1883, as his father fled

479 Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 424, case 184, 18 Rabi‘ al-Akhir 1300.
his land after failing to pay taxes and left his family landless, Ahmad Yusuf of al-
Salimiyya village worked on the Armant sugar plantation of the Daira.480

With the purchase of the land by the Société Générale des Sucreries, the farmers
heard the news that their leases would be broken and, moreover, the government would
sell off their assets, including the farmers’ own cattle, houses, waterwheels, and
machinery. As a solution to their crisis, peasants proposed to purchase the land at the
prices that the government set but by paying installments at a reasonable rate of interest.
The government never responded to this proposal, and the parliament declared it outside
its area of jurisdiction. 481 This resulted in one of the most massive land losses in the
province’s history and affected tens of thousands of tenant farmers.

The sugar company turned the city of Naj’a Hammadi into a major urban center,
where numerous landless laborers worked either for the company or in projects
supporting it. The company mobilized government and foreign capital resources for the
development of basic infrastructure to facilitate its businesses. It received government
permission in 1897 to construct narrow railways between Naj’a Hammadi and Farshut to
transport sugarcane to the factory premises.482 A French construction company, based in
Paris, worked on building a bridge on which the railroad ran, which later became one of
the largest bridges in the province. The laborers of the province were employed on the
project, but the safety and protection measures against accidents that the company
provided them were so deficient that many were injured or killed at the construction site.

480 Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 426, Sijill 863, case 1090, 28 Jumada al-Awwal 1300.
481 Majlis al-Wuzara, Majlis Shura al-Qawanin portfolio 3/2/Jim, 9 May 1898.
In one incident, thirteen workers were killed when the bridge’s cylinder fell on them. The families of the thirteen workers had to hire a French lawyer to sue the foreign construction company and request compensation. The company had paid the workers’ families only LE200, but the lawyer negotiated with the company to add another LE600, which was still much less than the families had hoped. The French company did not respond, and its lawyer argued that the wages of these workers were low and thus their families deserved small compensation. The dispute was prolonged for months until, after government intervention, the families and their lawyer accepted the small compensation they were offered in a telegram from Paris.\footnote{Majlis al-Wuzara’, Jalast Majlis al-Nuzzar, portfolio 5/Nun, 30 July 1896.}

In 1905, the sugar company declared bankruptcy, after only a few years of work, partially damaging the reputation of foreign capital as competent and efficient. Violating the main free market rule of non-interference in the economy, the colonial administration decided to assist the company to remedy its problems. The company was rewarded for its bankruptcy: it “was given a new lease of life under fresh auspices, with diminished charges and additional working capital. The Government redeemed its promise of assistance by taking over the company’s railway system at a cost of 400,000 lire.” The government emphasized the need to concentrate and expand sugar cultivation in the “southern provinces,” Qina and Jirja, as Middle Egypt was increasingly focused on growing the more lucrative cotton.\footnote{Reports by His Majesty’s Agent and Consul-General on the Finance, Administration and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1906, p.49.}
In the following years, the activities of the company, backed with extensive government support, brought about more devastating effects to the sugarcane farmers of Qina. The farmers in the village of Hasanat complained to the government, in 1911, against one common corrupt practice of the company. The peasants asserted that sugarcane was the only crop their village farmed and that they survived by selling it to the company. The company cheated in weighing what they bought and paid them less than what they deserved. They complained that the government did not inspect the company’s weights and measures, which allowed it to cheat peasants with impunity.485

More importantly, the government set low prices for sugarcane which benefited the company at the expense of peasants. During WWI, the government allowed the prices of different crops to rise but prohibited the sugarcane cultivators of Upper Egypt from raising their prices. Sugarcane farmers, Copts and Muslims, in the villages of Armant, Maris, Mata’na and Dab’iyya were making no profit on their harvests while their costs multiplied. Suffering from poverty and debt, they petitioned to the government in 1917 to raise the prices of sugarcane, especially when the situation became more desperate during the war. The farmers said,

Our houses were ruined, we lack the necessary food, and our debts are accumulating because of the government’s oppression. We have been crying out to the government for more than a year but nobody listens to our cries...While the prices of cotton and other crops multiplied...we grow sugarcane and the sugar company pays us the same old price, 3 piasters per qintar...the war conditions force us to purchase the farming needs at high prices. The prices of coal for the irrigation engines, oil, iron, and fertilizers multiplied three and four times. The wages of seasonal laborers and camels multiplies because the military authorities [British army] recruited many of them for its operations. We buy the grain to feed

485 ‘Abdin, Iltimasat, portfolio 494, 30 January 1911.
our children at a doubled price. Thus, how could it be fair that the company purchases our sugarcane at the same price set before the war? The company insists that it is the government that pre-sets the price and it is not willing to pay more. The truth is that the price of sugar in Egypt now is half or even a third its price all over the world...the current price of sugarcane is not sufficient to cultivate, and we have failed to pay the taxes and the rents of the lands to their owners.\footnote{\textsuperscript{486}}

\textit{The Agricultural Bank: Losing Land, Once More}

British administrators from the first year of occupation showed deep concern about the “indebtedness of the fellaheen,” or about relieving the peasants of the country from their long accumulated loans. Interestingly enough, Lord Cromer preached in his reports that the best way to accomplish this was to give peasants more debt, albeit at a lower interest rate. For that noble purpose, British capitalists in London founded the Agricultural Bank in 1902 and became its main shareholders. Once again, foreign capital in the province caused great loss of land for the farmers of Qina. By 1908, thousands of Qina’s female and male small peasants were crying out for government help against the Bank which seized their lands. Ironically, although the colonial administration insisted on adhering to the main principle of the market economy, that is, non-government intervention in private capital matters, and refused to help the peasants, it did heavily interfere to serve the interests of the Bank.

When the foreign debt crisis broke out in Egypt in the 1870s, it posed a problem not only for the government but also for peasants. Thousands of peasants were indebted to European capitalists and could not repay their loans, especially in the Delta. The

\footnote{\textsuperscript{486}} 'Abdin, Iltimasat, portfolio 495, 8 May 1917; 20 May 1917; November 1921.  
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'Urabi revolt adopted nationalist rhetoric assuring indebted peasants that the revolutionary government would alleviate their suffering. After the British army removed the ‘Urabi government, Lord Cromer raised the problem of Egyptian peasants’ refusal to pay off their debts to European creditors, in his first report from Egypt in 1883: “The declarations made during the rebellion by Arabi and other causes having led to a very general belief among the fellaheen that they need not pay their debts at all, a Circular was…issued by the minister of interior to the Mudirs [governors] of Upper and Lower Egypt, declaring that the Egyptian government has no intention whatever of paying the debts of the fellaheen…” 487 Following liberal economic principles, the colonial administration affirmed that this was a private capital matter in which it could not interfere; the government promised “de ne s’immiscer en aucune façon dan le règlement des affaires privées.” 488 Throughout the rest of the 1880s and in 1890s, the issue of the “indebtedness of the fellaheen” appeared often in Cromer’s annual reports. He claimed to sympathize with the hardship of peasants, and suggested that private capital should play a role in resolving their problems. 489

Asserting that the debt crisis originated from borrowing at high interest rates, Cromer proposed to establish a bank to give peasants more loans at lower rates so they could pay off their old debts. In 1899, he tested the idea first by opening an agricultural loan department in the National Bank of Egypt, founded only one year earlier by British

487 Memorandum on Egyptian Affairs. Course of Events and Progress of Reforms in Egypt since the Conclusion of Lord Dufferin’s Special Mission, 1884. FO 881/4906, p. 14.
488 Ibid.
489 Reports by his Majesty’s Agent and Consul-General on the Finance, Administration and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1898, pp. 16-17.
capitalists. In 1902, Cromer made this department into a separate company, the Agricultural Bank of Egypt. British capitalists were the main shareholders of this company, particularly Sir Ernest Cassel who maintained good connections with British bankers, like the Rothschilds, and foreign bankers in Egypt, such as the Suarés brothers. The allegedly laissez-faire government intervened to assist the bank: Cromer approved the stipulation that the government would guarantee a minimum return of 4 per cent on the investments at the Agricultural Bank. Furthermore, he allowed the Bank to use the government tax clerks to collect loans and interest from peasants.490

In the following few years, the Agricultural Bank extended its reach to Qina province, deep in the south of the country. The peasants of the province were not as indebted to foreign creditors as their counterparts in the Delta, where European moneylenders were concentrated. Rather, they had borrowed from local capitalists of elite families, parliament members, and Copts. Court records demonstrate that Qina’s small farmers used to lend to each other or borrow from elite women and men, both Muslims and Copts, in the province. Loans took the form of qirad shar‘i contracts, a form of loan with interest not forbidden by shari‘a law. Loans were mostly small, less than the price of one faddan. For example, ‘Itra bint Sulayman, an affluent woman residing in the city of Qina, gave a shar‘i loan of 1,560 piasters to both Ahmad the son of Mas‘ud and Fatima the daughter of Ahmad.491 Rich Muslims and Copts extended land mortgages to small and medium peasants. ‘Abdu Maryam, a rich Copt, was one of the

491 Mudiriyyat Qina Court, Madbatat Ishhadat, Sijill no. 3, p. 46, 9 April 1883.
main lenders in Dishna district, and he used to give loans to Coptic and Muslim peasants alike who wanted to mortgage their lands to obtain the capital needed to cultivate it or for other purposes. 492 Similarly, parliament members such as Muhmmad Bek ‘Umar extended land mortgages to peasants. 493

