THE ROLE OF THE ʿULAMĀʾ DURING THE FRENCH RULE OF EGYPT

1798-1801

by Jeffrey Charles Burke

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Title: The Role of the 'Ulamā' during the French Rule of Egypt: 1798-1801

Author: Jeffrey Charles Burke

Department: Institute of Islamic Studies

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This is a study of the role of the 'ulamā' during the French occupation of Egypt: 1798-1801. Bonaparte penetrated Islamic Egypt, marking the beginnings of the modern era. The French military brilliance dominated the East-West confrontation. Napoleon's military victories were short-lived when prominent 'ulamā', whom he thought had been wooed to his side, organized rebellions against him from al-Azhar. Although his attempt to raise the status of the Egyptian 'ulamā' to assist him in governing the people was successful, it was not enough to prevent his own hasty exodus from Egypt. The French left lasting cultural influences in Egypt: the latent concept of nationalism; and a systematic mode of study. But the French could not establish a long-lasting rule in Egypt due to outside military pressures and the fact that Egyptians looked to the 'ulamā' as the true leaders of the people.

Title: Le rôle des Oulémas pendant le règne français de l'Égypte

Auteur: Jeffrey Charles Burke

Departement: Institut d'Études Islamiques

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Cette étude porte sur le rôle des Oulémas pendant le regne français de l'Égypte: 1798-1801. En pénétrant l'Égypte islamique, Bonaparte a marqué le début de l'époque moderne. Les exploits militaires français dominèrent la confrontation est-ouest. Mais les victoires militaires de Napoléon furent sans lendemain car des révoltes furent organisées à partir de al-Azhar par des Oulémas influents qu'il pensait rangés à ses côtés. Bien que ses tentatives visant à rehausser le statut des Oulémas égyptiens afin de l'aider à gouverner le peuple furent une réussite, elles ne suffirent pas à éviter son départ hâtif d'Égypte. La France a laissé en Égypte une influence culturelle durable: le concept latent de nationalisme et une méthode systématique d'étude. Mais les Français n'ont pas pu établir un règne prolongé en Égypte à cause des préoccupations militaires extérieures et du fait que, selon les Égyptiens, les Oulémas étaient les vrais dirigeants du peuple.

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The transliteration procedure used in this thesis follows the system used by the Institute of Islamic Studies of McGill University.

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INTRODUCTION

This Master's thesis is a study of the role of the 'ulamā' during the French occupation of Egypt: 1798-1801. "Until the arrival of Bonaparte's expedition in 1798, Egypt had existed in comfortable isolation from the West."[1] Only a small trickle of Western travellers had penetrated the interior of Islamic Egypt. The two societies were strange bedfellows in that the French based most of their pertinent information on Egypt on travelogues, and the Egyptians, likewise, had to depend on stories from those who had visited Europe.

Napoleon and his entourage intended to make Egypt a permanent colony of France. This intention was a part of the overall scheme concocted by the French Directory, which had three main reasons for coming to Egypt:

> (a) to strike a blow at Great Britain by obtaining control of the best route to India, (b) to found a flourishing colony and exploit the best resources of Egypt, and (c) to provide for the scientific exploration of ancient and modern Egypt.[2]

The French commander wasted no time in attempting to identify the French to the Egyptians as fellow Muslims. His Proclamation stated that the French were true Muslims who had arrived in Egypt to save the populace from the tyranny of the Mamlūks. Napoleon also explained that he respected the Qur'ān and the Prophet Muḥammad. By manifesting this type of support for Islam and its

followers, Napoleon thought he could quickly acquire the trust of the Muslims.

Upon arriving in Egypt, Napoleon issued his Edict and immediately began to try to win the support of the merchant class and the 'ulamā'. Bonaparte knew that the religious class would be an important ally in his endeavors to make Egypt a prosperous colony of France. Napoleon sought to use the 'ulamā' for his own ends. He knew that they were the natural leaders of the Egyptian people. Bonaparte described the 'ulamā' as men who:

> ...are interpreters of the Koran, and the greatest obstacles we have met with and shall meet with proceed from religious ideas; and are rich and animated by good moral principles...they are not addicted to any sort of military maneuvering and they are ill adapted to the leadership of an armed movement.[3]

The Ottoman military elite had also sought to employ the social power of the 'ulamā' in the society at large. Jabartī records the significance of the 'ulamā' in describing the categories of men of importance as created by God:

> In the first category were the prophets who were sent to reveal God's message to mankind and to show the world the path of righteousness. In the second category were the ulama who are the heirs and the successors of the prophets, 'the depositors of truth in this world and the elite of mankind.'[4]

Napoleon recognized the long-standing position of the 'ulamā' in Islamic Egypt and in fact enhanced their status to make them loyal to their new French rulers.

Studies of the Egyptian 'ulamā' have included: "The Ulama and the State in Modern Egypt," an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation by Daniel Crecelius (1967); Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot's article "The Role of the 'ulamā' in Egypt during the Early Nineteenth Century," in Peter M. Holt's (ed.) Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt (1968); and Marsot's article "The Ulama of Cairo in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" in Scholars, Saints, and Sufis (1972). These articles explain how the 'ulamā' were an important part of the governing elite who served as intermediaries between the ruling elite and the common Egyptian people. But none of these articles concentrates on the role of the 'ulamā' under Napoleon during the French occupation of Egypt. I will explain how Napoleon tried to win the allegiance of the 'ulamā' in two ways: First, he used a proclamation which had been translated from French into Arabic, to convince the 'ulamā' and the people that the French were actually true Muslims who would be just rulers of the country. The second way was to put some high-ranking 'ulamā' on his Dīwān, which was used to govern the affairs of Egypt. This elevated the societal status of some Egyptian 'ulamā' because they had been subordinate to the Turkish 'ulamā' and the Mamlūks during the Turkish rule of Egypt. Napoleon sought to give the 'ulamā' a limited form of power in order to help him govern Egypt in an orderly fashion.

Although influenced by the French, the religious class of Egypt was not fooled by Napoleon's guise of allegiance to Islam. In fact, al-Azhar became a focal point of rebellion against the

French. Jabartī notes:

> Some of the 'ulamā' (al-muta 'ammimīn) applied themselves to stirring up rebellion with those people and set out to inflame the masses, summoning them to slaughter the French who had conquered them. Indeed, they preached to them a clear sermon, exclaiming 'O Muslims, the jihād (holy war) is incumbent upon you. How can you free men agree to pay the poll tax (jizya) to the unbelievers? Have you no pride?'[5]

The 'ulamā' were the refuge of the people during the French occupation of Egypt. Muslims turned to their religious leaders for support. The 'ulamā', in turn, paid lip service to the policies of Bonaparte but, in essence, were busy organizing the uprisings against the French.

Of the abundance of material available, I have chosen to use copies of Napoleon's original letters written during this time period as well as Jabartī's Chronicles of Egypt as original sources for my research. Other original sources include Ottoman Egypt in the Eighteenth Century: The Nizâmnâme Misir of Cezzâr Ahmed Pasha, edited and translated by Stanford Shaw and Ottoman Egypt in the Age of the French Revolution: A Report by Huseyn Efendî, edited and translated by Stanford Shaw. The secondary sources are derived from English, French, and Muslim works, with the latter two translated into English. I feel that it is important to study the 'ulamā' in this context in order to understand the Muslim reaction to being ruled by a foreign power in Egypt.

My thesis is composed of an Introduction, three chapters, and a Conclusion. The first chapter will present the social position

of the 'ulamā' under the late eighteenth century rule of the Ottomans. Then I will address the position of the 'ulamā' in the early nineteenth century of Egypt. Chapter Two will feature the invasion and occupation of Egypt by Napoleon and his relationship with the 'ulamā'. The final chapter will describe the 'ulamā's' opposition to Napoleon and the role of al-Azhar in the organized rebellions against the French. I will also discuss the remaining French influences in Egypt following the departure of Bonaparte.

ENDNOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

1.Jack Crabbs, The Writing of History in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: A Study of National Transformation(Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1984), 13.

2.Rivlin, Agricultural Policy of Muhammad 'Alī, p. 7-9 in Peter Gran, Islamic Roots of Capitalism(Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 28.

3.Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Ulama of Cairo in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," Scholars, Saints, and Sufis(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 161.

4.'Abd al-Rahmān al-Jabartī, 'Ajā'ib al-athār fi'l tarājim wa'l akhbār vol.I(Cairo, 1882), 7 in Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Ulama of Cairo in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 149.

5.Al Jabartī, Chronicle of the First Seven Months of the French Occupation of Egypt: Muharram-Tajab 1213, 15 June - December 1798: Tarīkh muddat al-Faransīs bi-Misr, trans. S. Moreh(Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 93.

Chapter One

The Social Position of the 'Ulamā'

The noted Egyptian chronicler, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī, provides a clear picture of the status of the 'ulamā' in Egyptian society in his time. He notes that their pious occupation elevates them to a position of superiority in society. Marsot describes the comments Jabartī makes about the 'ulamā' in his Chronicles:

> According to his account God created mankind in five categories of descending importance. In the first category were the prophets who were sent to reveal God's message to mankind and to show the world the path of righteousness. In the second category were the ulama who are the heirs and the successors of the prophets, 'the depositors of truth in this world and the elite of mankind.' Below them in rank were the kings and other rulers, and below them ranked the rest of mankind in two last categories.
>
> Such a glorified image of the ulama was not entirely a product of Jabarti's fantasy or ego, but was indeed grounded in Muslim ethics, and it serves to explain the special position the ulama occupied in their society. For where all men are enjoined to obey a moral imperative, 'command good and set aside evil,' for themselves and their circle, it was the duty of the ulama to see that this was carried out by the whole of society. They were the purveyors of Islam, the guardians of its traditions, the depository of ancestral wisdom, and the moral tutors of the population. The ulama who did not even form a priestly caste attained a position of moral and social superiority on the basis of their profession as doctors of the law and of their preoccupation with 'the words of God' which regulated the gamut of relationships between individuals and between them and their maker.[1]

The eighteenth century saw Egypt governed by its Ottoman conquerors, with the help of the 'ulamā' who served as intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled. It was the

'ulamā' who advised people how to worship God and to obey or disobey those in power above them. The 'ulamā' were the final religious authority on matters that governed the way people related to each other and to God. But the intrusion of a Western power challenged the ultimate authority of the Ottomans in Egypt and that of their compliant 'ulamā'. "One of the main rationales for examining the eighteenth century is that here we have the last opportunity to observe traditional Muslim society before the impact of the West began to be felt throughout the Near East."[2] A good way to begin to understand Muslim society is to study its religious leaders. But the 'ulamā' cannot be studied in a vacuum; they must be examined within the context of their socio-cultural setting.

> ...we need to deal with the 'ulamā' as members of a whole socio-cultural system, and our task must be to determine the totality of the social relations and the cultural roles which they entered. It may indeed be that the 'ulamā' are the only major group in Islamic society which we can ever know directly, but if we know them well enough, they can lead us to a sound understanding of the society in which they lived and acted.[3]

The 'ulamā' cannot be categorized into one specific economic level or religious family background. Although they engaged in similar functions in rural and urban areas, they remain diverse as a religious unit.

> Who and what are the 'ulamā'? It is easier to say what they are not, for they are neither a socio-economic class, nor a clearly defined status group, nor a hereditary caste, nor a legal estate, nor a profession. They appear in our texts as semi-literate village imāms and erudite qadis, as rabble-rousers and privy counselors to kings, as spiritual directors and cynical politicians. Some are scions of wealthy and influential families, others are impoverished immigrants from remote villages.

> Some are landowners, some are salaried professors or bureaucrats, some are merchants or humble artisans. The great majority are men, but there are a number of notable women in their ranks as well. In short, they seem to cut across almost every possible classification of groups within Islamic society, playing a multiplicity of political, social, and cultural roles. But in spite of this ambiguity, they are plainly a crucial element in Islamic society - the one group which in fact makes it 'Islamic' rather than something else - and wherever we turn we encounter them.[4]

But the 'ulamā' often have been studied only as religious leaders without considering them to be major players in the world of politics. The Ottomans needed the 'ulamā' to keep the peace and to help extract revenues to be funneled back to Istanbul. The 'ulamā' did far more than merely provide spiritual guidance for their superiors and the masses. Marsot comments:

> Although the 'ulamā' played a prominent part in the social, political and economic life of Egypt in the 18th century they have received far less attention than they perhaps deserve. One may mostly attribute this oversight to the dearth of available documentation, and partly to the fact that the major function of the 'ulamā' as the "Lords Spiritual" so to speak, has obscured their other mundane, but no less important activities. Thus the 'ulamā' have seldom been studied within the socio-economic framework, as a fragment of the native middle layer (I hate to use the term "class" for obvious reasons). When they have been studied, they have been placed within the religious, educational, and to a much lesser extent, political framework. For after all the essential function of the 'ulamā' was to act as the cement of Muslim society, to keep it together by "ordering the good and prohibiting evil." Yet we know that many, if not most, of the high 'ulamā' in Cairo had commercial interests, were well to-do, and some were even affluent. We also know that the 'ulamā' came from all sections of society, both rural and urban, as well as from all economic levels.[5]

The 'ulamā' of note eventually rose to share in power with the

Mamlūks and later with the French and then Muḥammad 'Alī. This time period in history was the apex of the influence of the 'ulamā' in society. But they were still under the thumb of military might.

> The strong ruler thus used the 'ulamā' either to legitimatize his actions vis à vis the community, or to help him rule the people, for in a society dominated by religion and tradition, the moral influence of the 'ulamā' was great, and their right to participate in matters of government recognized.[6]

Fortunately, the 'ulamā' were venerated by the Mamlūks who respected the Qur'ān, and the ways in which Muslims were to act on a daily basis. These were, in many ways, dictated by the guidelines of living enforced by the 'ulamā'. The Mamlūks were hesitant to cross those who were considered to be the heirs of God's kingdom on earth.

> In spite of the fact that the 'ulamā' formed an opposition to the Mamluks, yet the relationship between both groups, was, on the whole, an amicable one, not only as a result of the Sunnī tradition of submission to authority, but also because, according to al-Jabartī, the Mamluks had been reared in the laps of the 'ulamā', read the Qur'ān, studied the Shari'a and went on the Ḥajj. This, he claimed, instilled in them a veneration for the 'ulamā' and a deference to their wisdom, as well as a respect for the established and traditional way of life.[7]

The 'Ulamā' in the Ottoman Empire of the Eighteenth Century

The notion of the 'ulamā' guiding the umma in the proper way of Islamic living stems from the early days of Islam during the time of Muḥammad.

> Islam as revealed by the Prophet Muhammad did not provide for a priesthood or comparable religious institution, nor was any leader of the community after Muhammad deemed to have prophetic or infallible religious powers. The

> caliphs were "successors" of Muhammad as heads of the community, but they were never religious authorities or analogous to Popes, as some Westerners thought. Gradually, however, a body of men developed with specialized religious functions - chiefly readers or reciters of the Koran, and also experts in the Traditions (hadiths), recording the rules and sayings laid down by the Prophet as a guide for the behavior of believers.[8]

The concept of the 'ulamā' gradually evolved throughout the centuries after the Prophet Muḥammad. To examine the 'ulamā' in the eighteenth century is to notice some solidification of roles and customs of practice amongst the 'ulamā'. In essence, the 'ulamā' came to represent the learned body of men who were prepared to interpret and relate the Qur'ānic law and the Ḥadīth to the people. But this role of being a religious class had expanded to include other functions as well.

> In studying the nature of the official 'ulama it will be best to take the Ottoman empire as a model, since in this, as in so many other ways, the Ottoman system represented a logical development and formalization of what had existed in earlier states. At least three kinds of specialized training (but all of them having the common basis of a general Islamic education) prepared men for the service of the Ottoman sultan. Those who were to have a political or military role (including, at some periods, princes of the Ottoman family) might receive instruction in the sultan's household, or in that of the grand vizir, in the polite literature which enshrined the human and social ideals that should guide a ruler, and in the arts of war. Those who were to work as bureaucrats in chancery or treasury would be trained under a kind of apprenticeship by senior bureaucrats, to draft and write documents and keep accounts in the correct and traditional forms - forms which persisted through changes of dynasty and the passage of centuries. Those who were to interpret and administer the laws were given a training in Islamic law, and those who were to control the legal system were for the most part trained in the imperial schools of Istanbul.[9]

Unfortunately, the diversity of religious training in the eighteenth century Ottoman Empire did not promote a greater share of the wealth and influence. Even though men were being trained to fill a greater variety of posts than, for example, during the time of early Islam, the power of the 'ulamā' remained in the hands of a select group.

> It was because of their possession of power and wealth that the high official 'ulama had become by the eighteenth century a closed elite immersed in the interests of the world. The high positions tended to be a monopoly in the hands of a number of small families, linked by kinship and marriage with other official elites, and perpetuating themselves through wealth, official influence and privileged access to the imperial schools.[10]

Ottoman schools emphasized the Qur'ān as the center of all learning from which other academic disciplines could be gleaned. The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth were viewed as the ultimate authority in all societal matters, and the 'ulamā' were viewed as the official mouthpiece of God. In this context, libraries were built to house significant Islamic documents.

> The library had an important place in Ottoman society. The Ottomans founded libraries in mosques, hospitals and tekkes and collected private libraries in their own residences. Many of these private book collections found their way to vakif libraries, since it was considered meritorious to leave books to a pious foundation. The library was a single unit in a vakif complex, established usually in a stone room or separate building. The vakfiye stipulated how the books were to be preserved and used and appointed a librarian paid from the vakif funds. These libraries still preserve more than two hundred thousand manuscripts, from all lands and epochs of the Islamic world, and forming the richest source for the history and culture of Islam.[11]

The Ottoman Empire of the eighteenth century was rich in heritage and culture. From vast libraries to the inordinate amount of wealth possessed by the ruling elite, the Ottomans were comfortable maintaining an Islamic empire that had limited contact with Europe. But then decentralization slowly crept into the Ottoman political machine. The upstart Mamlūks were allowed to govern their own province of Egypt although they did continue to send revenues to Istanbul. The powerful Ottoman empire began to be transformed into a weaker, decentralized system of government.

> The main themes of eighteenth-century Islamic history are visible in the Ottoman experience. Political and economic realignments saw the forces of decentralization become stronger, and the official ulama played an important role in that decentralization as a conservative force.[12]

Of course, the 'ulamā' were unable to carry out such work solely on their own merits. They depended on significant social contacts to help them acquire wealth and prestige.

> Members of the great bourgeois families and of the 'ulamā' together provided an urban leadership: their wealth, piety, culture and ancient names gave them social prestige and the patronage of quarters, ethnic or religious groups, crafts, or the city as a whole.[13]

It should be noted, however, that the 'ulamā' were also known to be organizers of uprisings against the ruling élite when appropriate. The rulers knew that harming such 'ulamā' could result in widespread rioting. But essentially, the 'ulamā' were in favor of maintaining order and stability.

The "notables", the leaders of the bourgeoisie and the

> 'ulamā', obeyed the government not only from fear or self-interest, but from concern for peace and security, from that preference for social peace at almost any price which was the principle of later Islamic society, and from the final need of the city for political power and authority, to bring in the food-supply from the rural hinterland and to keep the trade routes open. But they were also "leaders" responsible to the urban population. At times they could use their independent power over it to mobilize urban forces and put pressure on the ruler.[14]

Although the 'ulamā' were capable of marshalling together a large number of people to oppose the Mamlūks, they did not have the organized military power of the Mamlūks, although the Mamlūks' power was considerably weakened by the time of Napoleon's arrival in Egypt.

