EGYPT FOR WHICH EGYPTIANS?
COPTS AND THE EGYPTIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT, 1882-1919

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ABSTRACT

Much has been written about the formative years of the Egyptian nationalist movement, between 1882 and 1919. However, little inquiry has been devoted to examining the role of Coptic Christians, Egypt's largest minority, in the development of this movement. For most of this period, Islamic loyalties were utilized to rouse nationalist or Ottomanist sentiments in the fighting against the British occupation of Egypt. Various movement leaders attempted to incorporate Egypt's religious minorities in their struggle, yet they were mostly unsuccessful.

For centuries, Coptic Christians have formed an integral part of Egyptian life; however, in this era when Egyptians began to envision their heritage via conceptions of language, history, religion and culture, Copts felt little connection to prevailing discourses invoking Islamic sentiments. Indeed they had more affinity to the then-less popular ideals regarding a Pharaonic heritage. As a result of a growing sense of disillusionment and isolation, Coptic intellectuals began to advocate their own brand of
nationalism. Their ideals of nationhood did not espouse a separate Egypt, geographically or politically, but they did propose a secular type of nationalism that looked for guidance and inspiration in a distant Pharaonic past, and which might allow Muslims and Copts to cooperate and experience a true sense of fraternity. Furthermore, Copts adopted Pharaonicism as a means of experimenting with and establishing their identity as descendants of the Pharaohs and therefore as "true" Egyptians, an identity they were often pressured to reassert during times of intercommunal strife, customarily agitated by the British. This work examines the historical background that gave rise to these Coptic ideals between 1882 and 1919, exploring the meaning and significance of their imagined nationhood.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The position of religious and ethnic minorities in the modern Middle East has been a perplexing historical question. While these groups lived for centuries under a well-defined system of Islamic governance, disruptions to this arrangement began to occur during the nineteenth century with increased interaction between the Middle East and Western Europe. This period of contact, Elie Kedourie asserts, introduced new notions such as “minority” and its correlative “majority,” which as “part of the cluster of political ideas...along with ‘nationality’ and ‘popular sovereignty,’ were taken over by the Middle East from the West.”¹ Such ideas changed the way in which religious and ethnic groups interacted with one another. For instance, the concept of nationalism, that the majority of inhabitants

of a state (typically a territorially-defined area) are members of one "nation," perpetuated the idea of majority rule and made the "force of numbers," wherein majority overrides minority, the deciding factor not only in determining political action but in assessing who qualifies for membership in the nation. Moreover, during the formative stages of nationalist movements within the crumbling Ottoman Empire, whether in the Balkans, Greater Syria or Egypt, a growing ambivalence over the place of minority groups, intensified by Western imperialist ambitions, contributed to an ideologically if not a politically charged situation which arguably shaped the way in which minorities came to construct their identities and histories.

Such was the case among the Copts of Egypt. As one of the Middle East's oldest Christian communities and Egypt's largest religious and from some standpoints ethnic minority, the Copts have played a varied and often ambivalent role in national ideological struggles. The conception of Copts as a separate ethnic group has come into being, particularly in the last century or so, as many Copts have adopted the Protestant and Catholic faiths. In that sense, Coptic Christians have come to identify with one another not because of a shared Orthodox Christian creed, but presumably

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2 Ibid., 29.
by reason of a mutual ethnic identity. This identification was particularly important in the period between 1882 and 1919. In the nineteenth century, Egypt had come under the rule of Muḥammad ʿAlī, the Ottoman viceroy who established a dynasty that lasted until 1952. Reforms instituted by Muḥammad ʿAlī and his successors, and by the British, who occupied Egypt in 1882, allowed a flood of Western imports, both technological and ideological, to permeate Egyptian society. The role which non-Muslim communities have played in the spread of such ideas in Egypt and in the Ottoman Empire has been closely examined by scholars, particularly those studying the relationship between Syrian intellectuals and Arab nationalism. However, little has been written about the intellectual history of Egyptian Copts between 1882 and 1919, a rather surprising observation in light of the unparalleled number of works produced by Coptic journalists and historians during this era.

This void in scholarship is not difficult to explain and is reflective of the uncertain role the Coptic community

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has played in the construction and establishment of the modern Egyptian state. Today, the Copts comprise approximately 10% of the total population although estimates vary in size and in accuracy. The relationship between Copts and Muslims has deteriorated in recent years as the former have been the target of numerous assaults, motivated by religious and economic antagonism and led by Islamic revivalist movements. This strife has underscored the place of Copts as a minority which one historian calls “too numerous and too Egyptian to be simply denied participation in the nation state or to be simply legislated out of existence and encouraged to emigrate as had been the case with other minorities.”

Indeed, the “Coptic Question” (al-mas’ala al-qibṭiyya), an aphorism often applied to the current situation, has its roots in the early phases of Egyptian nationalism. During this era, the predominantly Muslim nationalists attempted to deny the Copts’ claim that they were a unique community with a distinct past by arguing that the two sects had for centuries lived in complete harmony and unity, and that sectarian or religious affiliations should not interfere in Egypt’s overall interests. Furthermore, both the nationalists and the

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British authorities reiterated that Copts were a numerically insignificant minority and should not, as such, make any extraneous political claims. This appeared as the ultimate contradiction for many Copts. While Islamic loyalties were utilized to rouse nationalist or Ottomanist sentiments among Muslim Egyptians, Copts, who until that period had been dealt with on the basis of their religion, were asked to keep their "Copticness" or "Christianness" to themselves. Consequently, as one historian has articulated, some Christian groups during the nationalist era in the Middle East "had still more urgency to cling to the old order under which religious, confessional sanction preserved their law, their communal life, and their folk identity. If statehood were to replace these havens with a conjectural citizenship, what of the shape, the feel, and the guarantees of survival?"\(^5\)

As we shall see, the French invasion of Egypt in 1798 or the Muḥammad ʿAlī dynasty is a questionable starting point for understanding the Coptic experience during the modern period. It is often forgotten that Copts, like all Christians and Jews in the Islamic world, lived for centuries under the ḏhimma (protection) system, which is

frequently referred to as millet in the nineteenth century. The position of dhimmis as virtually autonomous groups allowed for the development of distinct communities and eventually, in the nationalist period, for the conceptualization and writing of a distinct history. Many Coptic historians, for instance, have portrayed the Coptic past as a struggle in a long narrative of martyrdom and oppression, from Roman times to modern Islamic regimes, which finally terminates with the rise of the Muḥammad ʿAlī dynasty. This over-generalization in the experience of Copts finds parallels in the study of other non-Muslim minorities as historians have addressed the topic through two “mythical” views. On the one hand, Islam and Muslims are depicted as being oppressive and intolerant, and on the

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6 “Dhimma” may be defined as “the sort of indefinitely renewed contract through which the Muslim community accords hospitality and protection to members of other revealed religions [i.e., Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism], on condition of their acknowledging the domination of Islam.” See a more detailed definition in Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd ed., s.v. “Dhimma,” by A. J. Wensinck.

7 This continuum is particularly reflected in Iris Ḥabīb al-Miṣrī’s multi-volume work Qīsāt al-kanisa al-qibṭiyya, which has been translated into one English volume as The Story of the Copts (Cairo, 1978).

other, Islamic societies are seen as fostering a utopia in which Muslims, Christians and Jews lived in harmony.\footnote{In the study of Jewish history in the Islamic context, the former argument has been dubbed the “neo-lachrymose theory” and the latter the myth of the “interfaith utopia.” However, both views have been criticized for oversimplifying the writing of Jewish history. For the case of Jews living under medieval Islamic rule, historian Mark Cohen proposes that neither perspective tells the whole story; while the Islamic system of governance inherently favored Muslims over non-Muslims, a situation which often left the latter vulnerable to violent attacks, on the whole both groups lived in relative peace. Incidentally, the term “neo-lachrymose” has been coined by modern Jewish historians in countering what they observe from their perspective to be a “myth of interfaith utopia” utilized mostly by Arab historians. It is an elaboration of the “lachrymose” view of the modern history of European Jewry, which adapts arguments against Western anti-Semitism by depicting Islam as an inherently and relentlessly persecutory religion. Seeing as this is an adaptation of terminology utilized in the context of European history, one should be cautious in applying this theory to the Islamic context. See Mark Cohen, “Islam and the Jews: Myth, Counter-Myth, History,” The Jerusalem Quarterly no. 38 (1986): 125-137.}

Notwithstanding, under Islamic law Christians and Jews were recognized as People of the Book (ahl al-kitāb) and lived under the protection of Muslim rulers. These groups were autonomous, for the most part, and were supervised by communal leaders who administered religious and judicial affairs, and insured that the poll tax, or jizya, was paid. This was the case under the Ottoman Empire, which conquered vast territories inhabited by Christians, including Egypt in 1516. To Egypt’s Copts, the Ottomans extended the traditional “tolerance.” To this end, the church hierarchy
was often the source of communal leadership, in the persons of the Coptic patriarch and the bishops, although wealthy Copts also participated.

Addressing the Islamic context in retrospect, Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis have defined tolerance as "the willingness of a dominant religion to coexist with others." However both scholars stress that such an arrangement did not necessitate equality; Muslim rule openly recognized basic inequalities among its subjects. Discrimination was an intrinsic part of the Muslim system of rule, but persecution was not. Non-Muslims were, in theory if not in practice, compelled to wear distinctive clothing, hindered from conducting specific religious rituals, and restricted in their public behavior. Bearing this in mind one historian articulates another dimension of this arrangement:

...observance of these restrictions did not guarantee the personal safety of non-Muslims. Persecution by the Muslim government on the one hand and mob outbursts against religious minorities on the other were not infrequent throughout the centuries following the Islamic conquest of the Middle East. Though insecurity sometimes hit Muslims as well, non-Muslims usually suffered the most. In fact, non-Muslims living in large Muslim centers were never free from concern for their lives and property. This reality, which was decisive in shaping the attitudes of generations of non-Muslims toward the Muslim majority, should be borne in mind whenever relations between these groups are discussed.  

10 Braude and Lewis, 3-4.

11 Arnon Groiss, "Minorities in a Modernizing Society: Secular vs. Religious Identities in Ottoman Syria, 1840-
Considering that a prevalent system of justice existed in this arrangement which dictated that various groups maintain their proper positions in society, the potential for problems arose when this system fell into disorder. Problems could emanate, for example, when Christians or Jews altered the delicate balance by attaining “too much” economic or political power, and being “negligent” in flaunting it. Again, as Braude and Lewis articulate, “non-Muslim subjects had a certain place. If they seemed to be going beyond the place assigned to them, it was either...a breach of the law, or...a disturbance of the social balance, and consequently a danger to the social and political order.”¹²

During the nineteenth century, the changing political and economic situation of the Middle East disturbed this long-established social balance between Muslims and non-Muslims. It has been argued that the process of modernization intensified communal conflict among various groups. Because modernization brought about the expansion of markets and improved communication, this, in turn, increased contact and generated competition among various

¹² Braude and Lewis, 7.
communal groups.\textsuperscript{13} Such a competition inevitably produced winners and losers. Those who began the competition with a perceived sense of deprivation, whether politically, educationally or economically, often felt discriminated against and, according to this theory, ultimately mobilized themselves along ethnic (or religious) lines for political action.\textsuperscript{14} This was the case for the Copts, who under British rule were removed from posts which they had traditionally held in the government bureaucracy, particularly in the accounting and tax-collecting occupations, and were made to feel uncertain in their political position. In the nationalist period under study, this uncertainty led to a sense among Copts that they must conceive of their existence in an Egyptian nation irrespective of widespread conceptions among Muslims. Increasingly, Copts began to vent frustrations over their place in the nationalist movement through the instrument of the print press.

Albert Hourani once wrote that while “the Copts are a more literate community than the Moslems [they] have made only a small contribution to the intellectual life of modern Egypt. There are to-day scarcely any outstanding Coptic

\textsuperscript{13} Esman and Rabinovich, eds., \textit{Ethnicity, Pluralism, and the State}, 15.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
writers or thinkers."15 Certainly this perspective has been strong in discounting the presence of a Coptic literary movement in the "liberal age," that is in the modern renaissance of Arabic thought (1798-1939) as defined by Hourani, because Coptic endeavors have figured less in modern Egyptian history than activities by Muslims or Syrian Christians. The void in scholarship about Copts may also be related to a presumption that Coptic works likely resembled those by fellow Egyptian writers. The presupposition is common that Copts are ethnically and culturally similar to Muslim Egyptians, and therefore there is no reason to consider their experience distinct. One scholar, Airi Tamura, concludes in her study of nation-building in Egypt that Copts and Muslims, in spite of their low intermarriage rate, "are almost identical to each other not only in their physical characteristics but also in many aspects of their daily life, such as the choice of foods and clothing, and even some ceremonial practices."16 While one may assume that Copts and Muslims are interrelated ethnically and

15 Albert Hourani, Minorities in the Arab World (London, 1947), 46. Interestingly enough, this statement was made in the years in which prominent Coptic leaders and thinkers, such as Salâma Mûsâ and Makram ʿUbayd, had made a name for themselves in Egyptian political and intellectual circles.

culturally, it is important to keep in mind for the period under study that they viewed themselves as Egyptians distinct from the Muslims, owing to their unique history.

The topic of Coptic political involvement and exclusion has received considerable scholarly attention; however, in order to understand the way in which Copts figured in the broader nationalist sphere, it is essential to inspect the transformation of their ideas within the written medium. To the extent that this study allows, I hope to furnish the social and political context for the development of a literary movement among this community between 1882 and 1919 and to give voice to previously unheard elements of the Coptic literati. Then I shall attempt to understand how and why the political visibility of this so-called "numerically insignificant" minority initiated a political crisis of sorts, particularly between 1907 and 1914, which led to the adoption of the discourse of "Pharaonicism" by Copts.\footnote{18}

The idea of Egyptians linking their historic past to an ancient Pharaonic rather than an Islamic heritage did not

\footnote{17 In English, see works listed in the bibliography by Doris Behrens-Abouseif, B. L. Carter, and Airi Tamura. In Arabic, see Sam\textit{\i}ra Ba\textit{\i}r, Riy\textit{\i}d Sury\textit{\i}l and Jak Tajir.}

\footnote{18 I will use the definition of Pharaonicism provided by Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski in \textit{Egypt, Islam and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1930} (New York, 1986) and will discuss its specific meaning in Chapter 5.}
attain much popularity in these early phases of nationalism although it had been elaborately discussed by the likes of Rifāʿa al-Tahtāwī (1801-1873). However, it was quickly adopted by many Copts as a means of experimenting with and establishing their identity as descendants of the Pharaohs and therefore as "true" Egyptians, an identity they were pressured to reinforce during times of intercommunal strife.

Such an association with the past became linked with the use of a particular phrase among writers and journalists, namely the term al-ʿumma al-qibṭiyā, or the "Coptic Nation," which broadly defined the Copts as a distinct community with a unique history and a closeness to the Pharaonic heritage. Rather than distinguishing them ethnically from Egyptians, this identification pointed out that Copts, as the original inhabitants of Egypt, were "elites" among Egyptians, an identification much sought in a time when Western ideas privileged certain peoples (particularly so-called "original" inhabitants), races and histories over others. The role of the Coptic Church in this process is worthy of consideration, for by the mid-nineteenth century, the Church had become quite involved in the education of a rising Coptic middle class who were responsible for advocating these perspectives. The Church

\[\text{Gershoni and Jankowski, 116.}\]
had conventionally maintained its own sense of Coptic history by upholding its characteristic liturgical and customary traditions. However the Christian dimensions of its traditions now seemed to conflict with this idea of a "pagan" Pharaonic past. Yet, as an examination of some texts will reveal, even those writers supporting the standpoint of the Church were able to reconcile Christian/Coptic and Pharaonic discourses as part of their historical narrative. Accordingly in this study, I hope to shed light on the meanings of these various viewpoints and terms and the way in which they may have contributed to the formation of a Coptic identity during the period in question.
CHAPTER 2

COPTS AND THE COPTIC CHURCH BEFORE 1882

Although many scholars have constructed the intellectual history of the nineteenth-century Middle East by examining the way in which Western ideas have influenced its development, few have paid attention to the place of Copts or to their church in this representation. This is in part because Copts, unlike other minority religious groups such as Maronites, Syrian Catholics, Armenians and Jews, had limited ties, economic or religious, to the West. Under Ottoman rule, Copts seldom held positions in the trade sector where others customarily encountered such ideas, nor did the Coptic Orthodox Church obtain the protection of foreign churches or governments.\(^\text{1}\) Undoubtedly, though, the

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\(^\text{1}\) For an excellent discussion of the traditional attitude of the Coptic church in regard to Western Christianity, see Jak Tajir, Ḍabāl wa muslimūn mundhu al-fath al-‘arabī [Copts and Muslims since the Arab Conquest] (Cairo, 1951), 280-285. Also we may contrast the Coptic case with the case presented by Arnon Groiss in “Minorities in a Modernizing Society,” with relation to Catholic and Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Syria who, by the nineteenth century, had attained French and Russian protection, respectively.
period, the Church consistently served in another capacity which is more difficult to gauge— as Upholder of Coptic history and traditions. The Coptic Orthodox Church continues to exalt its tradition of struggle and self-assertion and claims that it is founded upon the “blood of the martyrs.”

