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**The American University in Cairo**

**School of Global Affairs and Public Policy**

**TIES THAT BIND: MOTHERHOOD, MODERNITY, AND THE STATE IN SEMI-COLONIAL EGYPT**

**A Thesis Submitted to the**

**Department of Law**

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in International Human Rights Law and Justice**

**By**

**Marianne Dhenin**

**May 2020**

The American University in Cairo  
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

TIES THAT BIND: MOTHERHOOD, MODERNITY, AND THE STATE IN SEMI-COLONIAL EGYPT

A Thesis Submitted by  
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Date \_\_\_\_\_

## DEDICATION

*In lieu of a dedication, see* STEFANO HARNEY AND FRED MOTEN, *THE UNDERCOMMONS: FUGITIVE PLANNING AND BLACK STUDY* AT 26, PARA. 1 (2013).

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Marianne Dhenin

Supervised by Professor Mai Taha

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that a new institution of motherhood was constructed through modernizing reforms in the realms of law, public health, and social welfare in semi-colonial Egypt. Through the history of the institution of motherhood, I explore how colonialism, nationalism, and modernity penetrated family homes and affected women's daily lives. In Chapter One, I show that Egyptian women were blamed for the high infant mortality rate in turn-of-the-century Egypt. This coincided with an ongoing reorientation of the Egyptian family in popular and religious literature, wherein the woman was being recast as the central figure in shaping the child and tending the home. At the intersection of these phenomena, new discussions emerged about the significance of women as mothers and the proper way to perform motherhood as an Egyptian woman. I argue that an institution of motherhood was constructed and concretized through medical and legal reforms and the discussions surrounding them during this period. While Chapter One explores the construction of motherhood on the level of the population through medical and legal interventions that were opposable against women across Egypt, Chapter Two details several ways that motherhood was taught and enforced on the level of the individual in maternal and child welfare programs that sought to instruct women in a proper performance of motherhood. In Chapter Two, I argue that, with the foundation of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1939 and subsequent legislation on the regulation of benevolent and social societies in Egypt, the State took increasing control over and began to depoliticize civil society. As the State started to tightly regulate and later to subsume maternal and child welfare programs that were operating in civil society, it extended its reach into women's homes and intimate matters of children and the family where it was able to access and therefore transform mothers and motherhood to an extent never before achieved. Throughout this thesis, I emphasize a conceptualization of modernization as a dialectical process. Modernization claims to liberate individuals, women, or a nation, but, at the same time, it creates elaborate structures for their discipline. The institution of motherhood is one such structure.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis argues that a new institution of motherhood was constructed through modernizing reforms in the realms of law, public health, and social welfare in semi-colonial Egypt. Through the history of the institution of motherhood, I explore the ways that colonialism, nationalism, and modernity penetrated family homes and affected women's daily lives. Paul Rabinow writes that modernity has no essence – it cannot be defined – and rather than trying to define it, it is more heuristic to explore how claims to modernity are made and the effect they have on people.<sup>1</sup> That is what I have done here. My work follows that of many others who have similarly explored the effects of colonialism, nationalism, and modernity on women and the family in Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

In Chapter One, I show that Egyptian women were blamed for the poor state of public health and high infant mortality rate at the turn of the century. This coincided with an ongoing reorientation of the Egyptian family in popular and religious literature, wherein the woman was being recast as the central figure in shaping the child and tending the home. At the intersection of these phenomena, new discussions emerged surrounding the significance of the role of women as mothers and the proper way to perform motherhood as an Egyptian woman. I argue that an institution of motherhood was then constructed and concretized through medical and legal reforms and the discussions surrounding them. This chapter explores how a new institution of

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<sup>1</sup> PAUL RABINOW, FRENCH MODERN: NORMS AND FORMS OF THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT 9 (1989).