When the Agricultural Bank arrived in Qina’s villages, thousands of small peasants mortgaged their lands to it. They resorted to this in expectation that the European company’s capital might improve their harvests and ameliorate their poor living conditions. For example, Ayyush bint Salim, a widow from Dishna with two minor sons, mortgaged the half of a faddan she had inherited from her husband. She hoped to augment her small income to support her two sons after losing other lands to her step-son who deprived her and her sons of their inheritance. 494

For more than ten years, thousands of farmers in the village of Hasanat, in Naj‘ Hammadi, suffered from different types of crises with minimum government help, and the Bank appeared to be a last venue of hope for them. They struggled with the high flooding of the Nile which drowned their houses and harvests in 1887, and the government only responded with insufficient charities. So they had to take out large loans from the local rich at extremely high rates of interest to build new houses and purchase new cattle and seeds. Unfortunately, this was followed by other dark years of low Nile inundation or bad weather conditions that hurt their harvests and delayed payments of

492 See: Isna Court, Sijill Ishhadat no. 111, 1892.
493 For example: Dishna Court, Ishhadat, Murafa‘at, Mubaya‘at, and Tarikat, Sijill no. 136, case 274, p. 65, 11 Jumada al-Thani 1316-26 October 1898.
494 ‘Abdin, Iltimasat, portfolio 496, 30 February 1908.
their loans, which accumulated more interest. Thus, in the words of the peasants of Hasanat, “the Bank appeared with the government partaking in its administration, and we were under the illusion that if we dealt with it, it would consolidate our loans and we would see good financial results.”

Unfortunately, the hopes of these peasants were soon shattered when the Bank started to confiscate their lands and evict them on a massive scale. Five years after its arrival in Qina, the Bank took cases of the peasants who failed to pay back their loans to the mixed court in Cairo, where European judges ruled according to modernized civil laws, and obtained verdicts to evict them and seize their lands. The cases of the villagers of Qina were judged according to the rules of modern banking and civil codes, which they were without doubt unfamiliar with, and were heard in the civil courts of Cairo, where they had probably never been. They collectively complained to the government that they had failed to pay the debt installments because of numerous crises they had faced. The farmers of villages such as Armant, Khuzam, Nagada, and Isna had to face reoccurring years of low Nile inundation that left them with poor harvests, very high taxes with huge crop shortages, dramatically increased prices of seeds, and a sugar company that purchased their harvest at unfairly low prices. Furthermore, two foreign water and fertilizer companies had established monopolies over the sources of water and organic fertilizers in the province. While the water company had not completed the installation of machinery for irrigation water, the fertilizer company provided peasants with services at excessively high prices. They lamented that all these conditions, coupled

\[495\] 'Abdin, Iltimasat, portfolio 494, case 4, 30 January 1911.
with the Bank evicting them from their lands left their families and children in complete misery. 496

Seven thousand farmers from the aforementioned village of Hasanat lost their small plots to the Bank. In addition to low Nile inundation and bad weather, the foreign water and sugar companies significantly contributed to their massive loss of land. The farmers complained:

The Bank’s treatment of us was so harsh to the worst extent…We mortgaged our land to the Agricultural Bank at an interest rate of 9 per cent…As for our delay in paying, it is because of the aforementioned reasons [low Nile inundation and bad weather]…When the Bank started to dispossess us of our land, it made us pay fees in [the mixed] court that exceeded half of what we originally owed it. It already confiscated the land and took hold of it, and the people are now landless and have nobody to rescue them…The entirety of the village’s fields, 1,300 faddans, are now confiscated by the Agricultural Bank [and other debtors]…The population of the village is about seven thousand people, and in the meantime God afflicted us with another distress, that is, the existence of the water and the sugar companies in Naj‘ Hammadi. Our village is good only for sugarcane cultivation. While the sugar company cheats in weights when we submit our harvest, as there is nobody to inspect it, the water company raised the prices breaking its agreement with the government. This is all officially recorded. Therefore, we have reached conditions of utter poverty and misery under the mercy of the two aforementioned companies…When it was time to pay the Bank, land did not yield crops and peasants and their families could hardly obtain their sustenance. When the financial crisis and the cattle plague hit [the country], the water company prevented us from using its water supplies and the land was not plowed and wasted, and even cultivated plots did not yield crops. We were trapped between the Agricultural Bank on one side and the water company on the other. If we cultivate the land, the Bank confiscates our harvest, and if we leave it uncultivated, we suffer from hunger, our children become orphans, we lose our honor, our houses become ruins, and we are forced to migrate. 497

496 For example: ‘Abdin ‘Arabi, Sijill 4, microfilm 476, 20 December 1904; ‘Abdin, Iltimasat, portfolio 473, 14 March 1915; ‘Abdin, Iltimasat, portfolio 469, 2 May 1911; Abdin, Iltimasat, portfolio 495, 8 May 1917; Abdin, Iltimasat, portfolio 496, case 105, 20 April 1915.
497 ‘Abdin, Iltimasat, portfolio 494, case 4, 30 January 1911.
Not only did the government refuse to interfere to help the peasants of Qina in this crisis, it also participated in public auctions of the confiscated lands. In 1912, the Bank took hold of lands in the villages of Armant, Rayyanaiyya, and Maris and the government won the public bid to purchase them. Some of the farmers, in fact, had attempted the previous year to save their lands by paying a portion of the debt, which the Bank accepted. After the government purchased these lands, a committee in the Ministry of Finance opened an account in the budget to return these payments to the farmers, sealing their forfeiture of the property.\footnote{Majlis al-Wuzara, Nizarat al-Maliyya, Mizaniyya, portfolio 9/1/Shin, 17 March 1912.}

While the Bank was showing signs of failure, the colonial administration insisted on intervening to support its shareholders unconditionally. The number of peasants borrowing from the Bank declined precipitously, apparently due to a creeping lack of confidence in the institution on the part of the peasants. While the number of borrowers had amounted to 106,373 in the first few years, it declined to only 89,429 by 1906. Again, this number fell to 47,081 in the following year, when the Bank was facing difficulties in the European money market. Regardless of its failures, the Bank’s shareholders in London gratefully asserted that they relied on “not only the financial guarantees of the Egyptian Government, but also on the definite support and encouragement given by that government to the enterprise.”\footnote{FO, 141/531/2} In 1906, the Egyptian government guaranteed 3½% of the debentures issued by the Bank and allocated 6,570,000£ from the state budget for that purpose. Furthermore, shareholders who owned
debentures not directly guaranteed by the government were allowed to exchange them against the guaranteed debentures on payment of 6 per cent. More importantly, it was only the large shareholders holding more than 150,000 l who were to benefit from these advantages.  

Meanwhile, the government applied its policy of strict non-interventionism against the interests of peasants. In 1910, the parliament suggested that the government initiate a policy of negotiating with the Agricultural Bank and other lenders to assist the debtors out of their crisis. The government responded:

Since it is highly concerned about the issue of the Agricultural Bank collecting its loan installments, the government made sure that the Bank uses its authority moderately against the debtors. The Bank is now studying whether there is a way to decrease the debtors’ burden relatively. As for the government, it is now working on improving the agricultural conditions in the country, upon which its economic welfare is based, and believes that this is the best cure for the current conditions rather than its interference in the private deals of the banks.  

Furthermore, since the law gave the Bank the right to take debtors to the mixed court in order to obtain verdicts to confiscate their lands, the complaints and petitions that the farmers of Qina directed to Cairo were simply archived, tuhfaz, with no further investigation or relief.

The Bank’s shareholders in London blocked the only legal exit for the small peasants of Qina. In 1912, the government was considering a proposal to modify articles in the civil and commercial code of the mixed courts to ban the seizure of indebted small

\[501\] Majmu’at Mahadir Dawr In’iqad al-Jam’iyya al’Umumiyya, 1910 (Cairo: al-Matba’a al-Amiriyya, 1910), pp. 69-70.  

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properties. From 57½ Old Road Street, London, the committee members of the Agricultural Bank sent an urgent letter and a long memorandum attached to the colonial administration in Egypt to oppose the proposal. They asserted that such legislation “will render impossible, in the great majority of cases the business for which the Bank was created…It will thus cause grave financial injury to the Shareholders…and…will react unfavorably to the credit of the country.” 503 They argued that they embarked on this enterprise because of the government guarantees and support, and strongly objected to the reversal of that policy. Claiming to defend the interests of peasants, the shareholders added, “we believe that the proposed legislation would be detrimental, rather than beneficial, to the interests of the Egyptian fellaheen.” 504 The efforts of the shareholders in London met with great success. For several years to follow, hundreds of female and male peasants in the impoverished villages of Qina continued to lose their small plots to the almighty Bank. 505

(3) In the Time of Cholera

As Qina became further politically and economically peripheralized, public health conditions deteriorated and the province was afflicted with epidemics of cholera and other diseases. Although cholera “officially” invaded Egypt in 1895-1896, it had found its way to Qina province years before that. In the early 1880s, official reports coming

503 FO 141/531/2, Confidential: British Agency in Cairo Agricultural Bank of Egypt, p. 9.
504 Ibid., p.8.
505 Example: Abdin Iltimasat, portfolio 496, no. 108, 25 May 1915; portfolio 496, 7 January 1915.
from the province revealed that cholera and other diseases were already in the province as peasants suffered from severe food shortages and wretched living conditions.\footnote{Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Egypt, 1884 (London: Harrison and Sons, 1884), pp. 48-49.}