> The ulama, however, depended on the cooperation of the Mamluks and necessarily collaborated with them because the ultimate powers generated by the society were vested in Mamluk hands. The bulk of social wealth which in pre-modern society came from the control of the land was theirs, and contributions from their vast incomes were essential to the physical maintenance of the towns, the creation and endowment of great institutions of charity, learning, worship, and support of the large community of scholars and divines who were the flower of the Muslim peoples. The ulama, whose incomes were limited by institutions which tied them to the wills of previous generations or the rights of future ones, were in considerable measure dependent on the Mamluks for financial support. Since inheritance laws made difficult the accumulation of great free fortunes and waqfs ascribed resources to given purposes, the Mamluks could best meet new needs.[15]

Initially, the 'ulamā' were met with stiff competition for the rights to revenues.

> Throughout the eighteenth century the mamluks competed with the ulama and regimental officers for control of the revenues of the mosques, wikalahs (commercial depots),

> and other revenue-producing structures established as a awqaf for the benefit of the religious community. For most of the century specific lucrative awqaf, such as those of the mosque of al-Imam al-Shafi'i, of the Imam al-Layth, and the mosques of the sultans of the pre-Ottoman mamluk empire remained in the hands of the amirs. 'Ali Bey accelerated the conquest for control of the nizarahs (supervision) of the religious edifices by acquiring far more nizarahs than any of his predecessors. Among the awqaf over which he gained control were those of Sinan Pasha, Sultan Murad, and al-Azhar itself. Many awqaf were assigned to his mamluks, thus relieving his own treasury of the burden of their support. One even finds reference to a waqf that 'Ali Bey assigned in 1768 to one Muhammad Bey'Ali....
>
> The move to gain control of the revenues of the religious community was well under way when Muhammad Bey seized the leadership of the beylicate, then was brought to an abrupt halt for the short period of his mashyakhah, but was resumed again with more intensity after his death.[16]

Muḥammad Bey exerted his dominance in the community by diversifying his profit-making activities. His sizeable waqf enabled him to control a large share of the country's profit-making activities. Muḥammad Bey extended his influence beyond the Cairo marketplace to other locales, as well.

But Muḥammad Bey's activities were not strictly limited to the economic realm. He made a concerted effort to maintain friendly ties with the 'ulamā'.

> From the time of his introduction into Egypt Muhammad Bey showed deep respect for Muslim traditions and cultivated the close friendship of the ulama, whether Egyptian or foreign. This relationship, which had so much political advantage in his struggle with 'Ali Bey, appears sincere, for it was continued throughout his career. If anything, it grew more intense and more beneficial to the ulama as his personal fortunes prospered, culminating in the erection of the large collegiate-type mosque for the shaykhs he admired and in the serious weakening of the various Catholic missions in Egypt and Palestine.[17]

'Alī Bey also left considerable acreage and buildings to the 'ulamā' after his death.

By the late eighteenth century major power shifts were taking place amongst those vying for control of the revenues. As centralization spread throughout the Ottoman Empire, each interest group attempted to assert control in an effort to capture the lion's share of economic power. The Ottomans desperately tried to maintain control over their declining empire while the 'ulamā' and the mercantile class vied for a share of the economic privileges. Internecine struggles within the Mamlūk households further complicated the political and economic picture of the Ottoman Empire.

This struggle for power served to accelerate the decline of the Ottoman Empire as problems began to occur in greater number.

> ...the Ottoman Empire had, by the eighteenth century, become conservative in a sinister sense. It had become a congeries of groups and organizations, the primary concern of which, in an age of diminishing military power, political instability and economic impoverishment, was to maintain their entrenched rights and privileges, many of which had been usurped, or extended by prescription, during the period of decline.[18]

A case in point was the decline of the 'ulamā' which Selim had to face during his reign.

> The state of the religious class had fallen to a new low in the eighteenth century. The ranks of the Ulema had been flooded with persons who were entirely ignorant of religious law and practices and who had managed to purchase their positions or transfer their military or

> civilian salaries into Ulema pensions in order to avoid the service they were supposed to perform in return. Such persons were able to appropriate the leading positions in the Ulema and use them for their personal profit. Through their efforts, admission to the class was given more and more to those who could pay the highest bribes, without consideration of qualifications. Standards of education inevitably declined as these men occupied most of the teaching positions and gave the degrees and certificates of accomplishment in return for bribes and fees rather than proper examinations. Persons appointed as judges in the provinces farmed their posts to the highest bidders, who made use of the courts to recoup their purchase prices and make a profit by selling justice to those who paid the most.[19]

As the 'ulamā' began to grasp a greater share of the wealth and power in the Ottoman Empire, corruption continued to taint the Ottoman political system and the 'ulamā' as well. The Ottoman rule in Egypt was characterized by military repression, political corruption and the continued centralization of governmental power as highlighted by the Mamlūks, who ran their own province but still respected the Ottoman power center in Istanbul. In addition, Ottoman contact with Europe was mainly limited to the Ottoman elite.

> The overwhelming majority of Ottomans had no first hand knowledge of Europe. Few of them had ever travelled to Europe, and those who did were usually on official business. The Ottoman Empire did not establish permanent diplomatic relations with European powers until 1793.[20]

The French invasion of Egypt was to usher in a new era for the Ottomans and their colonies. The 'ulama' participated during this time of need. This was logical because Egypt, as a part of the Ottoman Empire, was also isolated from the rest of the world. "Perhaps the most significant fact about the eighteenth-

century Ottomans is that they lived completely within an Islamic environment and frame of reference."[21]

The Ottoman Rule in Egypt

Despite living in a closed environment, the Ottomans were skillful at carrying out their plans, which included the direction of Egypt.

> As was to be the case on numerous occasions throughout the history of Ottoman Egypt, as in fact was the case elsewhere in the empire, the Ottoman rulers skillfully adjusted to a situation which they could not control or change and fitted it into their own system in order to secure the same ends by different means. The main object of Ottoman rule in Egypt was to secure maximum exploitation of its sources of revenue for the benefit of the Imperial Treasury.[22]

The Ottomans did not lack skill in accomplishing this objective. As a result, Egypt suffered terribly just prior to Napoleon's invasion.

> During the famine of 1784, Jabarti says, the fallahin left their villages because they could not pay their taxes, nor pay the exactions imposed on them by the beys. They came to the towns crying famine; they ate everything that was thrown into the streets, and their hunger was so terrible that they ate the raw corpses of horses, donkeys and camels. That year famine was succeeded by an outbreak of the plague in 1785 when approximately one-sixth of the population was killed. Plague returned in 1791, followed by a worse famine in 1792 when people allegedly resorted to anthropophagy. The population was decimated and impoverished, and a sizeable proportion of lands remained uncultivated through lack of fallahin to till the soil.[23]

> The neglect of irrigation and drainage ditches by the authorities resulted in their silting up, to the detriment of agriculture. Public security was frequently

> so weak that marauding bands were able to penetrate the gates of Cairo and river pirates at times brought traffic to a standstill. To this picture must be added a population that was loaded with a heavy tax burden, much of which was arbitrarily imposed and illegal.[24]

Why did the situation in Egypt decline so dramatically at this time? A partial answer might be that the Mamlūks and Ottomans were both adversaries and also dependent upon one another. This situation kept the Mamlūks on the defensive and the Ottomans frustrated by a lack of total control over their Egyptian province.

> Why did the Ottoman government agree to Mamluk control of the administrative machinery of government, and Mamluk diversion of the bulk of the land-tax revenues for their own profit? And why did the Mamluks continue to pay taxes and ḥulwān fees to a government which lacked any real military power to enforce its suzerainty? As far as the Ottomans were concerned they really had no other choice, and were compelled to make the best of a bad situation. Suppression of the Mamluks required a military expedition which could not be spared from the increasingly dangerous fronts in Egypt and the East. The fate of Gazi Hasan Pasha's expedition to Egypt for this purpose is a case in point. In addition, the Ottoman governors were able to keep the Mamluk houses and confederation relatively equal and play them off against each other, so that none was completely dominant, and all were willing to recognize Ottoman suzerainty, pay the required taxes and ḥulwān fees, and perform duties in return for the benefits which the Ottoman legal support brought.[25]

As the Mamlūk houses fought each other for a greater control of the profits, the country continued to suffer the ravages of plague and disease. But the Ottomans did not want the Egyptians to suffer too much. An excess of suffering could cut into their profits and their long-term planning. In speaking of the Ottoman Empire, Inalcik notes:

> ...the ultimate goal of a state was consolidation and extension of the ruler's power and the only way to reach it was to get rich sources of revenues. This in turn depended on the conditions making the productive classes prosperous. So the essential function of the state was to keep in force these conditions.'[6]

In addition to political strife in Egypt, the Ottomans not only feared military pressure from Europe and the East, but also began to face increased economic competition, particularly from Europe.

> During the last half of the eighteenth century Europe had been undergoing a technological revolution that was to culminate in the industrial revolution. Techniques of production were improving, especially in the field of textile production. The French, for example, were importing vast amounts of cotton from Egypt; later on they turned to silk production, importing the raw materials from Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. Their mills rivalled, and surpassed, anything produced in the Middle East, not only for luxury items but also for medium-priced cloth, so that an increase in the importation of French cloth was noticeable in that period. The French consul attributed that increase to the affluence of the middle classes, which was sorely belied by the economic situation of the country. We can only conclude that the medium-price French cloth was cheaper than the equivalent Egyptian product, so that French production was not only destroying the Egyptian textile export market but was also undermining the local internal trade in textiles.[27]

The influence of 'Alī Bey al-Kabīr managed to slow down the downturn in Egypt's market economy but with only temporary success. Mamlūk internecine power struggles, combined with the conflict of whether to support or depose the local Pasha in charge, made the political and economic system in Egypt chaotic.

> 'Alī Bey al-Kabīr had succeeded, temporarily, in stemming the decay in Egypt's political institutions. But after his death in 1772, disintegration and anarchy rapidly set

> in. The system of rule had become rotten and inadequate. 'Ali Bey had neither the strength nor the imagination needed to rise above the political framework existing in his time.[28]

Despite the decay of Egypt from within its inner core of rulers, the 'ulamā' managed to share in governing. In addition, their social and familial ties to the Mamlūks enabled them to remain in the forefront of government, despite their lack of military prowess.

> Traditional government in Egypt combined the skills of several mutually antagonistic elites. The Ottoman-Mamluk military elites were responsible for the defense of Egypt and the supervision of government. With their preponderant power they dominated the wealth of the land and regulated the political life of the province. But the skills necessary to organize society below the highest levels of government were supplied by the native elites who presided over structures performing a wide range of important social, economic, political and administrative functions. It was through these native structures that the foreign ruling elites reached all levels of Egyptian society.
>
> It was the merchants and religious elites who performed the indispensable integrative functions that linked society with the government of the foreign military elites. Though the populace maintained a general hostility to the foreigners, opposition was useless, for native society was without the capability to drive them from Egypt. Mutual hostility was thus held in check by the realization that the goals of all could be obtained only through mutual cooperation. Only through cooperation could the native elites draw close to the foreign elites and so enjoy the advantages of wealth and authority which they could dispense; and only through cooperation could the Ottoman-Mamluks elites enjoy in peace the many rewards that stable rule in Egypt promised.
>
> Despite the many grievances the ulama had against their rulers, relations between the two groups were marked by harmony, not hostility. Besides the ties of mutual self-

> interest which bound them together, the ulama were able to establish exceedingly intimate social relations with their rulers. The ulama frequented the houses of the amirs, gave them instruction, acted as their agents and confidants, and even, on occasion, entered the harems of the amirs. Egyptian ulama were able to purchase mamluks of their own, to marry Mamluk women, or to grant the families of the amirs sanctuary when they were threatened.[29]

However, the number of 'ulamā' who were able to enjoy the full benefits of being associated with the ruling class was few. Most of the 'ulamā' continued to follow the path of their rural background by leading humble, pious lives. Marsot explains the social divisions of the 'ulamā':

> Exact figures for the number of ulama in al-Azhar in the eighteenth century are non-existent. M. de Chabrol gives an estimate of thirty to forty, others have gone up to a hundred. Of that number only a small percentage qualify as high ulama, that is, as men who were powerful and influential among the ruling circle and the population. We can therefore, and somewhat arbitrarily, divide the ulama into poor and pious intellectuals, respected for their rectitude and learning, and having or not political influence and perhaps learning as well. For quite often wealth, when it was not inherited, came as the result of connections with the ruling elite.[30]

The 'ulamā' filled a variety of roles for the Mamlūks, in addition to their usual vocation of being spiritual mentors. They largely kept the population in check and were adept at handling financial matters as well.

> Economically the ulama filled the role of administrators. They managed the wealth of minors and orphans, of schools, mosques, hospitals, and above all managed the funds of charitable endowments, the awqaf (pl. of waqf) which by the nineteenth century covered under one-fifth the total cultivable land, around 600,000 faddans, and which included perhaps a higher proportion of real estate

> and other forms of urban property. They were also involved in every form of commercial transaction since all sales, purchases, and transfers of property had to be authorized by the qadı and in the presence of the shahid (witness). They frequently acted as bankers and were entrusted with the safekeeping of valuables and had charge of whole families when the head was away, including families of Mamluks. A few ulama were part-time merchants and artisans. Many were men of property. At times they even doubled as tax collectors when forcible loans were imposed on the population, although they themselves were exempt from such taxations.[1]

Although the 'ulamā' could not be taxed, many of them had the desire to secure monies in addition to those which they were already earning. Sometimes they received gifts or found other fruitful ways of acquiring material goods. Marsot explains:

> Given the economic situation of Egypt the ulama were financially dependent on the bounty of the rulers or other patrons. Time and time again they were to be cowed through finances. They received no cash salary for teaching, and in general were remunerated either through financial endowments (awqaf) or donations. As teachers in al-Azhar they received a ration, jiraya, of bread every two days, and gifts of clothing (fur pelisses) on special occasions such as feast days, the accession of a wali or of a new Sultan. A very few ulama even received a cash allowance, for instance Shaikh Murtada received 150 paras (nisf fidda) daily from the Porte through the offices of the wali. Every riwaq had a different ration of bread and staples depending on its endowment and the gifts offered to it, thus some distributed over eight hundred loaves every two days, and others eighty. (It is interesting to note that the custom of distributing loaves to students and teachers at al-Azhar continued until 1929, when more than 10,000 loaves were distributed daily.) Most ulama received around three loaves but higher ulama, such as heads of riwaqs, received some twenty or more surplus loaves, if there were any, and were therefore traded for other staples.
>
> The ulama supplemented this ration by various means: they held additional positions in other schools or mosques, or managed to get themselves inscribed in the registers of the various regiments, which then paid them a salary, or they received salaries for teaching in private houses, or for copying books, or for reciting the Qur'an, or they simply received presents from the

> wealthy. The most lucrative source of income they could aspire to was to become nazir (supervisor) of a waqf. This post paid the holder a fee, and was usually accompanied by little supervision, so the nazir could dispose of the proceeds of the waqf at his own discretion.[32]

Many of the 'ulamā' were quick to take advantage of their newly acquired funds. They often displayed shrewd investment skills as they began to expand their investments beyond their pension plans. Analyzing the level of wealth acquired by the 'ulamā' is useful in assessing their role in Egyptian society.

> Our main interest in the wealth of the ulama lies simply in using it as a gauge for their political stock, for it rose when they were powerful, and it fell when they were not. It is also a matter of general interest to note the different branches of Egyptian economic life which attracted the ulama and which in turn throw light on economic life in general, and on the ulama as a potential middle class. Thus we find that when the ulama acquired a little capital they first bought real estate, usually a house in which to live. According to Jabarti the more affluent, like Shaikh al-Sadat, Shaikh al-Bakari, and Shaikh al-Mahdi, had more than one house, and often housed wives in different establishments. Later on they bought houses to rent out, or tenements, warehouses, shops, baths, coffeehouses and mills, flour mills and so on. They also acquired iltizams if they could, and they seem to have done that in such a widespread manner that the ulama and the women became the main multazims (tax farmers) in the land after the Mamluks. They also traded. In brief their sources of capital investment were diversified, as with any other canny investor, and showed their links to the suq, the countryside, and of course with the ruling class who were the main source of wealth. And because of their religious calling they were immune from the confiscations and from the forced loans that the rulers regularly levied on the merchants which decimated their wealth, so that the fortunes of the ulama though perhaps less grand than those of merchant princes, lasted for longer periods of time, and sometimes into several generations.[33]

Greater acquisition of wealth served to buttress the worth of the 'ulamā' in the eyes of the Mamlūks, who continued to suffer from internal power struggles. The Janissaries also tried to establish a more extensive economic base for themselves by feuding with the merchants and Mamlūk beys.

> The ulama emerged during the century as a distinctive sociopolitical force. As Mamluk factional strife increased, the ulama were called upon more frequently to act as mediators. They not only arbitrated among the Mamluk factions, but they also acted as a link between the ruling elite and the general population. Frequently the ulama were called upon by the people to intervene with the rulers in order to correct some injustice or to reduce oppressive measures.[34]

While it was true that Egypt did have 'ulamā' who were poor and humble, and others who were quite wealthy and perhaps a bit less than humble, there was a major difference between Egyptian 'ulamā' and other 'ulamā' in the Ottoman Empire.

> The social background of the Egyptian ulama differed from that of the ulama of the rest of the Ottoman Empire, for there was no aristocratic hereditary caste of high as against lesser ulama.... Most of the prominent ulama were of fallah, peasant origins.[35]

Although the Egyptian 'ulamā' may not have had a hereditary caste system in place, this fact may not have made much difference anyway, as long as they were being ruled by a foreign power. The Egyptian 'ulamā', except for those who held posts at al-Azhar, were almost limited to local positions of power.

> ...after the revolt of 'Alī Bey, the Egyptian 'ulamā' tended to replace Turks as qāḍis and with the general breakdown of the Ottoman administration, local qāḍis more and more assumed supervision of local government. By

1798 there were only five Ottoman qāḍīs in all of Egypt.

> As far as the official hierarchy was concerned, the native 'ulamā' were relegated to inferior positions. Many were muftis, faqihs, teachers, and scholars. Still, a few important offices were open to them and these positions, since they represented local followings, were frequently more significant bases of power than those controlled by the foreign 'ulamā'. The Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and Shāfi'ī muftis who ranked after the chief qāḍī all had positions in the Diwan and they also represented influential groups in the population.[36]

Backed by popular, local support, a few 'ulamā' such as Shaykh 'Abdallāh al Sharqāwī, and Shaykh al-Sādāt, for example, were able to use their bases of power to exert pressure on the Ottomans and later on, the French, to meet the people's demands. Even though such men were indigenous 'ulamā', they still were able to exhibit their own share of wealth and influence. But even these 'ulamā', despite their ability to amass a large group of followers at a moment's notice, had no choice but to cooperate with the Mamlūks. "...because they had no means of coercion at their disposal and no formal organization, they could only carry out their socio-political roles in uneasy collaboration with the Mamluk state."[37] The 'ulamā' knew that if they pushed their demands too far they could lose their positions or possibly lose their lives. Even the food they ate was often from a source controlled by the Mamlūks, such as the Imperial Granary.

> The total amount of the grains of the Holy Cities and of the Treasury (206) is three hundred and sixty thousand ardebs. Forty-four thousand ardebs are delivered to the Holy Cities and fourteen thousand ardebs to the Governors of Egypt. After the grains provided for the Mullahs of Mecca the honored and Medina the Illuminated, for the Mulla of Cairo and for the Qāḍīs of the provinces of

> Egypt are delivered, the remainder is distributed to the Seyyids, to the 'Ulemâ of the Azhar and to other 'Ulemâ, to the Ḥuffâẓ and the Imâms, and to the poor living in the precincts of the Azhar mosque....[38]

The Ottoman goal of exploiting the resources of Egypt for their own ends was not achieved precisely because they were unable to keep the working class people of Egypt both content and well off. They were not extracting the maximum labor output from the Egyptians that they needed to satisfy the Mamlūks or to satisfy themselves.