Consequently, it is not presumptuous to assert that the Coptic Church has faithfully guarded its position as one of the oldest Christian churches in the world.

One shies away from assigning “nationalist” sentiments in periods which predate modern nationalist ideology, as Copts have never advocated a Coptic “nation-state” per se, yet the tensions between Copts and their Byzantine rulers in the fifth and sixth centuries resulted largely from Coptic allegiance to their church and to their heritage—sentiments that continue to play a significant role in the writing of modern Coptic history. The Copts were adamant supporters of the monophysite religious doctrine at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, where they opposed the majority of the Christian world, and were consequently branded as heretics by other churches. The monophysite beliefs rejected the Council of Chalcedon’s decision to assert that Jesus had two

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2 This is a general reference to the “Age of Martyrdom” within the Coptic Church, which lasted from Late Antiquity until the Middle Ages, when Copts struggled for their creed against Byzantine emperors.
natures, one divine and one human, and that both existed separately yet in union (i.e., two natures in one). Monophysites insisted that Jesus has only one divine-human nature.\textsuperscript{3} Because of this disagreement, Copts soon after declared themselves ecumenically independent from Byzantine domination and thereby “liberated” their church. The extent to which these sentiments outlived the Islamic conquest of Egypt in 641 AD and the subsequent Islamicization and Arabization cannot be easily assessed. However, we may presume that the church continued to play a similar role, as did mosques, in transmitting spiritual (and possibly political) messages to the populace, and in promoting its historical narrative through liturgical services.\textsuperscript{4} Undoubtedly the clergy—priests and bishops—played a significant role in this scheme. Whether an awareness of being monophysite ever existed in the minds of ordinary


\textsuperscript{4} The \textit{Synaxarion}, the liturgical book which records important events in the church, including the death of saints, the persecution of Coptic martyrs and miraculous happenings, has been traditionally read out loud during the Coptic Orthodox liturgy and probably helped sustain these ideas among Copts. For more on the \textit{Synaxarion}, see \textit{The Coptic Encyclopedia}, ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York, 1991), s.v., “Synaxarion, Copto-Arabic,” by René-Georges Coquin.
Copts during subsequent years is unlikely,¹ but the legacy of Coptic and Egyptian uniqueness has lived to the present. Among scholars in the modern era, questions have been raised about the effects of the Muslim invasion in obscuring the Pharaonic and Coptic past. As Kenneth Cragg asserts, however, we should take note that “Egyptianism,” as recognized by both Christians and Muslims, has been arguably more significant in the nationalist debate than has “Arabism.”²

¹ An anecdotal incident from the modern period may shed light on the extent of this awareness among Copts. In a chance encounter with Bernard Shaw, Coptic intellectual Salama Musa mistook the former’s query about monophysitism for vegetarianism: “When he knew that I was a Copt, he said: ‘Are you Monophysite?’ [the word transliterated from the English]. The question puzzled me. It occurred to me that the word had to do with vegetarian food. For Bernard Shaw was associated in my mind with vegetarian diet and I had been toying with the thought that I would restrict myself to vegetables also and I had desisted from meat for some months....I replied: ‘No. We eat meat in Egypt.’ He burst out laughing and asked me to look up the word ‘Monophysite’ in the dictionary.” Excerpts from The Education of Salama Musa, Arabic edition, cited in Cragg, 201, n. 40.

² Cragg, 171. Writing about the presentation of history among Egyptian nationalists in the modern period, Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, 154, have pointed out that “the Monophysite variety of Christianity that became dominant in Egypt was opposed to the orthodoxy of the alien Byzantine establishment. Thus Egypt’s religious history in the Byzantine era was seen as one phase in its longer nationalist struggle. This opposition of a native Egyptian form of Christianity to a foreign Byzantine one was also viewed as being of great historical importance: it was the hatred of the Monophysite Egyptian masses for Byzantium and its official religious dogmas that were credited with an important role in the collapse of Byzantine rule and the Arab conquest of Egypt in the seventh century.”
One writer refers to the history of Copts prior to 1880 as one of "silent invisibility," supported by the low profile of the Coptic Church, by its monolithic organization and by its belief in political apathy. This perspective holds that once Copts accepted Muslim rule in 641, they were left no other choice but to live a life of submission and humiliation, and that they were passive witnesses to the forces surrounding them. Indeed such a perspective, which is prevalent particularly in history written under the auspices of the Church, has made for little scholarship on Coptic history in the period between the Islamic conquest and the reign of Muḥammad ʿAli.

However, in his work Al-aqbat fi Miṣr fi al-ʿaṣr al-ʿuthmānī (The Copts in Egypt in the Ottoman Era), Egyptian scholar Muḥammad ʿAfīfī provides a different viewpoint on the role of Copts and their church between 1516 and 1798. Specifically, through an original analysis of correspondence between the Catholic and Coptic churches (ca. 1600-1800), ʿAfīfī gives us new insights on the period under study. In the wake of political and economic crises brought about by

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conflicts with Ottoman governors and provincial grandees, "Afifi writes, several Coptic patriarchs felt politically weakened and sought to improve their situation by seeking the protection of the Roman Catholic Pope. However, this endeavor was not acceptable to many Coptic clergy and laymen, who would solicit the help of Ottoman governors in preventing these measures from being carried out.

The act of seeking European protection was not unusual for Christian minorities at that time. For decades, the Orthodox Melkite community in Ottoman Syria was enduring similar battles between factions supporting the recognition of the Catholic Pope (Uniates) and other factions advocating traditional and independent Orthodoxy. Eventually, this led to a breach, and the first Uniate Melkite patriarch in Ottoman Syria was appointed in 1724. A formal agreement with the Catholic papacy went into effect in 1736 and resulted in strengthening ties between the Melkites and the Roman Catholic Church.\(^9\) Modern Coptic historian Iris Ḥabib al-Miṣrī reports that it was under the influence of Syrian Catholic immigrants to Egypt in the eighteenth century that

one Coptic Patriarch, Yoḥanna the Sixteenth (1676-1718), was tempted to begin negotiations with Rome.\textsuperscript{10}

However when beseeched by Coptic laymen to interfere, Ottoman governors were quick to respond. Allegedly Yoḥanna the Sixteenth was poisoned, and a later successor, Murqus the Seventh (1745-1770), was removed from office for seeking similar agreements with Rome.\textsuperscript{11}  `Afifi maintains that the union was so strongly opposed because Copts feared the loss of their traditional heritage and "turning their backs" on the martyrs who had fought to emancipate their church. They also suspected Catholic self-interest in the region and resisted any encroachment on their established autonomy.\textsuperscript{12}  However insignificant this account may seem, it provides us with invaluable insight, first because it illustrates that the Coptic Church, far from being monolithic and xenophobic, had been in contact with Western churches and was devising plans which were potentially detrimental to its relationship with the Ottoman state. Secondly, it portrays a pattern that we shall discuss shortly, that of multiple interests and voices of clergy and laymen shaping church and communal

\textsuperscript{10}  Al-Miṣrī, \textit{Qiṣat al-kaṇīsā al-qibṭiyya} [\textit{The Story of the Coptic Church}], vol. 4 (Cairo, 1982), 92.

\textsuperscript{11}  `Afifi, \textit{Al-adab}, 293.  `Afifi does not provide the exact dates, but one may approximate them from Al-Miṣrī, \textit{Qiṣat}, 402-403.

\textsuperscript{12}  Al-Miṣrī, \textit{Qiṣat}, 296.
policies. It additionally shows the importance given by some elements of the community to church traditions and to maintaining Coptic autonomy.

The issues raised during this period—whether to solicit Western protection, whether to invoke the interference of the state in communal matters, and whether laymen or clergy should ultimately decide the future of the Coptic community—continued to be significant during the modern period. Such was the case, for instance, with the Napoleonic invasion and the subsequent occupation of Egypt (1798-1801). At that time, Coptic sympathies and loyalties were tested by consideration of allegiance to Egypt and to the Ottoman Empire. In light of the fact that the invasion was thought of as hostile by the majority of Egyptians, the reality that some Copts saw the French as fellow, and thus sympathetic, Christians and therefore cooperated with them in the fighting against Mamluk beys in Upper Egypt was viewed with resentment by the Muslim community.13 Although

13 Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “The Political Situation of the Copts, 1798-1923,” in Braude and Lewis, vol. II, The Arab Lands, 188. As several scholars have noted, Yaʿqūb Hanna was the most famous of the Copts who supported the French occupation. General Yaʿqūb, as he has come to be known, organized and trained a Coptic legion with himself as leader and fought with the French against the Mamluks in Upper Egypt. While his efforts have been assessed by some writers as “collaborative,” a few scholars have judged his involvement to be the first attempt made by an Egyptian to establish an independent Egypt. See Cragg, 185.
not all Copts were sympathetic to the French, public riots against the French resulted in the random deaths of several Copts. To the disappointment of those who supported the French, the latter were scarcely sympathetic and Napoleon wrote that Copts “are only a minority in Egypt, hated by the Muslims, and they apply themselves to earning that hatred. They are owed justice and liberty, but it would be impolitic and dangerous to choose them as allies and grant them any privileges.”

It is not difficult, then, to understand why the subsequent period is considered to be the birth of a new era for Copts. Muḥammad ʿAlī (1805-1848) began to eradicate the dhimmi system by allowing Christians and Jews to build synagogues and churches and to conduct public religious processions. It is thought that the Pasha was keen on opening the doors to European economic and political influence, and on gaining European favor; therefore he granted dhimmis a greater degree of equality with Muslims. Such is his legacy not only in Egypt but in Ottoman Syria, where he instituted similar policies under the rule of his son Ibrāhīm, policies that favored Christians over Muslims and eventually contributed to intersectarian conflict in

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14 Partrick, 120.
that region. However, the reforms established by the Muḥammad ʿAli dynasty are remembered more fondly by Coptic historians as they did not provoke hostility between Copts and Muslims. By 1855, Muḥammad ʿAli's grandson, Saʿīd (1854-1863), had abolished the traditional jīz̄a tax and recruited Copts into the Egyptian army. In future years, Egyptian rulers were not hesitant to display their support for the Coptic community. For example, Khedive Ismāʿīl, when making an announcement concerning the election of an Advisory Council in 1866, declared that "we also have Copts among those elected and we have opened the doors to Muslims and Copts without differentiation."

For the most part, these changes in themselves were not dramatic. For centuries, because of their indispensable

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15 Incidentally, similar reforms were passed under the Tanzimat decrees, the first of which was the ʿHaṣṣ-ı Şerif of Gūlhanē issued in 1839 by the Ottoman sultan, which promised "life, liberty, and property," concessions which were extended to "all our subjects, of whatever religion or sect they may be." See Roderic Davison, "Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century," in Philip S. Houry, Albert Hourani, and Mary C. Wilson, eds., The Modern Middle East: A Reader (London, 1993), 64-65.

16 Taḡir, 238.

17 "Documents of ʿAbbād Palace: The European Division" (Sijil 3482), an address by Khedive Ismāʿīl dated 18 February, 1866; cited in Riyād Surayl, Al-muṭṭamaʿ al-ḡibbū ḵī Miṣr ṣī al-garn 19 [Coptic Society in Egypt in the Nineteenth Century] (Cairo, 1984), 52.
position in the administrative and financial apparatus of Egypt’s government, where they had held a virtual monopoly over the positions of financial agents (mubāshīrs) and accountants (muhāsibs), Copts had frequently been granted leeway by the ruling powers in the practice of their religion.\(^\text{18}\) Notwithstanding, Copts appreciated their renewed rights, and the reforms were considered to be a great moral victory. There is no evidence, however, that Muḥammad ʿAli was personally interested in “modernizing” the Copts or that he viewed them as being “more than good tax collectors and accountants.”\(^\text{19}\) For instance, while the Pasha made reforms in Egypt’s educational system, Copts were not included in his student missions to Europe, nor were they entitled to receive a government education. As Edith Butcher later wrote about the Pasha:

[H]e surrounded himself with Europeans and Christians, because he perceived that they were invariably more intelligent, better educated, more energetic, and as a general rule more trustworthy than the Mohammedans. He abrogated all the laws against them, and severely punished any outbreak of fanaticism. At the same time he invariably chose, if possible, Armenian, Roman Catholic, or other European Christians, since he perceived the possible future danger of allowing the

\(^{18}\) Behrens-Abouseif, 186; ʿAfīfī, Al-aqābāl, 106-107. While the majority of Copts, like their Muslim counterparts, were impoverished farmers (fellahin), under Ottoman rule, Copts held a monopoly over certain posts in the civil service while those who lived in urban centers may have been additionally employed as artisans and craftsmen.

\(^{19}\) Tājir, 234.
Copts of the National Church to obtain any preponderance of influence in the country which they never forgot was their own by inheritance. 20

While Butcher’s views on the inherent superiority of Europeans are somewhat repugnant, her comments on the whole suggest Muḥammad ʿAli’s preference for other minorities and his apathy towards the Copts. Feeling excluded, Copts sought alternate avenues for education.

An option to which they resorted was the American and British missionary schools that had been established during the middle part of the nineteenth century. The missionary schools had already begun to gain wide popularity among both Copts and Muslims. American missionaries in particular were able to recruit substantial numbers of followers from the Coptic Orthodox by concentrating their activities in the city of Assyrūt, a densely populated center for Copts in Upper Egypt. 21 Consequently, a number of Copts adopted the religion of their missionary teachers, and conversion to Roman Catholicism and Protestantism increased throughout the century. Moreover, when a clerical school opened in Egypt in 1879, Catholic Copts completed part of their training in


21 Muḥammad ʿAfify and Rafiq Ḫabīb, Tārikh al-kanīsā al-misriyya [History of the Egyptian Church] (Cairo, 1994), 119; Partrick, 130.
Egypt and were then sent to St. Joseph’s, a Jesuit College in Beirut and an important center of Jesuit activities during that time (and incidentally of Arab nationalist activities), where they studied other subjects, including theology and philosophy.\footnote{Suryāl, 137.}

The missionary work threatened the heart of the Coptic Orthodox Church, however, and Patriarch Cyril IV (1854-1861) made communal reforms a top priority. Cyril, who is aptly dubbed “Abū al-Īslāḥ” (Father of Reforms), proceeded to orchestrate a number of changes aimed at improving the status of the clergy and of the broader Coptic community. Seeing inadequacies in the current educational system, which consisted of small village schools similar to Muslim kuttābs, or Qur’ān schools, he commissioned the building of the Great Coptic School (Madrasat al-Aqbat al-Kubrā) in 1853, near the new cathedral in Cairo. However, the attempts at opening schools all over Egypt were not entirely welcomed. They met with resistance from the ‘uraфа’, the blind instructors who had traditionally taught at the Coptic kuttābs and who now warned parents against sending children to the Patriarch’s schools, claiming that they were used to assist the government in conscripting Copts into military service. Cyril was quick to act and recruited the ‘uraфа’
to teach literacy and religion in his schools, thereby quelling the opposition.\textsuperscript{23}

The Patriarch’s Coptic School was a great success. Instructors were recruited to teach Coptic, in an unprecedented revival of this language, and to educate students in proper Coptic singing and ritual.\textsuperscript{24} The school offered a Western-style curriculum which included the teaching of languages such as English, French, Italian, and Turkish. Instruction was also provided in history, geography, fine arts, and music.