In 1884, Mustapha Agha, the British Consular Agent at Luxor, attempted to sound the alarm about how the grain tax, debt, and lack of renovation of the irrigation system reforms brought about food shortages, diseases, such as cholera and epizootics, and general misery in Qina. He wrote,

\[T\]he majority of the natives here are suffering a great deal on account of their misery. They continually subsist on bread made of maize and onions...The causes for all this are numerous: 1. The produce grown by them being barely sufficient for payment of the Government land-taxes and for their maintenance...3. The epizooty (cattle disease), which has so long continued and became a local disease. 4. Being dispossessed in former times of cash and cereals, most of them were obliged to borrow the seeds at high rates and return it during the crop season at low prices. They used to hire weak cattle for the cultivation of their lands, and pay the hire thereof in seeds (grain). They borrowed money at high rate of interest for the payment of the monthly installment for taxes and refunded in cereals at low prices; this was done only on production of solid guarantee as merchants place no confidence in them. They, after defraying the expenses for the transport of the produce from the farm to the threshing-floor, as well as for beating and sieving the wheat (which are deduced from the produce), the feddan generally yields from 1½ to 2½ ardebies, of which a portion is given to the creditors and the other portion to the Government for land taxes. The produce of the lands irrigated by means of the Shadoof and Sakeyehs which the natives subsist upon, is not sufficient for the payment of land taxes...the cholera and the epizooty reduced them to the lowest ebb.\footnote{Ibid.}

The colonial government did not advertise the disturbing news, and officials submitted contradictory information in their reports about the health conditions in the province. Furthermore, when cholera spread throughout the country, the state managed to
apply successful policies to prevent its recurrence in Cairo and the Delta, but it neglected Upper Egypt where cholera returned in the following years. In Qina, in 1902, the provincial administration announced, “the cholera epidemic is spreading in numerous villages of the province.”

In 1889, seven years into the British occupation, health conditions in Qina province showed signs of worsening. Officials submitted mixed reports about undiagnosed deaths among children and adults. They indicated that they had received unconfirmed reports about numerous children’s deaths in Farshut and other deaths in Luxor. The official doctor of the province went to Luxor to investigate and reported that the people of the town were in good health. Meanwhile, government investigations showed that information was accurate about children’s deaths occurring in Farshut. Reports concluded by affirming that the health conditions in the province were good. Denying the existence of cholera the state clearly made no attempt to quarantine it.

Qina was among the provinces most hurt by the cholera invasions because of one major factor: lack of clean water. The water company in Cairo controlled the water resources in the province leaving the subaltern with less access to water. Clean water projects were concentrated in the north, in Cairo and the Delta. As far as Qina was concerned, only the elite and foreigners enjoyed access to clean water. Food shortages, especially in staple grains like wheat and maize, negatively affected the immune systems

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508 Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1902, p. 423.
of the subalterns of Qina. Thus, it is no mystery that cholera kept recurring in the province.

Lack of clean water facilities was the main reason for the spread of cholera in Qina. British physicians and sanitary officials of the time detected a direct connection between cholera and the water supply. A British report stated, “[i]f further evidence were needed to prove that cholera is chiefly a water-borne disease, the late epidemic in Egypt afforded ample. During the period since 1895-1896 epidemic of cholera a certain amount of work has been done in the larger provincial towns to provide the water supply with as much protection as possible from pollution, and some have been supplied from deep tube wells. In none of these towns did the disease assume an epidemic form.”

Unfortunately, the villages of Qina were not among the lucky areas that the colonial government saved from cholera by clean water supply.

In 1880, the Egyptian government, under British-French dual financial control, privatized the water resources of the country by giving a concession to the Cairo Water Company, a private shareholding company managed by a foreign capitalist. According to the concession, the company was to install free public taps in cities to provide clean water. The company installed the spigots and the Department of Public Works footed the bill. The company concentrated its work in Cairo, the Delta and Middle Egypt and neglected Upper Egypt. Thousands of pounds were spent to equip Cairo with free taps and improve the quality of water. Water was drawn entirely from Artesian wells to avoid

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510 Reports by his Majesty’s Agent and Consul-General on the Finance, Administration and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1902, p. 71.
511 Majlis al-Wuzara’, Sharikat wa-Jam‘iyyat, portfolio 1/B, 16 May 1880.
the contaminated water of the Nile. The 1902 report asserted that “the steps taken…to prevent the spread of the disease [cholera] in the town of Cairo, were especially successful.”\textsuperscript{512} As for the Delta, in 1895, one year before the cholera invasion, the hard work of the company in the Delta yielded “water of excellent quality…at 75 feet below the surface. In consequence of this discovery, works capable of delivering 360 cubic meters of the purest well water per hour were constructed by the local company.” The Department of Public Works also gave directions for the company to dig for pure water in Fayoum. The number of cholera cases in Fayoum, in Middle Egypt, decreased remarkably between 1896 and 1902 due to the pure water supply.\textsuperscript{513}

The Cairo Water Company started to give attention to Qina province too late after the cholera epidemic had already invaded. Even when it did, it provided pure water only for the towns of Qina and Luxor, where state officials and Europeans resided, and left out dozens of villages in the province. It was the local commissions in the provinces, which consisted of the corrupt elite, who largely made decisions about where to invite the Company to undertake public works to provide a clean water supply. The water supply in the town of Qina improved, which successfully stopped the spread of cholera. “At Keneh…, which formerly drew its water from wells and stagnant back-water of the Nile, an engine, with pump, etc., was erected about eighteen months ago on the Nile. The result of this was very remarkable, only one case of cholera occurring in this town of 27,478

\textsuperscript{512} Reports by his Majesty’s Agent and Consul-General on the Finance, Administration and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1902, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{513} Reports by his Majesty’s Agent and Consul-General on the Finance, Administration and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1898, p. 30, p. 72.
inhabitants whereas during the epidemic of 1896 no less than 422 cases were registered.” On the other hand, the neglected villages were invaded, as a 1902 report attested. “It is worthy of note that during the cholera epidemic, the inhabitants of Keneh enjoyed immunity from the disease, whilst the surrounding villages were infected.”

Furthermore, the public health committee in the province focused on guaranteeing sanitary conditions of the elite and the foreign inhabitants of the towns. The public health committee of Luxor, a town frequented by Europeans and with a large elite Coptic population, selected certain places in the Nile, particularly where hotels and houses of elite Copts were located, and worked on protecting water purity there. The committee issued several decrees with preventive procedures to secure clean water in these places, including the 1902 decision to prohibit steamships and regular or commercial boats from docking in the area between a particular water wheel and the house of Monsieur Ensenger in Luxor as the drinking water needed for hotels was taken from this area. It did not allow the common inhabitants of the town to draw water there. Townspeople forced to an area south of the specified water wheel, and were prohibited from washing clothes or bathing animals outside the area assigned to them. Violation of the ordinance was punished by a fine of between 50 and 100 piasters.

Moreover, in the time of cholera, the province was suffering from severe food shortages, and the consequent malnutrition might have caused the invasion of other

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514 Reports by his Majesty’s Agent and Consul-General on the Finance, Administration and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1902, p. 49.
515 Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1901, p. 57.
516 Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1902, p. 77, p. 30.
diseases such as the plague. The peasants of Qina, and of Upper Egypt generally, could not consume their own wheat: they had to sell it because it was their only cash crop along with sugarcane. The British invested in growing cotton in the Delta and then Middle Egypt, making wheat one of two main commercial crops left for Upper Egyptian peasants. Still, the peasants of Qina made no significant profits from wheat sales because they could not face harsh competition in a free global market, as they received no government support in an allegedly liberal economy. According to the 1884 British report, around 30 per cent of Upper Egyptian land was cultivated with wheat. The peasants of Upper Egypt spent so much buying seeds, feeding cattle, and hiring seasonal labor that no profit was left for them.\textsuperscript{517} Lord Cromer asserted, “[w]heat is one of the principal staple products of Upper Egypt…A heavy fall has taken place in the prices of wheat since 1881…We have been informed…that at present the cultivator in Upper Egypt cannot sell his wheat on the spot for more than 50 piasters an ardeb…in the view of the competition of wheat produced in America and India, it is probable that prices will rule permanently at lower rates than the average of the past years.”\textsuperscript{518}

Upper Egypt shipped its grain north as Cairo and the Delta became relatively dependent on the southern grain supplies. This occurred for two reasons: the transformation of most Delta and Middle Egypt land into cotton cultivation, and prohibition in the north on using water to irrigate corn during the years of low Nile inundation. The Department of Public Works issued occasional decrees prohibiting the

\textsuperscript{517} Correspondence Respecting the Finances of Egypt, 1884 (London: Harrison and Sons 1884), pp. 24-25.
Delta peasants from using any water to grow grain in the lands that the low Nile inundation water did not reach, sharaqi, in order to save the water for cotton. The Delta peasants who did not comply faced different types of punishment ranging from fines to imprisonment. When the Delta parliament members complained about such laws, in 1900, Sir Garston, the British vice-minister of Public Works, spoke in the Egyptian parliament insisting that it was to guarantee a good cotton harvest.\(^{519}\)

The peasants of Upper Egypt could not consume their own wheat because they had to pay it as a tax to the central government in Cairo. In Qina, most peasant families could not bake their bread with wheat, and, instead, they survived on battau, a type of flat corn bread.\(^{520}\) The peasants of Upper Egypt had to pay the tax in grain delivered to the state storehouses in each province. Ironically, when the policy of paying tax in grain was discussed in the parliament, it was presented as a relief policy for Upper Egyptians. The government justified this policy based on Upper Egyptians inability to submit their dues in cash, something that the Delta peasants were able to do because of cotton sales.\(^{521}\) It is worth mentioning that in later developments, after WWI, the British army issued a proclamation to increase the production of wheat and other foodstuffs in Upper Egypt to support the army. In 1917, the proclamation was enforced and the cultivation of cereal

\(^{519}\) Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1902, p. 267, Majmu’at al-Awamir al-‘Aliyya wa-l-Dikritat, 1902, p. 142; Mahadir Jalasat Majlis Shura al-Qawanin, 1 April 1900, pp. 13-14.