<sup>2</sup> On motherhood, childhood, and the family see HEIDI MORRISON, CHILDHOOD AND COLONIAL MODERNITY IN EGYPT (2015); KENNETH M. CUNO, MODERNIZING MARRIAGE: FAMILY, IDEOLOGY, AND LAW IN NINETEENTH- AND EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY EGYPT (2015); HANAN KHOLOUSSY, FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE: THE MARRIAGE CRISIS THAT MADE MODERN EGYPT (2010) [hereinafter KHOLOUSSY, THE MARRIAGE CRISIS]; LISA POLLARD, NURTURING THE NATION: THE FAMILY POLITICS OF MODERNIZING, COLONIZING, AND LIBERATING EGYPT, 1805-1923 (2005); TIMOTHY MITCHELL, COLONISING EGYPT: WITH A NEW PREFACE 105-107 (1991); Renate Lunde, *Building Bonny Babies – Missionary Welfare Work in Cairo 1920-1950* IN INTERPRETING WELFARE AND RELIEF IN THE MIDDLE EAST 83 (Nefissa Naguib & Inger Marie Okkenhaug eds., 2007); Hanan Kholoussy, *The Nationalization of Marriage in Monarchical Egypt* IN RE-ENVISIONING EGYPT 1919-1952 317 (Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson & Barak A. Salmoni eds., 2005) [hereinafter Kholoussy, *The Nationalization of Marriage*]; Omnia Shakry, *Schooled Mothers and Structured Play: Child Rearing in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt* IN REMAKING WOMEN: FEMINISM AND MODERNITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST 126 (Lila Abu-Lughod ed., 1998). On women and nationalism see BETH BARON, EGYPT AS A WOMAN: NATIONALISM, GENDER, AND POLITICS (2005) [hereinafter BARON, EGYPT AS A WOMAN]; MARGOT BADRAN, FEMINISTS, ISLAM, AND NATION: GENDER AND THE MAKING OF MODERN EGYPT (1994); Mervat F. Hatem, *The 1919 Revolution and Nationalist Constructions of the Lives and Works of Pioneering Women Writers* IN RE-ENVISIONING EGYPT 398. On shifting gender roles during the period see HANAN HAMMAD, INDUSTRIAL SEXUALITY: GENDER, URBANIZATION, AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN EGYPT (2016); LUCIE RYZOVA, THE AGE OF THE EFENDIYYA: PASSAGES TO MODERNITY IN NATIONAL-COLONIAL EGYPT (2014); WILSON CHACKO JACOB, WORKING OUT EGYPT: EFFENDI MASCULINITY AND SUBJECT FORMATION IN COLONIAL MODERNITY, 1870–1940 (2011); MONA L. RUSSELL, CREATING THE NEW EGYPTIAN WOMAN: CONSUMERISM, EDUCATION, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY, 1863-1922 (2004); BETH BARON, THE WOMEN'S AWAKENING IN EGYPT: CULTURE, SOCIETY, AND THE PRESS (1994) [hereinafter BARON, WOMEN'S AWAKENING].

motherhood was constructed and enforced on the level of the population, through medical and legal interventions that were opposable against women across Egypt.

While Chapter One explores the construction of the new institution of motherhood on the level of the population, Chapter Two details some of the ways that motherhood was taught and enforced on the level of the individual in maternal and child welfare programs that sought to instruct women in a proper performance of motherhood and ensure the health and welfare of their children. I argue in this chapter that, with the foundation of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1939 and subsequent legislation on the regulation of benevolent and social societies in Egypt, the State took increasing control over and began to depoliticize civil society. This had significant effects on mothers and the institution of motherhood in Egypt. As the State began to tightly regulate and later to subsume maternal and child welfare programs that were operating in civil society, it extended its reach into women's homes and intimate matters of children and the family where it was able to access and therefore transform mothers and motherhood to an extent never before achieved.

I suggest in Chapter Two that the Egyptian government employed a legal language of rights and duties to frame and disguise its increasing control over civil society as a requisite of modern liberal governance. I began to build this argument using primary sources available at the American University in Cairo Library in its Rare Books and Special Collections. With the closure of the library due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic on March 22, I lost access to the sources that I needed to further this part of the argument in the chapter.

I engage with law throughout this thesis. In Chapter One, I conceptualize law as rules that regulated the actions of women in semi-colonial Egypt and were opposable against women across the nation. I explore the discussions surrounding labor and personal status law reforms during the semi-colonial period and argue that these reforms worked to construct and concretize a new institution of motherhood in Egypt. In Chapter Two, I conceptualize law and legality as a language employed by the State to frame and disguise its growing control over and depoliticization of Egyptian civil society. This conceptualization of law represents an intertwining of the social and the legal.

## **RE-PRESENTING SEMI-COLONIAL EGYPT**

The persons, their relationships, and the social transformations analyzed in this thesis must be understood as enmeshed in larger geopolitical relationships; economic, social, political, and legal processes; and capitalist and colonial systems. While no one label can do justice to this or any other historical moment, I use the term semi-colonial here. The following historical background

is provided for the purpose of exploring this term and with the hope that what follows can begin to be situated in all its complexity.