Language education in particular was seen as critical for Copts, who were now competing with other minorities, including a new wave of Catholic immigrants from Ottoman Syria, for top government posts. Historian Thomas Philipp reports that the search for employment by Syrian Christians was on the rise in the second part of the nineteenth century and made emigration to Egypt an attractive option. Apparently, with their professional training in Arabic and well-versedness in European languages, Syrians made ideal employees. Furthermore, Philipp argues that the Egyptian education system was unable to satisfy the demand for

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{23} Muḥammad Sayyid Kīlānī, Al-ādab al-qibṣī qadīm wa ḥadīthīn [Coptic Literature: Old and New] (Cairo, 1962), 26.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Al-Miṣrī, Qiṣṭ, 322.
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trained people. Khedive Ismā‘il’s reign, and more so the British occupation, offered a variety of careers for these professionally trained Syrians, whose position was further strengthened because of their ties to the Vatican.²⁵

Most graduates of the Great Coptic School, however, were able to attain various administrative positions, rising to posts far above that of the average civil servant, as in the case of Prime Minister Buṭrus Ghāli (1846-1910).²⁶ Among other reforms, Cyril IV has been credited with establishing the first girls’ school in Egypt and with purchasing Egypt’s first privately-owned printing press in 1860.²⁷ However, with his untimely death in 1861, an era of reform came to an abrupt end. It was alleged among contemporaneous Coptic historians that Cyril’s overreaching goal of pan-Orthodoxy via a rapprochement with the Armenian and Russian Orthodox churches provoked the anger of Khedive Sa‘īd, who, sensitive to Cyril’s connections with the Russians in light of Russian-Ottoman conflicts, subsequently ordered Cyril’s


²⁶ ʿAffī and Ḥabīb, 155; Behrens-Abouseif, 190.

²⁷ Samir Seikaly, “Coptic Communal Reform: 1860-1914,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 6(1970): 249. Seikaly challenges the credit given to Cyril in regard to the girls’ school, indicating that Cyril’s biographers give “no evidence to suggest that he actually founded any girls’ schools, or that if he did, the schools met with hardly any success.”
poisoning. Whatever the truth of the matter, for the next two decades, Cyril’s schools were left to deteriorate and most improvements came to a halt.

This set the stage for the emergence of a new communal leadership: Copts who had benefited educationally from Cyril’s policies or from missionary tutelage, and economically from past governmental reforms. They were landowners, businessmen, and financiers—a class of professionals who sought better supervision of their communal affairs. As was the case for other non-Muslim groups in the Middle East in the latter part of the nineteenth century, penetration of European concepts of political identification led to the establishment of secular identities at the expense of religion. Such was the case when Coptic laymen approached the clergy and asked that a Lay Council (Majlis Milli, also known as the Coptic Communal Council, be established to oversee further reforms and the management of church endowments (awgaf). No longer

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29 Suryal, 24-25.

29 Charles Issawi, “The Transformation of the Economic Position of the Millets in the Nineteenth Century,” in Braude and Lewis, vol. I, 276. During this period, legislation was passed by the Ottoman and Egyptian governments to allow free transfer of land; this subsequently made possible the accumulation of vast properties by wealthy non-Muslims.

30 Groiss, 52.
was the Church seen as a valid representative of the community, nor was it viewed as capable of managing its own affairs. The clergy, while at first cooperative, were alarmed by this encroachment and refused to forego their traditional rights. Since the clergy and monks were mostly drawn from the lower classes, they saw no sense in relinquishing the church’s wealth and its control over the awqāf to a class of affluent reformers. Moreover, the clergy argued that the patriarch was the Vicar of Christ and therefore possessed an absolute power not to be contested by or shared with any council.31 Consequently, in 1874, lay leaders turned to the government and asked Khedive Isma‘il to issue an ordinance for the establishment of the Lay Council.32 The Khedive complied. By involving the government so directly in the affairs of communal leadership, the laymen sacrificed traditional liberties ensured by the dhimma system and thus inaugurated a new era for Copts.

31 Seikaly, 252 and 262.

32 Ibid., 251. The complex struggle that ensued between the church and the Council, which was often mediated by the government, continued for several decades and is discussed quite thoroughly in Seikaly’s article.
Conclusions:

New reforms throughout the nineteenth century led to relative fragmentation within the Coptic community. Since Copts were no longer viewed as dhimmis in the eyes of the government, their position had changed yet remained somewhat ambivalent. Certainly the government was not interested in advocating outright equality between Copts and Muslims. However, at least until the 1870s, Copts were less interested in blatant political activism and remained preoccupied with reforming a community which was now divided, albeit disproportionately, among Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Copts. The last group in particular were seen by the Orthodox Church as provoking fragmentation and as threatening the safety of Copts because their connections to foreigners might be viewed as “damning” by Muslims, who “could not be expected to make such fine distinctions between Copts and Copts.”33 Additionally, confrontations between Orthodox clergy and laity persisted, and while these tensions were mostly connected with communal policies, the conflict ultimately affected the relationship between Copts and the ruling powers in Egypt. With the British occupation in 1882, Coptic reformers believed that they were entering a

new era of freedom and equality and that they had won their bid for power against the clergy.\textsuperscript{34} As the above discussion has illustrated, leadership in the Coptic community passed from the hands of Church officials into those of the Coptic laity. While these laymen came to form the backbone of Coptic leadership in Egyptian politics and within literary circles between 1882 and 1919, the Church continued to loom large in the lives of most Copts.

\textsuperscript{34} Seikaly, 252.
CHAPTER 3

POLITICS AND THE EGYPTIAN IDENTITY, 1882-1907: EGYPT FOR WHICH EGYPTIANS?

While seeking to advance their own communal interests, a group of reform-minded Copts also hoped to extend their active participation to the national political sphere. They were among an emerging class of intellectuals who were engaged in debate and speculation over the interests of al-umma al-miṣriyya, or the Egyptian nation. The ideological bent of this debate had mixed dimensions, as will be discussed, which were heavily influenced by the likes of Rifāʿa al-Ṭahāwī, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afgānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh. However, during the 1870s and 1880s, Egyptian intellectuals were busy finding new directions for frustrations, which had compounded, over the existing political status quo. Many began challenging the position of the Khedival dynasty and of the established Ottoman ruling elite, as well as criticizing the destructiveness of European finance
capitalism in Egypt; their objections culminated in the unsuccessful 'Urabi revolution of 1881.¹

The ideological foundations of the 'Urabi revolt have been debated in recent years; however there is near consensus among scholars that the movement was more Ottomanist than Egyptianist in its political outlook.² While showing resentment towards the Turkish/Circassian ruling elite in Egypt, movement leaders also expressed their loyalty to the Ottoman sultan and proclaimed their struggle as one of maintaining Islamic unity against European imperialist domination; the revolt was further contextualized in the terminology of a Muslim holy war.³ However, this Islamic orientation did not necessarily deter other religious groups from participating. A Copt by the name of Mihkāil 'Abd al-Sayyid, who in 1877 had founded Al-Naṣr, one of the first unofficial newspapers in Egypt, was asked in 1884 to shut down his paper for taking an outspoken

¹ Gershoni and Jankowski, 4.


³ Gershoni and Jankowski, 5-6.
stand against the British occupation. Others, such as the
dynamic leader Murqus Nabīh, were involved in rallying Copts
against British intervention. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, the
spiritual and political mentor of many Egyptian
nationalists, described the atmosphere surrounding the ʿUrābī
revolt as one of brotherhood and cooperation among all the
religious communities in Egypt:

Can anyone doubt that our laboring is not nationalist
even after it attracted men from all races [al-ajnās] and
religions? The Muslims, Copts and Israelites [Jews] would come to his [ʿUrābī’s] rescue with a
strange ferment...for they believed that it was a war
between Egyptians and the British. The Copts were
involved in this ferment (through financial donations
and participation in the fighting) and their leaders
were encouraging them to do so.

Buṭrus Ghālī, the future Prime Minister, was initially close
to ʿUrābī, and the constitution adopted by the ʿUrābis was
signed by several Copts, including Patriarch Cyril V (1874-
1927). However, the Islamic tendencies which continued to

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5 From Maḥmūd al-Khafīf, Ahmad ʿUrābī al-zaʿīm al-muftāri
ʿalayhi, cited in Samīr Bahr, Al-aqābī fi al-ḥayā al-siyāsiyya
al-miṣriyya [Copts in Egyptian Political Life] (Cairo,
1979), 24. For more on Coptic participation, see Sūryāl, 109.

6 Subḥi Labīb, “The Copts in Egyptian Society and Politics, 1882-1919,” in Islam, Nationalism, Radicalism in Egypt and
the Sudan, eds. Gabriel R. Warburg and Uri M. Kupferschmit
(New York, 1983), 303-304. For information on the
patriarch’s anti-Catholic stance, see Sūryāl, 128-129.
shape nationalist thinking in the decades following the British occupation apparently gave rise to some reservations.

Between 1882 and 1907, pragmatism characterized the political position of many Copts. Seeing the "Urabi movement on the brink of defeat, Buṭrus Ghālī retracted his support and allied with the British. While a group of Copts continued to voice their support for the nationalist movement, others (mainly from the wealthy) seemed to favor the British occupation, although suspicion remained towards both the British and the predominantly Muslim nationalists. Some have explained this Coptic preference for the British along religious lines: seeing the Islamic nature of the nationalist movement, Copts turned to fellow Christians, i.e., the British, in hopes of achieving more equality and freedom. While this may have been true to an extent, most of the Coptic Orthodox populace preferred to follow the lead of the clergy and of their church, which was moderately nationalistic. The clergy's stand was supported by a belief, which may have stemmed from the Copts' former position as dhimmis, that by maintaining the church's

8 Lopez, 18.
traditional organization and communal cohesion, and by avoiding explicit or implicit connections with the British, they upheld the safety of their community.

In several ways, the British occupation strengthened the Ottoman/Islamic loyalties of most Egyptians. Loyalty to the Ottoman sultan came to symbolize an avenue of resistance for Egyptians, both because of a religious allegiance to the sultan as Muslim caliph and because the Ottoman state could be used as a political "lever" against the British presence.\textsuperscript{9} Intellectually, these sentiments came to affect the nationalist movement which, after a brief respite, was revived in the 1890s. By that time, ideas about \textit{umma} and \textit{wālīn} (respectively "nation" or "nation-state," and "home-country," or \textit{patrie} in French) were freely circulating among intellectuals, and there was great ambiguity as to the use of this terminology in an Islamic context. Undoubtedly, though, the word \textit{umma} had specific historic and religious connotations in Egypt. Among the intelligentsia and throughout the journalistic explosion of the late nineteenth century, Charles Wendell writes, "the key word resounding through the propagandistic literature of all parties, religious, political, or whatever, was \textit{umma}, a term familiar

\textsuperscript{9} Gershoni and Jankowski, 6.
to all and with a long history.”¹⁰ However, arguments as to what umma and waļan meant had wavered between the inclusive concept of “territorial patriotism,” as interpreted by Rifā’a al-Ṭahhāwī (1801-1873), and the notion which is often referred to as “Islamic liberalism,” whose outspoken advocate was Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905). The influences of Ṭahhāwī and ʿAbduh were evident in the ideas of a subsequent generation of intellectuals and nationalist leaders which included in its ranks Ahmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid (1872-1963) and Muḥṣafā Kāmil (1874-1908).

For Rifā’a al-Ṭahhāwī, all individuals who lived in the geographically-defined land of Egypt were part of the umma. In Al-Manhaj (1869), a work which is considered to be one of the greatest influences on the Egyptian intellectual movement in the nineteenth century, Ṭahhāwī outlines his new romantic conception of Egypt.¹¹ The author speaks of Egypt as a nation which was distinct from the greater Islamic community. While he formulates and presents his ideas in the traditional language of Islam, the European influence on his work is clear in the notions of waļan and hubb al-waļan


(love of country). By asserting that patriotism belonged to all those who lived in Egypt, Ṭahṭāwī is primarily "Egyptianist" in his outlook:

[Ṭahṭāwī] praises and defends the part played by the Arabs in the history of Islam; when he talks of patriotism, however, he does not mean the feeling shared by all who speak Arabic, but that shared by those who live in the land of Egypt. Egypt for him is something distinct, and also something historically continuous. Modern Egypt is the legitimate descendant of the land of the Pharaohs. His imagination indeed was filled with the glories of ancient Egypt...but ancient Egypt for him was more than a source of pride; it had both the constituent elements of civilization, social morality and economic prosperity, and what it had possessed modern Egypt could regain, for the 'physical constitution of the people of these times is exactly that of the peoples of times past, and their disposition is one and the same'.

Indeed, Ṭahṭāwī's ideas singled out Egypt as a nation which had, since the time of the Pharaohs, maintained an intellectual and moral prominence that could be re-harnessed during the modern era. Ṭahṭāwī's inclusive ideas traversed religious boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims and, by essentially arguing for territorial nationalism, held inadvertent secular connotations. Still, in one historian's perspective, the language of Islam informed Ṭahṭāwī's image of the world and impelled him to consider the Arab conquest

as the turning point which gave Egypt its present identity and specific character.¹³

While Muḥammad ʿAbduh stressed the importance of unity among Muslims, Christians and Jews, there was little doubt that he, being a student of the noted pan-Islamist Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, was a vocal proponent of reform within the framework of Islamic principles. In his view of Islam, ʿAbduh emphasized the practical needs of a Muslim in the modern world, and his activities were focused on achieving a reformulation of the Islamic faith and reconciling the beliefs of early Islam with modern thought, hence the term “Islamic liberalism.”¹⁴ While his teacher al-Afghānī attempted to revive a romanticized past in the form of a pan-Islamic nation which transcended all linguistic, ethnic, and territorial boundaries, ʿAbduh’s cause was devoted more to the service of “Egypt and its people.”¹⁵ Although neither ʿAbduh nor al-Afghānī has been labeled a nationalist, their ideas influenced later nationalists who viewed themselves as a middle group between traditional Islamists and secularists. Their influence on the latter group in


¹⁴ Hourani, Arabic Thought, 140.

¹⁵ Wendell, 186.
particular can be understood in light of the fact that their circle of followers included both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Among the best known of the non-Muslims was the Jewish intellectual Yaʾqūb Sanūʿ (1839-1912), who was famed for speaking against Khedival policies and was banished from Egypt in 1884.16 Irene Gendzier, the author of a study of Sanūʿ, maintains that the mixed composition of ʿAbduh’s and al-Afghāni’s intellectual circles, which also included several Syrian Christians, calls into question their personal orthodoxy; the participation of non-Muslims like Sanūʿ in discussions about a Muslim/patriotic resurgence against the West may indicate that the leaders had given less priority to religion than had their contemporaries.17 However, while Muḥammad ʿAbduh attracted a diverse group of intellectuals, his Islamic outlook made Copts feel excluded. This contributed to the major difference between the political perceptions of Syrian Christians and Copts. Syrian Christians, who were busy formulating their own concepts of nationalism via Arabism and Ottomanism, were willing to accept ʿAbduh’s humanitarian and liberal ideas as an impetus for their brand of nationalism. By 1914, Nadrah

16 For more on Yaʾqūb Sanūʿ, see Irene Gendzier’s excellent study The Practical Visions of Yaʾqūb Sanūʿ (Cambridge, 1966).

17 Gendzier, 29-30.
Ma'rân, an intellectual of Lebanese Christian origin, had gone as far as admitting that “Islam was one of the glories of the Arab nation” and that “it was good for the Christian Arabs of Syria to submit to the rule of the Muslims” because of their splendid heritage. In contrast, the majority of Copts, who did not consider themselves Arabs, felt that they could not forego their nascent identity as “true Egyptians” for a heritage that espoused an Islamic past.

Indeed, Syrian Christians in Egypt had been the leading voice in championing unity among all the Arabs of the Ottoman Empire. Undoubtedly, Egyptians could not neglect that Arab history, and the Arabic language had formed part of their own identity. However, in terms of self-definition, that is with regard to considering Egypt as a distinct community, the majority of Egyptians did not adopt such a sentiment in the period under study. In a way, this led to an Egyptian sense of superiority towards Arabs,

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19 Behrens-Abouseif, 193. Indeed, anti-Arab sentiments of Copts were later reflected in the writings of Salama Músá, whose fundamental concern was with what the “defects and weaknesses of the Arab-Islamic political tradition had meant for Egypt,” a country which had been forcibly annexed and incorporated into the Arab-Islamic world. See Gershoni and Jankowski, 113.