\(^{520}\) Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 424, case 313, 22 Jumada al-Awwal 1300.

\(^{521}\) Mahadir Jalasat Majlis Shura al-Qawanin, 1884, 8 Rajab 1301/ May 1884.
was expanded in Upper Egypt to feed the troops, not the malnourished subalterns of the provinces.\footnote{522}{FO 141/66914, February-March 1917.}

Wheat killed many people during these dark times. It was such a rare and expensive commodity that every year during the harvesting days landless beggars used to take their donkeys and go ask charitable farmers for wheat.\footnote{523}{Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 428, Sijill 881, case 288, 6 Shawwal 1301.} Sulayman Radwan was part of a gang of thirteen thieves who used to rob peasants of their harvest. One night, he was found murdered beside the bridge of a village with traces of wheat inside his pockets and shoes. Inspectors found other amounts of wheat buried in fields adjacent to where his body was found, and the owners of these fields knew nothing about it: it was probably wheat he had stolen from other fields. More fresh wheat was also found in his house although he had not grown any that year.\footnote{524}{Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 422, 6 Jumada al-Awwal 1299.} Furthermore, hungry thieves attacked peasants’ houses demanding bread, no doubt in short supply. In mid-1878, two years through the dual British-French control over the country’s finances was instituted, a group of fifteen thieves attacked the house of a peasant who resided with his son on their farm where he grew wheat and other crops, and demanded bread and sheep. The peasant asserted that he owned no sheep and that the bread he had was very little and could barely feed him and his son. He brought out all the bread he had, and some ate while others did not get a share. Those who remained hungry shot the poor peasant, left him for dead, and fled to the mountains where they hid.\footnote{525}{Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 426, Sijill 861, case 998, 10 Dhu al-Hijja 1300.}
The plague also invaded Qina province and Upper Egypt, and probably food shortages and consequent malnutrition played a role in this. British reports asserted that the plague was most widespread in Upper Egypt. The 1907 report of the British consul-general stated, “[o]f recent years the disease has appeared mostly in Upper Egypt, where it commonly assumes the pneumonic form. This form is especially dangerous on account of the rapidity with which it spreads, its infectious nature, and the high mortality (particularly 100 per cent.) attending it…In 1905 there were reported from Upper Egypt only 3 cases of the plague in, occurring in 2 localities; in 1906 there were 412 cases in 26 localities; and in 1907 838 cases in 71 localities. The most serious symptom in these figures is the increasing number of infected localities, which adds greatly to the difficulty of stamping out the disease.”\footnote{Reports by his Majesty’s Agent and Consul-General on the Finance, Administration and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1907, p. 28.} The report of 1908 again emphasized that Upper Egypt was a special case stating, “the continued prevalence of the plague in Egypt and laid stress on the fact that the more severe pneumonic appeared to be increasing in the southern provinces.” The plague affected the whole country, but “when, however, Upper Egypt was invaded, it assumed the very infectious and fatal pneumonic form.”\footnote{Reports by his Majesty’s Agent and Consul-General on the Finance, Administration and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1908, p.32}

Furthermore, smallpox presented another serious danger in the province. The public health committee in Luxor in 1900 discussed the great increase in smallpox cases, especially on the island of al-Aqakita, and issued a number of orders: painting all the interior and exterior of the houses with white lime in a period of 48 hours, sweeping and
watering the streets twice a day at 8am and 4pm, vaccinating the children under 10 years old, and banning the storage of manure fertilizers inside houses or around them.528

Similar decisions were taken the same year in Isna, the town of Qina, and the entire province.

Thus, the years of the British Empire’s representative institutions and free market reforms furthered marginalization, corruption, and rampant diseases in Qina province. Pursuing their own mode of rebellion, subaltern women and men in the province took their revenge both on the empire and its co-opted, “nationalistic,” elite.

(4) The Return of Bandits: “Non-Nationalist” Rebellion

In the modern history of Egypt, the turn of the century was the time of the formation of a national identity and the rise of nationalistic mode of resistance against British colonialism. Cairene elites founded newspapers, political parties, banks, and companies that advocated for national independence from the British and mobilized the masses for this purpose. Elite women joined these political parties, founded charitable associations, and published women’s magazines serving the same goal. Egyptian nationalist and Western historiography have celebrated this elite resistance of colonialism, and a huge body of literature was written about the history of Cairene bourgeois press, political parties, banks, women’s associations, etc. In this literature, for

528 *Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1900*, pp. 175-176.
example, the Wafd party, founded by large landowners and industrialists, was made into the ultimate symbol of political resistance; Bank Misr, founded by native and foreign business elite, was made into the symbol of economic resistance; and the women’s association of Huda Sha’rawi, an aristocratic woman, was made into the ideal representative of the nation’s women. Nonetheless, some historians view this rising nationalism merely as a project in pursuit of the capitalist interests of Cairo’s upper class, who sought to exclude British capitalists and obtain independent control over the country’s resources. They forged an “imagined” nation and mobilized the masses to reach their goal, paralleling the rise of other nationalist discourses elsewhere in the world.

As far as Qina’s subaltern women and men were concerned, when the elite of the province embraced and advocated a nationalist discourse, they could not possibly identify with it. For them, this national identity was forged by the same northern elite that peripheralized them economically, muted them politically, and contributed to killing them by ignoring the recurring invasions of cholera and plague. As a consequence, the subalterns of Qina devised their own mode of resistance and rebellion against the colonizer and the nationalistic ruling elite alike. They invoked their own memory, both distant and recent, of revolt against former empires or central governments and their co-opted elites. Historical pockets of unrest in places such as al-Salimiyya, Armant, Samhud, etc., where numerous massive and small rebellions erupted in the past, once more became

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vibrant centers of resistance. New places of relentless unrest joined them, especially in Dishna and Naj‘ Hammadi, where foreign companies and the new co-opted elite reproduced colonial and northern elite hegemony. Theirs was constant, daily resistance championed by different types of social groups, especially bandits. 531

In general, Qina’s subalterns undertook everyday resistance by attacking village shaykhs and ‘umdas, refusing to pay taxes, delaying or sabotaging public works, etc. Under British rule, resistance in the province was also revived in the form of large-scale banditry. The shaqis (outlawed) bandits were mostly landless peasants and workers, and they committed crimes against state bureaucrats and raided government buildings undermining security and political stability in the province. The British administration criminalized bandits in Qina, and evinced deep concern about the sharp increase of crime in the province. The annual report of 1901 recorded a 3 per cent increase in “felonies” in Qina province, parallel to the increase in Grand Cairo. This probably suggests that resistance of the Empire was as great in Qina as in Cairo. 532

We Resist Everyday

The women of Qina carried out daily attacks against the oppressive village shaykhs. In 1885, in Busalyla village in Isna, Zaynab Husayn, a widow, and her two

531 This section of the chapter is theoretically informed by the Subaltern studies insights into writing non bourgeois-nationalist histories of colonized societies, particularly in India. It attempts to break away from elitist historiography of Egypt that focuses on bourgeois nationalism as the only form of resisting colonialism. This section presents a non-elitist narrative showing other modes of resistance of the lower classes in Upper Egypt. C.f.: Ranajit Guha, “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India,” in Mapping the Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial, pp. 1-7.