> Egyptian trade and commerce was coming into conflict with European technology and was lagging behind, but artisan production was falling off for purely indigenous reasons as well. The loss of janissary protection, the increased extortions resulting from the rise of the Mamluks and their need for new weaponry and mercenaries, the decline in agricultural production through plagues and famines, all produced a situation in which there were no funds for improvement or capital expansion, and accounted for the sorry state of affairs upon which the French savants in 1798 had commented. The decline of artisan production developed the growth of wage-labor, when some 15,000 men, or roughly 10 - 15 percent of the male population of Cairo, became day laborers, showing the beginnings of a slow but inevitable proletarianization of the artisans.[39]

Position of the 'Ulamā' in the Early Nineteenth Century of Egypt

> On the eve of the French invasion, the Egyptian 'ulamā' - as individuals and as a group - succeeded in accumulating and consolidating powerful and influential positions for themselves. As a result, the 'ulamā' became an important force in the internal political scene.[40]

The 'ulamā' managed to remain in good standing with all of the

various political groups which continued to seek more power. The wealth they accrued as a result of their political shrewdness in no small way contributed to their continued success in the political realm.

> ...the 'ulamā's influence in traditional Egyptian society stemmed from a combination of factors, the most important of which were the build-up of great wealth in the hands of the 'ulamā' (through iltizām and the administration of awqāf) which gave them socio-economic power; the fact that the 'ulamā' were an integral part of the local Muslim population, in contrast to the social elite which was characterized by its foreign origin and language; the 'ulamā's monopoly as educators, which gave them spiritual and cultural authority, enhanced by religious sanction; and the integration of the 'ulamā' in the socio-political structure through their close ties, both institutional and personal, with other important groups of the population and through their functions within the ruling institution.[41]

The 'ulamā' did not build up a large capital merely because of their profession as religious scholars. They acquired the bulk of their wealth as a result of shrewd social contacts. Essentially, the majority of the 'ulamā' would have had very little money without the support and ties to the ruling elite.

> If we go through the biographies that are listed in Jabarti's chronicles we discover quite predictably that the start of any kind of capital in the hands of the 'ulamā' was the outcome of personal connections and of social relationships among the moneyed elite, whether mamluk or mercantile. Unless, like Jabarti, and a few other equally fortunate, the 'ulamā' had inherited wealth, most of them started life penniless and ended with tidy little fortunes at the least. The importance of having influential friends lay not so much in that they supplied the first boost up the ladder of affluence, important though that may be, but also in that they were a means to the acquisition of further wealth like iltizāms.[42]

The importance of social contacts to the 'ulamā' cannot be overstated. But what caused some 'ulamā' to rise above other 'ulamā' in terms of wealth and affluence? Being brought up in a wealthy family is a partial answer to the question. Another factor may be the degree of attention the individual 'ālim received as a result of his teachings and interactions with people. "It was on the basis of his personality, for instance, that the Egyptian Naqib al-Ashraf, al-Sayyid Umar Makram, became the leading shaykh of his day."[43] Other shaykhs also had a certain manner about them that compelled people to look up to them as leaders.

> Both Shaykh al-Bakrī and Shaykh al-Sādāt held their power over the people by virtue of their headship over the Ṣufī orders. Both men had the aura of Ashrāf about them, both were excessively wealthy by virtue of their being nāzirs over very extensive waqfs, and also through their personal property. They held mūlids (mawlids) which were lavish, and which were attended by the high and mighty. Traditionally the Bakrī shaykhs celebrated the Prophet's birthday while the Sādāt celebrated mūlid Sayyidnā al-Ḥusayn. These were privileges which had accrued with the ages, and with each privilege the shaykhs acquired a little more wealth, prestige and consequently, political influence. We can easily say that throughout the eighteenth and up to the middle of the nineteenth century these two men were involved in most of the major political incidents in the land.[44]

Capturing the people's attention was no mean feat. Each 'ālim had to undergo a rigorous inspection involving the candidate's display of subject knowledge and oratorical prowess before being received into the fold of the qualified 'ulamā'. "Incompetent ulama were physically driven away by their disgruntled students, and before any man was accepted as an alim he passed a test of endurance before his peers and his students."[45] 'Ulamā' not only had to

demonstrate proficiency in teaching, they also had to display their erudite capabilities. "The Shaykh al-Azhar and the muftis, for instance, were supposed to be the wisest, most knowledgeable representatives of their groups."[46] The shaykhs were able to command the respect of their peers and the people by demonstrating talents for writing and teaching. The fact that the 'ulamā' could read and write distinguished them from most of Egyptian society. "Learning first set one apart from the great majority of Egyptians who remained both illiterate and ignorant of matters pertaining to religion."[47] In addition, the 'ulamā' were generally in a different socio-economic category from the rest of the populace, despite their often rural and poor background. "Although the native ulama controlled considerable wealth, they could in no way rival the fortunes accumulated by the Mamluks, Ottomans, or even leading merchants. Relative to the native population, however, they were well off."[48]

The 'ulamā' maintained their ties to the population by interacting with the people on a daily basis. They did not rule from afar like the Mamlūks or the Ottomans. Many 'ulamā' preferred to live near the center of religious activity, like the local mosque, for example. "A large proportion of the well-to-do middle class, the merchants and shaykhs, preferred to live in or near Cairo proper close to their khāns, colleges, and the mosque of al-Azhar."[49] The latter mosque was, of course, one of the foremost centers of Islamic learning in the Muslim world. It represented

the heartbeat of Cairo, in terms of its religious learning and political activity. European travellers to Egypt, though, would comment later on the sense of disorder that pervaded the Azhar mosque.

> Disorder seems to break out, or already to prevail, whenever the old, uncoordinated, undistributed style of learning was now described, especially in descriptions of the famous teaching-mosque of al-Azhar. "What is astonishing at al-Azhar is the crowd that throngs in its halls," we are told by the Inspector-General. "A thousand students of every age, of every color...scattered into groups, the diversity of costumes." One writer complains of the "chaos" and the absence of nizam (order, discipline), noting that the teachers do nothing but sit at the pillars of the mosque giving lessons, without bothering to record the presence or absence of students or their progress through different lessons. Another writer describes "the brouhaha" as "the students, lacking all direction, move haphazardly from professor to professor, passing from one text to another, understanding nothing of passages on which the masters comment in a language about which they have no clue, and ending with everything confounded and confused." "What is lacking more than all is height, and space. One suffocates beneath the endless ceiling." But worse than this "the noise and the perpetual movement." Some are sleeping on their mats, we are told, some eat, some study, some engage in argument, vendors move haphazardly among them selling water, bread and fruit. Organisation is absent, and anarchy hovers at the gate.[50]

To European eyes, this type of teaching was unsystematic and chaotic. It was the type of educational system which would greet Napoleon on his arrival to Egypt in 1798. Yet this type of educational system at Azhar reveals how the 'ulamā' cultivated respect from their students and from the population at large.

> Despite the problem of disorder, the weakness of the authority, the absence of regulation and system, and the

> confusion of noises, of colors, of ages, of clothing and of activities, nevertheless the pedagogical style manages, it is said, to maintain some sort of order. Its form is the individual exchange between master and student. This relation is seen as both the limitation and the strength of the social order. It is the limit, because every instruction, correction, encouragement and admonition must be given separately and repeated for every pupil. Compared with the systematic pedagogy that will replace it, where the master can instruct, correct, encourage and admonish all individuals simultaneously and continuously, this is enormously inefficient.[51]

Yet at the same time, even this type of approach to learning at Azhar had its own pitfalls and ruts. The infiltration of Western thought that was coming to Egypt would prove to be a threat to this centuries-old institution.

> ...al-Azhar was its own worst enemy. In past centuries it had been capable of adapting itself to doctrinal changes while remaining at the forefront of the intellectual life of Islam. But the nineteenth century, bringing Westernization in it wake, caused al-Azhar to fear modernization of any kind.[52]

The Egyptian 'ulamā' also chose not to be involved in the direct rulings of governmental affairs. While they benefitted economically by the political association with the foreign élites, the Egyptian 'ulamā' were hesitant to aspire to direct control of the government of Egypt. Perhaps the Egyptian 'ulamā's' dislike of formal organization exacerbated the problems the religious group was facing at the time. Corruption had spread through the ranks as a handful of 'ulamā' garnered the lion's share of wealth among them. The Mamlūks had let the country's irrigation and farming systems run awry. And the people were beginning to suffer an even lower standard of living prior to Napoleon's invasion. The 'ulamā' appeared to be resting on their laurels. "In the days before decay

set in, the 'Ulemâ enjoyed an almost universal respect for the real learning they displayed and the integrity with which in general they administered justice."[53] The 'ulamā' may have estranged themselves from the populace by owning large tracts of land.

It was not uncommon for people to march on al-Azhar in protest of the joint cooperation between the Mamlūks and the 'ulamā'. But the 'ulamā' were resistant to educational or social change because they viewed it as a threat to their power and authority. Their authority was soon to be challenged in a new way. Western modes of thought and government were soon to encroach on the long-standing ultimate authority of the 'ulamā'.

The Decline of the 'Ulamā'

Despite their decline, the 'ulamā' still carried enough spiritual influence amongst the people to enable them to organize the masses to face the intrusion of France as the next colonizer. Why didn't the 'ulamā' seize power from the Mamlūks and run the country themselves?

> The answer is to be found in the very function of the ulama within an Islamic society. Their political involvement was only of secondary interest, a by-product, so to speak, of their social standing. And though they were the natural leaders of the people, they did not aspire to lead politically, and were never at ease in the exercise of direct power. They saw their role in society as that of governing the governors if one may paraphrase Lord Cromer who made such a form of government commonplace in nineteenth century Egypt. Their self-image was that of the preservers of tradition, not of political innovators; tradition had decreed that though

> they became involved in the power process they neither direct it/nor lead it save indirectly.[54]

The 'ulamā' not only preserved tradition but also acted as spokesmen between the ruling élite and the masses.

> The ulama in particular stood as intermediaries between the regime and urban society, indispensable to both because they formed the integrative and administrative class of the Muslim community, performing all the legal and political functions we normally associate in modern government with bureaucratic, judicial, and sometimes parliamentary structures.[55]

The integral social ties with the common Egyptian enabled the 'ulamā' to understand the depths of the unrest felt by the people on the eve of the French invasion. But the 'ulamā' were not so organized as to be able to put together a systematic nationalistic defense of the country. In fact, many of the 'ulamā' went into hiding when the French first arrived. The guidance they offered was spiritual and moral in nature as opposed to a direct call for nationalism on the part of Egyptians, a call which would not be voiced until many years later.

> Nevertheless, while the necessary elements for the eventual formation of an Egyptian nation, as Europe understood the term, were undeniably present, they were largely inoperative in 1798, when the disturbances attendant on the French invasion revealed the depths of the hatred, vengefulness, and fear, as well as the unbridged chasms created by the accidents of history and the guiding principles of the Islamic world order, which separated city dweller and peasant, sedentary and nomad, Muslim and non-Muslim, ruler and subject, as soon as a heavy-handed authority slackened its pressure.[56]

The Ottomans, despite their harsh rule of Egypt by the Mamlūk Beys, were still Muslims ruling other Muslims. Now their power had

declined and the 'ulamā's' power had followed likewise. But the 'ulamā' remained a potential political force in Egypt because they were the natural leaders of the people. The French were to benefit from the Mamlūk governmental experience in Egypt as well as the sage advice of the 'ulamā', who saw yet another foreign power rule their country. The Ottoman's rule of Egypt was marked by various invasions of that country. The Ottoman expedition to Egypt provided, in general, some valuable information for Bonaparte.

> Although the Ottoman expedition to Egypt failed to procure any lasting results, it presents some interesting features. In the first place, it anticipates the policy of destroying local autonomies and re-integrating the provinces in a centralized empire, which was to be followed by the Ottoman sultans of the nineteenth century. Secondly, it provides a prototype for Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt, both in respect of the course of the campaign and of the measure employed to win Egyptian support against the Mamluks. The use of Arabic proclamations as a vehicle of propaganda, the conciliation of the Ashrāf and the 'ulamā' and the ostentatious deference to Islam of the new regime, were all expedients later to be adopted by Bonaparte. Finally the difficulty of evicting the Mamluks from Upper Egypt by the power of controlling Cairo was to be experienced, not only by the French, but, for many years, by Muḥammad 'Ali himself.[57]

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

1.Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Ulama of Cairo in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500, ed. Nikki R. Keddie(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 149-150.

2.Norman Itzkowitz, "Men and Ideas in the Eighteenth Century Ottoman Empire," Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen(Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 15.

3.R. Stephen Humphreys, Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry(Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988), 192.

4.Humphreys, 173.

The author does not elaborate on the women who count among the ranks of the 'ulamā'. I have not found any author who does so.

5.Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, "A Socio-Economic Sketch of the 'Ulamā' in the Eighteenth Century," Colloque International Sur L'Histoire Du Caire(Cairo: Ministry of Culture of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 1969), 313.

6.Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Role of the 'ulamā' in Egypt during the Early Nineteenth Century," Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt: Historical Studies from the Ottoman Conquest to the United Arab Republic, ed. P.M. Holt(London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 264.

7.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Role of the 'ulamā' in Egypt," 265.

Marsot provides a helpful description of the Mamlūks in footnote 8, page 153, of "The Ulama of Cairo in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500, ed. Nikki R. Keddie.

8.Nikki R. Keddie, "Introduction," Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 1-2.

9.Albert Hourani, Islam in European Thought(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 149.

I think it is important to be familiar with the variety of training the religious class underwent in Turkey in order to provide a proper background of how the Egyptian 'ulamā' were treated by the Ottomans and by the Mamlūks.

10.Hourani, 150-1.

11.Halil Inalcık, The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600, trans. Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber(New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 174.

12.John Obert Voll, Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World(Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), 48.

Voll also points out that Ṣūfism played a particularly important role amongst the 'ulamā' who were not directly involved with governmental affairs.

13.Albert H. Hourani, "Introduction: The Islamic City in the Light of Recent Research," The Islamic City: A Colloquium, ed. Albert H. Hourani(Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1970), 18.

14.Hourani, "The Islamic City," 19.

15.Ira M. Lapidus, Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984ed.), 130-131

16.Daniel Crecelius, The Roots of Modern Egypt(Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1981), 133-134.

See pages 11-19 of Chapter One "The Social and Economic History of Egypt, 1760-1815: A Study of Merchant Capital and Its Transformation" in Peter Gran's Islamic Roots of Capitalism Egypt, 1760-1840 for a thorough description of the Mamlūk Elite 1760-1798, including a social background of the Mamlūks.

17.Crecelius, Roots of Modern Egypt, 141.

18.P.M. Holt, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent: 1516-1922: A Political History(Ithaca, New York: Cornell Paperbacks, Cornell University Press, 1966), 69.

Holt describes the academic training of the 'ulamā' in schools as "the dried husk of a once living curriculum." (p. 69).

19.Stanford J. Shaw, Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789-1807(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 78-79.

20.Norman Itzkowitz, Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition(New York: Knopf, 1972), 105.

Itzkowitz explains that Europeans had plenty of literature describing travel in the Levant but the Ottomans had no such comparable literature describing travel in Europe.

21.Itzkowitz, 104.

22.Stanford J. Shaw, "Landholding and Land-tax Revenues in Ottoman Egypt," Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt: Historical Studies from the Ottoman Conquest to the United Arab Republic, ed. P.M. Holt(London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 94.

Holt reports that tax farms were the most viable means of profit to the Ottomans because they were successful at collecting a large amount of taxes.

23.Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 15.

24.Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Wealth of the Ulama in Late Eighteenth Century Cairo," Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen(Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 205.

Marsot relates that these events caused more pressure to be put on the urban guilds.

25.Holt, Political and Social Change, 101.

26.Halil Inalcik, "The Ottoman Economic Mind and Aspects of the Ottoman Economy," Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East from the Rise of Islam to the Present Day, ed. Michael Cook(London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 217.

27.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali, 16.

28.David Kimche, "The Political Superstructure of Egypt in the Late Eighteenth Century," The Middle East Journal, 22(1968), no. 4: 462.

29.Daniel Crecelius, "Nonideological Responses of the Egyptian Ulama to Modernization," Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East Since 1500, ed. Nikki R. Keddie(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 168-170.

Jabartī's Chronicles provide a full description of the lower and the higher ʿulamāʾ mixing with the households of the Mamlūks.

30.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Ulama of Cairo," 150-151.

31.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Ulama of Cairo," 153-154.

32.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Ulama of Cairo," 154-155.

33.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Ulama of Cairo," 156.

34.Voll, Continuity and Change, 49.

35.Voll, Continuity and Change, 52.

36.Susan J. Staffa, Conquest and Fusion: The Social Evolution of Cairo, A.D. 642-1850(Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), 288.

37.Humphreys, 186.

Humphreys points out that collaboration with the Mamlūks did not necessarily mean loyalty to them. Both groups needed each other to keep the peace and maintain the flow of revenue from the populace.

38.Cezzâr Ahmed Pasha, Ottoman Egypt in the Eighteenth Century: The Nizamnâme-I Misir, ed. and trans. Stanford J. Shaw(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 45.

39.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali, 17.

40.Haim Shaked, "The Biographies of 'Ulamā' in Mubārak's Khiṭaṭ as a Source for the History of the 'Ulamā' in Nineteenth Century Egypt," The 'Ulamā in Modern History, ed. Gabriel Baer(Jerusalem: The Israel Oriental Society, 1971), 58.

41.Shaked, 59-60.

42.Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Political and Economic Functions of the 'Ulamā' in the 18th Century," Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, XVI, parts II-III(1973): 141.

43.Daniel Neil Crecelius, The Ulama and the State in Modern Egypt(Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, Inc., 1968), 13.

44.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Role of the Ulama in Egypt," 268.

45.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Ulama of Cairo in the 18th and 19th Centuries," 158.

Marsot adds: "It is also interesting that even by the nineteenth century it was the profession that remained the obvious choice in the rural areas among even the most affluent village notables for the brightest child, the weakest child, and the blind child, of whom there were all too many." ("The Ulama of Cairo in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" in Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since

1500, ed. by Nikki Keddie, p. 158.

46.Crecelius, The Ulama and the State in Modern Egypt, 20.

47.Crecelius, The Ulama and the State in Modern Egypt, 71.

48.Crecelius, The Ulama and the State in Modern Egypt, 61.

49.Staffa, Conquest and Fusion, 259.

50.Timothy Mitchell, Colonising Egypt(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 80-81.

51.Mitchell, 81.

52.Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Beginnings of Modernization among the Rectors of al-Azhar, 1798-1879," Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century, ed. William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers(Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1968), 280.

53.Gibb, 104.

54.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Ulama of Cairo," 164-165.

55.Lapidus, Muslim Cities, 142.

56.Charles Wendell, The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image: From its Origins to Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 93.

57.Holt, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, 101.

Chapter Two

NAPOLEON'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE 'ULAMĀ' OF EGYPT

"Until the arrival of Bonaparte's expedition in 1798, Egypt had existed in more or less comfortable isolation from the West."[1] European modes of thought were virtually unknown in Egypt because only a small trickle of Western travellers had penetrated the interior of the country. The French invasion and occupation of the ancient land commanded wide-sweeping changes in various facets of the Egyptian society. New ways of thinking and living came coupled with the pain experienced by an intense cross-cultural encounter. The two societies were strange bedfellows in that the French based most of their pertinent information about Egypt on travelogues, and the Egyptians, likewise, had to depend on stories from those who had visited Europe. The encounter marked a time when the Muslims in Egypt were confronted by secular France.

> If we are optimists, we may think that it marked the beginning of a long and painful process from mutual contempt and misunderstanding towards mutual respect and comprehension, between the cultural worlds of Europe and of Islam. In 1800 the former was vigorous and self-confident, knowing all the answers. The other, no longer confident of its own superiority, was beginning vaguely to formulate questions which seemed to require an answer.[2]

In a short time, the French learned how few answers were actually within their grasp. But Napoleon began the Egyptian campaign full of promise. He told colleagues that personal glory would be his in

the Orient.