20 Gershoni and Jankowski, 15.
a feeling which was provoked by the British tendency, to be discussed shortly, to look upon Syrian immigrants in Egypt as the "cream of the crop" and to reward them with choice positions in the government. In the first decade of the twentieth century, when Arabism became defined more as a separatist movement from the Ottoman Empire, this gave further incentive for Egyptian nationalists, most of whom had been staunch loyalists in upholding the sultan figurehead, to denounce Arab nationalism. In 1913, their position was duly noted when an Egyptian present at a meeting of the Arab Congress in Paris was denied the right to address the assembly as the chairman declared the Congress restricted to Arabs from the Ottoman provinces east of Egypt.\(^{21}\)

One of the renowned Egyptian nationalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who was scarcely an advocate of Arab nationalism was Muṣṭafā Kāmil. He was a passionate supporter of Ṭahāwī's territorial patriotism and an outspoken opponent of the British occupation. In the period between 1900 and 1907, Kāmil founded two significant political organs: the National Party (Al-Ḥizb al-Waṭāni) and the newspaper Al-Liwa'. Kāmil was an excellent orator and perhaps won the greatest support of any national leader, up

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 17.
till that time, from the Coptic community. Expressing a prevalent sentiment among Muslim intellectuals, he emphasized that Copts and Muslims “have lived together for long centuries in the greatest unity and harmony,” and that Egyptians should learn to separate the two spheres of religion and national life. In his speeches and writings, Kamil invoked the beauty of Egypt’s past. However, as Albert Hourani writes,

It is not ‘the Egyptians’, it is ‘Egypt’, ‘my country’ (bilâdi) which is the god of Kamil’s worship: Egypt is the world’s paradise, and the people which dwells in her and inherits her is the noblest of peoples if it hold her dear, and guilty of the greatest of crimes against her if it hold her rights cheaply and surrender control of her to the foreigner.

Ultimately, Kamil’s abstract notions of an “Egyptian nation,” in addition to his support of an “Islamic nation,” appear to be in perpetual conflict. Invoking sentiments from the Urâbi movement, he insisted that all Egyptians should support the Ottoman Empire and the sultan, yet at the same time, he professed strong loyalty to the Egyptian nation; this latter view is clear in his repopularization of the aphorism “Egypt for the Egyptians.”

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22 Labib, 307.

23 Hourani, Arabic Thought, 207.

24 Ibid., 206.

25 Gershoni and Jankowski, 13.
commitments remained ambiguous and at best utilitarian; however several prominent Copts agreed to join the National Party, including Murgus Ḥanna and Wiṣa Waṣif, yet they continued to be watchful of the Ottoman/Islamic undertones in his ideas.\textsuperscript{26} For a moment, it appeared that Copts and Muslims who were involved in Kāmil’s movement had begun to define themselves as part of a larger group, of those who belonged to the broader Egyptian nation.

However, Coptic interests in the National Party dwindled with Kāmil’s premature death in 1908, after which the Party acquired rigidly Islamic undertones. The Coptic intellectual Salāma Mūsā later expressed the growing frustrations among young Copts which were springing up in the latter years of Kāmil’s life:

\begin{quote}
\textit{[Kāmil’s Al-Liwa’]} captured many people’s hearts and minds...but the Coptic young men were as a rule averse of its religious appeal and also of its Ottoman-Turkish propaganda. They reasoned as follows: ‘If you propagate the formation of a Muslim League, and the support of the rights of Ottoman power in Egypt, although the Turks are not only strangers but have a historical record that abounds in acts of oppression over Egypt, then we have a right to seek our orientation towards a Christian league, and to seek support from the occupying power.’\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{26} Sūryāl, 109. Incidentally, Wiṣa Waṣif served as a member on the Party’s advisory board.

\textsuperscript{27} Salāma Mūsā,\textit{ The Education of Salāma Mūsā}, translated by L. C. Schuman (Leiden, 1961), 29.
In many ways, Kāmil’s death and the subsequent feeling of isolation were major turning points for Copts who had attempted to be politically and intellectually involved in the Egyptian nationalist movement. The prevailing political situation did not portend a promising future, so for those who had taken a wait-and-see approach to joining the movement, none of the available options seemed attractive. Different nationalists, who had scarcely defined their goals beyond achieving independence from the British, failed to provide Copts with a less Islamist and more secularist political option. Increasingly, many Copts saw no alternative but to declare their support for the British occupation.

Far from offering assurance, the politics of the British authorities intensified the feeling of alienation among Copts. The British had little interest in them and, at least politically, saw no advantage in supporting a Coptic minority in a predominantly Muslim country. Moreover, the British employed Syrian Christians and Muslims in many government posts, including those of tax collectors and accountants, and thus broke the aforementioned Coptic monopoly in these sectors. As discussed in the Introduction, direct Western intervention in the
“traditional” local practices of the Middle East often created a competitive atmosphere among ethnic and religious groups. This is attested by the increasing tensions between Copts and Muslims, and to some extent between Egyptians (i.e., Copts and Muslims) and non-Egyptians (i.e., Syrian Christian or Armenian immigrants) within the political and economic spheres. The British had been less than shy in boasting of their preference for Syrian Christian and Armenian employees, whom they believed to be more skilled and among the indigenous Christians of the region, more “elite”; they went to great lengths in assuring the Muslim populace that Copts would not receive special treatment.28

In spite of these policies, the economic status of Copts did not suffer much under the British, and Copts entered new employment in the fields of land-ownership and investment.29 However, the seemingly antagonistic approach was indeed a blow to those who may have wished for support and sympathy from the occupying power. Again, Lord Cromer, the British Consul-General (1883-1907), showed that the British had no intention of giving the Copts special

28 Earl of Cromer (Evelyn Baring), Modern Egypt, vol. II (New York, 1908), 218. Cromer wrote that “whether from a moral, social, or intellectual point of view, the Syrian stands on a distinctly high level...in that respect, he is probably superior, not only to the Copt, but also to the Europeanised Egyptian, who is but too often a mere mimic.”

29 Behrens-Abouseif, 195.
treatment. Cromer’s racist comments about Egyptians (see his Modern Egypt) took a turn for the worse when he defended British practices by stressing the ignorance of the Copt:

The principles of strict impartiality on which the Englishman proceeded were foreign to the nature of the Copt....When the Copt found that this process of reasoning was fallacious, and that the conduct of the Englishman was guided by motives which he had left out of account, and which he could not understand, he was disappointed, and his disappointment deepened into resentment. He thought the Englishman’s justice to the Moslem involved injustice to himself, for he was apt, perhaps unconsciously, to hold that injustice and absence of favouritism to Copts were well-nigh synonymous terms.\(^{30}\)

Questions surrounding the fairness of British hiring practices in civil officialdom would not disappear and continued to be, in both the short and long terms, an issue of conflict between the British and Egyptians. In stressing the love-hate sentiment of Copts towards the British in the period between 1882 and 1907, one historian argues that Coptic attitudes towards the occupation depended in part on intercommunal relations with the Muslims. If relations with Muslims were strained, then Copts would not turn away from British presence/protection. If they were good, the British occupation “naturally seemed less vital and desirable.”\(^{31}\)

Before turning to the post-1907 period, I would like to highlight the views of one more intellectual who would have

\(^{30}\) Cromer, 209.

\(^{31}\) Carter, 59.
a significant influence on the development of modern Egyptian nationalism. For 'Ahmad Luğfî al-Sayyid, the idea of an Egyptian nation had relatively less ambiguity than it did for the likes of Kâmil, since a religiously based solidarity was contradictory to the territorially rooted and largely secular nationalism he so strongly advocated.  

But Luğfî was discounted by other nationalists because of his belief that the British presence was a "guiding authority" and that "Egypt had all to learn from Europe and yet almost nothing to contribute to modern civilization."  

That is not to say that he was not a strict patriot:

> We Egyptians love our country in precisely this way and we absolutely reject any attachment to any other homeland but Egypt....We have settled in Egypt as our homeland and have made a pact of loyalty with her [namely] that she bestow her bounty upon us, and that we uphold her interests and pledge our souls to defend her honor.

Luğfî condemned the pro-Ottoman and pan-Islamic sentiments of his time; to him, Turkish rule was as foreign to Egypt as was the British occupation. In 1908, he wrote:

> There are those among us who might be proud of being descendants of the first Arabs as if their association with the Egyptian race was a deficiency or a flaw. And still among us there are some whose Turkish heritage makes them inclined to sacrifice Egyptian loyalty for

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32 Gershoni and Jankowski, 14-15.

33 Wendell, 223.

34 Ibid., 259.
Turkish loyalty. And then there are some who prefer religious ties over the ties of nationhood and patriotism. If we do not end this dissolution with determination, we will fail to subdue its consequences and will be unable to broaden the extent of our similarities and narrow our circle of differences.\(^{35}\)

In taking such a perspective, Luţfi was especially sensitive, perhaps more than any other intellectual at the turn of the twentieth century, to the dilemmas posed by the incipient political disparities between Muslims and Copts. In Luţfi’s perspective, Copts and Muslims could live under one nation if both suppressed their religious allegiances. In many ways, Luţfi’s notions of the Egyptian umma, to which he devoted many articles in his newspaper Al-Jarīda (1907–1914), would come to be on a par with those of Copts in that both masterfully invoked the ancient Pharaonic past and rejected a religiously-based patriotism. However, as he was the most vocal advocate for Egyptian unity, Luţfi would come to view the Coptic position in upcoming years with dismay and suspicion. Moreover, Luţfi was relatively withdrawn, and while his writings were to influence the secular-based revolution of 1919, most Copts did not identify with him at this stage.

\(^{35}\) Al-Jarīda, February 5, 1908; cited in Kīlānī, 43.
Conclusions:

It is clear from these early stages that Copts would not take a back seat to political activism and to the development of the Egyptian nationalist movement. However, for many Copts, the ideological bents of most Egyptian nationalists left something to be desired. Although they joined in the pro-Ottoman "Urabist struggle against the British invasion in 1882, as Ottoman/Islamic loyalties continued to inform the Egyptian nationalist movement, Copts felt mostly excluded. Mustafa Kamil's National Party attempted to accommodate all groups, but its ill-defined political goals failed to arouse much enthusiasm. Coptic dismay stemmed from two fundamental viewpoints: first, unlike Syrian Christians, Copts (and Egyptians in general, for that matter) did not view themselves as Arabs and could not, as such, take pride in a movement which embraced an Islamic heritage; secondly, their precarious position vis-a-vis the British occupiers was cause for growing anxiety over their place in the Egyptian economic and political spheres. As will be discussed in the next chapter, shrinking options led to the development of a distinct brand of nationalism among Copts. However, the transitional nature of this period, between 1882 and 1907, must be emphasized as a
stepping stone towards the formation of a Coptic identity. In the shift from dhimmi status to increased political rights, the uncertainty of the Coptic position would manifest itself in the threat of losing traditional posts in the government administration. While this was indeed an economic grievance, the loss of these positions was viewed more as a failure of Muslim Egyptians and the British to recognize the indispensability of Copts, who were the “true” Egyptians, in the political, economic and national spheres of Egyptian life.
CHAPTER 4

THE COPTIC LITERARY MOVEMENT TOWARDS NATIONAL IDENTITY (1907-1914)

At the turn of the twentieth century, a generation of Egyptian intellectuals, with diverse visions and goals, had argued for the existence of an ambiguously-defined Egyptian nation. Perhaps it was this vagueness which allowed nationalist leaders such as Ahmad ʿUrābī and Muṣṭafā Kāmil to use the slogan “Egypt for the Egyptians” in promoting their anti-colonial cause, with little doubt in their minds as to the implications of this aphorism.¹ It was assumed that the Copts, Egypt’s largest non-Muslim minority, would be accounted for in such a slogan. However, in 1911, when approximately 1200 Copts gathered for a meeting in Upper Egypt, they demonstrated their aversion at being snubbed by the Egyptian government, by nationalist leaders, and by the British authorities, whose hiring practices had broken the Copts’ long-standing monopoly of certain government posts.

¹ Schölch, 310.
Among other provisions, members of this Coptic Congress declared themselves as representatives of al-umma al-qibṭiyya—the Coptic Nation. As we may observe, Coptic frustrations had begun to find direction in a newly emerging, albeit obscure, identity: that of Copts as a distinct “nation.” While the Congress’s demands, in general, were considered to be politically insignificant, the meeting illustrated the growing disillusionment which had prevailed among a large number of Copts as to their role in the formation of a modern Egyptian nation.

Copts felt justified in posing their demands; by 1910, they comprised approximately 6.5% of Egypt’s population (about 706,322) and controlled a fifth of the country’s wealth, a dramatic change considering that at the end of the eighteenth century, they were a dwindling minority. Their economic success was paralleled by a flurry of cultural activities; in 1907, the literacy rate among Copts was 10.3% as opposed to 4% among Muslims. Moreover, for some time, two daily newspapers with sizable readership had become the

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2 Ramzi Tadrus, Al-agbat fi al-qarn al-qishrin [Copts in the Twentieth Century], vol. 1 (Cairo, 1910), 29. The author estimates that at the end of the eighteenth century, the Coptic population was about 90,000, an indication of either a gross underestimation or an astonishing rate of growth between 1800 and 1910; Afifi, Al-agbat, 197.

outlet for Coptic grievances.⁴ One of them was the aforementioned *Al-Waṭan*, which resumed publication in 1900 under the editorship of Jundi Ibrāhim, and the other was *Miṣr*, which was taken over from Syrian editorship in 1895 by Tādrus al-Manqabādī. Interestingly, both men had studied at al-Azhar, the renowned institution of Islamic learning, during a period in the nineteenth century when this seemed an unlikely feat for Copts; yet they would continue to view and present national events from a strictly sectarian angle.⁵

Between 1907 and 1914, in a period when Muslim-Coptic relations were increasingly antagonistic, these periodicals asked Copts to lay aside their differences concerning the management of church affairs and to display communal cohesiveness. *Al-Waṭan*, in particular, was a strong

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⁴ While it is difficult to determine the exact size of readership for these two newspapers as not much data is available, Ami Ayalon estimates that around 1919, *Miṣr* had a daily circulation of approximately 12,000-14,000 (compare with another popular daily, *Al-Ahram*, which had a circulation of about 20,000 during the same period). For more on circulation figures, see “Table 1: Circulation of Individual Arabic Newspapers, 1822-1947” in Ayalon, 148-151. Incidentally, between 1882 and 1919, several Coptic dailies and periodicals were published in the Arabic language and boasted a variety of topics which were both sectarian and nationalist in interest (See Appendix A).

champion of Coptic interests in the years prior to World War I and was warned on several occasions to tame its presses, as it was accused of inciting religious fanaticism. Miṣr started out as a loyal defender of the British occupation and fought against pan-Islamic sentiments of its day. However, in later years the newspaper championed a more diverse perspective and presented openly nationalist views that clearly opposed Al-Waṭan’s growing conservatism. While Miṣr was to become one of the mouthpieces for Saʿd Zaghlūl during the 1919 revolution, Al-Waṭan held its pro-occupation stance well into the 1920s.⁶ One interpretation for the differences in opinion between these two newspapers might be inter-communal dissent; Al-Waṭan was owned by and defended Coptic Protestants (Anglicans) and was therefore more likely to support the occupation, while Miṣr generally upheld the Coptic Orthodox perspective, a conventionally more nationalist viewpoint.⁷

However, the role which both of these newspapers played in the nationalist phase prior to World War I was pivotal. They became a channel for asserting the political position

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of Copts and for raising questions about the establishment of an Egyptian nation-state where Islam would continue to play an important role in politics. At the heart of their arguments was the idea of instituting a secular Egyptian nation-state, as inspired by Western models, where the role of official religion would be subdued. Indeed Al-Waṭan proclaimed that religion and nationhood must not mix: "la waṭan maṣa al-din wa la din maṣa al-waṭan [There is no nation with religion and no religion with the nation]." In many ways, this was a defensive pose taken as a result of the growing pan-Islamic sentiments in the period between 1907 and 1914. Yet it was also a position issuing from alarm that the political gains made by Copts in past decades, which included a remarkable openness in the press, would be foregone if Egypt returned to a past system of governance where Copts had little public voice. This point often resulted in Coptic periodicals taking an offensive posture against Muslims. Paradoxically, as we shall discuss, while Copts wished for a secular political sphere, they continued to demand rights and political recognition based on their status as a religious minority.