532 Reports by his Majesty’s Agent and Consul-General on the Finance, Administration and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan, 1901, p. 29.
younger brothers, Taha and Ali, attacked shaykh ‘Abd al-Jalil, beating him and breaking two of his teeth. Moreover, when he was in the hospital for treatment for more than ten days, Umm Muhammad, the female maternal cousin of Zaynab, went to his house, attacked his wife, and took a pair of silver bracelets and a golden earring from her. Zaynab and her brothers completely denied the incident, asserting that the shaykh’s teeth were already loose from drinking alcohol and this was not the first time he had fabricated a false accusation about his teeth against innocent people. Evidently convicted, Zaynab and her brothers were sentenced to thirty days in jail and fined eighty piasters, equal to what the shaykh spent on treatment in the hospital. The shaykh could not prove his case against Umm Muhammad and had to withdraw his lawsuit against her.\footnote{Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 43, Sijill 892, case 187, 15 Rajab 1302.}

Keeping weapons became a common practice among peasants to protect themselves against village shaykhs, ‘umdas, and other government officials. They hid weapons in their houses, sometimes by burying them underground, to conceal them from the authorities.\footnote{Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 422, 6 Jumada al-Awwal 1299.} Angry about the elite’s monopolization of public works for their own benefit, peasants used those weapons against contractors who relied on cheap labor from the province for the projects. In 1889, the dissatisfied inhabitants of Bayadiyya village, whose houses lined the two banks of a canal under construction, collectively took up their weapons and attacked the contractors and laborers working on the canal. The contractors were attempting to pave a road cutting through the houses of peasants for the workers to pass and dispose of dirt. The farmers of the village quickly gathered in a crowd with their
weapons and shot at the workers, who ran away.\textsuperscript{535} Another form of resistance was vandalizing state projects under construction, even if they were to serve the people of the province themselves. Some angry peasants cut the irrigation dikes that the Department of Public Works was constructing. The only solution the state found for this type of crime was to draft the vandals themselves as corvée laborers on the projects, after corvée labor had been abolished throughout the country.\textsuperscript{536}

Perhaps the bluntest form of subaltern revenge against the province’s co-opted elite was to commit crimes and then accuse the village shaykhs and ‘umdas of doing them, mainly in order to avoid paying taxes. This was not a new practice in Qina’s villages, as in the late 1870s and early 1880s there were many legal cases where peasants accused shaykhs and ‘umdas of crimes—accusations which turned out to be fabricated.\textsuperscript{537} In one incident, in 1889, as soon as the shaykh entered the house of Abd al-Rahman Mas‘ud, a farmer from Samhud, to collect taxes, Abd al-Rahman hit his father on the head and claimed that the shaykh had done so. The authorities summoned the shaykh, but the old father died before the investigations could begin. Abd al-Rahman then insisted that his father had died after being assaulted by the shaykh and his clan. The authorities reached the conclusion that the farmer did so to “conspire [against the shaykh] and delay the government stipulations (\textit{makida wa ta‘til li talabt al-hukuma}).”\textsuperscript{538}

\textsuperscript{535} Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira \textit{fi} 1889, p. 378.
\textsuperscript{536} Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira \textit{fi} 1902, p. 504.
\textsuperscript{537} For example: Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 422, 11 Rajab 1299.
\textsuperscript{538} Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira \textit{fi} 1889, p. 19, pp. 10-11. This is the government’s official account to the incident, and the farmer might be in fact innocent.
The Return of Bandits

The armed shaqis bandits were the most prolifically rebellious group against the colonial state and its co-opted elite in Qina. They inherited the place of the falatiyya bandits who disturbed previous regimes throughout the nineteenth century, and, through their operations against the government, shaqis brought back to life the memory of the late great bandits. Like the falatiyya, the shaqis bandits were also fed by fugitive peasants and workers escaping state oppression in the form of taxes and corvée labor. They adopted the same strategies of disturbing security, and took the mountains of the province as their refuge to hide and operate.

In 1885, on one of the hot days of August in the market of Qus, ‘Awwad sold ten ardabbs of wheat for a decent price. While heading back home with his son Mahmud, twelve armed men robbed him of the money and other things and hit ‘Awwad on the head, leaving him seriously injured near a waterwheel. When his son reported the crime, investigations revealed that the attackers were a gang of shaqis, and among them were the two sons of the victim himself. A few years earlier, this gang had even more members, some twenty-five, who cut four agricultural bridges in Hajza village. They also stole the tax money, about 33,979 piasters, which had been collected from the same village in 1883. Many of those shaqis had already been convicted of other crimes and had served sentences in Qina’s or Alexandria’s jail.539

Bandits maintained the long tradition of the falatiyya: attacking the houses of the rich, especially the parliament members and government bureaucrats. Tay‘ Salama – the

539 Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm, 43, Sijill 893, case 244, 17 Shawwal 1302.
aforementioned parliament member who kept his seat for more than twenty years against the people’s will—was a favorite target of the *shaqis* and faced numerous attacks by various gangs. One night, a gang broke into the barn attached to Salama’s house and stole four cows and their offspring. The gang was mostly from Qamula village, whose ‘umda was Salama himself. Barely a year passed before his house was the target of another raid. Husayn Makhdum, also from the Qamula village, stole four cows from Salama’s barn.\(^{540}\)

In another incident targeting the rich elite, the cash locker of the *abʿadiyya* plantation of Ismaʿil Pasha Taymur was raided, and 118 pounds and the signet of the plantation manager were stolen. The police arrested only eight of the *shaqis* who committed the crime, and the rest disappeared despite the efforts of the village watchmen who tirelessly searched for them.\(^{541}\)

Bandits generally attacked state employees, including village *ghafir* watchmen who carried the treasury’s money. A group of seven bandits, for instance, attacked a watchman in the Qus market as he was carrying a large amount of tax money to deliver from an elite person to the treasury clerk.\(^{542}\) *Shaqis* were also active in attacking the police. In 1889, bandits raided a police patrol in Farshut; after exchanging fire, two soldiers were injured and the bandits made off with their weapons. They escaped and the police were never able to apprehend them.\(^{543}\) In addition, the *shaqis* targeted the contractors working for the government. In 1889, a gang of more than fourteen *shaqis* in

\(^{540}\) Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 422, 5 Jumada al-Thani 1299; microfilm 430, Sijill 893, case 214, 13 Shawwal 1302.
\(^{541}\) *Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1889*, p. 329.
\(^{542}\) Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 429, Sijill 884, case 436, 8 Dhu al-Hijja 1301.
\(^{543}\) *Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1889*, p. 813.
Qus attacked the contractors of the Bayadiyya village canal and the laborers with them; the gang shot and injured six workers and stole 360 pounds and other items valued at 34 pounds from the contractors.\textsuperscript{544} Bandits were also active in stealing from the construction sites of public projects. The ghafir watchman caught two bandits on the arched bridge of al-Salimiyya. They attempted to bribe the police officer with one pound to set them free, but they were caught and were sent before the judge of criminal investigation.\textsuperscript{545}

The war of the shaqis was mostly a battle against corrupt, oppressive village leaders, ‘umdas and shaykhs. It was an ongoing battle launched by fugitive villagers against ‘umdas and shaykhs who caused them to turn into shaqis when they seized their lands and robbed them of their money and houses. In the village of Damamil in Qus, around the mid-1880s, a feud erupted between a gang of twelve armed shaqis, and Mahmud Muhammad, the current ‘umda, Bulu, his Coptic business partner who was an influential bureaucrat, and shaykh ‘Ali Yunus and other shaykhs. The leader of the gang was Ahmad Nasr Allah, joined by his cousin and his father. His father claimed to be a former ‘umda and alleged that Mahmud Muhammad conspired against him with Bulus to take his position. They united with other landless, unemployed, and homeless shaqis from the same village. “The twelve are among the large groups of shaqis and falatiyya who are following their sinful incentives in robbing and snatching east and west using fire and manual weapons, and some of them had already been convicted for committing several previous crimes,” the authorities stated. They were involved in highway robbery,

\textsuperscript{544} Ibid., p. 501.
\textsuperscript{545} Ibid., p. 813.
a major crime, but they had never committed murder. The majority of them were peasants, but among them were a former village watchman, a Nile boat captain who employed his boat in the operations and in helping the gang escape from the police, and two bedouins from the ‘Abibda tribe.

Almost every one of the twelve had a story of a devastating encounter with the aforementioned ‘umda, shaykh or Coptic bureaucrat that had turned him into a shaqi. ‘Abd al-Malik Sa’id had been a dedicated watchman, never leaving the village in order to carry out his job. ‘Umda Muhammad Mahmud seized his land and harvest and conspired with shaykh ‘Ali Yunus to murder him. The shaykh was in fact taking revenge on ‘Abd al-Malik because he had written a petition against him for extorting more than four ardabbs of wheat. The shaykh then sold the seven faddans of ‘Abd al-Malik. Ruzayqan Muhammad, another member of the shaquis gang, claimed that his father used to be a shaykh of a small area but the ‘umda plotted to have the government fire him. While the ‘umda Mahmud hid his relatives from corvée labor, he conscripted Ruzayqan with the help of Bulus, the influential Coptic bureaucrat. Ruzayqan submitted a petition against the ‘umda for hiding his relatives from corvée, which did not yield any results. Husayn Ahmad, another shaqi member, was a small peasant who owned four faddans that shaykh Yunus wanted for himself. Muhammdayn ‘Abd al-Rahman, a third shaqi, was married to the niece of the shaykh Yunus and when he divorced her in court the shaykh attempted to disgrace him and ruin his life. Salim Ibrahim, a fourth shaqi, was a Nile boat captain who owned his own business and had been appointed as the tax collector of one-third of the boat captains. His misfortunes began when he married the divorcee of one of the shaykhs.
who hated her former husband and had secured a divorce in court. The two bedouins from the ‘Ababid tribe settled in the village of the shaqis gang to make a living by renting their camels. ‘Umda Mahmud asked them to carry his grain to Qusayr port but refused to pay them their wages after they completed the job. He insisted that their service was recompense for allowing them to settle in the village. They complained to the government, and the ‘umda used the help of his Coptic business partner and bureaucrat Bulus against them.546

In 1885, Nasr Allah had just been released from three years in jail when he reorganized the gang and resumed armed operations; many of the other gang members were also just out of one year in jail. The ‘umdas and shaykhs, including ‘umda Mahmud Muhammad and shaykh ‘Ali Yunus, did not wait long to accuse the twelve of new crimes, arrest them, and hand them over to the authorities. In the twelve’s places, weapons and bullets allegedly used in these crimes were found. Forty-one shaykhs and ‘umdas from different villages enthusiastically volunteered to testify against them and furnish evidence to convict each one of them. Moreover, the shaykhs and ‘umdas claimed that the twelve used to gamble and drink alcohol, two practices prohibited by Islamic law, a statement which certainly worked to further disgrace them. During interrogation, they all denied the accusations and asserted that they were the lies and fabrications of the village shaykhs and ‘umdas. The shaykhs asked the authorities for the maximum sentence