“The writing of history is not a transparent affair.”<sup>3</sup>

Egypt was, in the late-nineteenth century, in a precarious geopolitical position, caught between British, French, Ottoman, and indigenous interests. Both Said Pasha (r. 1854-1863) and Ismail Pasha (r. 1863-1879) undertook several development projects during their time, using money borrowed from mostly French and British banks.<sup>4</sup> In 1876, a collapse in the price of cotton left Egypt unable to repay the debts it had accumulated, and the Egyptian government was forced to declare bankruptcy. That same year, European governments established the Public Debt Commission (Caisse de la Dette Publique) to support European bondholders who had invested in Egypt. The commission took control of more than fifty percent of Egyptian revenues to repay foreign creditors.<sup>5</sup> The establishment of the Public Debt Commission and the powers vested in it amounted to direct European intervention in Egyptian financial affairs.

Three years later, in 1879, at the behest of the Ottoman Sultan, under pressure from France and Britain, Ismail was deposed and replaced with his son, Tawfiq (r. 1879-1892). In 1881, frustrated with the Turkish-speaking elite at the upper echelons of the military and in an attempt to stop the passage of a law that would prevent their promotion to the rank of officer, Colonel Ahmed ‘Urabi and other Egyptian military men staged an army mutiny. Their action quickly grew into a larger nationalist uprising, as they were joined by other Egyptians aggrieved at growing instability and reliance on foreign capital, a heavy presence of foreigners in civil service and military positions, and years of deleterious tax and property law reforms. The uprising was of great concern to the Ottoman Sultan and to the British and French, to whom Egypt still owed substantial debts. Both ‘Urabi and Tawfiq courted the Ottoman Sultan, but he was reluctant to either depose Tawfiq or to deploy troops to quash the uprising. The British did not hesitate, however, and as revolts continued to spread across Egypt in 1882, the British House of Commons moved to protect their interests in the area and voted in favor of intervention. The ‘Urabi revolt was soon put down by military force, and the British began what would become a forty-year occupation of Egypt.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Himani Bannetji, *Politics and the Writing of History IN NATION, EMPIRE, COLONY: HISTORICIZING GENDER AND RACE* 278, 278 (R.R. Pierson, Nupur Chaudhuri & Beth McAuley eds., 1998).

<sup>4</sup> WILLIAM L. CLEVELAND & MARTIN BUNTON, *A HISTORY OF THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST*, 87-92 (5th ed. 2012).

<sup>5</sup> JAMES L. GELVIN, *THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST: A HISTORY* 96-97 (4th ed. 2015).

<sup>6</sup> CLEVELAND & BUNTON, *supra* 4 at 92-93.

The early years of the occupation entrenched British influence in Egyptian institutions and affairs. Efforts to quickly secure financial and political stability in Egypt were led by Lord Earl of Cromer (1841-1917), who served as the British consul-general to Egypt from 1883 to 1907. Under his command, the British administration in Egypt restructured the Egyptian army and penetrated government ministries, placing British officers in positions of power throughout.<sup>7</sup> By 1908, the British administration controlled every government ministry save for the Ministry of Awqaf, and Egyptians retained only twenty-eight percent of high-ranking government posts.<sup>8</sup>

Under British occupation, the Egyptian economy was reoriented to serve the interests of Britain and other core economies.<sup>9</sup> Cotton production more than doubled in the first decade of the occupation, and with increased production came a highly unequal distribution of landed property and a sharp rise in the number of landless peasants in Egypt. The provision of water necessary for increasing production was not accompanied by commensurate improvements in drainage, which led to the widespread incidence of ailments like bilharzia, hookworm, and malaria, especially among the peasant class. While Egyptians grew sicker and poorer as a result of British restructuring, the British administration insisted on maintaining a balanced budget and prioritizing the repayment of Egyptian debts to Europe. Only minimal expenditures were spared for Egyptian health and welfare.<sup>10</sup>

Continued British presence and growing poverty fueled nationalist sentiment, and, in 1907, Mustafa Kamil (1874-1908) founded the earliest organized Egyptian nationalist party – the National Party (Hizb al-Watany).<sup>11</sup> Kamil is credited with popularizing kinship idioms to deemphasize ethnic and religious differences among Egyptians, which proved fundamental to nationalist identity formation in turn-of-the-century Egypt. In his impassioned speeches, men became sons and brothers, and women became mothers of the nation. Beth Baron notes that while the language of kinship transcended class, it simultaneously reinforced class hierarchies with its paternalism. Elite women who saw themselves as mothers of the nation, for example, felt a sense of maternal authority, which empowered them to engage openly in reform programs that targeted poorer classes of women.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> M.W. Daly, *The British Occupation, 1882-1922* IN 2 THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF EGYPT 239, 241 (M.W. Daly ed., 1998).

<sup>8</sup> GELVIN, *supra* 5 at 98.

<sup>9</sup> Juan Ricardo Cole, *Feminism, Class, and Islam in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt*, 13 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MIDDLE EAST STUDIES 387, 388 (1981).