> To Madame de Remusat he made a more specific confession in the early 1800's: 'In Egypt, I found myself freed from the obstacles of an irksome civilization. I was full of dreams...I saw myself founding a religion, marching into Asia, riding an elephant, a turban on my head and in my hand the new Koran that I would have composed to suit my needs. In my undertakings I would have combined the experiences of two worlds, exploiting for my own profit the theatre of all history, attacking the power of all England in India and, by means of that conquest, renewing contact with the old Europe. The time I spent in Egypt was the most beautiful in my life, because it was the most ideal.'[3]

The French invasion of Egypt was spearheaded by a man who had romantic notions of the Orient and Islam. Though small in stature, Napoleon was quick to garner the attention of others.

> He was, at that time, a lean, sallow little man whose hat and boots seemed too large for him. Women had nicknamed him Puss-in-Boots. But there was in him a compact energy that made one think of a panther ready to leap rather than of a tomcat with odd sartorial tastes; and in the cold, calm gaze of his grey eyes there was a quality that inspired devotion in some, terror in all, and love in none.[4]

The French general was a complex man who envisioned religion as a tool to aid him in colonizing Egypt.

> Religion was among his favorite topics. It was his vague religiosity, perhaps a lingering attachment to childhood beliefs, which made him recoil from the cold materialism of Berthollet and attracted him to more open-minded Monge. Also, religion had such obvious political usefulness! The closer he came to the African coast, the more he steeped himself in the study of Islam and speculated on the practical use to which he might put it.[5]

The commander wasted no time in attempting to identify the French to the Egyptians as fellow Muslims. Napoleon wanted to

convince the Egyptians that his intentions were honorable and that France was merely trying to side with the Muslims in deposing a corrupt Egyptian rule. A portion of the translation (from Arabic) of the Proclamation issued by Bonaparte upon landing in Egypt reads:

> The French are true Mussulmen. Not long since they marched to Rome, and overthrew the Throne of the Pope, who excited the Christians against the professors of Islamism (the Mahometan religion). Afterwards they directed their course to Malta, and drove out the unbelievers, who imagined they were appointed by God to make war on the Mussulmen. The French have at all times been the true and sincere friends of the Ottoman Emperors, and the enemies of their enemies. May the Empire of the Sultan therefore be eternal; but may the Beys of Egypt, our opposers, whose insatiable avarice has continually excited disobedience and insubordination, be trodden in the dust and annhilated![6]

Few, if any, Muslims were convinced by Napoleon's grand scheme of taking advantage of Islam in order to display proper religious piety. Jabartī was quick to point out the multitude of grammatical mistakes and the improper French-to-Arabic translation of words used in the proclamation. His critique of the French was kept in diary form in which he recorded daily observations of the French.

> Jabarti was one of three important figures who witnessed and participated in the momentous events of Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt (1798-1801), namely, Shaykh Hasan al-'Attar, who was to become Shaykh of the Azhar under Muhammad 'Ali, Shaykh Ismai'il al-Khashab, who was to become Secretary General of the first Egyptian cabinet of ministers formed by the French from among the grand ulama of the Azhar, and Jabarti himself, who accepted service as a cabinet minister in the government of "Abdalla" Jacques Menou after the assassination of Kléber.[7]

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī was no stranger to political intrigue. His father owned a collection of houses and land and somehow managed to teach at Azhar despite his business commitments. Jabartī was a shrewd politician who inherited his father's talent for juggling business affairs along with scholarship.

> Thus Jabarti grew up in two worlds, that of the religious ulama and that of the ruling beys or Mamluks, who specialized in politics, war, intrigue, money-gathering, and spilling blood; the first a world of thoroughbred Egyptian shaykhs who were proud of their fellaheen extraction, and the second a world of Turkish Knights living on administration and plunder in the name of the Sultan-Caliph of Istanbul.[8]

Jabartī's critique of the French was penned to serve his two-fold task of providing a running commentary about current Egyptian politics and daily events, together with gaining some political advantage for himself. "What directed Jabarti to writing his Chronicles was his association with Muhammad Murtada al-Zubaydi, the greatest Arabic philologist of the second half of the eighteenth century and author of the famous dictionary Taj al'arus."[9] Through this association with al-Zubaydī, Jabartī grew more knowledgeable of the complexities of the Arabic language. This, in part, may explain Jabartī's scathing critique of Napoleon's attempt to issue a proclamation touting the French loyalty to the cause of Islam.

Ismail Poonawala studied the way in which Jabartī's patterns of thinking evolved over three major time periods in his life.

> The evolution of Al-Gabartī's historical thinking can be

> divided into three stages; the first is from 1190/1776-7 till the advent of the French, the second starts with the French occupation of Egypt 1213/1798 and lasts until the accession of Muḥammad ʿAli to power in 1220/1805, the third and final stage begins thereafter.[1]

This chapter will be primarily concerned with stage two of this thinking process. Although Jabartī soon became engrossed in compiling biographical dictionary information on behalf of al-Zubaydī, he quickly turned his attention to matters at hand. One wonders what he must have thought when first sighting the French as they began to exert control over Egypt. Jabartī witnessed the French invasion of Egypt with his own eyes. Prior philological training with al-Zubaydī no doubt whetted his appetite for examining the curious French document which attempted to justify the French invasion on religious grounds.

Jabartī was quick to notice flaws in the document. The French mistakenly put forward the notion that they were against the Papal mission in Rome, thinking the Muslims would take this as a sign of loyalty to Islam. To the contrary, this stand confirmed the Muslims' belief that the French were sadly lacking in any religion. In discussing the proclamation, Jabartī reasons:

> They agree with the Muslims by mentioning the name of God and rejecting his paternity and any association with him. They disagree with them by not confessing the šahāda and rejecting the Message, and also by rejecting the norms and principles laid down by the šariʿa. Thus they agree with the Christians. But they disagree with the Christians by rejecting the Trinity and the message, by killing priests, and by destroying churches. They agree with the Jews in the Unity of God, as they do not believe in the Trinity. But they are Muǧassimīn (who give coroporeal attributes to God) and thus they disagree with

the Jews.[11]

Jabartī concludes that the French believe in no religion and should be considered as atheists.

The Egyptian writer also discusses Napoleon's effort to convince the Egyptians that the French had come to be their saviors from the crushing rule of the Turks. Jabartī comments:

> This is the first lie Napoleon fabricated, then he went further to a bigger lie when he said that he worshipped God more than the Mamlūks did. Certainly, this shows nothing but his insanity and absolute ignorance. How could worship be of any value with infidelity? He said that he respected the Prophet. This is also an absolute lie. If he really respects the Prophet, he would have believed in Him, and accepted the Islamic faith. He further says that he respects the Holy Qur'ān. This is heaping lie upon lie. To respect the Qur'ān means to exalt it, and to exalt it means to believe what is in it. The Qur'ān is a testimony of the Prophet's truthfulness. He was the last Prophet and His umma is the best of all nations. But the French reject all these.[12]

Jabartī represented the Muslim 'ulamā' who rejected the French as true followers of Islam and eventually as rulers of Egypt. Even though the Muslim leadership paid homage to the greatness of Napoleon and his savants, secretly they were plotting ways of pushing the French out of the Levant. The French, unaccustomed to the living out of Muslim beliefs and customs, mistakenly thought that their proclamation had fooled their Muslim neighbors into thinking the French were true Muslims. Nothing could have been farther from the truth.

Napoleon's scheme to colonize Egypt by convincing Muslims of

his Islamic beliefs was doomed to failure. French storybook visions of the Orient, such as images from Thousand and One Nights, blinded the French to the underlying currents of thought and action in Islamic Egypt. The French were largely ignorant of the country they were about to conquer and occupy. They had contact with Alexandria through shipping commerce, but they had scarcely any knowledge about the interior of Egypt. Napoleon and his entourage failed in their venture to control Egypt because of military pressures, cultural misunderstandings and, a miscalculation of how successfully to address the all-encompassing "Islamic element" of Egypt. Despite their thinly veiled scheme to present themselves as "true Muslims," the French demonstrated their Western, secular orientation by the methods they used to conquer and govern Egypt. Soon the indigenous peoples rallied to support the corrupt Mamlūk leadership against those who denied Allah and His Prophet Muḥammad. Bonaparte failed to recognize the cohesiveness of the Muslim population against an alien Western conqueror. Girgis provides a proper summary to this argument:

> Bonaparte's bombastically phrased proclamations, his appeal to the prophet's religion, his attempt to transplant the secular national conception of Europe to the Egyptian soil, his efforts to win the alliance of the people by introducing some institutions for the self-government, then his attempt to awaken Arab Nationalism and shift the eyes of the Muslim Arabs towards the Sharif of Mecca, instead of the Sultan, could not avail him much. Indeed Egyptian Nationalism, self-government and Arab Nationalism were too feeble to substitute the deeply rooted tradition of leadership and the corporate Muslim feeling.[13]

Background Information - The Setting

A brief analysis of French politics and the vulnerability of Egypt to foreign attack are useful in understanding why the French chose to invade Egypt. Napoleon was eager to prove his military might on the battlefield once again after a victory in Italy. But first he had to procure the favor of a new French government in order to carry out his new plans.

> To unravel the tangled skein of the contradictory interpretations lying behind the decision to attack Egypt, a brief examination of France's international position in 1798 is in order. The coup of 18 Fructidor (4 September 1797) had eliminated the moderate elements in the Directory, replacing them with a bellicose Jacobin government which rejected England's peace overtures at Lille and imposed the harsh treaty of Campo Formio on Austria in October 1797. By the autumn of 1798 the Republic's invincible armies proceeded to occupy the central cantons of Switzerland and the Italian capital, setting up sister Republics modelled on her north Italian client states in Berne and Rome. In June a purge within the ranks of the government of the Batavian Republic brought Holland's naval resources under strict control, while the protracted negotiations at Rastatt enabled French diplomacy to exploit German rivalries to secure Mainz and the Rhine frontier in return for appropriate indemnities among the German princes. Naples dreaded the inevitable French incursion that would overrun Sicily from the Papal states, and although Spain, a hesitant ally since 1796, tried to evade her commitments, her alliance served at least to deny England entrance to the Mediterranean. Except for Portugal, England stood alone against the Jacobin menace. But despite a depleted treasury and recurring Irish revolts, her navy had succeeded in overcoming the mutinies of Spithead and the Nore, allowing Duncan to smash the Dutch at Camperdown and Jervis to blockade Cadiz after his victory off Cape St. Vincent, leaving the way open for Nelson's battle squadron to re-enter the Mediterranean.[14]

France faced the choice of continuing to dominate various parts of Europe or of forging a new military plan by adopting the idea of conquering the Levant. A major concern was the grudgingly

admitted superiority of the English Navy commanded by Lord Nelson. Napoleon was aware of the English sea power but nevertheless pushed for the plan of an invasion of Egypt. This effort dovetailed with the French need for additional grain supplies and trade.

> In the 1790's, economic restrictions imposed by the Revolutionary government in Paris made the local French trade situation even more difficult. In the summer of 1793, the Convention laid an embargo on the export of French goods and forbade the transmission of funds to foreign countries, thus making payment for imports impossible. In June 1793, the British declared grain and raw materials to be contraband of war. By September of 1763, France was almost cut off from world trade. This almost certainly underlay the famous "vexations" of French merchants and is generally alleged to be one of the justifications of the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798.[15]

The French merchants began to envision the financial and practical gains of acquiring Egyptian rice and grains should Egypt become owned by France. The trade restrictions meant that France was suffering from a severe grain shortage, and it appeared that Egypt's bountiful resources might serve to redress the situation.

The French were brimming over with confidence because they knew that Egypt was vulnerable and ripe for attack.

> ...Egypt was a weak tributary formation. It was weak in the sense that the extraction of ground rent depended on the central government, and not on a seigneurial presence. It was weak in the sense that the reproduction of the system depended on the active cooperation of the rich peasants, who had to ensure the day-to-day maintenance of agriculture. Finally, it was vulnerable vis-à-vis Europe in the sense that its commercial sector, which was confined largely to the city of Cairo, was disproportionately large. This pre-capitalist commercial sector from Ayyūbid times to the early seventeenth century performed the functions of distribution and financing for the ruling class; thereafter, industry and

> trade came to account for half or more of the tax revenue and constituted a principal arena of struggle for dominion by Mamlūks and Janissaries.[16]

The time was right for France to capitalize on the expansion of its Empire. Conquering Egypt would mean immediate food and monetary assistance for the French. Napoleon was more than willing to lead the invasion because he was too young to serve in the Directory. He also badly wanted to fulfill his dream of conquering one of the world's oldest countries. Napoleon managed to convince his superiors that invading Egypt was worth the risk.

The French General was a clever man. He knew the potentialities of what a colonized Egypt could offer to France. Foregoing a plan to attack England, Napoleon turned his eyes toward the East and contemplated a new victory.

> But England was never in Napoleon's eyes a mere island; she was a world power whose principal strength lay in her wide commerce and her Indian possessions. To attack England with success was a feat which could be accomplished in more ways than one. If the Channel was impassable, the Mediterranean was open, and a French army established in Egypt might just create that diversion in the naval forces of his opponent without which it would be folly to attempt the crowning enterprise on London.[17]

A nagging question remained. How would the French be able to finance such an endeavor? Maintaining the costs of such a significant military quest would be expensive, indeed. The answer turned out to be the quick plundering of a neighboring country. "...after money had been found from the spoils of an unprovoked invasion of Switzerland, an armada was sent out in 400 ships in May 1798."[18] Having sufficient funding was only part of the puzzle.

Napoleon still faced two major problems: (1) The impending threat of a war between Turkey and France, and (2) the danger of having to confront the highly skilled British fleet. After continued calculations, the proud General opted to begin the invasion.

"Carrying along water for a month and provisions for two, the biggest maritime expedition that had crossed the Mediterranean since the Crusaders sailed from Toulon on the 19th of May 1798."[19] This grand expedition was carried out in the name of justice. The French claimed it was mounted to free the Egyptians from the cruel hands of the Mamlūk tyrants. But other motives were of paramount importance. The Directors in France were afraid of a direct attack upon England. They circumvented this military concern by commissioning Napoleon to lead the "Army of England" against the Mamlūk Beys of Egypt. England occupied the Dutch Cape of Good Hope, and the French sought to establish a shorter trade route to India. This was a careful plan meant to challenge the supremacy of the English Empire.

A victory over Italy had whetted Napoleon's appetite for greater glory. He calculated that capturing Egypt would be the best way to initiate the downfall of England. Napoleon's fleet was no mean collection of vessels. The provisions allotted enabled them to make the journey across the Mediterranean with few problems. Eventually, all facets of the French Fleet converged and headed toward Alexandria.

> At sea, the armada would cover from eight to ten square kilometers. When the units from Genoa, Cittavecchia, and Ajaccio joined the main fleet, the invasion forces would comprise 400 vessels - frigates, brigs, sloops, and transports - carrying 55,000 men, 1,026 cannons, 1,000 pieces of field artillery, 467 vehicles, and 1,000 horses; not to mention numerous women (in addition to female sutlers), who had come aboard the ships more or less clandestinely.'

This impressive foray of ships and weapons equipped the French Fleet to cause widespread destruction upon engagement with the Egyptians. But Napoleon realized that a Herculean task lay ahead. First of all, his soldiers were largely ignorant about the nature of the journey.

> Incredible as it may seem, only a few of Bonaparte's companions knew the real destination of the voyage. Some thought it was Sicily or Naples. Almost no one suspected an expedition to the Levant. For the moment, however, most of the passengers - seasick, crowded together, poorly fed - were wishing they were back on land and trying to forget their hardships by making fun of the nine acres of land promised by the commanding general.[21]

Following a quick defeat of Alexandria upon landing, Napoleon delivered his famous edict concerning the French love of Allah, the Prophet Muḥammad, and the Qur'ān. Then it was time to cross the desert to Cairo. The General wondered if his troops would die of thirst before reaching the ancient city. His fears were unfounded, and the French finally prepared for a frontal assault on Cairo.

> In the dawn of July 21 (3 Thermidor, Year VI) the soldiers beheld a tremendous spectacle; on the one hand, the pyramids - colossal and majestic triangles which glittered in the sun; on the other, across the Nile and behind the ramparts, the 350 minarets of Cairo and, towering above all this, the citadel of Saladin. Twelve thousand fellahs occupied Embaba; several tens of

> thousands of soldiers were milling about in the plain; and along the near bank of the river, occupied by Ibrahim's gun emplacements, was a long line of 6,000 Mamelukes with flashing arms, ready to charge. Did Bonaparte say (as he is reported to have said): "Soldiers, from the top of those pyramids, forty centuries look down on you?"[42]

The French superiority of weapons and tactical maneuvers led to a massive slaughter of the Mamlūk forces and their accompanying army. It should be noted, however, that French sources concerning Napoleon's invasion of Egypt give an overly optimistic view of the battles. Napoleon's forces, no doubt, did triumph in the end. The Battle of the Pyramids provided a last gasp for the Mamlūks against a superior fighting force. But the Turks were not without their moments of glory.

> "When Murād learned of the capture of Alexandria, he went out from Cairo to meet Bonaparte. Tchesmelis seconded the advance of his commander by going down the Nile to the village of Shubrākīt, where he installed two batteries of nine-balls, and set up fortifications so that the village was on his left and the Delta was on his right." When Napoleon s admiral, Perrée, who was leading the advance, arrived at Shubrākhīt, he was completely surprised by withering artillery fire. Unable to fight back, the French sailors deserted a number of their ships. Luckily for Napoleon, there happened to be some infantry contingents in the vicinity near enough to bring up; when these arrived, they captured the gun batteries, permitting Perrée to recover his fleet. In this fierce but rarely discussed battle, each side lost about three hundred men. Even the capture of Alexandria was not as easy as the more romantic French sources have pictured it. A letter from a French soldier or officer dated July 6, 1798, spoke of the Mamlūks in Alexandria as having weak artillery but deadly musketry.[43]

Napoleon's military genius and superior forces enabled the French to prevail over the Mamlūks. The French General anticipated

the glorious moment of entering Cairo for the first time. In the event, he was disappointed with the squalor. Napoleon soon became well acquainted with this aspect of his newly conquered city.

> Cairo rather disappointed him. How different it was from the decor of Thousand and One Nights that he thought he would find in the famous city! "It is difficult," he wrote the Directory, "to find a land more fertile (he was of course speaking only of the narrow valley) and a people more impoverished, ignorant, and degraded." For him, the 300,000 inhabitants of Cairo were "the most wretched population in the world."[24]

Despite his disappointment with Cairo and its populace mired in filth, Napoleon knew he had to address the matter of religion. He quickly began a campaign to cajole the Egyptians into recognizing his (alleged) interest in the Islamic faith. His military training and well-read background prepared him to court the 'ulamā' and persuade them to support his rule. "From the time of his arrival in Cairo his proclaimed policy was directed toward winning their support, that is, the support of the merchants and 'ulamā'.[25]

Napoleon Bonaparte and Islam

Napoleon's regime suffered from a lack of finances and the growing threat of war between France and Turkey. These circumstances, combined with Napoleon's desire to control the Muslims and their leaders, caused him to engage in religious rhetoric about the Prophet and the Qur'ān in order to rally the people to his side. Napoleon thought that proper identification

with the religion of many Egyptians would better enable him to manipulate and control the masses. He was fervent in cultivating this approach to religion.

> When he landed with his army and captured Alexandria in July, 1798, he proclaimed, "I have come to restore to you your rights and to punish the usurpers. I worship God more than the Mamelukes do, and I respect his Prophet Muhammed and the admirable Koran...tell the people that the French are also true Muslims."[45]

But Bonaparte miscalculated the effect his soldiers would have on this foreign country. The French could not discard their European cultural trappings. Also, Napoleon seriously misjudged the amount of loyalty the Muslims had for each other in facing unknown strangers from the West. He failed to recognize the complex web of social structure inherent to the Ottoman Empire. Muslims felt akin to other Muslims even though they resided in different countries, something which was very different from the Westerner's allegiance to his or her country of origin. The French way of life seemed alien to the Muslim populace.