546 Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 403, Sijil 897, case 419, 20 Muharram 1303.
this time: for a full seven years in jail for Nasr Allah and three years for the other
eleven.547

Several women in the province joined the world of banditry. Wasfa, the daughter
of Hasan and Walqan the daughter of Jad Allah, both from the village of Qamula Middle,
formed a gang of bandits consisting of a third woman, her husband Isma‘il the bandit,
and another man. Interestingly enough, the three women were over seventy years old and
had never committed a crime before forming the gang. One night in 1883, Wasfa and
Walqan took three donkeys and accompanied the two bandits to a salt source that the
state enclosed in the mountains of Danqiqi village. While they were loading the donkeys
with salt, the ghafir watchman that the state hired to guard the source saw them and
attempted to arrest them, but one of the male bandits hit him with a gun. The gang
managed to escape leaving the watchman injured, yet they were soon arrested by the
police with about 55 ardabbs of salt, guns and other weapons. Investigations revealed
that one of the donkeys was the property of Wasfa and another was the property of the
third woman bandit, the wife of Isma‘il, who had not accompanied them. The three
women confessed to committing the crime, and, because of their old age and lack of
previous criminal charges, they were sentenced to less than one year in jail.548

Dealing with the shaqis was a matter of public security and political stability.
Hence, the state had to promulgate special laws to handle their cases at both the national
and provincial levels. In 1884, the Khedive decreed that investigations into shaqis’ cases

547 Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 403, Sijil 897, case 419, 20 Muharram 1303.
548 Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 426, Sijill 859, case 875, 17 Shawwal 1300.
would be carried out by a special commission with the governor of the province as the
president and the vice attorney general, the parliamentarians, wealthy families, and the
‘umdas as members. When the aforementioned gang of the twelve *shaqis* was captured,
they were interrogated by a committee composed of ‘Ali bek Ibrahim, the parliament
member from an elite family in Abu Manna’ North, and other wealthy villagers. They
handed out a stiff punishment to the twelve, sentencing some to seven years and others to
three years in jail.549

With the foundation of civil courts in Upper Egypt, in 1889, deficiencies in the
modern civil law rendered the *shaqi* bandits fortunate enough to expand their operations
and escape without punishment. The new civil law had no articles to convict recognized
outlaws based only on their “infamy,” (*mashurin bil-shaqawa*), which the old law had
allowed as legal evidence. Thus, many *shaqi* bandits were released after being captured
for a lack of hard, documented evidence needed to convict them. Dissatisfied state
officials in Upper Egypt, whose efforts to capture the bandits were wasted when the law
allowed their release, called for changing the code. The *shaqi* Bakhit Hasanayn raided a
place at night before the formation of the first civil court in Upper Egypt at Asyut. He
was arrested and arbitrarily imprisoned without trial, but managed to escape. He was
finally captured but only after many aborted attempts and armed battles between him and
the police force. As the civil court was then formed, he was brought before a modern
judge. None of his crimes was attested to by documented evidence, so the court cleared
him and set him free. On his way from the court to his home village, Bakhit passed by the

549 Madabit Majlis al-Ahkam, microfilm 403, Sijil 897, case 419, 20 Muharram 1303.
district governor sitting in his office. He taunted him “you had captured me and the
government let me go” (inta masaktini wa al-hukuma sayyabtimi).  

The shaqi bandits sometimes held open conferences for groups of dozens of them
during which they mobilized members and devised plans for future crimes. In Qus, in
1889, about fifty shaqis joined forces and designed secret plans for some potential
operations. When they heard that the police had found them out, they fled to Mutayra
Island taking the boat of Hasan al-‘Ashri, who sailed with them to the western bank of
the Nile. From there, the shaqis committed many crimes and the police tirelessly
searched for them both under cover and in public. The boat captain, Hasan, was
summoned and he confessed that he only knew three of them from his own village, and
those three, when summoned, denied any affiliation to the gang.  

In another incident, the ‘umda of Hu, a town where many large landowners resided, sent a telegram to the
Minister of Interior to report that an armed gang of shaqis from the area had gathered to
plan crimes. A police campaign attempted to arrest them but captured only two; the rest
managed to flee. After they fled, five crimes occurred, including the theft of grain,
money, and animals. In the graveyard of Hu, two shaqis took refuge from the police but
were later arrested.  

Arresting a single shaqi was such an important feat that it brought great rewards
from Cairo for those involved in the arrest. In 1914, when an elite man in Qina informed

550 Majmu‘at al-Taqarir al-Marfu‘a min al-Mudiriyyat wl-Muhafazat li Dawlatu Afandim Nazir al-
Dakhiliyya wa-l-Maliyya ‘an A’mal 1889, pp. 198-199.
551 Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fj 1889, p. 88.
552 Ibid., p. 574, p. 624.
the authorities about the arrival of a famous shaqi in his village, the Cabinet of Ministers in Cairo considered granting him the highly honorable Sultanic medal. As soon as the shaqi set foot in the village, in Qamula Middle, Ahmad Ayyub informed the police commander, who immediately captured him. The cabinet discussed granting him the prestigious award, but eventually decided that Ayyub was part of the village’s elite and therefore the bandits the region were his responsibility.\footnote{Majlis al-Wuzara’, Jalasat Majlis al-Nuzzar, portfolio 5/’Ayn, 6 April 1914, pp. 26-27.}

In 1890, Ziyad al-Shaqi of Qina became a “national” legend, even though nationalist causes were the furthest thing from his mind. News of his thrilling exploits was met with great public attention in Cairo, and the press played a major role in creating and perpetuating his reputation. Newspapers in Cairo published different and sometimes contradictory accounts of his story, informed by their correspondents in Qina, and the truth was almost lost in the telling. To put an end to the rumors, the governor of Jirja, the province north of Qina, sent a report to the minister of interior recounting the story of Ziyad as the following. Ziyad and his brother apparently led a gang of shaquis who committed “infamous felonies.” Ziyad’s gang disturbed the state by committing “horrifying major sins in Qina that the pen would fail to depict,” an official report asserted. Most of his men were mountain dwellers who knew their secret paths and hiding places by heart. The extensive press and public attention on Ziyad forced the colonial administration to create a determined plan to capture him and end the legend, a plan that mandated that the General Police Inspector himself, Jutsun Pasha, came from the north and oversee it. The plan had the village shaykhs, ‘umdas, and watchmen block
all the roads leading to mountains east and west so the gang could not flee. Upon receiving the news, Ziyad and the gang fled north from the mountains of Qina to the mountains of Jirja province. They reached the east side of the mountains in a village in Jirja. Another plan was to surround them with two large forces and wait until they emerged from their hiding places; many undercover guards were vigilant day and night. One evening, the gang came down from the mountains to a village to obtain water from a well and managed to return safely. The next day, Justun Pasha led two large forces and launched a massive attack on the eastern mountains. The attack continued for two hours in search of the gang that disappeared leaving no traces as they fled into the labyrinths of the mountains. The disappointed force departed leaving behind a few soldiers to keep watch. Soon the gang appeared and shot at the soldiers, killing two of them. The force returned and, after a fierce armed battle in which he was leading the gang in the very front, Ziyad killed to the bullets of the soldiers and was arrested. The rest of the gang melted away again into the secret paths of the mountains and the soldiers searched for them for more than ten hours, until Ziyad’s brother was also captured while attempting to escape to the western mountain with their weapons. They were forced to inform the police about the place where they hid all the gang’s weapons at the foot of the mountain, and the shaykhs who assisted in capturing them were handsomely rewarded with money and ‘umda positions. Jutsun Pasha carried Ziyad to Qina for interrogation, and he and his shaqis confessed to all the crimes they had committed in the province.554

554 Al-Qararat wa-l-Manshurat al-Sadira fi 1890, pp. 157-161.
Conclusion

The alleged political liberalization and the market economy of the British Empire further peripheralized the subaltern women and men of Qina. The people of the province lost their voices and lands to British claims of applying political and economic “liberal reforms.” They were represented in Cairo’s allegedly reformed parliament by the corrupt provincial elite of large landowning families, were economically further peripheralized by the colonizer and the northern nationalistic elite alike, and lost their small plots of land with the inflow of foreign capital to their villages. They suffered from lack of clean water which brought about recurring invasions of cholera, and food shortages and poverty eventually contributed to the spread of the plague and other diseases. Consequently, Qina province simmered with political unrest, and its subalterns embarked on everyday violent resistance against both the colonizer and the ruling provincial elite. The subalterns of Qina fashioned their own mode of resistance, a non-elitist and non-nationalist one, reviving the legendary memory of the province’s old revolts and its late great bandits.
CONCLUSION

The Empire Hasn’t Gone Yet

Thanks to the legacy of empires, today’s Qina province, a small place deep in the south of Egypt, is utterly isolated and suffers from underdevelopment manifested in the daily lives of its impoverished peoples. Despite its isolation, Qina was not immune to the recent bread riots and strikes that broke out in the country in April 2008 and the events that generated them. The struggle to purchase subsidized bread killed many people in the villages of Qina during the months preceding the riots. In the long lines in front of state bakeries, Qina’s villagers shot each other to get a share of the cheap bread, while preachers in mosques called upon them to consume less and not to waste leftovers. In fact, bread riots and other similar events in the province were the direct result of the hegemony of a new informal empire. Once again, after the passing of an entire century, the all-encompassing empire still finds its way to Qina province.