Fan-Islamic sentiments, which identified mostly with the restoration of Ottoman rule in Egypt, had increased

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8 Ramzi Mihāl, 52.
during the first decade of the twentieth century, particularly in view of two political events. First, there was the Taba incident in 1906, when Ottoman troops occupied the Egyptian town of Taba on the Red Sea on the pretext of constructing a railroad. While the subsequent standoff between the Ottomans and the British did not lead to a military confrontation, growing popular support for the return of Ottoman rule was heightened. Even more publicized in the Egyptian press was the Dinshawai affair, which also occurred in 1906. The ensuing trial and execution of several Egyptian fellahin, who were accused of killing a British soldier following skirmishes in the countryside, stimulated widespread agitation against British rule.9

9 The details of the Dinshawai incident are retold by Peter Mellini in Sir Eldon Gorst: The Overshadowed Proconsul (Stanford, 1977), 111-112. They may be summarized as follows: on June 13, 1906, a few British officers were spending their afternoon recreational period by shooting pigeons in the countryside. The villagers in the neighboring area were resentful because pigeons were a means of livelihood for them. Suddenly as a result of the shooting, a small fire broke out in a nearby barn and the angry villagers attempted to disarm the soldiers. In the ensuing struggle, a shotgun was misfired, wounding four men and a woman. In retaliation, the villagers beat the officers, killing one; however, two officers managed to escape and a rescue patrol was immediately sent. On their way, the patrol shot at some villagers and clubbed to death another who was attempting to help one of the previously injured officers. The authorities in Cairo called for an immediate investigation, and Cromer requested that the accused villagers be tried by a special tribunal.
The repercussions of Dinshawai were enormous for the nationalist movement. As one historian has written, Dinshawai was able to bring the ordinary Egyptian much closer to the opinions of nationalists such as Kamil and Shaykh "Ali Yusuf, an outspoken pan-Islamist, but it also brought the nationalist leaders closer to the real grievances of the people. The ability of this incident to provoke sympathy for the "ordinary" Egyptian was visible in that newspapers began to dwell on the miseries of the fellah. Some Copts even joined in the general criticism of British rule, and at least temporarily the nationalist platform seemed to achieve Muslim-Coptic unity. Moreover, the uproar caused by the Dinshawai executions led Britain to announce a new policy in Egypt; in May 1907, Cromer retired and was replaced by Sir Eldon Gorst, the new Consul-General. This change was considered to be a triumph for Egypt's nationalists, particularly those in Muṣṭafā Kamil's camp who had reached a heightened level of frustration with Lord Cromer's policies. However, the stance taken by Al-Waṭan and Miṣr during this time created new aggravations for Copts. Upset by the prevailing Islamic rhetoric in the

10 Ahmed, 63.

Egyptian press, both newspapers accused the people of Dinshawai of religious fanaticism—specifically, of assaulting the British soldier because he was a “Christian infidel”—and furthermore attacked the overtly Islamic sentiments expressed in Al-Mu’ayyad, the mouthpiece of Shaykh ‘Alī Yusuf, as well as the National Party’s Al-Liwa’. Tensions resulting from this position inaugurated a period of journalistic warfare between Coptic and Muslim newspapers which would form a clear divide in the Egyptian nationalist movement and would also affect popular sentiment.

With the death of Muṣṭafā Kāmil in early 1908, his close associate Muḥammad Farid took over the leadership of the National Party. Even though Farid was formally the leader, most of the party’s authority fell into the hands of Shaykh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Jawīsh, a stern pan-Islamist of Tunisian origin, who assumed the editorship of Al-Liwa’ and projected his own political agenda on its pages. Even Murqus Ḥanna and Wīṣa Waṣif, the two Copts who had joined in Kāmil’s struggle, now abandoned the National Party, and, as a result, the new party leaders were freed from upholding the conciliatory attitude towards Copts which Kāmil had endorsed.13 A wealthy

12 Ramzi Mūkhīl, 51.

13 Carter, 10.
Coptic landowner named Akhnûkh Fânûs decided to look for alternative political options. In 1908, he founded the Coptic Reform Society, an organization which demanded equality in civil service appointments and promotions, Christian religious instruction in government schools, and the appointment of more Copts to Egypt's representative bodies.\(^{14}\) Hoping to provoke the interest of the British in Coptic concerns, Fânûs requested audience with a British agent in June of the same year; however, his request was denied.\(^{15}\) The seemingly exclusivist nature of Fânûs' activities met with criticism from Al-Liwa' and Al-Mu'ayyad, which were troubled by his assertiveness. However, Fânûs was adamant in voicing Coptic concerns, and out of his Reform Society grew the Independent Egyptian Party, which aimed to meet those demands. Seen as a political threat, the party was criticized for being sectarian, although in reality its program contained little that was of interest only to Copts. Indeed, it seems to have attracted the support of a few wealthy Muslims. Yet while most Copts (particularly the Orthodox masses) had been frustrated by the current political climate, they were too suspicious of

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

Fanus' Protestantism to lend their support, and the party soon disbanded.\textsuperscript{16}

Failing to gain British patronage, on the one hand, and being left out of the nationalist movement, on the other, the Copts became increasingly frustrated. As options narrowed, Copts began to characterize themselves in a new light. If by that time, as Charles Wendell argues, some Egyptian intellectuals had made membership in the wa\textsuperscript{a}fan or umma traceable to the days of Pharaohs and pyramids, then "Copts must be regarded as a kind of aristocracy and the most concrete link with the past...[however] this went counter to the common feeling among the Muslims and contradicted the very basis of the Islamic constitution."\textsuperscript{17} Increasingly supported by the words and findings of European Egyptologists, Copts adopted an elitist attitude and were bold in expressing their direct descent from the Pharaohs. The idea heightened the feeling that Copts could not and would not espouse an Islamic heritage. In a response to prevailing opposition, Al-Waf\textsuperscript{a}n wrote:

\begin{quote}
The Copts are the true Egyptians. They are the real masters of the country. All those who have set their foot on Egyptian soil, be they Arabs, Turks, French, or British, are nothing but invaders. The originators of this nation are the Copts....Whoever calls this country
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} Kil\textae{n}, 87-88; Carter, 12.

\textsuperscript{17} Wendell, 163.
an Islamic country means to disregard the rights of the Copts and to abuse them in their own fatherland.\textsuperscript{18}

The scene was set for some of the most brutal journalistic battles between Copts and Muslims in the history of the Egyptian press. On June 15, 1908, \textit{Al-Wa\'afan} published its most provocative article to date. The author was an Orthodox Copt by the name of Farid Kamil, and the title was "Humanity Is Tortured" ("Al-\textit{insaniyya tata\'adhab}"):

If we examined the history of Islam, in its splendid and glorious age, in its greatness and brilliance, and we wished to recover from its hidden treasures the secret of its past greatness...we would find that it was violence which promoted the enslaved. It was selfishness which stifled the spirit and hurled a severe deathblow to the precious hopes of men, sending them to the bottomless pit of hell; we would realize that taking pride in the strong and mocking the weak were the two cornerstones upon which this 'glory of Islam' was built. Undoubtedly, the countries of Christian Europe and the pagan Kingdom of Japan are reliving the legacy of Islam these days, for they have conquered weaker nations, taking away their independence, with the pretense of civilizing them....Enough torturing humanity, enough mangling its flesh....Down with the hypocrites and the arrogant.\textsuperscript{19}

Needless to say, belittling the religion of the majority of the population was not an expedient political move, and it certainly did not fare well with opposing factions. In a

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Al-Wa\'afan}, May 22, 1908; cited in Behrens-Abouseif, 195-196.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Al-Wa\'afan}, June 15, 1908; cited in Klani, 72-73.

[F]ools, it was Islam that saved you from the hand of the Greeks after many centuries of bondage, during which you were employed as beasts, cursed with tongues, kicked with feet. You threw yourselves into the arms of Islam and it saved your blood and protected your women and children....You accepted its rule and it harboured you; you claimed its protection and it supported you, giving you the rights of its own adherents. Furthermore, it allowed you to manage your own affairs and to be your own judges, unless you voluntarily appealed for its ruling and accepted its judgment. How then was ‘humanity tortured,’ as you say, you fools, amidst people with such a religion and divine laws....Perhaps you saw that the Occupation people had the same religion as you and you thought of selling them your country and your conscience to sever all connection with us after all these centuries? Such are the dogs of renegades and traitors....Of course, there are certain posts that cannot be filled except by Mohammedans. These remain in Moslem hands and will always remain so if you open your mouths for shrieking so wide that your upper jaw reached heaven and your lower jaw touched the soil on which your shoes tread....Silence, you impudent fools! An account lies before you which if neglected by the Government will be backed by eleven million Mohammedans, who will neither neglect that account nor forget.²⁰

This was a harsh and bitter rhetoric which was implemented by Jawish to essentially “put Copts in their place.” Far from being aggrieved, however, Al-Wafan wrote in response to Jawish that the “Christians in Egypt, whose eyes have seen nothing except generations of age-old persecution, far worse than those posed by this human being [Jawish]...believe the

²⁰ Excerpts from “Al-Islām gharīb fī balādīhī” [“Islam Alien in Its Country”], Al-Liwa’, 17 June, 1908 reprinted in Alfred Cunningham, To-Day in Egypt (London, 1921), 245-249. Please see a reproduction of this article in Appendix B.
man to have been touched by insanity or that he wrote it while he was in a state of convulsion, being far from cognizance."\textsuperscript{21}

It is inaccurate to give the impression that all Muslims shared the strong sentiments expressed by Jawish or that all Copts felt so strongly against the advocates of pan-Islam. Almost immediately, efforts were made to reconcile the two sides and to heal the wounds of the journalistic strife. The National Party held an administrative meeting on June 20, 1908, at which it emphasized its long-standing party platform, which echoed decades-old sentiments: to "extend a hand to all Egyptians, whether Copts, Muslims or Israelites [Jews], inviting them to demand the rights of the [Egyptian] nation from its overlakers."\textsuperscript{22} In addition, Muslim and Coptic poets published long verses which called Egyptians to unity and cooperation, and at least temporarily the situation seemed to quiet.

However, at a point when tensions appeared to be subsiding, the British intervened in an untimely fashion. The appointment in November, 1908, of a Copt, Buţrus Ghali, to the post of Prime Minister reintensified intersectarian

\textsuperscript{21} _Al-Wafan_, June 19, 1908; cited in Kîlînî, 76.

\textsuperscript{22} From excerpts published in Kîlînî, 78.
hostility. Resistance to his appointment in the Muslim press stemmed from Ghâli’s involvement in the Dinshawai trials as a counsel for the tribunal that passed death sentences on several fellâhin. For those who had viewed Ghâli as a collaborator, the British action had given them evidence that "the Occupiers were encouraging their servants [i.e., Ghâli] to insult the nation." 23 Other Muslim complaints against Ghâli were related to his role in the 1899 Sudan Condominium Agreement 24 and in reactivating laws restricting the freedom of the press. However, his reputation among Copts had not fared better. The fact that he, in his capacity as a high-level administrator, had not attempted to voice the political concerns of the Coptic community to the Khedive, with whom he was closely associated, or to the British did not earn him much support. 25 Be that as it may, seeing a Copt attacked

23 Ramzi Mikhâl, 55.

24 This was the agreement between Egypt and Britain whereby a distinct political status and organization was imposed upon the Sudan. Its rule was jointly albeit unequally shared between the khedive and the British government.

25 A French newspaper, Les Nouvelles, reported on November 17, 1908, that the Khedive appointed Ghâli to counter the negative campaigns put forth by the Muslim press against the Copts and to “pacify Europeans by illustrating that the Egyptian government and the majority of the people do not object to the ideas of the National Party.” See Bâhr, 53; Carter, 12.
regularly in the press, on the basis of both his religion and his politics, was decisively harmful to the entire community.

Victim of the first politically-motivated assassination in the history of the Egyptian nationalist movement, Buṣrus Ghālī was murdered on February 21, 1910. His assassin, a young Muslim by the name of Ibrāhīm al-Wardānī, maintained that he did not kill Ghālī because of antisectarian motivations.²⁶ However, the Coptic press was quick to view this act as sectarian-driven and felt that it was an assault on their community which revealed to the world their precarious situation in Egyptian society. Having split in past years over the direction of communal policy, the Copts, in the wake of the assassination, united in the face of opposition. This position was not presumptuous, for the murder of Ghālī ultimately set off a wave of anti-Christian and anti-foreign demonstrations in Cairo and Alexandria. Youths were witnessed in the streets praising the assassin, who now assumed the status of national hero, chanting, “Wardānī! Wardānī! Illī 'atal al-Nūṣrānī,” (who slew the

²⁶ Indeed, Wardānī listed four reasons for the assassination: 1) Ghali's involvement with extending the Canal Company's control over the Suez Canal for another 40 years; 2) his reinstatement of old press laws in 1909; 3) his role in the Sudan Condominium Agreement of 1899; 4) his involvement in the Dinshawai trials. Bahr, 54.
Nazarene). The British took advantage of the unrest to tighten their control over the press. Many nationalist newspapers (including Al-Wafan and Al-Liwa') were either warned or suppressed under new policies instituted by Gorst. However, a chorus of complaints led by Copts, the community which had most consistently supported the occupation, began to reach the British press and parliament, increasingly discrediting Gorst's administration.

In June 1910, as a representative of the Coptic press, Kyriakos Mikhāl (1877-1957) was sent to London to act as a correspondent and to arouse the British public in "the question of the Coptic claims." Eldon Gorst took these

27 Ronald Storrs, Orientations (1945), cited in Wendell, 243. We should note that "'atal" represents the Cairene pronunciation of "qatala," or "slew."

28 Mellini, 207-208.

29 Kyriakos Mikhāl, v. Kyriakos Mikhāl was an interesting figure of his time. At an early age, his interest in journalism led him to report for both Al-Mu'ayyad and Al-Wafar. When he went to London in 1911, he established an Egyptian Information Bureau, where he instigated much opposition against British policies in Egypt. With the outbreak of World War I, he was not allowed to return to Egypt, so he began to make a living by writing and lecturing on Egyptian politics, society, and history at Birmingham and Oxford Universities. In 1918, he led Egyptian workers when riots broke out against non-English colored workers in 1918. Accused of meddling with the opposition Labour Party and of leading an Egyptian student demonstration in London, he was deported by an order of Parliament in 1919. Glimpses of his interesting career can be found in The Coptic Encyclopedia, s.v., "Mikhāl, Kyriakos," by Ragai N. Makar's.
claims to heart and agreed to survey Egypt’s provinces in January 1911 to investigate the Coptic concerns. However, his ultimate conclusion was that no communal problem existed in Egypt. “Moslems and Copts, he declares, generally live together quietly if they are left alone, and the worst possible service to the Copts was to treat them as a separate community.”  

30 Needless to say, in the minds of politically active Copts, who had felt for years that their position as a minority was being overlooked, this was hardly the anticipated response. Complaints against the Gorst Report were sent from Assyuf, Girgeh, and Assuan to the London Times and published on February 17. “It is not easy to see,” the article proclaimed, “how he [Gorst] could have conducted an exhaustive inquiry into so complex a question [in a few hours].”  