<sup>10</sup> ROGER OWEN & SEVKET PAMUK, A HISTORY OF MIDDLE EAST ECONOMIES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY 30-33 (1998).

<sup>11</sup> CLEVELAND & BUNTON, *supra* 4 at 99.

<sup>12</sup> BARON, EGYPT AS A WOMAN, *supra* 2 at 36-37.

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Britain promptly declared Egypt a protectorate, increased the number of troops stationed in the territory and imposed martial law. Throughout the war, anti-British sentiment in Egypt mushroomed, particularly among the fellahin, many of whom were conscripted into the British labor corps or had their livestock requisitioned for use in the horse, donkey, and camel transport corps.<sup>13</sup> When Egypt was declared a protectorate, Ottoman rule ended, but the capitulations – treaty clauses that allowed for the operation of an extraterritorial legal system for European nationals in Ottoman territories, including Egypt – remained. These and other grievances with the British rendered Egypt ripe for a renewal of the nationalist movement as World War I drew to a close in 1918. The movement found a new leader in Saad Zaghloul (1859-1927) and his Wafd Party (Hizb al-Wafd).<sup>14</sup>

Saad Zaghloul reinvigorated the Egyptian nationalist movement and, with it, the kinship metaphors that Kamil had popularized. Saad was arrested and exiled in March 1919 as a result of his efforts to foment nationalist sentiment. His exile failed to bring Egyptians in line, however, and instead sparked a wave of support for the Wafd and a period of upheaval now known as the 1919 Revolution.<sup>15</sup> During this period of instability and while Saad remained abroad, his wife, Safiyya Zaghloul, often acted on his behalf. The metaphor of women as mothers of the Egyptian nation was given living embodiment during this period when Safiyya earned the nickname Umm al-Misriyyin, literally “Mother of the Egyptians.” According to her biographer, Safiyya was christened the Mother of Egyptians by an injured protester whom she brought into her home. Sensing that his injuries were severe, the man lamented, “I am going to die far from my mother,” and, in an effort to comfort him, Safiyya responded, “My son, am I not also your mother?” He replied, “Yes, but you are also the mother of all Egyptians.” Sometime later, a woman gifted Safiyya an inscribed flag, which said: “‘A’isha was the mother of Muslims and you, you are the mother of the Egyptians.”<sup>16</sup> The home that Safiyya shared with Saad was used as a center for meetings and marches and eventually came to be known as the house of the nation (*bayt al-umma*), further establishing the kinship metaphor

Following the exile of Saad Zaghloul, students, civil servants, merchants, and peasants continued to strike and stage demonstrations across Egypt for several weeks. The British administration met civilian demonstrators with armed force. Once the uprisings had been put down, the British appointed a commission under Lord Milner (1854-1925) to examine its causes and make

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<sup>13</sup> Marguerite Skilling, *Egypt and World War I*, 11 THE HISTORIAN, 204, 208 & 212-213 (1949).

<sup>14</sup> CLEVELAND & BUNTON, *supra* 4 at 180.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 181.

<sup>16</sup> FINA GUED VIDAL, SAFIA ZAGHLOUL 33-35 (1946), quoted in Beth Baron, *The Construction of National Honour in Egypt*, 5 GENDER & HISTORY 244, 249-250 (1993).

recommendations for the future of the Anglo-Egyptian relationship. The commission concluded that Britain could not hope to maintain direct control over Egypt and that British interests in the area would be best protected if Britain granted Egypt conditional independence.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in deference, the British abolished the protectorate and declared Egypt independent in 1922.<sup>18</sup> This declaration of independence, however, reserved several points which, as historian Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot writes, “rendered it well nigh void.”<sup>19</sup>

For Wafdist politicians, many of whom trained as lawyers either at the Khedival Law School or the French law school in Cairo, the idea of independence was closely linked with concepts of constitutional liberalism.<sup>20</sup> Once the Egyptian declaration of independence was issued, the group hastened to promulgate a constitution and establish a parliament. An Egyptian constitution was promulgated in 1923, and elections for parliament were held in 1924.<sup>21</sup> Egypt nonetheless struggled to attain political stability during this period, thanks in large part to tensions between early governments, the Egyptian monarchy, and a British administration that remained entrenched in Egyptian affairs. None of the early Egyptian governments made more than limited efforts in the realm of social and public health reform, and what efforts these governments did make were hindered as power struggles raged among competing factions of the elite.<sup>22</sup>

Diplomatic relations between Britain and Egypt did not change dramatically until the conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in 1936. The treaty recognized Egyptian sovereignty and gave Egypt control over its foreign and domestic policy. Britain maintained the right to intervene in Egypt in times of emergency and was granted military facilities in Egypt from which to monitor British lines of communication in the territory. British troops remained in the Suez Canal zone. The Montreux Convention was signed in 1937 as a corollary to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, and it ended the capitulations.<sup>23</sup> The British left their remaining posts in Egypt after a group of junior military officers, led by a certain Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970), staged a *coup d'état* and then overthrew the pro-British Egyptian monarchy in 1952. Nasser assumed executive office

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<sup>17</sup> GELVIN, *supra* 5 at 206.