Egypt is “traditionally the largest U.S. wheat consumer,” through the USAID aid program. The annual influx of U.S. aid to Egypt mostly takes the form of exports of American products, so aid money returns to American producers at prices set by them. Wheat makes up a considerable portion of these goods. Despite its calls for global free trade, the U.S. government pressures the Egyptian state, an authoritarian regime co-opted

and supported by the informal empire, to buy the more expensive American wheat instead of the cheaper alternatives from other countries, thereby closing the doors to free-market competition. Moreover, on the one hand, the World Bank and the IMF’s neoliberal policies have compelled the Egyptian government to eliminate its subsidies to peasants, including wheat cultivators, as a way of achieving economic and human development. On the other hand, American farmers enjoy extensive government subsidies, and part of their wheat is sold to the Egyptian villages deprived of state support.\textsuperscript{557} Without a doubt, each of the above factors contributed to the recent food shortages and bread riots in Egypt. In Qina province, the glorious presence of the huge USAID wheat’s silo in the fields bordering the city of Qus, coupled with its people’s bread wars in front of the state bakeries, testifies that informal imperialism found its way to the remotest places in Upper Egypt.

On another front, amidst the wheat crisis, the sugarcane cultivators of Qina province went on strike. As neoliberal reforms eliminated subsidies, peasants are now burdened with increasing prices of seeds and fertilizers and are able to make only minor profits on their cane harvests. The government purchases this sugarcane for the province’s state-owned factories— which are undergoing a process of neoliberal privatization – at unfairly cheap prices, and assists private businesses in doing the same. The farmers of Armant and Ruzayqat went on strike refusing to deliver their harvest to the state factories unless the government raised prices. One of the parliament members of

the province, ‘Abd al-Rahim al-Ghul of Qus who has held his seat for the last thirty years as a member of the northern ruling party, the National Democratic Party, condemned the strike. He characterized it as an illegal action of public disobedience that the peoples of the province are not naturally inclined to commit, and asserted that it was only incited by oppositional groups and human rights organizations.\footnote{See: \textit{Al-Masry al-Youm} Daily, 3/9/2008; 3/30/2008.}

The same sugarcane farmers are also losing their lands to the old elite families, of the colonial era, as the new legal codes of market reform have reversed the Arab socialist codes and introduced private property laws anew. Thousands of Qina’s peasants have recently been evicted, or are awaiting eviction, from their plots in order to cede their land back to large old families. These are the same families that were the co-opted local elite and propertied class during the period of British colonialism, before the 1952 military coup and subsequent socialist reforms. Now, they are co-opted by the northern authoritarian regime through membership in the ruling party and parliamentary seats.\footnote{C.f.: The Land Center for Human Rights’ reports, 2005-2008; Ray Bush (ed.), \textit{Counter Revolution in Egypt’s Countryside: Land and Farmers in an Era of Economic Reform} (London; New York: Zed Books, 2002).}

Market reforms, preached by the Washington Consensus as the only way for promised economic and human development, in these cases work for the benefit of the business and rural elite, in control of the ruling party and the parliament, at the expense of the peasants and laborers of Qina.

In today’s Qina, legendary bandits still hide in the mountains to show their discontent with an authoritarian regime which colludes with the informal empire. As
today’s northern authoritarianism and dependency presents a more complicated dilemma, stories of southern bandits take new trajectories: many of them begin their career cooperating with the corrupt regime and its security apparatus, which disowns them when they become a threat to the central government. Many years ago, there was a legendary bandit known as al-Khutt, whose name has become the ever-horrifying title given to every other great bandit appearing in the province after him. Sa‘id Nawfal, who finally fell to the police’s bullets last year, was another khutt who inherited the terrifying persona of his predecessor. Nawfal was an unemployed 40-year-old from the Hawwara, the clan that independently ruled Upper Egypt for centuries during Ottoman times. He started his criminal career in Qina in the 1990s, when he assisted the regime in crushing Islamic fundamentalists and in violently supporting the candidates of the National Democratic Party— the ruling party— during parliamentary elections. He became friends with high-ranking police officers who protected him in return for a considerable share of his illicit income. In a village in Naj‘ Hammadi, his house was a huge fort protected from the back by the mountains and hidden in the front behind the high sugarcane fields, and guarded day and night by his heavily armed gang. The security apparatus soon came to view him as a threat, and the time came to terminate him. The police shot Nawfal in a fierce battle on account of many charges against him: aside from drug dealing, robbery, and murder, he was charged several times for resisting the authorities and threatening public security. For many months after he died, his wife attempted to avenge his death by murdering the village traitors who assisted the police in reaching him.560

560 Al-Wafd Daily, 8/4/2007. The story of Nawfal is very similar to that of ‘Izzat Ali Hanaﬁ, the bandit
Over the last few centuries, Qina province weathered different modes of imperial hegemony and its subaltern classes expressed discontent with the empire by fashioning their own mode of resistance. The peoples of the villages and small cities of Qina met four empires during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, as this study demonstrates, and have a unique story to tell for such devastating encounters. As the world transitioned from “traditional” towards “modern” imperialism, and as Egyptian regimes moved from “oriental despotism” to “modernity,” Qina province was forced onto a long road of peripheralization and solitude. In the eighteenth century, under the traditional Ottoman Empire, the province was the capital of an autonomous state, a center of commercial agriculture and textile industry, and, more importantly, a thriving international trade center in what many world historians call the “Indian Ocean world economy.” The Ottoman Empire was a politically decentralized and economically liberal system: it allowed the growth of autonomous regimes in the provinces and *laissez-faire* local economies. An Arab dynasty in Upper Egypt, Hawwara, took advantage of such a loose system to build an independent state which survived for three centuries, taking Qina province as its seat and capitalizing on the province’s agricultural production and long-distance trade.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Muhammad Ali Pasha attempted to build a modern empire for himself, introducing the discourses and institutions of modern hegemony. Upper Egypt became the first tributary region annexed to this empire, as the mentioned in the introduction, with regard to allying with the regime in crushing Islamic fundamentalists and forging elections’ results for the interest of the NDP.
Pasha subjugated the formerly autonomous state and its capital in Qina province, monopolized southern agricultural and industrial production, and dominated its long-distance commerce. In the process of building his empire, he crushed the unprecedented massive revolts championed by Qina’s subalterns hoping to overthrow his government. Muhammad Ali, the so-called and ever-celebrated “founder of modern Egypt,” never viewed the north and the south as one centralized state called Egypt. Rather, the imperialism and modernity of the Pasha created a country divided for the first time into a developed north and a backward south. He turned the rebellious south into a peripheral semi-colony, applying uneven policies of economic interventionism and integration without representation there. Only during the last few years of his reign, after losing his short-lived empire to British imperialism, did Muhammad Ali attempt to fully integrate Qina into a centralized state. But it was too late; the province already simmered with profound unrest and exhibited diverse forms of rebellion carried out by its female and male peasants, laborers, and bandits.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the informal, and later formal, British Empire “undid” the old world economy of the Indian Ocean and replaced it with a European-led one, controlled by Great Britain acting as world hegemon. British imperialism of free trade cut Qina off from its old regional and international markets in the Ocean, and shifted the center of economy in Egypt to the cotton-producing north. Thus, furthering Muhammad Ali’s legacy, British imperialism made the province’s marginalization and solitude complete. While introducing modernity to the world, the British Empire deployed a “liberal” discourse of hegemony, preaching global free trade,
private property, and free inflow of European capital and experts to places eager for modernity. As far as the subaltern women and men of Qina were concerned, political and economic liberalism delivered by native colluding elites only resulted in food shortages, massive land losses, and recurring diseases. Female and male subalterns in the province resisted the empire and the ruling elite by developing their own mode of rebellion, divorced from the elitist and allegedly nationalist struggles of the north. Under British informal and formal control, the province witnessed massive revolts, everyday actions of resistance, and large operations of bandits against the symbols of the northern regime and the empire.

This study poses a microscopic gaze at Qina province, a remote, hardly known, and small place in Upper Egypt, in order to investigate wider questions pertaining to empire and modern modes of imperial hegemony, as well as rebellion and subaltern modes of resistance. Thus, this study makes the empire its unit of analysis, instead of the nation state, and considers subaltern forms of rebellion, rather than nationalistic, elitist struggles against colonialism. Issues of nation-state formation and national identity are over-exhausted subjects that have dominated contemporary world history for too long. They rarely go beyond the bourgeois politics of the native metropolis and reach out to the rural and suburban alternative narratives. The nation itself, as Antonio Gramsci asserts, is merely a product of ruling-elite hegemony over the subaltern classes, or, as Benedict Anderson adds, in colonial and post-colonial societies is an imagined entity created to serve the capitalist interests of the colonizer and the native ruling elite. To sustain the focus on the nation state in world history further advances the elitist narrative of the big
city, at the expense of subaltern rural locales, and perpetuates the nationalistic myth, eclipsing the subaltern reality. Literature on empire has recently expanded in world history, making it the most proper tool to analyze colonial and post-colonial societies, whose nationalistic politics functioned under the hegemony of one empire or another.