One of the least understood (or most misunderstood) events of the period, the Coptic Congress was held in Assyuf in March 1911 to voice concerns over the progression of current events. At the outset, members of the Congress referred to themselves as representatives of the Coptic Nation. However, in the opinion of Al-Mu‘ayyad, the

30 Telegram dispatched through Reuters news agency, January 26, 1911; cited in Kyriakos Mikhail, 21.

31 “Copts and Muslims in Egypt,” The Times (London), February 17, 1911: 5.
Congress seemed to advocate the political view of a wealthy class of Copts who were interested only in preserving their economic interests.\textsuperscript{32} Among the attendees were well-known figures of recent years, including Akhnûkh Fânûs, Bushra Ḥanna, Murqus Ḥanna, Ḥabîb Dûs, George Wîsâ and Murqus Fahmî (incidentally, they were all lawyers). Support from the Coptic clergy was mixed. On the one hand, the British Ministry pressured the aged and weakened Cyril V to issue an official encyclical to the clergy, first asking them to boycott the meeting and then asking that they hold the assembly in Cairo or Alexandria, away from the Coptic stronghold of Upper Egypt, so it would not be viewed as politically provocative.\textsuperscript{33} However, Anba Makaryûs, the bishop of Assûû, threw in his lot with the conference and was present throughout the assemblies.\textsuperscript{34} Undoubtedly his

\textsuperscript{32} Al-Mu‘ayyad, May 11, 1911; cited in Baḥr, 66.

\textsuperscript{33} A. J. Butler, “Copts and Muslims in Egypt,” The Nineteenth Century and After 70(1911): 596.

\textsuperscript{34} In Al-Wafan, March 2, 1911, the bishop wrote to the patriarch: “With utter respect to your advice and with complete conformity in following it, we wish to let you know that the fear of holding the Coptic Congress in Assûû because of the possibility of disturbances is not valid. I am certain that not the least harm will be provoked because the purpose of the Congress is to strengthen the ties of love between all Egyptian sects by preserving the rights of the Coptic sect. That is why I am not alarmed by the assembly at Assûû whatsoever.” Cited in Baḥr, 65, n. 1.
participation symbolized a temporary reconciliation between clergy and laymen.

Whether it was seen as sectarian antagonism or not, in reality the atmosphere of the Coptic Congress was not belligerent towards Muslims, and a traditional congeniality among all Egyptians was emphasized in the speeches given. One spokesman evoked memories from his childhood to this end:

At my father’s house I used to meet more Muslims than Copts, and in the house we had prayer-mats and carpets which the Muslims used as if they were in their own homes; yet when the church bell rang, my father would repair to the sacred edifice to attend divine service. On many occasions I remember seeing Muslim notables listening to the service with him.

The “Copticness” of the meeting, however, was not underplayed. Several Coptic poets composed verses to commemorate the Congress. One notes the Pharaonic motifs, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, utilized in the following verse:

The sons of the Pharaoh announce their happiness
For today is a day of bliss.
Ramsis, arise and look to the Congress which has assembled
The nobles from every valley.

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35 Butler, 592.

36 Bulus al-Shama, Al-Wafan, March 9, 1911; cited in Kilani, 107.
After three days, the political demands of the conference were put forth. Echoing familiar requests from recent years, the Congress asked that:

1.) Coptic government officials and students be exempt from duties on the Sabbath Day (Sunday);
2.) In the face of unfair promotion policies, merit and capacity would be the standard for employment and promotion in government service;
3.) A new electoral system, similar to that in Belgium, be introduced to secure the rights of minorities;
4.) Copts have the right to take advantage of the educational facilities provided by the new Provincial Councils- that Kuttabs and normal schools be open to all Egyptians, irrespective of their religion, and that religious teaching be provided for both communities;
5.) Government grants be bestowed on deserving institutions without invidious distinction of race or creed.\(^{37}\)

While these demands, by now sounding like a practiced drill, were not politically substantial, they showed Copts as opponents of British policies and menaces to the hopes of national unity. Subsequently, as one writer has commented, the events surrounding the Congress sent a message that Coptic concerns were to be openly vocalized; however, the events following the Congress served to emphasize that other political elements in Egypt were hostile to these demands.\(^{36}\)

On the one hand, the press took seriously the appeal of Copts for equality in employment. “Every Egyptian has a right for complete equality without differentiation,” wrote

\(^{37}\) Paraphrased from Kyriakos Mikhāl, 28-30.

\(^{36}\) Lopez, 47.
Al-Jarida. However, on the whole, the Assyuf Congress was castigated and one month later the authorities supported an "Egyptian Congress" in Heliopolis, Cairo. The aim of this conference was to show that Egypt's demands towards the British, who wholeheartedly sponsored this Congress, must not be made along sectarian lines. In what must have intensified the apparent unison of the meeting, the Egyptian Congress brought together usually opposing factions, including vehement Islamists such as Jawish and longtime moderates such as Ahmad Lu'fi al-Sayyid. Ever-concerned with the solidarity of the Egyptian nation, Lu'fi chastised recent Coptic activities, which he viewed as nothing more than "the force of whining and complaining." To the chagrin of Copts, he declared that it was dangerous to refer to the Coptic sect (mu'afat al-aqbāḥ) or the Coptic element (al-unsur al-qibīḥ) as the "Coptic nation":

Repetition of this nomenclature in the ears of the Copts can only result, in the course of time, in its acquiring a special meaning which will entail the Copt's casting aside his attribute of Egyptianness [waṣīf al-miṣriyya], and narrowing his interests down to solidarity with his fellow-Copts, and not with the Muslim or the Jew. And that will assuredly compel the other elements of the Egyptian community to deal harshly with the Copts...There is no precedent in the outside world for this nomenclature, since custom permits this word to be applied only to a people

39 Suryal, 270.
enjoying an independent communal existence within a specified homeland.  

The Egyptian Congress made it clear that Copts, who were for centuries regarded as a Christian minority, would have to forego their identity and individuality and to accept the opinions and standards of the majority of (Muslim) Egyptians. Questioning Luṭfi’s position, Akhnûkh Fânûs implored: “Why does the editor of Al-Jarīda look to the Copts and to their familiar grievances as if he was a warrior, hovering above the massiveness of an army of a majority, looking down on a weak and crushed minority?”

Conclusions:

In the period prior to World War I, tensions between Copts and Muslims reached new heights. Reinforced by relative freedom in the press, certain factions of the Coptic literati gained boldness in expressing their discontent at the status quo. Fearful of the growing force of Islamic sentiments and of the potential restoration of Ottoman rule, Copts began to stake their claims in the Egyptian nationalist movement by asserting their

40 Al-Jarīda, March 8, 1911; cited in Wendell, 240-241.

41 Miṣr, February 25, 1911; cited in Kīlānī, 117.
wholehearted advocacy for a secularist nationalism. Moreover, Copts adopted the posture of championing the “truest” sort of Egyptian nationalism (that of Pharaonicism, as will be discussed in the next chapter) since they denounced Arabs, Turks—indeed the Islamic religion—as foreign and destructive elements to Egyptian unity. This position was undoubtedly instigated by a political atmosphere which subdued Coptic hopes of having more involvement in the Egyptian nationalist movement. All the while, though, Coptic leaders were initiating political activism based on their community’s position as a religious minority; the Assyūr Congress and the attempts to create a Coptic political party attest to this sort of activism, which contradicted another prevalent posture: religious and nationalist aspirations must not mix. The result was growing dissent among all Egyptians. As British authorities reaped the benefits of instigating discord among Copts and Muslims, the Egyptian nationalist movement stagnated between 1907 and 1914, and in fact would not be revived until the end of World War I.
CHAPTER 5

"MODERN SONS OF THE PHARAOHS":
COPTS, NATIONHOOD AND PHARAONICISM

The rise in tensions between Copts and Muslims in the years prior to World War I was undeniably a low point for the cause of Egyptian unity in the face of British colonial rule. Coptic leaders had demonstrated that those who opposed them on the basis of their status as a numerical minority would be challenged. On the whole though, neither Copts nor Muslims had much opportunity to champion Egyptian autonomy during World War I as the nationalist movement was more strictly policed by the British in comparison to prior years. Several Egyptian leaders, including the National Party’s Muḥammad Farid and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Jāwīsh, were sent into exile. Moreover, tighter censorship of the press and of public speech rendered political activism partially inert. Although Egyptian popular sentiment may have favored assistance to the Ottoman government during the war, this support could not materialize because of the tighter
security measures taken by the British. When Egypt was declared a British Protectorate in 1914, many Egyptian leaders began to visualize their future in terms of a rapprochement with the British.

Attaining this rapprochement, many intellectuals and politicians thought, involved redefining the prevailing ideological outlook which had failed to elicit much change. Thus one appealing option was the adoption of an Egyptian territorial nationalism as it had been first advocated by Rifāʿa al-Ṭahāwī and then in recent years by Aḥmad Luṭfi al-Sayyid. Indeed Saʿd Zaghlūl, the dynamic leader of the 1919 Revolution, and several of his associates in the Wafd Party had identified with Luṭfi and were members of his Umma Party in the years prior to the war. Moreover, in attempting to convince the British authorities of Egypt’s right to independence and nationhood, these leaders espoused a discourse which would include Coptic Christians and Muslims: all Egyptians were “a single and unique race.”¹ Subsequently, as scholars Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski have noted in their work Egypt, Islam and the Arabs, the prevailing Egyptian national image in the 1920s rejected any association with an Arab past and dismissed any

¹ Gershoni and Jankowski, 43.
non-Egyptian components found in Egyptian life. Rejecting Arab affiliation, Egyptian intellectuals became preoccupied with the formulation of nationhood primarily based on Egypt’s location in the Nile Valley and on the glories of its Pharaonic past. Some went as far as to consider Egyptian Islam as being completely divorced from its Arab roots. In every phase of Egypt’s Islamic past, the uniquely Egyptian character present in their country’s history was emphasized.

Through the efforts of these intellectuals, Gershoni and Jankowski maintain, the idea of “Pharaonicism” became an evident feature of the self-definition of Egyptians and of the historical development of Egypt in the post-World War I era. The two scholars define Pharaonicism in the 1920s as “that body of opinion which postulated the existence of a unique and durable Egyptian national essence persisting from the Pharaonic era to the present.” Advocates of this theory additionally proposed that the contemporary people of Egypt were the direct descendants of an ancient people and therefore possessed identical characteristics and potentials. From a political perspective, it is understandable why the Egyptian nationalist movement may

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2 Ibid., 99.
3 Ibid., 157.
4 Ibid. 164.
have shifted its focus from a pro-Ottoman/pan-Islamic outlook to an increasingly secularist one, particularly in light of diminishing Ottoman power during World War I. However, little attention has been devoted to understanding the intellectual gap between a nationalist movement which had for years earnestly advocated an Islamic option and one which now upheld a secularist, Pharaonic past. The idea of Pharaonicism had indeed been present in some embryonic form since the mid-nineteenth century, yet it gained wide support only in the 1920s. Where, then, was the missing link?

In my assessment, the continuous presence of a Pharaonicist ideal among leaders such as Ahmad Luṭfi al-Sayyid but more significantly among a large number of Coptic intellectuals, whose dissenting opinions were the cause of frequent public aggravation, has been overlooked as a possible determinant in Egyptian nationalist ideologies during the pre- and post-World War I eras. Such a sentiment was partially preserved among Copts in the notion of al-umma al-qibṭiyya, or the Coptic Nation, which had begun to develop as the Coptic minority felt increasingly excluded from the political and intellectual spheres of Egyptian life. As previously discussed, Copts often aligned with the British because they viewed their future as compatible with secularist concepts of government in preference to an
Islamic order. This secularism should be emphasized; liberal critics of Coptic political activism, such as Luṭfi, insisted that religious allegiance was destructive to the unity of Egypt. However the Coptic Nation or the Coptic view of nationalism, as will be discussed shortly, did not necessarily promote a Christian-centric viewpoint, but it did challenge the notion of an Islamic heritage— that Muslims and Copts shared that particular historical experience. Moreover, while Copts may have accepted that Muslims were ethnically Egyptian, they began to uphold the idea that as the original inhabitants of Egypt, they were the “true” Egyptians, that they represented an elite form of Egyptianness and were thus deserving of more recognition. To regain their past essence of Egyptianness was a priority, and hence the glorious Pharaonic past was emphasized. By reclaiming this essence, Copts asserted their importance as an integral part of Egyptian society vis-à-vis the past and present. Consequently, the secularist and Pharaonicist tendencies of the next phase of Egyptian nationalism in the 1920s succeeded in incorporating the Coptic community within the struggle for an independent Egypt.

The interest of Copts in re-harnessing their Pharaonic past had undoubtedly been fueled by European curiosity in ancient Egyptian history and in the field of archaeology.
during the early part of the twentieth century. Indeed, several renowned Egyptologists had publicly affirmed that Copts retained a distinct racial purity and were the true descendants of the Pharaohs. In 1908, Italian Egyptologist Gaston Maspero delivered a lecture in which he stated that “les Coptes sont les anciens habitants du pays qui sont restés les mêmes sans changement,” and “le groupe musulman offre donc une proportion plus forte de sang étranger que n’en contient le groupe Copte.”\(^5\) This statement is a clear example of the way in which many Europeans perpetuated the racist and essentialist ideologies of this period— as colonizers against colonized— by constructing the changeless characteristics of conquered peoples. Yet another celebrated Egyptologist, Flinders Petrie, extended Maspero’s argument by asserting that since Copts inherited the true characteristics of their ancestors, they were the only ones who were qualified to lead Egypt on the path of advancement.\(^6\) The connections between Copts and the Pharaohs were quite prevalent in the European literature

\(^{5}\) Gaston Maspero, parts of a lecture delivered on November 19, 1908, in Nādī Ramsīs, entitled “The Copts,” cited in Samir Seikaly, “Coptic Communal Reform,” 269. According to Alfred Cunningham, 231, Maspero served as the director of the Cairo Museum during this time. Cunningham notes that the field of Egyptology has attracted neither Muslim nor Copts as the government has failed to encourage Egyptians to “engage in this fascinating pursuit.”

\(^{6}\) Ibid.
about Egypt in general and about Copts in particular. For instance, in 1918, S. H. Leeder published his study on the manners and customs of the Copts titled *Modern Sons of the Pharaohs*. While Leeder admitted that Copts were racially similar to their ancestors, he argued against those who had asserted that the Copts are "the most civilised of the natives" as he found few differences between the "Oriental customs" of Copts and Muslims.⁷

For years prior to this period, however, various Copts had been interested in recording their community’s history and had begun to link the Egyptian/Coptic experience to the Pharaonic past. One such historian was Mikhāl Shārubīm (1861-1918). Shārubīm had benefited from the Coptic educational reforms of the nineteenth century and was learned in Arabic, English and French. As such, at the age of fourteen, he was employed in the ministry of finance as a redactor in foreign languages. Shārubīm gradually moved up in the Egyptian administration, becoming a judge in 1884. However, in 1888, he retired and devoted the rest of his life to writing his monumental history *Al-kafi fī tarīkh Miṣr al-qadīm wa al-ḥadīth* (*A Survey of the Ancient and Modern*

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In this work, published in 1898 in four parts, Shārūbīm devotes a significant section to the Pharaonic age, reproduced in brief biographies of various Pharaonic rulers. The largely political narrative in Al-kāfi highlights one important point: the existence of a resilient continuity among the people of Egypt as they passed under the governance of Pharaohs, Ptolemies, Romans, Byzantines and finally Muslims. This was not Coptic history per se, but it was an Egyptian history written by a Copt, influenced by an historical periodization that ultimately found roots in and continuities with Egypt’s Pharaonic past.

Another historian who directly contributed to the genre of Coptic history was Yaʿqūb Nakhlah Rufaylah (1847-1908). This writer was a celebrated personality in the Coptic community, and his prominence earned him a post as proofreader for the Bulāq Government Press. Subsequently, he became involved in the establishment of the printing press attached to Al-Wāfan newspaper. He continued to rise in the ranks of the government administration, working

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8 For more on the life of Mikhāl Shārūbīm, see The Coptic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Mikhāl Shārūbīm,” by Aziz S. Atiya.

9 See Mikhāl Shārūbīm, Al-kāfi fi tārikh Miṣr al-qadīm wa al-hadīth [A Survey of the Ancient and Modern History of Egypt], vol. I (Cairo, 1898), 1-201.
ultimately as the secretary of the Fayyum Railways Company. All the while, he was quite involved in founding several Coptic religious societies and was an active member of the Coptic Community Council. His best-known history is entitled Tārīkh al-umma al-qibṭiyya (History of the Coptic Nation, 1899), a title which apparently came to influence this genre of Coptic history and the use of the term “the Coptic Nation.” This may be noted in the translation of E. L. Butcher’s The Story of the Church of Egypt (1898) by Tadrus al-Minqabādī into Tārīkh al-umma al-qibṭiyya (1900), Yusuf Manqariyūs’ Tārīkh al-umma al-qibṭiyya (1913), and the Society of Coptic History’s Tārīkh al-umma al-qibṭiyya (1922).