The French offered a totally new way of life to Islamic Egypt. No doubt the impact of the French was a bit overwhelming to their Muslim subordinates. Napoleon's flirtation with the matter of converting to Islam aroused the interest of some Muslim theologians. Perhaps the French could be converted to Islam!

> A curious exchange followed between the sheiks of the Mosque El Azhar and Bonaparte. There were obstacles to his and his army's conversion to Islam, Bonaparte informed the theologians. One was the matter of circumcision, the other was the prohibition of wine. His

> men, having drunk wine all their lives, would never consent to give it up, and they were tenderly attached to their foreskins.[27]

Later, the 'ulamā' of al-Azhar issued fetwas condoning these practices by the French as acceptable to the Islamic faith "...provided they redeem their sin by contributing one fifth of their income to good works, instead of the customary tenth."[28]

Despite their negotiations, Muslims remained suspicious of Napoleon's motives. How could they trust a man who had just conquered their country? The religious leaders eventually decided that the Mamlūks, as Muslims, were to be trusted as opposed to the leader of a foreign army. To Muslims, Bonaparte was obviously not a Muslim; he came from a Western nation. Therefore, he could not have valid reasons for wanting to respect Islam. Most likely, he was preparing to attack the 'ulamā' and to use Islam for his own political use.

It was the Muslims who took the first action. Excited by the possibility of the Sultan's Muslim army marching to Cairo, rebellion erupted in the heart of Cairo.

> Among its first fruits was the insurrection which broke out in Cairo on 21 October. It began with the religious call to the Holy War, and was a spontaneous affair without leadership or coordination. The military governor of Cairo was killed in the first hours of the rising and the news of this doubtless encouraged the insurgents. But the French reacted with vigor and the rebels were soon surrounded in the quarter of the Azhar Mosque, the main centre of Muslim religious education in Egypt. There they were subjected to artillery fire from the Citadel and the whole affair was over in 36 hours. The French had lost 300 men and the insurgents probably

> 3,000. Although "Napoleon forgiving the Rebels of Cairo" became a favorite theme for court painters under the Empire, French reprisals were stern. Six of the shaikhs of al Azhar were executed after a summary court trial and several more were condemned in their absence, all Egyptians taken with arms in their hands were executed without further ado, and the disarming of the population which followed the rising was carried out with little consideration for Muslim customs or feelings.'

Though a failure, the "Cairo Revolt" marked a turning point in the French occupation of Egypt. Napoleon was learning that religious matters were far more complicated than he had ever imagined. The French were beginning to run out of options. They strengthened their military control over the Egyptians and were faced with more defiance by increasingly hostile Muslims eager to expel the French from Egypt. The French had been cut off from France by the English Fleet. They now faced the advent of the Sultan's army, and they were worried about the impending war with Turkey.

The French fared poorly in Egypt because they attempted to govern their new colony as if it were an European country. Their knowledge of Islam was cursory at best, and they seemed unable to grasp the significance of how Islam so permeated the Egyptian culture in all aspects. Speaking of Napoleon, A.B. Rodger states:

> True, he was at his best the most intelligent, if not the wisest head of a state modern Europe has yet seen; it is equally true that, as H.A.L. Fisher said, he had a mania for practical improvement, and could never see an institution or organization without tinkering with it; but, as has already been noted, his lasting administrative successes were confined to the civilized countries of Europe, and the farther he got away from

> those regions, the more his work becomes unhistorical, doctrinaire, flimsy, and superficial. So it was with Egypt.[30]

European Cultural Influences on Egypt

Napoleon's commercial interest in Egypt led to his organization of the country in a European style. This was not suitable for adapting to a new environment but it did serve to create interest in Egypt as Europe began to receive detailed information about the land newly captured by the French.

> The archeological invasion of Egypt was the direct result of the French invasion and the consequent interest aroused in Western Europe by the memorials of ancient Egypt publicized by the French invaders.[31]

The French General laid out some proper groundwork before beginning to exert his influence over the country. He took care of the health care system, security, and monetary matters[32] before moving on to the French plan to "culture" the Egyptians.

This plan was already formulated before the French left their own country. A large collection of engineers, scientists, and doctors organized to begin a massive study of the Egyptian culture.

> Before the expedition left France these savants had been organized into a Commission of Sciences and Arts, consisting of 165 persons, including civil engineers, surveyors, cartographers, architects, botanists, zoologists, physicians, pharmacists, chemists, and mineralogists. There were also a few artists, mathematicians, archaeologists, writers, and musicians. Soon after their arrival in Egypt an inner group of the

> most distinguished of these savants formed themselves into the Institut d'Egypte, a more select and more specifically academic society than the Commission of Sciences and Arts. It had as its stated objectives: (1) progress and the propagation of enlightenment in Egypt: (2) the research, study and publication of natural, industrial and historical facts about Egypt: (3) the giving of advice about various subjects on which the French administration might consult them.[33]

Napoleon felt that a thorough study of Egypt would whet the appetities of Europeans wanting to know more about the enchanting land of Thousand and One Nights. He also thought this process would enable him to glean important information about the intricacies of Egyptian society - valuable knowledge for the colonialists. The French, no doubt, were quite dismayed by the profound lack of literacy amongst the populace. "Only the Christian Copts and a handful of sheiks and imams could read and write. Until the arrival of the French, there were only two printing presses in the whole Ottoman Empire, neither of them in Egypt."[34] Perhaps the most significant Western contribution of the French to Egypt was the printing press.

> Bonaparte brought two printing plants with his army. One, operated by the Orientalist Marcel and a staff of thirty-one, remained in Alexandria until the end of 1798 (although Marcel preceded it to Cairo). It had three sets of type - French, Arabic, and Greek. On its presses all Bonaparte's proclamations were printed, as was the first book ever printed in Egypt - Exercises in Literary Arabic, Extracted from the Koran, for the Use of Those Who are Studying That Language.[35]

The printing presses printed out information about the glory of ancient Egypt. The presses became tools of the Institute which promoted the study of ancient Egypt - as opposed to educating the

indigenous masses. The printing press seemed to be a machine designed to serve the self-interests of the French. Other institutions focused on satisfying the needs of the governmental bureaucracy. Most Egyptians were immediately suspicious of the newly established French institutions and failed to understand the benefits of such foreign influences.

Societal Effects of the French Invasion

The French, no doubt, underestimated the degree of cultural shock and resistance to change that the Egyptians exhibited during the conquest and occupation of their country. But Egyptian 'ulamā' and other leaders often acquiesced in French demands under the guise of friendship and agreement when, actually, they despised their foreign masters. The roots of European ideas were planted in the Egyptian culture but did not reach fruition until the advent of Muḥammad 'Alī, who sent numerous Egyptians to Europe on student missions.

The new ruler of Egypt had specific reasons for sending students to Europe. He was motivated "...by the desire to bring to Egypt the practical wisdom of the French, not so much in order to regenerate his country in their image, but rather to consolidate his power by mastering their superiority in the art of war."[36]

Muḥammad 'Alī took over a country that had been largely

transformed by the French. Napoleon was not averse to being aggressive about changing the societal structure in ways he thought would teach the Egyptians a new way of life and a new way of thinking. "...there is ample evidence that the use of education as a tool to win over the minds of a native elite to the revolutionary principles he so self-consciously incarnated was never absent from Bonaparte's mind."[37]

But during Napoleon's reign, Ottoman Egypt began a social metamorphosis. The Ottoman military elite, with docile 'ulamā' in tow, had dictated the country's daily life and future destiny up until Napoleon's arrival. The French overhauled the social structure of Egypt, and in doing so, uplifted the 'ulamā' to a more influential position in society.

> This organic structure of functions, interests and prescriptive rights was damaged by Bonaparte's conquest. The old military élite, largely Mamluk in composition, forfeited its place to the soldiers of the Republic. With its passing, the other element in the traditional partnership, the 'ulamā', increased in prestige and influence. Not only were the 'ulamā' the natural leaders and spokesmen of the Muslim community in times of crisis, but their status was recognized and indeed enhanced by Bonaparte. By cultivating their acquaintance and flattering them he sought to win their support, but his tactics must have seemed crude and childish enough to men grown old in the politics of Ottoman Egypt. With the habitual deference to authority of their order, they accepted his decorations and subscribed the documents drafted for them, while remaining totally uncommitted in their hearts to republicanism, France or Napoleon Bonaparte.[38]

The significant culture shock experienced by the Egyptians caused them to turn away from the French. The Muslims sought

solace in the counsels of their religious leaders. "They turned to the 'Ulamās' and Sheikhs, the sole refuge and main repository of consolation."[39] As previously noted, most of the 'ulamā' paid lip service to the French command but thought otherwise in their hearts. The Cairo rebellion showed only the tip of the iceberg. Discontent with the infidel French had been brewing for some time but had only occasionally risen to the surface.

An Islamic Critique

In the Mazhar by al-Jabartī, we learn of some true feelings about the French as chronicled by this noted Arab scholar.

> ...the French, in spite of their protestations to the contrary, are indeed atheists. They may say they respect the Qur'ān, yet they do not hesitate to touch it after urinating. They are all together an ill-mannered people, who shave and wear shoes on expensive carpets.[40]

It should be noted that al-Jabartī does present the French in a more favorable light in subsequent publications. He recognizes some merit in their scientific achievements and their form of government. However, the point to be made is that he was a pious Muslim observing foreigners who were presenting an unacceptable way of life to Muslims. The French claimed to be followers of the Prophet Muḥammad, yet, in essence, they were seen as infidels based on the behavior they condoned in public: "The French drank in public and encouraged females to appear unveiled."[41]

These actions are only a few of the reasons why the Egyptians

turned to their religious leaders for help and gave their allegiance to the Mamlūks instead of the French. Perhaps the most notable reason for the gulf between the French and their conquered populace was a matter of Islamic pride and togetherness. Boundaries of countries, in the Islamic world, were secondary to the unwritten bonds of fellowship amongst Muslims, even those who are being ruled by another Muslim land. "The source of all authority in Islam resided in the sacred law which was internationally applicable to all believers disregarding the territorial boundaries."[14]

It is plausible to speculate that Napoleon would have failed in his mission to maintain Egypt as a colony even if Nelson had not defeated his fleet and even if France had not been threatened with a war against Turkey. This conclusion is justified because the French did not understand Islam or its functions in the society. Their cultural foibles and their ignorance of Islam might have possibly led to their downfall anyway.

Conclusion - The End of an Era

Napoleon's romantic mission to Egypt was a failure. He became disenchanted with the situation toward the end of his stay in the ancient land. At last it was time for him to depart.

> Cut off from France by the British fleet, and checked in the East by the obstinate resistance of Acre, Egypt became a great prison for the ambitious General whose models were Alexander and Caesar. Having kept the warmth

> of his countrymen at home far away from the discredited Directory, Bonaparte deserted his helpless and penniless soldiers trapped in these unhealthy and discouraging conditions.[43]

General Kléber was hand-picked by Napoleon to continue with his affairs in Egypt. Kléber was notified of this decision through the mail, so there was little recourse for rebuttal. Apparently, the two military leaders were often at odds with each other. Nevertheless, the report Kléber submitted to the Directors in France betrayed the degree of disarray left by Napoleon in Egypt.

> Bonaparte had left without warning, he said; the army was in a bad state; the finances of the country were near bankruptcy; pay was badly in arrears; there was not a sou in the Treasury, but a deficit of twelve million francs; the taxes had been anticipated, and little more would come in until the Nile floods were over, and in any case that year's Nile was a bad one; the economic reforms were not paying dividends; and the population was riddled with discontent.[44]

Regardless of the failure of the French mission to Egypt, certain matters had changed permanently. Western culture and ways of thought had pierced the long isolated Islamic nation of Egypt. Desaix and his entourage found the ancient monuments located in Karnak and Luxor. The hieroglyphics on the Rosetta Stone were deciphered by a French specialist, and the Institute had sent reams of information to Europe regarding the splendor of ancient Egypt and its artifacts. The French language and culture were to have a lasting effect upon Egypt even though Napoleon's forces spent only a total of three years in the desert country. Herold describes the French occupation in the following terms:

> Of all colonial campaigns, it was perhaps the most

> remarkable, not only because of the personalities involved in it, not only because of the scope of its planning or the excitement of its adventure, but more especially because of the earnestness with which Bonaparte and his two successors sought to bring about a fusion of the secular West and the Islamic East on equal terms.[45]

Yes, this was a remarkable campaign. Napoleon came to Egypt fully expecting to conquer it and to keep the country as a French colony; but he expected to do it with only a strong army and a cursory knowledge of the Islamic way of life. The campaign was remarkable in that the French carted off many Egyptian treasures to European museums. The campaign was remarkable also in that Napoleon thought he could actually fool the Muslims into believing that the French were true Muslims. There is no doubt that the campaign was an "adventure," at least for the French.

The adventure failed, in part, because the Egyptians could not accept being governed by a foreign power. Moreover, they refused to be subjects of non-Islamic peoples.

> The introduction of the new ideas and institutions of the French were too "modern" and sudden to counteract or undermine the old traditions, sentiments and thoughts of the majority of Muslims. The ancient semitic theory of the inseparability of religion and nationality, and the traditional belief in the oneness and indivisibility of the source of legitimacy still predominated the political arena at that time, in a society which had been stratified in terms of belief rather than in race.[46]

Napoleon's occupation of Egypt did serve to spark an interest in higher learning in the country. The French language and way of life still persist in modern Egypt. But the French attempt to make

Egypt a long-standing colony failed due to outside military pressures; the attempt to transplant a European political system to North African soil; and an underestimation of the significance of how to address the problem of Muslims unwilling to be ruled by a non-Muslim power.

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

1.Jack A. Crabbs, The Writing of History in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: A Study in National Transformation, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1984), 13.

The French invasion of Egypt forced the Egyptians to confront Westernization. Why did only the Egyptians undergo a long process of self-examination? Was this because the French thought they had nothing to learn from the Egyptian culture or its people?

2.J.C.B. Richmond, Egypt 1798-1952, Her Advance Towards A Modern Identity. (London: Methuen & Co., 1977), 30.

I wonder if the French military officers possessed even a rudimentary knowledge of Islamic history. This seems unlikely considering the triumphalist approach of the French to the Egyptians.

3.Clare de Vergennes Comtesse de Remusat, Memoires, (Paris, 1893) in Christopher J. Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1963), 3-4.

4.Christopher J. Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1963), 2.

Although small in stature, Napoleon had achieved more than most people do in a lifetime by his twenty-ninth birthday.

5.Herold, 53.

Napoleon should be accorded due credit for exhibiting such a sincere curiosity in the religion of Islam. He read widely about Islam and also perused the Qur'ān with some regularity.

6.Napoleon Bonaparte, Copies of Original Letters from the Army of General Bonaparte in Egypt, Intercepted by the Fleet under the Command of Admiral Lord Nelson with an English Translation, (London: Printed for J. Wright, Opposite Old Bond Street, Piccadilly, 1798), Part I, 236.

The French had an admirably well-developed scheme of how to convince the Egyptians that they were also true Muslims.

7.Louis Awad, The Literature of Ideas in Egypt, Part I, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986), 8.

8.Awad, 9.

9.Awad, 9.

10.Ismail K. Poonawala, "The Evolution of Al-Gabartī's Historical Thinking As Reflected In the Muzhir and the 'Aqā'ib," Arabica, 15(October 1968), 270-271.

11.Poonawala, 274-275.

12.Poonawala, 275.

13.Samir Girgis, The Predominance of the Islamic Tradition of Leadership in Egypt during Bonaparte's Expedition; European University Papers; Series III; History, Paleography and Numismatics, (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1975), 30.

14.Alain Silvera, "The Origins of the French Expedition to Egypt in 1798," The Islamic Quarterly, XVIII, nos. 1 and 2(January-June 1974), 23.

15.Peter Gran, Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760-1840, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 10.

16.Gran, 11.

17.H.A.L. Fisher, Napoleon, (London: Oxford University Press, 1964ed.), 45.

Napoleon wanted to enhance his reputation as a brilliant field general by capturing Egypt.

18.Richmond, 16.

19.Girgis, 51.

20.Andre Castelot, Napoleon, trans. Guy Daniels, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 103.

Napoleon had a flair for detail. The list of provisions even included exact numbers of clothing to be worn by his army.

21.Castelot, 104.

22.Castelot, 108.

The author reports that following the Battle of the Pyramids, a huge market was set up on the battlefield to trade and secure the wares of the fallen.

23.Gran, 29.

24.Castelot, 109.

25.Gran, 30.

26.Gordon Waterfield, New Nations and Peoples: Egypt, (New York: Walker and Company, 1967), 69.

27.Herold, 185.

This supposedly thwarted a mass conversion of French troops to the Islamic faith. But clearly, Napoleon felt it was politically expedient to interact with the 'ulamā' on the matter of Islam.

28.Herold, 185.

Essentially, Napoleon was able to have the 'ulamā's of al-Azhar issue fetwas condoning the French practice of imbibing wine as a permissible practice - for the French. The 'ulamā', no doubt, had little say in the matter.

29.Richmond, 25-26.

30.A.B. Rodger, The War of the Second Coalition: 1798-1801; A Strategic Commentary, (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1964), 123.

31.John Marlowe, Spoiling the Egyptians, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1974), 13.

32.Rodger, 124.

33.Marlowe, 10-11.

Napoleon's supreme goal for the Institute was to engage in an exhaustive study of major facets and resources of the Egyptian society in order to sap as much wealth as possible from the economy of the newly conquered colony.

34.Herold, 138.

35.Herold, 165-166.

36.Alain Silvera, "The First Egyptian Student Mission to France under Muhammad Ali," Middle Eastern Studies, 16(May 1980), 1.

37.Silvera, "Egyptian Mission," 3.

38.P.M. Holt, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent: 1516-1922; A Political History, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 161.

The French culture still permeates modern Egypt today. Muḥammad 'Alī sent thousands of students on missions to Europe to learn about Western subjects and ways of thinking. The 'ulamā' were unable to squelch this significant societal influence of the French.

39.Girgis, 57.

40.Crabbs, 46.

The French desultory treatment and lack of sensitivity towards Islamic customs and thought were ignorant and crude. Unfortunately, the French had had to rely solely on travelogues and tales from sailors who had been to the ancient land. This may partially explain their lack of understanding of the intricacies of the Islamic culture.

41.Girgis, 69.

But Napoleon did make a point of highlighting such noted Muslim holidays as the Prophet Muḥammad's birthday, the pilgrimage, etc. These festivities were gaily celebrated in Egypt with singing and dancing. (Herold, 150-151.)

42.Girgis, 43.

The introduction of Napoleon's secular government in Egypt was doomed to failure because the Muslims were simply not used to state and religion being considered as separate entities.

43.Girgis, 84-85.

Napoleon bailed out of Egypt just in time to save face and appear as a hero to the French back at home. He did not want the soured opportunity in the East to affect his career.

44.Rodger, 137.

Kléber intuitively knew that the French reign was coming to an end. He was preparing for a settlement and withdrawal of the French from Egypt when he was struck down by an assassin.

45.Herold, 390.

46.Girgis, 104.

Chapter Three

Organized Resistance to the French

Organized opposition to Napoleon was based in the power of the 'ulamā', who reflected the spirit of the people in their thoughts and actions. Napoleon's sophisticated attempt to transform the Egyptian political system into a European style of government was a limited success because of the Islamic religious element in Egypt. Napoleon was probably doomed to failure in this sense because he could not understand the emotional difference for Egyptians between being governed by a Muslim power, although corrupt, and being ruled by a foreign, non-Muslim power. The French could not hide their religious and ideological differences from the Muslims.