Hence, this study adopts the all-encompassing empire as its unit of analysis. It is the greater system that envelopes the close and the remote of all places, and is capable of explaining imagined nations and peripheralized places in them. The study follows “traditional” and “modern” discourses and institutions of imperial hegemony to go outside the walls of the native metropolis and investigate how the empire was able to reach the remotest places on the periphery of the periphery and to irrevocably alter the lives of its people. No place could escape the empire, and modern discourses and institutions of imperial hegemony penetrated every region, near or far, big or small, as the experience of Qina province testifies. Moreover, the celebrated nationalistic elite colluded with the empire to peripheralize small places in order to serve the interests of the empire and native co-opted elite. History forgot these places, and the story of Qina province, restored here, is but one of them.

Furthermore, this study depicts subaltern modes of rebellion, contesting the dominant narratives of nationalist, elitist resistance of colonialism that have dominated historiography for so long. The focus on the nation state in world history, on one hand, only generated attention to the resistance of the educated city dwellers, which was organized after European patterns of struggle in, for instance, press, political parties, trade unions, non-profit associations, etc. On the other hand, it ignores the uneducated
countryside and small-city dwellers, who developed alternative patterns of rebellion both against the native ruling elite and empire alike. This study provides an opportunity for the forgotten subaltern of small places to speak, at least in Qina province, to tell her or his story of resentment against the empire and its co-opted elite. Subaltern women and men in Qina’s villages and small cities championed massive revolts, submitted an enormous number of collective and individual petitions, ran away from their lands or the state factories to escape the government heavy dues, attacked bureaucrats and propertied politicians, raided the houses of the rich, or joined the bandits in the mountains to upset any chance of political stability and security in the province.

Above all this, the western empire advocated modernity making it into a discourse of hegemony, and this study particularly focuses on one aspect of this alleged modernity: the market economy. British informal and formal imperialism advocated free trade, legal codes of private property, free movement of European experts and labor, and free inflow of foreign capital to countries eager for modernity. Co-opted regimes did not hesitate to adopt the discourse and apply policies of the market economy, and embarked on political and economic liberalization that served the interests of the empire and the colluding ruling elite. British liberalism, founded on the theories of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, asserted that formally and informally colonized countries should open the door to capitalist arrangements and free forms exchange as a universal, guaranteed recipe for achieving the promised modernity. The market economy with minimum or no state interventionism, the empire claimed, would allow all parties to benefit from free
competition. Markets would surely correct themselves if something went wrong and one party benefited at the expense of the other.

Karl Polanyi used history to undermine liberal and neoliberal theories and to demonstrate that there is no such a thing as a self-regulatory, self-correcting market. Western European countries often times did interfere to control markets for their interests while espousing freedom of exchange. The ideal model existed in European history for only a very brief period and was soon reversed with interventionism whenever it was needed. Similarly, Timothy Mitchell uses history, Egyptian history, to refute liberalism and neoliberalism and prove that the market economy is neither a “universal” nor a “neutral” model to achieve modernity or development. Using the history of Qina province, this study applies the same theoretical insights in order to demonstrate how the market economy myth functioned as a discourse of hegemony while the capitalist empire controlled the market. Furthermore, prominent facets of market reforms, such as foreign capital and experts, only resulted in catastrophic consequences for the subalterns of Qina.

The liberalism of the British Empire has passed into history, but the neoliberalism of the American empire is replacing it, and is steadily making its way to small places in the world like Qina province. Niall Ferguson indicates that “the United States is considered by some historians to be a more effective ‘hegemon’ than Great Britain.” The “soft power” of the new “liberal” empire functions with the same discourses and institutions of the old one, especially with regard to freedom of markets and citizens.

561 Ferguson, The Colossus, p. 15.
Just as American presidents of recent decades have consistently propounded the benefits of economic globalization—even when they have deviated from free trade in practice—British statesmen a century ago regarded the spread of free trade and the liberalization of commodity, labor and capital markets as desirable for general good. And just as most Americans today regard global democratization on the American model as self-evidently good, so the British in those days aspired to export their own institutions, not just common law but ultimately also parliamentary democracy.562

Ferguson is not, however, criticizing imperial liberalism and neoliberalism; rather, he endorses them with his praise of the old and new empire. On the other hand, Joseph Stiglitz’s Globalization and Its Discontents condemns them and demonstrates the fallacies of this discourse and the economic policies of the IMF and the World Bank prevalent throughout the world today. The long awaited human and economic development is guaranteed only through market reforms, the Washington Consensus rhetoric affirms. “Liberalization has thus, too often, not been followed by the promised growth, but by increased misery,” Stiglitz insists.563

While the economic and political liberalism of the old empire promised to deliver an alleged “modernity,” neoliberalism of the new informal empire is promising to deliver alleged “development.” Qina province has endured the predicaments of the two discourses. Throughout the long nineteenth century, the all-encompassing empire developed an entrenched presence in Qina, with the indispensable help of co-opted, nationalistic ruling elites. The result was peripheralization and solitude. The province still suffers from the legacy of old empires, and a new informal empire is making its strong

appearance there to maintain this pattern. Qina province probably shares the same fate
with many other small, remote places in the world, whose stories remain to be told.
MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Map 1: Qina, Qus, and Qusayr

Source: www.redseaparks.net
Map 2: Qus-'Aydhab Route, 1200s-1500s

Source: http://chass.colostate-pueblo.edu/history/seminar/jubayr/routeoftravel2.jpg
Map 3, 4: Qina-Qusayr Route in the Indian Ocean
Qina’s Villages and Towns

Source: http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/wsrp/information/wadi_el_hol/map.jpg

Wadi el-Hol
The Mountains of Qina

Source: http://www.philographikon.com/imagesantique/robertserment.gif
The Village of Armant

Source: http://fotos.alwatanvoice.com/images/topics/2964208280.jpg
Contemporary Bandits

Source: www.alwafd.org

Nawfal of Qina: al-Khatt of Upper Egypt
GLOSSARY*

‘a’ila: extended family
‘Ababida: an Arab tribe
‘ardhal: collective or individual petition raised to a government official
‘a’yán: landed notables
‘ab’adiyya: reclaimed plantation
afandi: title carried by a bureaucrat
agha: title for a Turkish official
‘ahali: the populace, citizens
‘ahkam: legal rules and verdicts
al-Sa’id: Upper Egypt
‘ardabb: a dry measure equal to 5 to 8 English bushels
‘ashraf: local notables claiming noble Prophetic lineage
‘athariyya/kharajiyya: a type of taxable land held by peasants
bashmuhandis: engineer
bek: title for Turkish official and later for propertied natives
ciftlik: royal-family plantation
Copts: Egyptian Orthodox Christians
Daira al-Saniyya: the royal family plantations
darb: trade route
faddan: surface measure, 1 faddan = 1.038 acres
fahm: coal
falatiyya: bandits
fallah, fallahin (pl.): peasants
fatwa, fatawa (pl.): legal opinion
firman: decree or edict in the Ottoman Empire
ghafir: village watchman
hadith: Prophet Muhammad’s traditions, sayings and deeds
hakimbashí: doctor
Hawwara: an Arab tribe
hukuma: government
iltimas: collective or individual petition raised to the government
iltizam: tax farming
imam: religious or political leader
‘iqta’: fief
isbitalia: hospital
jallaba: Sudanese merchants
jammala: camel drivers
kabrit: sulfur
kahrijilla: gunpowder factory
kharaj: land tax
kharajiyya/athariyya: type of taxable land held by peasants

* The meanings of Arabic and Turkish words listed here only refer to their common usage in Egyptian context in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
khawaja: foreigner, especially European
madrasa: Islamic college
mahaliyya: local
mahdi: waited messiah
majlis, majalis (pl.): council
majlis (pl. majalis) al-'arab: Arab tribal governing and adjudication council
malikane: Ottoman legal form of private property in agricultural land
marakbiyya: Nile boat captains
massah, massahin (pl.): land surveyors
matarid al-jabal: Upper Egyptian bandits
miri: land owned by the government or its tax
mu'allim: master, a title enjoyed by elite Copts
mudaraba: type of business contract in Islamic law for commercial speculation
mufti: jurisconsult
multazim: tax farmer
muqata’a, muqata’at (pl.): district
mutasahhib: peasant or laborer who fled his land or a state job
nabbut, nababit (pl.): long, heavy sticks traditionally used in fighting or dancing
nafar: laborer
muwwab (pl.): parliament members
piaster/qirsh: 1/100 Egyptian pound
Qibli: Upper Egypt
qantar: weight measurement equals from 120 to 300 lb. depending on the time period
qirad: type of business contract in Islamic law for extending loans with interest
qisariyya: covered local market
qiya: commercial Nile boat
ra’iyya: Ottoman local subjects (peasants, artisans, merchants, etc.)
rayis: Nile boat captain
salam: type of credit contract in Islamic law, in which a farmer took loans in return for delivering harvest after a specified period of time
shaqi: bandit
sharaqi: irrigation water shortage due to low Nile inundation
shaykh: Arab tribal leader, village notable, or guild chief
shura: consultation
sijill: file of official papers or court records
suq: local village or town market
tasahhub: fleeing one’s land or a state job
‘uhda: deserted land turned to state and later private plantation
‘ulama: shari’a law scholars
‘umda: village leader or head official
‘urf: local customs and traditions
waqf, awqaf (pl.): religious charitable or family endowments
watan: homeland
wikala: commercial complex
wilaya (t): Ottoman province
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