While it is unclear exactly what the term meant or what its usage connoted, in the view of many writers, the Coptic Nation was a vivid and dynamic concept. One of these writers was Ramzi Tadrus, a Coptic Orthodox editor for the newspaper Miṣr who published a four-volume work, Al-aqbat fi al-qarn al-‘ishrin (Copts in the Twentieth Century), between 1910 and 1912. His work is evidence of a sophisticated literary style of Arabic which had developed among Egyptian journalists and intellectuals during this time. As Partha

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10 Information on Yaʾqūb Nahklah Ruwaylah can be found in The Coptic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Yaʾqūb Nahklah Ruwaylah,” by Aziz S. Atiya.
Chatterjee argues for the case of Indian intellectuals in the late nineteenth century, the writing of these “colonized intellectuals” was often an adaptation of a modern European discursive framework which encompassed a bilingual dialogue between local ideas and European logic.\(^1\) It is clear that Tādrus’ views on nationhood were influenced by the French Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution. However, Al-
agūm was intended to be neither a political treatise nor an historical monograph but rather a status report about the social and economic position of Copts in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Nonetheless, by invoking the Pharaonic past in his conception of nationhood, the author gives us a glimpse of the ideals represented by the Coptic Nation at that time. Evidently, the term had multiple and contradictory meanings, and this ambiguity appears to have been both deliberate and unintentional. At the outset, Tādrus is reluctant to refer to Copts as an ṭumma and prefers the phrase al-
sha’b al-
qibṭi (the Coptic People). He opens his work by stating that “the Coptic People are what remained of an ancient and distinguished ṭumma” and proceeds to discuss their particular characteristics.\(^2\) In recounting the past, however, Tādrus

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speaks of nationhood in an increasingly self-evident and immediate tone:

Since the time of the French occupation, the Coptic umma entered an unparalleled and grand literary age. Most did not expect that it would be transformed so quickly or modified in this swift manner. However, those who knew its capabilities during the dark ages of oppression and had vouched for its aptitude expected this change, for this change was on par with the path of progress and advancement which exists in every illustrious umma.\textsuperscript{13}

Here, the label “nation” may be affixed to umma, for Tadrus sees the advancement of the Coptic nation as part of a natural evolution which is specific to “illustrious” nations. Considering the bleak political situation during this era, it was understandable that Copts and Muslims viewed the past as a time of great success and grandeur. However, the use of umma by this author appears to designate a hidden quality or essence unique to a Coptic people who had endured centuries of oppression, awaiting a suitable moment to emerge in all their illustriousness. Repeatedly, the author stresses that he sees no better time for this reemergence than the present.

In an interesting comment on sectarian strife, Tadrus maintains that religious differences between Muslims and Christians were not indicative of the existence of two ummas as “there is no such thing as two Egyptians [Miṣrān], one

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., vol. I, 137.
Muslim and the other Copt, but there is only one Egypt."\textsuperscript{14} Nonetheless, this "Egypt" was equated with the Copts: "Ask Egypt and she will answer you, 'I was named by their [the Copts'] name,' for the entire meaning of Egypt [igipt] means the 'land of the Copt.'"\textsuperscript{15} The implication was that Egyptian Muslims, who may have professed the ancient Egyptian heritage as their own, were in fact part of a greater Coptic nation and might stake claims in Egypt's past only because they were incorporated by a pre-existing Coptic community. Indeed, later intellectuals would echo this sentiment. One Copt, Murqus Samqa, told an audience of Egyptian students that "[a]ll of you are Copts. Some of you are Muslim Copts, others are Christian Copts, but all of you are descended from the ancient Egyptians."\textsuperscript{16} However, Tdrus elaborated further by suggesting that a Coptic-Egyptian culture could stake claims within the greater Arab world:

\begin{quote}
[C]enturies have passed since the Muslim conquest and the commingling of the Egyptian and the Arab. As a result, [the latter] acquired Egyptian behavior and Egyptian customs and those have spread out to the entire Arab world. The Coptic language had been famous and widely used, as the Arab language is used today, and everyone spoke Coptic. However, it was abolished
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., vol. II, 9 and 12.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., vol. II, 28.
\textsuperscript{16} Cited in Gershoni and Jankowski, 165.
from official usage and its function was relegated to churches and Coptic Christians.\textsuperscript{17}

Ultimately, then, \textit{umma} refers both to the Coptic nation or community and to a broader Egyptian nation, which includes “Muslim Copts” and “Christian Copts.”\textsuperscript{18} The author appears to have welcomed this play on words, which allowed him to make political allusions, on the one hand, and to glorify a Coptic heritage, on the other.

Tâdrus was as concerned with the present and future of the Coptic Nation as he was with its past. In his expression of the legacies of ancient Egypt, one notes the relationship between the author’s ideas and those of European Egyptologists during this period:

If this immense corpus, made up of millions of souls, can be traced back to [ancient] Egyptian origins, then there is no doubt as to which group preserved the original Egyptian traits more than others....[It is] the Coptic Christian people [who] have remained faithful to their Christian religion and did not mix with other groups as our Muslim brothers have done.\textsuperscript{19}

Tâdrus is eager to prove his assertions and challenges readers to test this hypothesis by visiting the Egyptian museum and comparing their own physical appearance (“tall and slender”) with that of their statuesque ancestors. The Coptic people have survived to this day, he maintains,

\textsuperscript{17} Tâdrus, vol. I, 104.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., vol. I, 11 and vol. II, 11.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., vol. II, 3-4.
because of their link to an ancient heritage which passed through their veins and enabled them to endure generations of persecution and oppression.\textsuperscript{20} This idea of blood relation to the Pharaohs is regularly affirmed, and Tādrus attributes Coptic resilience to hereditary traits:

The Coptic people have preserved their will and determination to this day. Such is a treasure which has been passed down to them from the treasures of the Pharaohs and has survived through generations of oppression and torture without dying....This is proof of the greatness of intellect among the people of intellect [ahl al-\textsuperscript{2}uqal].\textsuperscript{21}

The suggestion was that Copts, having sustained such hardship, embodied the “true” Egyptian identity. As contentions brewed over who qualified to be a member of the Egyptian nation (see the previous chapter), Copts felt it reasonable to think of themselves as a sort of nobility. In an existent political situation in which Muslims were the majority and contended that the Coptic minority had no legitimate political claims, Tādrus may have been hinting that it was the Muslims who had lost their true Egyptian identity; they were thus incapable of becoming an “illustrious” nation because their claims and connection to the past would be flawed without adequate recognition of the position of Copts. Pharaonic Egypt is invoked in

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., vol. I, 3.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
establishing an historical basis for the nation, but it further serves as a source of legitimacy for the extent of the purity of blood and hence of superior Egyptianness among Copts. Incidentally, the biological basis of Pharaonicism as later expressed clearly elaborates the sentiments which were so vividly evoked by these earlier writers. During the 1920s, Egyptologist and nationalist Ḥasan Ṣubhī proclaimed that "my blood is your blood; it is the blood of every one of you; it bears no mark but that of Egyptianism."\textsuperscript{22} Another influential intellectual, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, wrote to all Egyptians that they should examine their characters, analyze their natures and know their temperaments, for they would "discover the essential nature of your ancestors has been passed on to you."\textsuperscript{23}

It appears that in the years prior to and during World War I, Copts began to further develop their vivid relationship with the Pharaonic past. The adoption by some Copts of the symbol of Pharaoh "Ramsis" as a special emblem was highlighted when they urged the British to designate a Cairo town square as "Midān Ramsīs" in 1913 and to eventually place an ancient statue of this king in the midst

\textsuperscript{22} Gershoni and Jankowski, 166.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 167.
of the square. During the same year, several Coptic writers and poets paid a special visit to the Karnak temple in Luxor. When they came upon an imposing statue of Pharaoh Ramsès, they "fell on the ground, rolled in the dirt, and raised their voices with shrieks and cries." On this occasion, the poet Naṣr Loza al-Assyūñi wrote:

Arise Ramsès and behold your grandchildren,
How they have been humiliated and have persevered.
Your mercy, your mercy! Arise and gaze with your eyes,
Gaze at what the treacherous and crushing nights have hidden.  

What followed these plaintive passages was a long ode in which the poet continued to mourn the loss of the Pharaonic past. Bleak as this scene may seem, the Pharaonic past, as I have discussed, also served as an inspiration for Copts and a hope for the future.

One interesting dilemma posed by advocating this Pharaonicist discourse was its emulation of a secularist model that opposed any association with the Christian-based historical narrative which was promoted by the Coptic Church. In 1922, when the Society for Coptic History published its History of the Coptic Nation, a book which was to be utilized in religious education in public schools, the authors devoted a chapter to the ancient Pharaonic religion.

24 Kīlānī, 45.

25 Al-Wafan, August 16, 1913; cited in Kīlānī, 46.
Rather than speaking of Egypt’s “pagan” past from a Christian perspective, the writers of this book discussed the monotheistic features of the ancient religion and justified the existence of various gods as mere attributes or descriptives of one true god. Moreover, the ideas of the afterlife in the Pharaonic religion which found parallels in Christian teachings were highlighted as such, as were concepts of transgression, transfiguration and eternal punishment.

However, in earlier writings, such associations were not so explicit. In Ramzi Tādrus’ representation, for instance, Christianity was not so clearly linked to the Pharaonic past but could still have a role in the growth of the nation if the Church could instigate a spiritual revival by eradicating traditions and customs which had left it in the backwaters of advancement. The author felt that the Christian spirit could unite Orthodox, Protestants and Catholics and emphasized that Christianity, in its undefiled and biblical form, contained necessary elements which could strengthen the morals of the nation:

It has been proven that the Christian religion is the only one which enables humans to attain true knowledge....It has made clear to us the path of happiness....[However] it is safe to say that the present deterioration, backwardness, and absence of

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dignity among Copts is due to their abandonment of religious virtues.\textsuperscript{27}

Subsequently, the author proposes his plans for uprooting those unsuitable beliefs which had contributed to the deterioration of the Church, such as superstition and the "worshipping" of icons, and thereby suggests a means for recovering this Christian essence. On this subject, another monograph was written to awaken the Coptic Church by advocating a return to its original customs. Farid Kāmil, the Coptic journalist whose article "Humanity Is Tortured" caused a conflict between the Muslim and Coptic presses in 1908, published Ḥiyā' al-kanīsa al-qibṭiyya bi ūdātihā ila tuqusihā al-āṣliyya (Reviving the Coptic Church by Restoring It to Its Original Traditions) in 1913. The author addresses and critiques several practices in the church, from prayers to marriage ceremonies, from monasticism to fasts, asserting that the church could regain its former glories if it could differentiate between which of its practices were performed correctly and which were not. "The church was nearly dying," Kāmil writes, and by returning to its original roots, it could make an unprecedented revival.\textsuperscript{28} The "return to original roots" appears to have

\textsuperscript{27} Tādrus, vol. I, 96.

\textsuperscript{28} Farid Kāmil, Ḥiyā' al-kanīsa al-qibṭiyya bi ūdātihā ila tuqusihā al-āṣliyya [Reviving the Coptic Church by Restoring It to Its Original Traditions] (Cairo, 1913), 4-5.
been a regular theme among all reformers and intellectuals of the period. In the end, then, the best of both worlds, of Pharaonicist achievements and of true Christian moral codes, could be amalgamated to reproduce ideal guidelines for the nation. All the while, this necessitated the abandonment of those "excess" rituals and practices which had been long preserved in the church.

For many Copts, intention of reviving the true Egyptian essence could be accomplished through the rebirth of the Coptic language. In romanticizing the Coptic language, some saw its revival as a means of uniting all Egyptians, Muslims and Christians:

Egypt declares today: Oh Egyptians, no matter how much you have betrayed me by learning the Arabic, French or English languages, the Coptic phrases continue to abide in your language without your realization. Go to the sea and you will find the sailors saying 'heya līsa,' which means 'assistance.' Go to the fields and you will find the fellāhin saying 'al-damira ḥadaret' which means the northern silt [alluvial soil] has arrived. This is proof that their origin is Egyptian before it is Arabic and therefore we must learn the Coptic language.29

Not everyone agreed, however, with this perspective. Some wrote that the use of the Coptic language, particularly in the services of the Coptic Orthodox Church, caused a social divide among the people. They declared that the Coptic language was dead, and its revival was useless:

There is no use for prayer if it is conducted in an incomprehensible language. When we attend the mass, we only hear the Coptic phrases and hymns which we do not understand....To teach the Coptic language to the members of the nation is an impossible task, for even linguists and specialists have little time for such studies. One should then sympathize with the situation of farmers and others.  

While night schools were opened in Cairo and in various Egyptian provinces to provide free access to the teaching of the Coptic language for both Muslims and Copts, the movement was generally isolated and negligible. Coptic was restored neither as a spoken nor as a literary language.

If the nation did not have a language, it certainly had a history, and this history would serve a distinct purpose. If nationalist historians of the period sought to convey a certain view of the past- one of ancient glory, subsequent decline, and a conclusive moral: "reform society, remove all of these superstitions that are the marks of decadence, and revive the true ideals of the past"- then Coptic writers were also engaged in such a discourse. Ramzi Tādrus was sure that decline existed during the Arab, Mamluk, and Ottoman periods but ended with the reign of Muḥammad ʿAlī (1805-1848). Since the study of history was to have a didactic objective, the present era was comparatively a


31 Chatterjee, 98.
"golden age" as it extended new economic and cultural opportunities for all Egyptians. The British were easily accepted as new conquerors; Copts could support the British without losing their sense of patriotism, knowing that this secularist path was the best one for Egypt:

Go back to the silent past and you shall learn that Copts have displayed the finest patriotism and have worked hardest at preserving their land. This country is theirs and the life which flows in its valleys is the fruit of their labor....The Turkish sympathizers [today] consider that independence is dishonorable and that freedom is dangerous if they [the sympathizers] are not supervised and supported by Turkey. The idea of being enslaved to Turkey has predominated and, even though it is weak in theory, it has strengthened and become indoctrinated in the emotions of the umma, ruining the intentions of Copts to improve and liberate the country.32

This hatred for Turkish/Ottoman rule was reinforced by a belief that the British could lead the entire Egyptian nation to future autonomy:

Some aggravating few and their blind followers have accused the British of opposing progress and education, and of wasting the country's money....However, the patriotism of the Copt forces him to allow the British to do as they will in the government and in the country, so long as their intentions are directed towards industrializing and modernizing his nation. For at that time, the nation would have reached a point at which it may assert to the British and to the world that it is alive and well, able to take care of its affairs and to rule itself. I believe this to be the sincerest form of patriotism, and it should be a model for each conquered nation....If you look at this past, you will be assured that the governments which ruled Egypt could not subdue, in spite of their pressures and persecution, the [current] effort of Copts in restoring

their golden civilization nor could they extract the immense patriotic feeling which is permanently affixed to their hearts.\textsuperscript{33}

However, submission to or cooperation with the colonial regime did not indicate acceptance of Western practices. In the inner domains of culture such as religion, language, family and education, the battle to keep out the colonizer was yet to be waged. If the colonized succeeded in doing so, they could proclaim sovereignty and victory over this private, fundamental sphere of national life.\textsuperscript{34} That Coptic writers of this period devoted much time to discussing reforms in the religious, educational and domestic spheres was no coincidence, for it was in these domains that the struggle to bring forth the "hidden essence" was as yet unrealized.

The connections between retrieving this hidden/inner essence of the nation and Egypt's Pharaonic greatness were repeatedly emphasized by Ramžī Tādrus. For one thing, this essence had been preserved since ancient times in the private domain of the family and, more importantly, in the character of the Coptic woman. For the author, "family" (al-\textsuperscript{ā}īlāḥ) and "woman" (al-mer\textsuperscript{ā}ah) were interchangeable. "I see family through the image of a woman," Tādrus writes,

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., vol. II, 30.