> Muslims are, by and large, devout and close to their religion because it is deeply enmeshed in their way of life. When threatened by outside forces, or by local forces which seem more attuned to the outside world than to their own internal society, the balance is redressed by the appeal to religion - the equivalent of the inside force negating the alien influence.[1]

The French demonstrated their alien mannerisms in a number of ways. Most of the soldiers did not hesitate to imbibe wine to an excess and to chase after the indigenous women, as well as the female stowaways on board the ships that landed in Egypt from France. Some women came along on the journey seeking adventure as well as to entertain the soldiers. The fact that these French women appeared unveiled in public and wore their French clothing

was appalling to many Muslims who could not understand or condone this type of attire. This example was just another of the many obvious differences between the cultures. Many Muslims turned to their religious leaders for solace and for some ideas about how to deal with the new conquerors of their land.

Napoleon was quick to supply the answers to their questions with his noted proclamation, as was discussed in Chapter Two. The French general demonstrated a rudimentary knowledge of the Qur'ān, the Bible and the Vedas. This background helped him to think of appropriate ways in which to present his governmental reforms . A key matter in this attempt was to convince not only the 'ulamā', but the general populace as well that he sincerely had their best interests at heart. A feather in Napoleon's cap was the French technological advancement of the printing press. This instrument was used to achieve the goals of his campaign.

> Egypt witnessed the birth of its press under Napoleon, who was aware of the fact that the most decisive weapon to win the hearts of the Egyptians, was 'propaganda'. His firm belief in the role played by the press, was based upon his personal interest for practicing journalism in his youth, considering it a major factor behind his success and for the achievement of his ambitious goals, besides his successful experience in using the press during his campaign in Italy.[2]

Napoleon had definite plans about how to forge ties with the 'ulamā' and to use them for his ends. The 'ulamā' represented the heartbeat of the Egyptian society. Bonaparte knew he had to share with them the power of ruling the country if he wanted to succeed.

The 'ulamā' displayed mixed feelings about the French. Some of them admired the French ingenuity and ability to promote such a widespread study of their culture. Jabartī was amazed by the systematic approach - the Institute project - that the French used to study Egypt. But most of the 'ulamā' were deeply resentful of being ruled by a non-Muslim power. They paid lip service to Napoleon as the supreme commander and, at the same time, plotted behind the scenes to devise some skilled ways of fighting back against the French.

Napoleon as Leader

Although he was skilled at governing and was a master of war, Napoleon lacked the depth of understanding necessary to quell the disturbances which were being organized to disrupt his rule. Problems began immediately as he attempted to govern a Muslim country.

> The first year of the French occupation of Egypt had not justified Bonaparte's expectation that the native inhabitants would welcome the French as their liberators from Mameluke tyranny. He had underestimated the influence of the Muslims' fanaticism which caused the Egyptians to hate and distrust the French as infidels. His clumsy attempts to show sympathy with Islam exacerbated rather than diminished this prejudice. He neglected to consider the unpopularity which was bound to accrue from the financial levies imposed for the maintenance of his army after it had been cut off from France by Nelson's victory at Abuqir. He was surprised at the extent to which the native Egyptians were incapable of and apathetic towards any measure of self-government. He did not appreciate the instinctive Oriental suspicion of nearly all forms of government activity, and did not realize that sinister motives would be attributed even to actions beneficent in their

attentions.[3]

The indigenous populace and the 'ulamā' had already spent many years under the yoke of tyranny. They had not been yet in a position to oppose openly any of their oppressors. However, the 'ulamā' did not consider it their role to exercise political power over the country as they were deeply distrustful of political leadership. In addition, they were often financially dependent on their superiors for their survival. (More will be said about this in subsequent discussions.)

Napoleon should be credited for truly believing in some of the aspects of Islam, as he saw them.

> An anti-Trinitarian, anti-clerical Deist, he admired a religion which was so monotheistic and without its clergy or Vatican. ... what he liked about Islam was its identification of religion and politics. He remarked to Gourgaud that 'it is ridiculous for a head of State not to be head of its religion.' He liked the apparently sensual aspects of the Koran's teaching. The great Caliphs embodied a conception of the State that was his own; a need for order tempered by some regard for counsel, ceremony, the concern to exercise strength with justice, a taste for speech-making, the application of warlike principles to all aspects of life and government. The profound submission to the chief of state which he sensed everywhere in Islam was not likely to displease him.[4]

Napoleon loved the idea of the church and state as one. He saw an opportunity to put this idea into practice in Egypt. I suspect that Napoleon reasoned that such a blending of religion and politics would endow him with greater control over the country. To achieve his end, however, required careful consideration of who

could best assist him by sharing the reins of power. It was important to him to find a group of Egyptians who would have the same ideas and values that he had.

> In his policy for a new Egypt Napoleon made a curious and yet profound choice. He regarded the Bedouin as dangerous marauders, to be suppressed as firmly as the Mamelukes. Dissident and corrupt, they were opposed to the very spirit of civilization. The people who would be the intermediaries of the Napoleonic Egypt, the ambassadors of the ideas of Voltaire and Rousseau, were the Muslim religious leaders: the Ulema. For with a shaft of vision that was to remain his alone throughout the century, Napoleon saw that the religion of Muhammad was not, in essence, reactionary as Cromer was to die believing, but contained in its simple propositions and practical outlook, a firm basis on which a new order might be raised. The Ulema were prosperous; essentially civilian, and therefore, unlikely to lead military revolts; they loved justice; and they lived morally. He also found that they shared a vision of a better Egypt.[5]

Napoleon believed the 'ulamā' were just the proper leaders who would be perfect for his plan of making Egypt a successful colony of France. Following his famous proclamation, he immediately began to woo the 'ulamā' to his side. His energies were directed toward bringing the key elements of society into synch with his stated policies. Unfortunately, Napoleon's own soldiers were among his worst enemies. While their commander was doing his best to establish important ties with the 'ulamā', the soldiers were missing home.

> ...his soldiers were ordinary men, transplanted from their own climate to this different land. They lacked the intuitions of their leader. Once his back was turned, and he had hurried off to address his Institute on how drinking water could be purified, or whether windmills or watermills were more effective for irrigation, they turned to alcohol to assuage homesickness, and to Muslim women, whom they seduced, arousing in one evening the sternest taboos of the

Egyptian people.[6]

Bonaparte was quick to order the executions of soldiers who were found to have misbehaved either in terms of excessive drunkenness or stealing from the indigenous population. Jabartī reports that Bonaparte was extremely prompt and judicious about addressing this matter. Once Napoleon had asserted his supreme power in Egypt, he began to implement his plan to do some power-sharing with the 'ulamā'. "While the Mamluks hid in upper Egypt, Napoleon expropriated their lands and redistributed them to those members of the merchant elite and 'ulamā' who would cooperate with him."[7]

This plan was not without its complications. The 'ulamā' were not used to sharing in the exercise of power because they had been considered second-class citizens under the rule of the Mamlūks. Napoleon raised the status of the 'ulamā' in the Egyptian society by giving land to those 'ulamā' who chose to cooperate with him. But most of the 'ulamā' were suspicious of Napoleon because he was not a Muslim and he was a foreigner asserting control over their country. The 'ulamā' had no choice but to submit to the general's wishes, but they still had enough power of their own to consider alternatives to a French-led Egypt. The 'ulamā' found themselves in a difficult position of receiving a higher status and greater financial support and, at the same time, having to answer to their own people concerning how Egypt could best rid itself of the French. But Napoleon's plan of shared leadership affected most

aspects of Egyptian society. The 'ulamā' were a bit startled by their newly acquired position of power which affected even the market place. The trade guilds in Cairo were an example of how Napoleon's system caused some temporary widespread changes. "...it was Bonaparte's Divan which lent the guild shaykhs a political importance they never possessed before or later."

Napoleon's Dīwān system was his attempt to introduce a French system of government to the Egyptians. This was quite a drastic change for the 'ulamā' and their people.

> Whatever the response of the Egyptians, we must note that the idea of a local native government proposed by Napoleon in his proclamation was novel to Egypt. Regardless of the propaganda objectives of Napoleon's policy, the invitation to the shaykhs, ulama and notables to participate in a French-controlled government of Egypt seemed to identify a native leadership and to evoke a local patriotism. Napoleon made it plain that he considered these shaykhs and notables as the leaders of the Egyptian people, and proceeded to negotiate with them the establishment of the Diwan or Administrative Council. Although he appointed its members by decrees in July 1798, he ordered them to elect a president from among themselves. The Diwan was to be responsible for civil government in Cairo, although its power was not final but subject to approval or veto by the French military governor. While the French authorities retained the right to appoint certain high civil officials without consulting the Council, the latter did possess the broad power of appointing all other officials under the French directors. Another limitation upon the Council was the participation of French members. Nor could its authority extend beyond Cairo in fact, for Napoleon organized a system of Provincial Councils in the rest of the country, to which he appointed French representatives of the provinces with the leaders in Cairo, and, for that purpose, in September 1798, he ordered the meeting of a General Council (Diwan Am).
>
> One of Bonaparte's alleged purposes was to familiarize Egyptian notables with the processes of advisory councils and representative government; another of his intentions

was to assess the reaction and feeling of these native leaders towards his system of Administrative Councils; to devise a system of civil and penal judiciary best suited for his purposes in Egypt; to promulgate the kind of legislation that would accommodate orderly laws of inheritance; and to plan the type of reform necessary for landownership, land surveys, and the devising of a proper taxation system. All these measure were moreover designed to win local support for the French against the Ottomans.'

Napoleon sought to supplant the Ottoman system of government by devising his own scheme of how the French should govern their new colony. His challenge lay in being able to create a new governmental system that would also be able to handle Islamic matters such as family disputes and rights of inheritance. "Jabarti reports that the purpose of this Grand Council was to examine and discuss three matters: religious (sharia) courts and the judicial system; landownership; inheritance laws."[10] Napoleon had to make sure he maintained the delicate balance between imposing new laws on the country, and at the same time, not offending Muslim sensibilities concerning matters that were usually decided by a Muslim court of law.

Jabartī, a member of the 'ulamā' of Cairo, watched this balancing act take place as he was an eye witness to the French dealings with the 'ulamā' and the Muslim populace in general. He saw how the French were faced with trying to run a country that was so foreign to their own. This marked one of the first times a western country had come face to face with an eastern nation. I.K. Poonawala asks:

> ...what was the impact of the Napoleonic campaign as a cultural confrontation on al-Ǧabartī, what was the reaction to it of the man who was an eye-witness to this scene? What kind of image did he form of the French people?[11]

The vast cultural differences between the Egyptians and the French were glaringly obvious to Jabartī. His first impressions of the French were rather unfavorable. But Jabartī was not without his own prejudices.

> Al-Ǧabartī's hostile and unsympathetic attitude towards the French prevented him not only from understanding their alien culture but also from appreciating it. He regarded the French as infidels and inferiors, and their culture as despicable One reason for his feelings might be that he inherited a legacy of the glorious Islamic past which coincided with Europe's darkest age. He was born and brought up in a very religious family of scholars who were the heads of the riwāq of Gabart in al-Azhar. Al-Gabartī himself was a distinguished member of the 'ulamā' of Cairo. This legacy of a glorious past, combined with religious orthodoxy, could have generated a kind of smugness towards the alien French culture.[12]

Despite his shortcomings, Jabartī's chronicles of the French occupation of Egypt offer a descriptive picture of the encounter between East and West. Jabartī's sentiments toward the French were alternately hot and cold; he despised their lack of manners but admired their ability to set up the Institute to study Egypt in such a systematic fashion. There is no doubt that Jabartī wrote with sincerity as an Egyptian who was trying to make sense of what was happening to his country.

> What makes al-Jabartī an historian of the first rank, in spite of the fact that he wrote only a local history, is not only his outstanding natural gift, but also his profound emotional involvement in his subject. He is a

> great lover of this country, who shares its joys and sorrows to the full. It is as if he writes about his own flesh and blood. This is the spirit with which the book is imbued from beginning to end. The chronicle is a splendid combination of passionate warmth and scholarly detachment, which is only rarely overcome by any personal or other kind of bias. The reader never loses the feeling of having his finger on the pulse of life and of sharing in the true atmosphere of the country and of the period. To this should be added our historian's concise, concentrated, and factual way of writing, together with his insight and his ability to go straight to the heart of things and draw a complete picture with a few broad strokes of his brush.[13]

Jabartī is to be credited with noting the distinctions of the French culture. He writes passionately and accurately about the French as they begin to rule his native land. What emerges is a clear picture of the French because of Jabartī's keen eye for detail.

> ...no thoughtful Egyptian observer could have set down the history of the French occupation without paying some attention to the characteristics that set the French apart from more familiar groups like the Mamluks, the Ottomans or even the indigenous population itself. It was the French, after all, who altered drastically the Egyptian form of government; al-Jabartī merely recorded this event. It was also the French who had radically different religious views and a totally unfamiliar way of life, and al-Jabartī simply registered these differences. Finally, the French possessed a vastly superior science and technology, and al-Jabartī was privileged to observe and assess the results of that superiority. In other words the French occupation was for an Egyptian a phenomenon sui generis, which could not be treated as one would treat Mamluk in-fighting, and indeed as al-Jabartī did treat Mamluk in-fighting. The French experience was so contrary to anything Egyptians had ever known that of its very nature it tended to provoke thought and a re-examination of values.[14]

Jabartī accepted the challenge of studying the French as an alien group of people who thought and acted in ways different from

those of his own people. He was struck by the need to examine the impact of French influence upon his own life and writings. Jabartī chose actively to involve himself in interpreting the ways in which the French challenged the traditional ways of Islam. "When it comes to the French, al-Jabartī starts for the first time to interact personally with his material, rather than simply recording it."[15]

Role of the 'Ulamā' in Society

> In traditional Islam the élite of society was divided into men of the sword and men of the pen. Ideally these should have worked in harmony but in practice the former tended to dominate and the latter to retreat into passivity. As time went on the functions of the men of the pen, the masters of the religious science, the 'ulema, had gradually come to be the legitimization of authority, mediation between authority and the local people, and very occasionally opposition to authority.[16]

The local populace looked to the 'ulamā' for guidance and direction. Even though the 'ulamā' were usually tied to the governing elite, the people respected the 'ulamā' as religious experts who could always be depended upon.

> ...many of the people respected and trusted the 'ulamā'. Apart from the fact that there was no one else to trust, the 'ulamā' were Arabic-speaking .... Most of the 'ulamā' came from the people and lived with the people. They were accessible, even the most glorified amongst them. They were awlād balad rather than mamālīk since the people were religious and superstitious, and the 'ulamā' were the representatives of religion, they were believed to possess baraka, to be capable of siḥr, or at least, as holy men who knew the Qur'ān they were worthy of

veneration.[17]

Certain 'ulamā' received more veneration than others. The 'ulamā' was comprised of a small group of men, probably less than 100 in total during the reign of Napoleon. However, a few 'ulamā' rose to be regarded as the leaders of the scholarly class. Marsot relates:

> But who were the powerful 'ulamā' of Egypt? Firstly they were those who occupied an official position in the religious hierarchy such as the rector of al-Azhar, the muftīs of the four madhabs, and the marshall of the Notables (naqīb al-Ashrāf). Then came the heads of two Ṣufī orders, Shaykh al-Bakrī and Shaykh al-Sādāt. Both of these shaykhs were descendants of the Prophet and of Abū Baker. Their titles were hereditary, and passed onto whichever member of the family the reigning shaykh chose to appoint.[18]

These two shaykhs possessed the lion's share of the power amongst the 'ulamā' of Egypt during the French occupation. Their role generated jealousy and rivalry between them for greater amounts of power. Both had differing responsibilities that, at times, led to bitter disputes. Marsot notes the following of these two leaders as recorded by Aḥmad Pasha al-Jazzār in the Nizāmnāme-i Miṣir:

> ...'there is his Excellency the Seyḫ ul-Bekrî...who has many relatives, dependents, followers, and revenues. All the 'Ulemâ of the Azhar and the Emirs and elders of the corps and the merchants and other people kiss his hand and venerate and esteem him. After him (in rank) there is the greatly honored Excellency the Ṣeyḫ ul-Sâdât.... All his circumstances are like those of the aforementioned...the poor of the city, the Rûm Ôṣâğî, and the North African merchants follow them and never contradict their words. In sum, they have the ability to assemble in a single day a powerful military regiment of at least seventy or eighty thousand men who are docile and loyal to them.[19]

The point being made is that the 'ulamā', particularly the ones on top, were able to usher the people together with little difficulty. They had a significant amount of power even though Napoleon was technically in command. This power was accrued because of various reasons. Some of the 'ulamā' were quite charismatic and thus had no trouble drawing large legions of support. Other 'ulamā' came from wealthy families which were already established as pillars in the communities. Still, the main factor of why the 'ulamā' were so popular, aside from the obvious religious reasons, was their closeness to the people. Greater and lesser 'ulamā' performed actions that brought them in close contact with the masses.

> The role of the ulema encompassed a wide range of functions. In the villages and among the urban poor they were leaders of the community. They performed most of the important duties: They acted as judges, provided religious and political guidance on Friday, educated the young, performed marriages, and laid the dead to rest. They represented the force of order and stability and served as the strongest supporters of the status quo. The upper strata of the ulema played an important part in government; some wielded significant power as leaders of sufi tariqas (religious brotherhoods).[7]

The 'ulamā' were not in one accord about deciding whether or not to support the authorities in power. Often the economic and physical environment of the 'ulamā' dictated where they stood in terms of either supporting the current government in charge or attempting to organize revolts to promote its overthrow. Marsot comments:

> ...when urban protest movements (riots and sometimes violent confrontations) arose during the eighteenth century, they were largely directed by members of the

> ulama group, or by sufi mystics who came to dominate certain of the artisan guilds. These movements were aimed at the mamluks and against their abuses of power. We thus witness a series of uprisings either fomented by religious individuals, or when instigated by some other individual, soon led by a member of the religious groups We must note here that although we refer to the ulama as a group and as an establishment, they were by no means a homogeneous establishment. There were high ulama as well as certain affluent sufi leaders who more often than not tended to side with the mamluks, who were their benefactors; there were also members of the low ulama and the sufi establishments who sided with the population. On certain occasions some of the high ulama took the part of the population, leading movements of protest. Though cohesive as a group up to a certain point, the ulama were also divided according to urban or rural origins, as well as to different degrees of affluence. Thus, while presenting the appearance of a corporate structure, they were not monolithic. ..[1]

Though members of the 'ulamā' were often at odds with each other, they were able to unite against a common foe: an alien ruler. The machinations of the 'ulamā' to create revolts against the Mamlūks, and later the French, were possible because of the religion of Islam, which permeated all aspects of the culture.

> What indeed took deep root in Egypt was that consciousness of the Arabic language which accompanied the acceptance of the Islamic faith with its Holy Book, the Qur'an. Through it, the Egyptian joined millions of his co-religionists in the Muslim world to partake of Islamic tradition and culture. Like them, however, he was ruled for many centuries by a conquering caste of warriors, the Turks and their satraps. Although somewhere deep in the recesses of his memory he felt that he was an Egyptian and, therefore different from his rulers, the Egyptian hardly influenced government and authority, or its institutions. Fortunately the Islamic framework with its religious tradition, orders and institutions, operating on the whole within the limits of the Sacred Law, afforded him an ordered and relatively contented existence. Towards the end of the eighteenth century it was not only the political authority and military power of his rulers that were destroyed, but more significantly the coming of a European conqueror to

Egypt undermined his traditional order and subverted his loyalty to it.[22]

Background of the 'Ulamā' and their Revolts

It was precisely the matter of order that was eventually to cause trouble for the new European ruler. Napoleon's widespread changes in government, thanks to his implementation of a dīwān, received tacit approval by the 'ulamā'. But these changes were destined to cause problems because the people were used to being ruled by a Muslim government. A function of the 'ulamā' was to organize the people into protests which would reflect this rejection of a non-Muslim government. Marsot gives a clear definition of protest movements:

> By protest movements I mean collective social action-action which has a violent content, or uses violence or the threat of violence as a means of achieving goals. Such collective action is based on some degree of mass mobilization and on a modicum of elite participation. It may be organized for ad hoc purposes, that is, righting an institutional wrong as part of the normal competition over power and conflicting goals; or it may lead to more extreme goals, culminating in social or political revolutions. Protest movements may thus form the vanguard of more extreme revolutionary actions, or they may easily become defused and accept short-term arrangements as settlement. This last outcome depends on whether the causes of the protest were generated by abuses, causing a deviation in a social institution; or were generated by deeper dissatisfaction with the institution itself, resulting in a demand for its change or excision. We can then suppose that protest movements represent a first stage leading to more violent confrontations - although that stage may or may not develop further.[23]

Protest movements were commonplace in the Ottoman Empire.