\textsuperscript{34} Chatterjee, 26.
"and I discern nothing within a woman except family." 35
Indeed the nationalist discourse of the colonized intellectuals often espoused a kind of patriarchy which gave women a new social responsibility and associated female emancipation with the historical goal of sovereign nationhood, thereby binding them to a new and entirely legitimate subordination. 36 Correspondingly, Tādrus writes:

[T]here is no advancement for the umma except with the advancement of the woman, and there is no advancement for the woman unless she is educated and trained with a proper cultivation which will give her a soft disposition and a knowledge of real beauty- that within the self. This is the sort of training which will mold a girl into a mature [kāmila] woman who is able to make the home of her father, brother, husband, and son a flourishing paradise. 37

The Coptic family, in this rendition, was a microcosm of the nation, and the woman, in her role as wife, mother, or daughter, was expected to act as the keeper of this private sphere. She was to police the purity of this domain and could procure spiritual cleanliness by attending church, praying, and fasting, hence compensating for the man’s preoccupation with the outside world.

In a passage which embodies the aforementioned ideas about history, women and nation, Tādrus advocates the

36 Chatterjee, 131-132.
unveiling of the Coptic woman. Lord Cromer had written that "in spite of his religious and his monogamous habits, the Copt has developed no high ideal of womanhood." 38 Tādrus seems to counter such a perspective, and his anti-veiling sentiments maintain that the Coptic-Pharaonic woman was in fact the ideal of womanhood. At first, the author highlights the freedom enjoyed by the unveiled Coptic woman prior to Islamic rule:

The Coptic woman had lived since the time of creation to the age of the Romans to the time of the Arabs, free with no veil. She promoted Egypt's civilization and was a flame of fire in the hearts of her sons symbolizing nationhood [al-wafaniyya]...until Ahmad b. Tulun ruled Egypt in the ninth century and it was his will that the Coptic woman shall become equal with her sister the Muslim woman and shall wear the veil. So she adopted it with humility until it became a habit/custom for her....Coptic women, during this oppressive age of caliphs, Mamluks, and Turks, wore a special dress which distinguished them from their sisters and which greatly constricted them and increased their servitude. With the passing of time, they were forced to be secluded in their homes....While this practice was favored during times of servitude and oppression, it is repulsive during this age of freedom and justice. 39

In a final presumptuous remark, the author asserts that the achievements of the ancient Egyptian civilizations were due to the fact that women were unveiled. For centuries, Tādrus maintains, these age-old customs had served as an established model for all who visited Egypt.

38 Cromer, 206.

Conclusions:

For years since the start of the Egyptian nationalist movement, Copts had looked for new avenues of expression to illustrate their integral position in Egyptian society. Finally, at the turn of the twentieth century, Coptic intellectuals began to assert themselves in the guise of a discourse which espoused a Pharaonic heritage. This was adopted as a result of years of tensions with Muslim nationalists and with the British authorities—tensions which threatened to diminish the Coptic claims of “true” Egyptianhood. However, as will be summed up in the final conclusions of this study, the idea of a Coptic Nation as espoused by Coptic writers, particularly by Ramzi Tādrus, was conceptualized to illustrate that Copts were in every sense the truest Egyptians and that they, by virtue of inheriting the qualities and essence of their ancient predecessors, were the most capable of attaining genuine patriotism. As this chapter has illustrated, the Coptic Nation was an intellectual ideal which advocated wholeheartedly the belief in a secularist Egyptian state that would reduce the role of religion, i.e., Islam, in the socio-
political, public sphere. At the same time, the ideals of the Coptic Nation advocated reform in the private sphere, which included the realms of religion and family; these reforms would allow Copts to preserve those qualities which had rendered them a unique and illustrious nation. Such a discourse was certainly not exclusive to Copts and was common to many Westernized or "colonized" intellectuals of this period. To this end, however, the colonial moment impelled Coptic intellectuals to impose a set of new, and often contradictory, values upon their invented nation, and to believe that such a course of action was the best for attaining advancement.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In his monumental study on nationalism, Benedict Anderson speaks in great detail about the concept of an "imagined nation" or "community." During the formative years of nationalism in all parts of the world, he asserts, various communities could be distinguished from one another, not because one held more genuine or less false claims to nationhood, but because of the style in which each nation came to be imagined.\(^1\) For those who conceptualized its ideals, the imagining of a nation did not entail a denial of the past, be it religious or secular, but rather invoked its perceived historical achievements as an integral part of the present and future. Anderson maintains that while an awareness of being connected to the past was not exclusive to the nationalist period, during this era the association

was articulated by intellectuals and literati in a new and more deliberate language.

In styling their conception of a nation during the modern period, Coptic Christians turned to the ancient Egyptian past, looking for glory and grandeur in the age of pharaohs and pyramids. However, in historical retrospect, the Copts were not a newly imagined community per se. For centuries after the Islamic conquest of Egypt (641 AD), the Copts were seen and dealt with as a collective, as a religious minority of dhimmis who lived differently from their Muslim counterparts. Led by the Coptic Orthodox Church, Copts came to be conscious, at least on some level, of being a unique Christian sect with a rich historical heritage.

Bearing this in mind, I have discussed the development of a national consciousness and identity among Copts during a transitional period in modern Egyptian history (1882-1919). This stage of Egyptian nationalism has been widely studied in comparable literature about the Arab world. Scholars have examined the social, intellectual and political aspirations of Egyptian nationalists. While some have explored the influence of colonization on the development of nationalist ideals, others have been interested in how nationalists were informed by the pan-
Islamic ideologies of their day. There is near consensus that during this first period of colonial rule, Egyptian activists had a clear political goal, namely, to gain independence from the British; however, that nationalists could not agree, either politically or ideologically, on how to achieve their aspirations became an evident theme.

Caught in the midst of this struggle were the Copts, whose ambiguous role in this phase of the Egyptian nationalist movement has been little studied. As a small but disproportionately wealthy minority, the Copts were an integral thread in the fabric of Egyptian life. During this period, Copts did not develop nationalist aspirations in the traditional sense; for instance, they did not (and realistically could not) seek a geographically or politically independent “Coptic Egypt,” nor did they succeed in reviving the Coptic language. However, because Egyptian intellectuals were busy formulating and imagining their ideals of nationhood within the confines of an Islamic framework, Coptic Christians felt rejected from active political participation. Increasingly, they grew more conscious of their position as a minority who represented the “original inhabitants” of Egypt and thereby demanded increased recognition. This sensitive and problematic stance, which is perhaps uncommon in the context of
nationalist histories, led to their devising of a different and uniquely Coptic model of nationhood.²

A Coptic nationhood, as espoused by an educated literati at the turn of the twentieth century, was formulated to portray this minority as the descendants of a great Pharaonic heritage and therefore as the truest of Egyptians; they were in essence creating a "usable" past. Supported by a Western formulation of racial and cultural superiority, Copts believed that they, by having the essence of their ancient predecessors in their blood, were the most capable of achieving patriotism and of participating in the leadership of the Egyptian nation. This was in part a reactionary posture taken as a result of years of frustration with the predominantly Islamic rhetoric of Egyptian nationalists. Coptic nationhood recognized that Muslims and Copts could share a sense of fraternity (that is, they could form a community) only if they focused on

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² A comparable case might be the Khilafat movement in India (1919), where Indian Muslims, as a minority overwhelmed by a Hindu majority, hoped to establish themselves as part of the Indian nationalist movement by supporting the Ottoman caliphate. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Ottoman sultans had been encouraging pan-Islamic sentiments of Muslims everywhere in hopes of improving their own positions vis-à-vis the European colonialist threat. Gail Minault addresses this issue in her study of the relationship between the Islamic religio-cultural identity and nationalist movements. See her work, The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India (New York, 1982).
their common Egyptian heritage. This was exemplified in their advocacy of a secularist Egyptian state which would reduce the role of religion in the political sphere. However, their position was overlooked in the period prior to the 1919 Revolution, mostly because of the seemingly contradictory stance that Copts deserved specific political rights as a religious minority.

The effect of the secularist, Pharaonicist ideals, as articulated by Copts in the period under study, on Egyptian nationalism could be seen in the years following World War I. At this time, Egyptian leaders had come to recognize that achieving independence from the British required full cooperation among all of Egypt’s sects; at least temporarily in the 1920s, Muslims and Copts could boast of a unified political and ideological agenda which was exemplified by the symbol of crescent and cross on a single flag. Tragically, despite the fact that Copts and Muslims are ethnically and culturally similar, whether one can still detect any lasting effects of their earlier cooperation is doubtful. Today, as in the period between 1882 and 1919, the Coptic minority, which is “too numerous and too Egyptian...to be legislated out of existence,” continues to experience serious insecurity over its place in the Egyptian nation-state.
APPENDIX A

COPTIC PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPERS, 1882-1919

- ʿAyn-Shams [Heliopolis], published monthly by Claudius Labib in 1900, ceased publication three years later; mainly for Coptic language and history.
- Al-Fatah al-Qibṭi [The Coptic Youth], published monthly by the Central al-Imām Benevolent Society at Cairo from 1905 to 1910.
- Al-Firaʿaun [The Pharaoh], published bimonthly at Cairo by Tawfīq Ḥabib from 1909 to 1920.
- Al-Haqq [The Truth], published monthly by Yūsuf Manqaryūs, director of the Clerical College, in 1907 for a period of about five years. It reappeared under the hegumenos Yūsuf al-Dayrī in 1947 and stopped again in 1950. It was devoted mainly to news of the diocese of Qalyūbiyya.
- Al-Karma [The Vineyard], published in 1915 by Ḥabib Jirjis, director of the Clerical College, for biblical studies. It ceased publication in 1930.
- Al-Majalla al-Qibṭiyya [The Coptic Journal], monthly published by Jirjis Philūthawus ʿAwad from 1907 to 1930; devoted mainly to Coptic history and to the call for clerics to concentrate their energy on spiritual matters.

* This list is part of a larger listing of Coptic newspapers and periodicals as compiled by Mirrit Boutros Ghali and published in “Press, Coptic: Minor Organs,” The Coptic Encyclopedia (1991).
• Al-Nahda al-Dayriyya al-Ushufiyya [The Unceasing Revival, A Weekly], published from March 1892 to February 1914 by the hegumenos Yusuf Habashi.

• Al-Nur [The Light], published weekly by Tadrus Shinuda al-Minqabad in 1899 and 1900.

• Al-Nuzha [The Promenade], published bimonthly at Assyut by George Khayyat from 1886 to 1890.

• Al-Uzama' [The Exalted], published monthly at Cairo by Mikhail Bishara Dawud from 1915 to 1925.

• Shahada al-Haqq [Testimony to the Truth], published bimonthly at Cairo by Christoфорос Jabbar from 1895 to 1899.

• Al-Rabi'a al-Masihiyya [The Christian Tie], published monthly by Faraj Jirjis for Jam'iyat al-Rabi'a al-Masihiyya at Cairo in 1907 and 1908.

• Al-Sha'b al-Qibti [The Coptic People], published weekly at Alexandria by Maximus from 1908 to 1910.

• Al-Tawfiq [Success], monthly founded by al-Tawfiq Benevolent Society. It ceased publication in 1910, then was started again in 1938 with Tawfiq Habib as editor and with the collaboration of Mustapha Sadig, but it lasted only one year before finally ceasing publication.

• Al-Wafaniyya [Patriotism], published by Ayyub Sabri in 1911; ceased publication in 1953.
APPENDIX B

"ISLAM ALIEN IN ITS COUNTRY"

BY ʿABD AL-ʿAZĪZ JĀWĪSH
AL-LĪWĀʾ, 17 JUNE, 1908

Al-Wāfan (a Coptic daily) committed the day before yesterday a heinous crime which has doubled the public wrath against it. On that day it besmirched its pages with the filth of libel and the dirt of slander which usually sully its face on every day. It gave publicity to an article by that petty writer who has gained disrepute and recorded against himself ignorance in matter of history as well as the shame of ungratefulness for the benefits he and his ancestors derived from Islam. Had Islam been as pictured in that article neither its writer, Farid Kamel, nor the owner of Al-Wāfan would have been transferred from the bodies of their fathers to those of their mothers (the original Arabic here is too immoral and vulgar to be translated word for word)- to appear in these days with diabolical soul in human form. You two fools, it was Islam that saved you from the hand of the Greeks after many centuries of bondage, during which you were employed as beasts, cursed with tongues, kicked with feet. You threw yourselves into the arms of Islam and it saved your blood and protected your women and children. Had Islam been as you say, it would have crushed and annihilated you, throwing your remains to the winds to cleanse and purify the Egyptian soil from your black forms. It would have extracted your tongues so that you might not speak, and amputated your fingers so that you might not write. You accepted its rule and it harboured you; you claimed its protection and it supported you, giving you the rights of

* Reprinted in Alfred Cunningham, To-Day in Egypt (London, 1912), 245-249.
its own adherents. Furthermore, it allowed you to manage your own affairs and to be your own judges, unless you voluntarily appealed for its ruling and accepted its judgment. How then was 'humanity tortured,' as you say, you fools, amidst people with such a religion and divine laws?

For thirteen centuries you were in the bosom of Islam, which cared for you and nursed you while you increased in wealth and numbers. Had you lived for even a quarter of that period with the English they would have made you like the Red Skins of America or the brown race of Australia, roaming in the wild forests and sleeping in the caves like the beasts of the desert. Or had you seen the subjects of King Leopold in the Congo he would have made your hair into ropes and your skins into soles. He would have torn your bodies to pieces with lashes and chained you with iron while you carried great weights. Or had you been in Ireland the English would have thrown you away and discarded you just as they do with their old shoes. They would have driven you out of your country with utter contempt.

We have lived in this country so long according to the tenets of Islam, brothers in nationality, neighbours exchanging visits and advice. What is the reason now of this change in your attitude? Perhaps you saw that the Occupation people had the same religion as you and you thought of selling them your country and your conscience to sever all connection with us after all these centuries? Such are the dogs of renegades and traitors!

Your shrieks have reached heaven in claiming the right to certain high administrative posts. You say that it was Islam that enslaved and humiliated you, that denied you the right to those posts. You even had the audacity to describe the weakness and wretchedness of Mohammedans, threatening them with revenge. Ah! You may be excused for not knowing what Islam is; but you have treated with contempt the Mohammedans who are in their country like a crouching lion that did not pounce only because it knew that your shrieks were no more than the buzz of flies in the elephant’s ears, without the least annoying effect. I do not wonder at your ignorance of Islam and its glory more than I wonder at your ignorance of the rules and laws of this country. Read these different laws, criminal, civil, commercial and others. Do you find therein any distinction between sects on account of their faiths? Read the laws promulgated during the ministry of Riaj Pasha and you will see that the Egyptian nationality was the only condition of public service, without the least distinction between faith and faith. Of course, there are certain posts that cannot be filled except by Mohammedans. These remain in Moslem hands and will always remain so if you open your mouths for shrieking so wide that your upper
jaw reached heaven and your lower jaw touched the soil on which your shoes tread.

The political parties about which you reported falsehoods have not expressed an opinion upon the question which you claim and upon which you write so much. They have only approved the old-established system of the Government. Read those regulations and pore well through their contents. Ask those who have no intelligence. Ask the boys in their school, and the vendors in their shops, the oxen in their zarebas’, the horses in their stables. All these will tell you things that will silence your tongues and make you fell ashamed you are capable of so feeling.

What end have Al Wa‘an and Miṣr, together with Farid Kamel, gained? What is that victory of which they talk so much in vain? They have only over-taxed their vocal cords and recorded upon themselves the shame of abject slavery for the sake of certain posts for which the English use them as mere tools and wherein promotion is guaranteed only to those who implicitly obey the orders of the foreign occupiers.

Al Lewa has refrained for a long time from writing on this trivial subject, for the owner of Al Wa‘an has cast away all modesty and revolted against the morals of his country by publishing that article which left no room for patience and made many persons ask the Government to prosecute him and Farid Kamel in accordance with articles 138 and 195 of the criminal code. How these two base persons attack the religion of the Egyptian Government, the religion of our Sultan and Khedive, the religion of the majority, the religion of truth, the religion of justice, the religion of tolerance and equality! You have shown this bigotry and this audacity in attacking Mohammedans and their faith because the Mohammedans have been too generous in dealing with you. You know that had the Mohammedans wished it they could have blown you to atoms. Silence, you impudent fools! An account lies before you which if neglected by the Government will be backed by eleven million Mohammedans, who will neither neglect that account nor forget.

*A “zareba” could refer to a “mess,” a “dump” or a “land fill.”*
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