Though the Turks were also Muslim, the Egyptians still resented being yoked to a power based outside their own country. Soon the Turks were facing revolts in the country and in the city.

> Throughout the eighteenth century - at least until the French conquest - Egypt presented a spectacle of an Ottoman domination over whose possession and control local chiefs fought with one another continuously. Rebellion was practically endemic. Peasant and tribal uprisings were so violent - and occasionally well organized - that civil war broke out between the Huwara tribesmen led by their Shaykh Humama in Upper Egypt and the troops of the Cairo Mamluk Beys, which lasted on and off for over thirty years (1736-69). It practically detached Upper Egypt from the rest of the country when Humam set up his own government.[24]

Bonaparte also had to deal with his own uprisings that were caused largely by the French presence in Egypt. "Bonaparte's occupation, by the resistance it aroused, awakened what may be called the political consciousness of modern Egypt and his policy provided it with its first leaders."[25] The 'ulamā' were not ready to take full control of the reins of power. But they were ready to assist the people in resisting the French. Formerly, the Mamlūks were looked to as the leaders because they were Muslims and because of their effective military might, even though their rule was harsh at times. But now the 'ulamā' organized the people to face an outside threat.

> The French conquest of Egypt had broken the ties that had bound the mamluks to the local population. The reasons the Egyptians put up with the mamluks other than the fact that they did not have the military means of getting rid of them, was a belief that at least the mamluks would protect them from foreign invasion of any kind. That reason proved to be fictitious, for the mamluks were incapable of any military effectiveness.[26]

Thus, it fell on the shoulders of the 'ulamā', as leaders of the people, to organize and lead the rebellions against the French.

> Jabarti tells us that Cairo rebelled primarily against high taxation imposed by the French, the expropriation of property and other financial burdens. He also reports that members of the Council, that is the shaykhs and notables, protested against such measure to the French members and Bonaparte. Unsuccessful in their protests, the religious leaders formed an ad hoc revolutionary headquarters centered in the Azhar mosque to organize opposition to the French. Shaykhs al-Sadat, al-Sharqawi and other well-known religious personalities led this opposition [27]

In addition to the financial reasons for the rebellion, the Egyptians had moral reasons for wanting to expel the French. It was thought that the French lack of respect for the women and the sacred properties of the Muslims demonstrated the French lack of a strong belief in one god.

> The Egyptians could no longer cherish any illusions as to the intentions of their new masters. They saw that nothing was sacred in their eyes. The chief mosque in Cairo was used to stall horses of the army; the daughters of the most eminent families were seduced; the lower orders were encouraged to indulge in alcoholic beverage and drugs.[28]

This type of behavior toward the Egyptians did not happen during the Mamlūk reign. It was also difficult for many Egyptians to rid themselves of thinking that the Mamlūks would always be there to protect them against foreign intrusions.

> Essentially, with their deep-rooted faith in Islam and their consequent loyalty to the Sultan - to them the greatest and most powerful ruler in the world - the men and women of Egypt never pinned their troubles to

> anything more remote than the bullying of the local officials. There was not a fellah in the land who did not believe that if he could only meet the Sultan in person, his wrongs would be immediately and miraculously righted. Moreover, the Egyptians whole attitude towards the government was misunderstood by the French.[29]

The Mamlūks' way of governing their affairs probably appeared to be laissez faire in comparison with Napoleon's detailed system of taxation and landownership. The Egyptians began to feel constricted by the thoroughness of the French ways of collecting money on a systematic basis. Jabartī explains the details concerning landownership:

> If a landowner's title-deed was found in the register, confirmation was demanded from him; upon bringing proof by legal evidence and upon this being accepted by the authorities the landowner had to pay another fee in return for this evidence and an official document of possession (tamkīn) was written out for him. An investiture would then be drawn up for him after which they had assessed its value. The landlord then had to pay two percent. If it happened that the landlord had no certificate, or if he had one and it was not recorded in the register, or recorded and that record was not confirmed, then his holdings would be confiscated by the Diwān of the Republic (Diwan al-Jumhūr) and become its property. This was one of the most malicious artifices by which the French stripped owners of their holdings and lands, since people acquire their property either by purchase or inheritance in the form of a new certificate (ḥujja) or an old one or through a similar document from their forefathers. In many cases it was difficult or impossible for a landowner to prove the validity of his certificate and verify its existence in the registers due to the incidents of death or travel. In other cases witnesses did come forward but were not accepted by the authorities. If it happened that they were accepted, the French treated them as mentioned above.[30]

The French treatment of the 'ulamā' left something to be desired as well. Not only were Egyptians stripped of landownership

but the 'ulamā' were forced to pay tribute to the French as well, namely Napoleon. The Egyptians who had had land taken away from them no doubt felt they had been treated with disdain. Napoleon attempted to provide a similar humiliation for the top leaders of the 'ulamā'. Jabartī describes Napoleon's meeting with Shaykh Sādāt:

> That day the Commander in Chief, Bonaparte, called in the grand shaykhs. When they were all seated, Bonaparte left the council, then returned with tricolor capes, each cape having three stripes, white, red, and blue. He put one of the capes on the shoulder of Shaykh Sharqawī, who threw it on the floor and asked to be excused. Upon this Bonaparte was upset, became pale and angry. Then the interpreter said: 'O shaykhs, you have become the special friends of the Commander in Chief, and he had meant to honor you and to enhance the dignity of your status with his special costume and insignia. For when you are distinguished by these things, both troops and people will pay homage to your distinction, and you will occupy an elevated place in their eyes.' The shaykhs then answered: 'But we will lose our place in the eyes of God, and of our fellow Muslims.' Bonaparte became vexed and, according to some of the interpreters, commented that Shaykh Sharqawī was unfit for leadership, along with other remarks of that nature. The other shaykhs tried to assuage his anger but asked to be excused for not wearing the tricolor gown. He then said, 'In that case, you must at least wear the cocarde on your breasts.' It is the insignia they call the rosette.... They answered: 'Then give us some time to reflect upon this.' It was agreed that they should be given twelve days to come to a decision.
>
> Shaykh Sadat made his appearance [on the same day], having been summoned by Bonaparte. He met the Shaykhs as they were leaving. When he was seated, the Commander in Chief received him with good cheer, joked with him and spoke kindly to him through an interpreter. He presented him with a diamond ring and told him to call again the following day. He then brought him a cocarde which he attached to his robe. Shaykh Sadat said nothing but pretended to go along with him, then rose and left. After he left he took it off, though wearing such an insignia is not contrary to religion.
>
> [That day] some of the guards called out to people to

> wear the above-mentioned insignia, known as the rosette, a symbol of loyalty and friendship. Most people found it belittling to do so, while some put it on, thinking that to be compelled to wear it was no sacrilege since to disobey was to be exposed to harm. However, in the afternoon orders were given excusing the common people from wearing the cocarde, though some notables as well as those who called officially on the French were obliged to wear it. In fact, they only put it on as they went in and took if off as they left. This went on for a few days until the ensuing incidents took place [Jabartı here refers to the first Cairo Revolt], then it was discontinued.[31]

The 'ulamā' and their people were fed up with the French treatment of them. They turned to the most sacred institution in Egypt for divine guidance. At the end of the eighteenth century, al-Azhar had an unrivalled reputation in the Arab world. It was also the focal point of rebellion against the oppressors. Sir Hamilton Gibb and Professor Bowen explain that even though al-Azhar was not the only institution of its kind:

> It was undoubtedly the most important (because it was the richest) in the Arabic lands. It was at this period tolerably well staffed and endowed, had some sixty or seventy professors and great number of students drawn mostly from Cairo ıtself and the provinces of Egypt, but also from other Muslim lands. Owing to ıts great reputation, the other 'madrasahs' and college mosques of Cairo had become satellites, and though they retaıned a certain independence ın the matter of endowments, the teaching posts were held as a rule by the shaykhs of al-Azhar. In addition there were some eighteen or twenty towns in Egypt with college mosques, varying ın number from one to seven or so. In these agaın, the principal teachers were generally local shaykhs trained at al-Azhar, but in return they supplied the latter with many of its prominent scholars. Of these provincial schools the most active were at Rosetta, Damietta, Desūk, Maḥalla, Manṣūra, and Ṭanṭa in the Delta and Ṭahta in Upper Egypt.
>
> Not one of the head shaykhs of al-Azhar in the eighteenth century was of Cairene origin.[32]

Since the 'ulamā' of al-Azhar came from a variety of Egyptian cities, they truly represented all of the people of Egypt. The 'ulamā' were careful to organize their people in a somewhat systematic fashion. The warning signs of an imminent uprising based upon al-Azhar were obvious to those who were aware of the typical procedures used to begin a revolt.

> The danger signal was a drum sounded from one of the minarets of al-Azhar, which could be heard within a wide radius, and since most of the guilds converged along topographic lines with the water carriers inhabiting one street, the coppersmiths another, and so on, whole sūqs would then close, gates leading to the various quarters barricaded, the gates of al-Azhar would be shut, and a mob, armed with stout staves would assemble in front of al-Azhar to await the 'ulamā'. This was a voice of public opinion. It could get out of hand and degenerate into a mob, but it could also become the core of popular resistance movements, as it did during the French occupation. But it was through the urban population that the 'ulamā' were able to restrain the authorities, and it was to the 'ulamā' that the urban population appealed when it wished to reach the ear of the said authorities.[33]

The problem of taxes caused some of the 'ulamā' to organize revolts against Napoleon just as they did during the reign of the Mamlūks. Blessed with skill in political maneuverings, the 'ulamā' were able to make things uncomfortable for the Mamlūks when the people became unhappy with excessive taxation. An example is the revolt of 1794. Marsot describes the role of Shaykh al-Sharqāwī in this revolt.

> One of the strongest rectors of the times was Shaykh al-Sharqawi (1793-1812). He was an intriguer, who could take the initiative and show courage at times of crisis. One such crisis arose in 1794, when multazims of Bilbays appealed to him, also a multazim of the area, to help them oppose a new tax. Al-Sharqāwī gathered the 'ulamā',

> closed al-Azhar, summoned the mob, and marched to the house of Shaykh al-Sādāt. There the 'ulamā' discussed their grievances in general, and told the defterdar that they wanted 'justice, an end to tyranny, a return to the rule of the Sharī'a and an end to the various new taxes innovated.' The crisis lasted for three days, with the mob daily growing in size and the Mamluks becoming more alarmed, until finally they all met at the pasha's house, and the qāḍi drew up a document wherein the beys promised not to raise new taxes, but to deal fairly with the people. This incident was a potent example of the presence which the 'ulamā' could bring to bear on the Mamluks, but unfortunately the Mamluks were never coerced for long, and soon returned to their former ways.[34]

This was not unlike the French reaction to uprisings against them. The French were shocked by organized rebellions against them. Napoleon was fair but brutal in his handling of the landownership affair. "All hopes of French and Egyptian cooperation were shattered in October, 1798 when the people of Cairo rose up against the French."[35] Jabartī reports that some people became very angry when they heard about the new French tax increases and others assumed a complacent posture about the matter.

> The former group (those lacking in foresight) exchanged whisperings and agreed to follow the way of opposition, rebellion and dissention. Some of the 'ulamā' (al-muta'ammimīn) applied themselves to stirring up rebellion with those people and set to inflame the masses, summoning them to slaughter the French who had conquered them.[36]

The talk of rebellion spread quickly throughout the populace and the rebellion in October of 1798 was soon to become a reality. The people trusted that the 'ulamā' would lead them in battle against the French.

> On Sunday morning they joined forces, openly declaring their aims, intending to fight the French and stirring up the flames of war. Thereupon they brought out the weapons which they had concealed and instruments of fighting, clubs, goalds, truncheons, sticks, and hammers. He who had none of these, took latch-bars, axes and hoes. So they set out from all points, attacking the shops and stone benches (maṣāṭib) continuing until they filled the market-places and their clamor reached the heavens.[37]

The revolt gathered steam, and even the French governor of Cairo was assassinated by mob violence. But the French quickly put an end to things, as described in Chapter Two, with their furious bombardment of al-Azhar from the Citadel. The 'ulamā' were forced to surrender because they feared that too many of their people were being massacred. A large gulf of endless hostility was created between the French and the Egyptians as a result of the French treatment of al-Azhar during the revolt.

> And the French trod in the mosque of al-Azhar with their shoes, carrying swords and rifles. Then they scattered in its courtyard and its main praying area (maqṣūra) and tied their horses to the qibla. They ravaged the student's quarters and ponds (baḥarāt), smashing the lamps and chandeliers and breaking up the bookcases of the students, the mujāwirūn, and scribes. They plundered whatever they found in the mosque, such as furnishings, vessels, bowls, deposits, and hidden things from closets and cupboards. They treated the books and Qur'ānic volumes as trash, throwing them on the ground, stamping on them with their feet and shoes. Furthermore they soiled the mosque, blowing their spit in it, pissing, and defecating in it. They guzzled wine and smashed the bottles in the central court and other parts. And whoever they happened to meet in the mosque they stripped. They chanced upon someone in one of the ruwāqs (students' residences) and slaughtered him. Thus they committed deeds in al-Azhar which are but little of what they are capable of, for they are enemies of the Religion, the malicious victors who gloat in the misfortune of the vanquished, rabid hyenas, mongrels obdurate in their nature.[38]

Even though the French executed a number of shaykhs who had led the Azhar rebellion, the Egyptians continued to create organized resistance to the French. "Mere rumors that an Ottoman army was about to deal the French a crushing blow set off another great Cairo insurrection in March-April, 1800."[39]

The 'ulamā' were skilled at maintaining friendly ties with the power elite even though they also organized the rebellions against Napoleon. The 'ulamā' feigned cooperation with Napoleon when actually they couldn't wait to see him leave the country. But they made sure that Napoleon believed that most of them were loyal to him. Crecelius reports that the 'ulamā' issued letters of congratulations to Napoleon when he had gone to France to become head of state. They asked him to remember Egypt with fondness.[40] There were some material benefits to be gained from such behavior.

> Grudging cooperation, which was stretched to the point where force was threatened, not open opposition, had been the characteristic response of the ulama to tyranny. For the ulama in the period of the French invasion such cooperation had particularly great material rewards, for it opened the way to the vast wealth and influence once monopolized by the ruling elites.
>
> Despite their hatred of the French, Jabarti noted that each of the shaykhs had a secret desire to be seated in the divan and assume the dignity of authority of high office. Members of the divan were paid the sum of 14,000 paras/month or 400 paras/meeting. Such a salary was still not to be compared with what an amir, or even his wife, previously received from the government, but relative to what native Egyptians or members of other professions could earn, it was impressive. In this period, the ulama used their influence to become a class of great landlords through the control of awqaf and iltizams.[41]

The 'ulamā', no doubt, benefitted greatly from Napoleon's enhancement of their social status, in addition to the aforementioned material gains. But the 'ulamā' also suffered because of this new economic power. It moved them away from the mainstream of society to a position of power above and beyond the common Egyptians. The 'ulamā' were to suffer further under the leadership of Muḥammad 'Alī.

> The influence of the 'ulamā' gradually declined, whether through the policies of the rulers of Egypt (although these policies were not directed against the 'ulamā' as such) or through the weakness of the 'ulamā' themselves and perhaps even their unwillingness to try to fashion the new reality according to their concept and values and by integration into it. A characteristic factor of the first type was the impairment of the economic position of the 'ulamā', especially as large landowners. A characteristic factor of the second type was that the 'ulamā' ceased to constitute a prominent factor in the state machinery and among the intelligentsia and lacked the initiative to integrate into the new educational structure.[42]

Unfortunately, the 'ulamā' were not very malleable in terms of adjusting to the societal changes wrought by the French and then continued by Muḥammad 'Alī. It was very difficult for them to function with the new type of government in Egypt, largely because it was based on the ideals of the French revolution. In addition, the 'ulamā' had a history of aversion to taking command of the country.

> The unwillingness of the ulama to accept the responsibilities of political decision-making and defense was not only a reflex of their centuries-long submission to political tyranny, it was, in essence, an admittance of their own inability to perform these vital functions

themselves. Their response, therefore, was in perfect conformity with their own concept of the basic division of functions among the various elements of Islamic society, for each element, the military, the bureaucratic, the commercial and the religious, had developed into further specialization. Just as the 'ulama' would broach no intrusion by others in their special field of interpretation of the sacred law, so they, in turn, could not presume to encroach upon the functions of the scribes, the military, or the rulers.[13]

The French Impact

Napoleon was convinced that the Egyptians should be enlightened about the French revolution of freedom. Paradoxically, he established the Diwan to keep a firm governmental control of the country. The French contributed to the development of Egypt in several concrete ways.

> One was an Arabic printing press; the other was the organization of an official press when the French started publishing the Courrier de l'Egypte, a political journal, and La Décade Egyptienne, a monthly scientific and economic journal which reported findings and discussions of Institute members. As for the printing press, it appears that Napoleon secured Arabic letters for it from the Vatican, and appointed the Orientalist Marcel to direct it. He designated it the National Press, and it was used for the printing of the French proclamations to the population in Arabic, and the printing of the two journals just mentioned.
>
> Meanwhile, French scientists and engineers worked diligently on the improvement of roads, construction of arsenals and factories, including the construction of a theatre under the governorship of General Menou. They expended great efforts in the service of science and the arts. Although the Institute closed with the departure of the French from Egypt in 1801, it was reinstated in Alexandria in 1859 under the honorary chairmanship of Jomard. Later a new Institute was founded in Cairo, presumably to carry on in the scholarly tradition begun by the French.[14]

The earnest, comprehensive study of the Egyptians by the French Institute was a noteworthy achievement. This later served to spawn Egyptian interest in nationalism and notions of freedom. The press publications introduced Egypt to the art of mass media production, although the press was primarily created by the French to help control and propagandize the people into believing in the leadership of Napoleon. The Egyptians responded to the French innovations in science and the arts with mixed feelings. They were curious about the libraries but bewildered by the French governmental changes.

> Egyptians belonged to a closely knit, complex Islamic society within the Ottoman Empire kept together by the religion of Islam which engendered a feeling of brotherhood for everyone who was a Muslim from whatever country he came. Neither the French, nor other foreign visitors, understood that ideas of territorial or ethnic nationalism were entirely alien to Muslims, nor were they interested in French proposals of reform for these, too, were all alien. But some were impressed by the amount of learning which was displayed in the French Institute which was open to all, including its large library of Arabic books. Shaikh al-Djabarti, who was himself well known as a mathematician, expressed his admiration for the French enthusiasm for learning, he used to visit the library and attend lectures on electricity and chemistry. The fact that the French of the Revolution were not Christians made them appear less suspect and led some of the young Egyptian writers and teachers to study their ideas on liberty and nationalism; slowly some of these ideas began to exert an influence.[45]

Perhaps the stark differences between the French and Islamic cultures also made some of the Egyptians engage in introspection about their ways of life and their ways of practicing Islam. The French, no doubt, engaged in some odd behavior, in addition to the obvious wonderments of letting their women stroll around unveiled

and the French preoccupation with drinking to an excess. In referring to the French, Herold notes: "Their favorite pastime, however, was to hunt ostriches; almost the entire army...wore ostrich plumes in their hats."[46]

Despite the eccentricities of the French and their idea that they needed to "culture" the Egyptians, their efforts were effective only with a small segment of the population. The French did Westernize Egypt in a sense but this was basically limited to the élite of society. Baer notes some ways in which the French achieved this Westernization and then states:

> As a result of all these factors 'westernization' was confined to a very small layer of Egyptian society. Moreover, the fact that this layer tried to adopt a foreign culture and civilization alienated it more and more from the bulk of the Egyptian population. While at the beginning of the century there were no significant cultural differences among Egyptians, the impact of the West created a gulf between the europeanized and educated Egyptian officials and other parts of the upper class, and the great mass of fellahs and town dwellers, including the lower middle classes.[47]

The French influence even extended to rural Egyptian villages where Napoleon made his presence felt by altering the way in which village leadership was conducted.

> By the end of the eighteenth century a head shaykh called shaykh al-balad was appointed in each village. According to the historian al-Jabarti, it was the French who introduced this innovation during the period of their rule over Egypt after Napoleon's expedition.[48]

The French were careful to implement changes that would help

them monitor the heartbeat of the nation. For example, the introduction of a census provided some much-needed demographical information to the French.

> This was no chance occurrence but stemmed from a necessity undertaken by successive rulers who regarded the accumulation of data concerning the number and distribution of inhabitants to be essential to the administration of economic, fiscal and military policies.[47]

Napoleon's "improvements" of Egypt were not lacking in practical implementations either. The French style of architecture is still evident in modern Cairo and Alexandria.

> Of all the reforms instituted by the French, only two were to persist beyond the actual physical presence of their troops. One was the reorganization of Cairo's administrative districts. The French, by judiciously combining the 53 existing ḥarāt of Cairo, created 8 large arrondissements, each known as a thumn (Arabic for one-eighth). These basic divisions established by the French more than a century and a half ago have been retained, with certain boundary modification, in the present administrative organization of the city, although obviously they have been supplemented by the aqsām (districts) of the newer quarters of Cairo.
>
> The second impact of the French occupation was on the street pattern of the city. For purely military reasons the French began to regularize a number of important communicating streets in the city, since European armies could not cope with the confusions and potential ambushes of Cairo's maze-like system. In this process, al-Fajjālah Street was cleared of obstructions, to allow the French readier access to the strategically important gates along the northern wall of Cairo. (Bāb al-Naṣr and Bāb al-Futūḥ). The ancient pathway which connected Azbakiyah to the medieval city at the Muski Bridge over the Khalij (mentioned by Maqrizi) was similarly widened and straightened to permit the maneuvering of troops. The old road between Azbakiyah and Būlāq was elevated and stabilized, again for purely tactical purposes. These streets have since become major thoroughfares of the city, indispensable to the present circulation system of contemporary Cairo.
>
> The remainder of the French reforms were obliterated

> directly after their departure. However, they evidently left germinating seeds, since one reform after the other was reinstituted in the decades that followed. So it was the French attempts to clean Cairo's streets, to introduce minimal sanitation measures, and to require the registration of births and deaths.

Whether most of the French reforms disappeared after their departure remains a matter of debate. France was still the first Western nation to be encountered by the Egyptians. Some scholars believe the French achieved more long term changes in Egypt during their brief stay than did the British during their extended colonial presence. Holt states:

> Within Egypt, the French occupation prepared the way for changes which, in the course of a century, were to transform the country. It is not correct to ascribe directly to the occupation that powerfully Francophile strain in Egyptian culture, which, in spite of political vicissitudes, is still so marked today. The scholars and scientists who accompanied Bonaparte came to Egypt to learn rather than to teach, and their investigations, published in the monumental Description de l'Egypte, have been the foundations of modern research into the history, society and economics of Egypt.[24]

Likewise, French information sent to Egypt created a widespread interest in the ancient land. People even began to pattern their furniture and other house decorations after the styles of Pharonic Egypt. The French did appear to be primarily interested in acquiring knowledge about Egypt in order to benefit themselves and the rest of Europe. Despite Napoleon's monumental success in being able to liberate the Egyptians from the yoke of Mamlūk bondage, many of the French reforms served to help the French and did little to help the native populace.

> ...the French occupation caused, in addition to physical destruction, dislocation in educational institutions and left them the poorer by the execution of notable teachers of al-Azhar and frightening away others. The French were far too busy in military campaigns and suppressions of risings to pay serious attention to native education. Their ventures in the cultural field were designed for their own benefits and the efforts of the team of savants who accompanied Napoleon were directed towards advancement of European knowledge of Egypt rather than towards the education of Egyptians.[50]

Heyworth-Dunne seconds the notion that education in Egypt suffered under the reign of the French.

> The French invasion and occupation of Egypt had a distinctly adverse affect on learning in Egypt; madrasah life was disorganized and during the three years' occupation, al-Jabarti no longer gives us the long and interesting biographies of 'ulamā' who died, but he gives us brief mentions of those who were executed by the French and references to those who left Cairo altogether and went to the provinces. But Napoleon who, up to the revolt, had tried to make use of the shaikhs to suit his own ends, must have failed to understand them; he certainly seemed to have under-rated their abilities to stir up the people against him and he relied too much on flattery. Nevertheless, al-Azhar never regained its former prestige after the revolt especially in view of Napoleon's changed attitude towards it, while subsequent events showed that others were not slow to make use of the lesson taught by the French that the shaikhs could be used as a stepping-stone to gain control over the people and could also be set aside without much fear of reaction.[51]

The Lasting Impact of the French on Egypt and the 'Ulamā'

The 'ulamā' were largely successful in organizing and executing their plans to lead the people in open rebellion against the French. Napoleon did not succeed in coaxing the people into accepting him as the long-term politico-religious leader of Egypt.

The populace continued to place their loyalty in the hands of the 'ulamā'. However, Napoleon himself should largely be credited for the lasting influence the French did exert in Egypt despite the fact that their stay in Egypt was brief. Napoleon was once described as "...taciturn, fond of solitude, capricious, haughty, extremely disposed to egotism, seldom speaking, energetic in his answers, ready and sharp in repartee, full of self-love, ambitious, and of unbounded aspirations."[54] These attributes and the French general's love of discipline and authority made him a natural leader - even in forcing the French culture onto an alien populace. The French occupation of Egypt was to change Egypt forever. No longer was it to remain relatively isolated from European thoughts and ways of living.

> By the beginning of the new century, Egypt and the rest of the Near East were inextricably linked with the political fortunes of Europe and subject to ever increasing pressure of European civilization and its values.[55]

This, in turn, accelerated the decline of the 'ulamā' as a power élite in Egypt. Muḥammad 'Alī initially supported the elevated status of the 'ulamā' in society as accomplished by Napoleon but soon pushed the 'ulamā' to the background; they no longer shared in the major decision making and policy setting aspects of Egyptian government under the new Albanian leader.

Muḥammad 'Alī was to inherit a country that was stunned by the French incursion. He found that, in many ways, Egypt had not adjusted well to being ruled by a European power.

> Egypt was not a wad of malleable clay for the potter's wheel, but a complex of social, cultural, facilitational and technological institutions, such that major alterations in some could not fail to produce unintended but yet significant changes elsewhere.
>
> For the religious elites, the French invasion was a catastrophe with profound religious implications. How could these unbelievers attain such levels of accomplishment as to permit them to conquer the community of God?[56]

The French superiority in areas such as science and the art of warfare did cause some 'ulamā', such as Jabartī, to re-examine the roots of their own culture. But in many ways, the French ideas of liberty and self-government were too modern and too foreign to most Egyptians to have an immediate impact upon the mainstream of political and social thought in Egypt. The country that Napoleon conquered to be a permanent colony of France continued to remain an Islamic country at heart.

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

1.Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, "Religion or Opposition? Urban Protest Movements in Egypt," International Journal of Middle East Studies, 16(1984): 551.

In describing Islam, Marsot goes on to state: "It is a forward-looking movement seeking to change society from its rapid pace of westernizaion and redirecting it towards a society that derives its ethos from traditions, that is an authentic society, not an alien hybrid." (p. 551)

2.Foad Shafik, "The Press and Politics of Modern Egypt, 1798-1970: A Comparative Analysis of Causal Relationships," I, Ph.D. dissertation, New York University: 1981, 21-22.

Shafik provides an interesting footnote to this statement: "As a matter of fact, Napoleon printed the First 'Proclamation to the Inhabitants of Egypt' dated June 28, 1798 -- the first of its kind to be addressed to the Egyptians in Arabic -- on board of his Warship 'L'Orient', while crossing the Mediterranean." (p. 22)

3.John Marlowe, A History of Modern Egypt and Anglo-Egyptian Relations: 1800-1956, (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon books, 1965), 17-18.

4.Jean and Simonne Lacoulture, Egypt in Transition, (London: Methuen and Co., 1958), 44.

5.Desmond Stewart, Young Egypt, (London: Allan Wingate, 1958), 28.

6.Stewart, 29.

7.Tamara Sonn, Between Qur'ān and Crown: The Challenge of Political Legitimacy in the Arab World, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1990), 70.

8.Gabriel Baer, Egyptian Guilds in Modern Times, (Jerusalem: The Israel Oriental Society, 1964), 130.

9.P.J. Vatikiotis, The Modern History of Egypt, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 38-39.

10.Vatikiotis, 39.

11.I.K. Poonawala, "The Evolution of Al-Ǧabartī's Historical Thinking as Reflected in the Muẓhir and the ʿAqāʾib, Arabica, 15(October 1968): 273.

12.Poonawala, 278.

Poonawala also provides a description of Gabarti attending a French air show. "Once al-Ǧabartī was present at a French balloon show. The French had announced that on a particular day and at a particular time, they would fly a balloon near the pool of Azbakiyya. Al-Ǧabartī gives a very accurate description of the balloon, and a scientific explanation of its operation. He was not impressed with the performance. It soon burst in the air and came down, whereupon he remarks, owing to its falling down they became downcast. They had announced that it was in the shape of a ship, and that some people would ride and travel to far lands for investigating news. These were all false pretentions that did not come true. It was obvious that it was just an ordinary balloon.

Elsewhere describing a second balloon show, he writes, it went up in the air and flew in the direction of the hills of al-Barqiyya where it came down. If the wind had helped in blowing it further away and if it had disappeared from the eyes of the people, their artifice would have been accomplished, and they would have claimed that it flew to far lands as they pretended." (p. 277-278)

13.David Ayalon, "The Historian Al-Jabartī and his Background," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 23(1960): 230-231.

14.Jack A. Crabbs, Jr., The Writing of History in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: A Study in National Transformation, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1984), 52-53.

15.Crabbs, 54.

16.J.C.B. Richmond, Egypt 1798-1952: Her Advance Towards A Modern Identity, (London: Methuen and Co., 1977), 39.

17.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Role of the ʿulamāʾ in Egypt," 266.

18.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Role of the ʿulamāʾ in Egypt," 267.

19.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Role of the ʿulamāʾ in Egypt," 268.

20.Hisham Sharabi, Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1975-1914, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 11.

21.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "Religion or Opposition," 542-543.

22.Vatikiotis, 31-32.

23.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "Religion or Opposition," 541-542.

24.Vatikiotis, 34.

25.Jamal Mohammed Ahmed, The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 2.

This isn't to say, however, that Egyptian nationalism as we know it today began with the advent of Napoleon. The 'ulamā' and other notables of Egypt were its first leaders. But there was no "nationalistic" movement that took place at that time. The people merely rallied together to expel a foreign power. The seeds of nationalism planted by the French did not reach fruition until a later period in Egyptian history.

26.Afaf Lufti Al-Sayyid-Marsot, A Short History of Modern Egypt, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 51.

27.Vatikiotis, 42,43.

28.Shafik Ghorbal, The Beginning of the Egyptian Question and the Rise of Mehemet Ali: A Study in the Diplomacy of the Napoleonic Era Based on Researches in the British and French Archives, (London: G. Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1928), 120.

29.Raymond Flower, Napoleon to Nasser: The Story of Modern Egypt, (London: Tom Stacey, 1972), 47-48.

30.'Abd al-Raḥman al-Jabartī, Chronicle of the First Seven Months of the French Occupation of Egypt: Muharram-Rajab 1213, 15 June-December 1978: Tārīkh muddat al-Faransīs bi-Misr, ed. and trans. S. Moreh (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 79-80.

31.Louis Awad, The Literature of Ideas in Egypt, Part I, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986), 17-18.

32.Sir Hamilton Gibb in Bayard Dodge, Al-Azhar: A Millennium of Muslim Learning, (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1961), 92.

33.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Role of the 'ulamā' in Egypt," 267.

34.Al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The Role of the 'ulamā' in Egypt," 269.

35.Daniel Neil Creclius, The Ulama and the State in Modern Egypt, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc., 1968), 86.

36.Al-Jabartī, 93.

37.Al-Jabartī, 93-94.

38.Al-Jabartī, 100-101.

39.Crecelius, 86.

40.Crecelius, 87.

41.Crecelius, 88-89.

42.Gabriel Baer, The 'Ulamā' in Modern History, (Jerusalem: The Israel Oriental Society, 1971), 74.

43.Crecelius, 91.

44.Vatikiotis, 40-41.

45.Gordon Waterfield, Egypt, (New York: Walker and Company, 1967), 70.

46.J. Christopher Herold, Bonaparte in Egypt, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1963), 159.

47.Gabriel Baer, "Social Change in Egypt: 1800-1914," in Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt: Historical Studies from the Ottoman Conquest to the United Arab Republic, ed. P.M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 160.

48.Gabriel Baer, Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 30.

49.Daniel Panzac, "The Population of Egypt in the Nineteenth Century," Asian and African Studies, 21(1987): 11.

50.Janet L. Abu-Lughod, Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), 84.

51.P.M. Holt, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent: 1516-1922, A Political History, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 160.

52.A.L. Tibawi, Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems, (New York: Crane, Russak & Co., Inc., 1972), 50.

53.J. Heyworth-Dunne, An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt, (London: Luzac and Co., 1938), 101.

54.William O'Connor Morris, Napoleon: Warrior and Ruler, and the Military Supremacy of Revolutionary France, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), 6.

55.Charles Wendell, The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image from its Origins to Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 116.

56.A. Chris Eccel, Egypt, Islam and Social Change: Al-Azhar in Conflict and Accommodation, (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1984), 4.

CONCLUSION

Napoleon's attempts to win Egypt for the glory of France ended with partial success. The French general had little trouble disposing of his Mamlūk adversaries but then had to contend with convincing the Egyptians that the French were true Muslims. This effort, of course, was doomed to failure. Napoleon should be credited, however, for exhibiting a sincere interest in Islam and, in fact, admiration for the religion. He followed the Mamlūks' example of using sophisticated propaganda, in addition to brute force, to conquer Egypt.

The 'ulamā', as a collective body, were perhaps the most important link in the French plan to colonize and exploit their newly conquered treasure in North Africa. As natural leaders of the people, the 'ulamā' saw their status uplifted by Napoleon during the French reign. This heightened status, however, was not a natural phase in the development of the Egyptian religious class. It was designed by the French who used the 'ulamā' to pacify the masses and to help their plans run smoothly; the French goal was to make Egypt a prosperous and permanent colony of France. But the 'ulamā' were too clever to be fooled by such underhanded dealings. They spoke favorably of Napoleon's governmental reforms and, at the same time, organized rebellions against the French from al-Azhar. Napoleon's ultimate departure from Egypt turned the expedition into a hollow victory for France.

> The French occupation of Egypt was perhaps disappointing in its result for France. None of the Directory's objectives were fulfilled: English commercial supremacy continued undisturbed, Ottoman sovereignty returned to Egypt. In addition, England was introduced to Egypt, marking an association which led ultimately to the British occupation of the country for some seventy-five years. On this basis, the French venture was a dismal failure. Yet this would be an unfair evaluation; for the brief occupation left a permanent mark on the country. Not only were the Egyptians impressed by the military prowess and genius of Bonaparte, who so easily defeated the feared Mamluks, but the ideas inspired by the French Revolution which he brought with him - whether in the form of the Institute or the Cairo Council - were to influence Egyptians for the next hundred and fifty years and to form the basis of their renaissance and cultural-national development.[1]

Jabartī both despised and admired the French for the new intellectual and technological advancements they brought to Egypt. His attitude was typical of the way many Egyptians reacted to the French.

> Egypt's response to this first massive impact of modern Europe was therefore a cautious and ambivalent one: it was cautious in so far as Egyptians did not quite know what to make of this new force other than consider it the harbinger of new and, as always, foreign ruling institutions. It was ambivalent in so far as the French with their science, administration and political ideas were received with mixed feelings of admiration, awe, perplexity, dismay, but also of disbelief, religiously provoked antagonism, and overt enmity. To be sure, no self-respecting Muslim in eighteenth century Egypt wished to be governed by infidel foreigners regardless of how harsh and unjust his Mamluk and Ottoman master may have been - at least they were members of the community of believers, brothers in the faith.[2]

It was the Islamic faith of the Egyptian people which helped the 'ulamā' to continue to be respected in their newly acquired power. The ultimate mistake of Napoleon was that he failed to

internalize fully the meaning of how Islam permeates a culture and country such as Egypt. The 'ulamā' were merely expressing their long-standing belief that a successful nation is one that is morally sound according to Islamic principles.

It has been mentioned that Jabartī admired the French for their systematic ways of studying Egypt, but not for the way in which they exhibited moral turpitude (in Jabartī's mind) in regard to the treatment of women, the drinking of wine, and the careless ways in which they handled Islamic religious affairs. I think the 'ulamā' organized the uprisings against the French because of the growing tensions between the Muslims and their captors. A paramount example was the occasion when one of the uprisings resulted in the French storming of al-Azhar and the consequent widespread destruction of things holy to Muslims there.

Napoleon is to be credited for bold innovations in attempting both to respect the indigenous traditions of Egypt, as well as trying to institute novel French ways of governing the populace.

> ...basically and simply, the French expedition revolutionized both government and society in Egypt by removing its ruling class in a single blow, by substituting French and native Egyptian officials for the Ottomans and Mamlûks who previously had combined to rule the country.[3]

This French attempt to win over the Muslim population fell short. The Egyptians still looked to the 'ulamā' for religious guidance. Even though many of the people might not have otherwise

had anything against the French, the fact that their religious leaders took the initiative to lead revolts against the French speaks of how the people came to rally behind the 'ulamā'.

Napoleon's limited success in Egypt was not simply because the Egyptians thought that he and his men were immoral. The destruction of his navy, early in the occupation of Egypt, severely limited his military options and eventually, the French succumbed to military pressures from the outside. But the question of different beliefs and how those beliefs were lived out daily, in Egypt's eyes, was a contributing factor in the decline of the French rule. At the beginning, the 'ulamā' were helpful in maintaining a cooperative atmosphere for the French in Egypt. Later, though, the 'ulamā' redirected the people's attention to their Islamic faith at a time when they had become distracted by the French scientific achievements and new ways of thinking. It became very difficult for a foreign, non-Muslim power to establish permanent roots in Islamic Egypt in the late eighteenth century. The 'ulamā', as purveyors of religious truth in their culture, aided the people in remaining committed to their Islamic faith, a faith of which the French were not a part.

> Islam is not a reified concept which is considered to be the cause of historical events, but is a culture, in Clifford Geertz's sense - a system of symbols existing at one and the same time in scripture, in literature, in public discourse, and in the minds of individuals, and by virtue of these multiple expressions links high culture to everyday life, and joining the two, allows for variety and individuality. As a culture, Islam is not something divorced from, above and beyond events. It is precisely a way of conceiving, of articulating, the ordinary issues

of worldly experience - whether in moral, family, economic, or political matters.[4]

ENDNOTES FOR CONCLUSION

1.P.J. Vatikiotis, The Modern History of Egypt(London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 44.

2.Vatikiotis, 44-45.

3.Ḥuseyn Efendî, Ottoman Egypt in the Age of the French Revolution, trans. Stanford J. Shaw(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 23.

4.Ira Lapidus, "Islam and the Historical Experience of Muslim Peoples," Islamic Studies: A Tradition and Its Problems, ed. Malcolm H. Kerr(Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1980), 101.

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