<sup>18</sup> CLEVELAND & BUNTON, *supra* 4 at 180.

<sup>19</sup> AFAF LUTFI AL-SAYYID MARSOT, A SHORT HISTORY OF MODERN EGYPT 81 (1985).

<sup>20</sup> Amr Shalakany has traced the rise of an Egyptian legal elite who trained at successive iterations of what was known during this period as the Khedival Law School. Shalakany writes that graduates of the institution came monopolize the leadership of the early-twentieth-century Egyptian nationalist movement and succeeded in hitching the nationalist project to a “liberal legality” project of political and economic governance.” Amr Shalakany, *I Heard it All Before’: Egyptian tales of law and development*, 27 THIRD WORLD QUARTERLY 833, 838-844 (2006).

<sup>21</sup> CLEVELAND & BUNTON, *supra* 4 at 182.

<sup>22</sup> NANCY ELIZABETH GALLAGHER, EGYPT’S OTHER WARS: EPIDEMICS AND THE POLITICS OF PUBLIC HEALTH 13 (1990).

<sup>23</sup> CLEVELAND & BUNTON, *supra* 4 at 183.

in 1954. A new Anglo-Egyptian agreement was concluded the same year, which mandated that British forces evacuate their last Egyptian stations along the Suez Canal by 1956.<sup>24</sup>

The Egyptian transition from British protectorate through quasi-independence towards greater autonomy during the earlier half of the twentieth century raises questions about how to understand and label the period. Though Egypt was neither a British colony nor even a protectorate until 1914, it was inarguably under the yoke of British imperialism since British forces landed in Alexandria in 1882. The British administration penetrated the Egyptian army and its government ministries and reoriented the Egyptian economy to serve its interests and the interests of other core economies. Historians writing on Egypt after its *de jure* independence in 1922 tend to refer to the period as Egypt's liberal experiment.<sup>25</sup> Baron argues, however, that referring to this period as a failed experiment in liberal governance obscures the extent to which the actions of Egyptian politicians were constrained by continued British presence in Egypt and Egyptian affairs. Baron opts for the term "semi-colonial" to more accurately describe the Egyptian predicament during the period.<sup>26</sup> Hanan Kholoussy uses the term semi-colonial in her work too. Kholoussy emphasizes the importance of crediting Egyptian politicians for their role in drafting and promulgating law related to marriage and gender during the semi-colonial period, as these were realms over which Egyptian politicians exercised great control.<sup>27</sup> This work heeds the arguments of both scholars and the preceding historical background in its choice of the term semi-colonial. The history of the institution of motherhood and a focus on the role of medicine and law in constructing that institution is meant to provide a novel lens through which to read power, colonialism, nationalism, gender, and modernity during this period in Egypt.

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<sup>24</sup> Charles B. Selak Jr., *The Suez Canal Base Agreement of 1954*, 49 THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL LAW 487, 487 (1955).

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., AFAF LUTFI AL-SAYYID MARSOT, EGYPT'S LIBERAL EXPERIMENT, 1922-1936 (1977).

<sup>26</sup> BETH BARON, THE ORPHAN SCANDAL: CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND THE RISE OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, xi (2014).

<sup>27</sup> Hanan Kholoussy, *Monitoring and Medicalising Male Sexuality in Semi-Colonial Egypt*, 22 GENDER & HISTORY 667, 682 (2010); KHOLOUSSY, THE MARRIAGE CRISIS, *supra* 2 at 5-6.

## CHAPTER ONE

A new politics of health emerged in semi-colonial Egypt, couched in the policies of both the British colonial administration and the mostly European-educated Egyptian nationalist elites. British leadership sought to capture and make Egyptians useful, while the nationalists were determined to show that Egyptians were a mature and civilized people and thereby prove their capacity for independent governance. The groups disagreed on which administration should lead Egypt into the modern era, but the colonialists and nationalists shared a common set of assumptions about the path that should be followed. Lord Earl of Cromer wrote that “The new generation of Egyptians has to be persuaded or forced into imbibing the true spirit of Western civilization.”<sup>28</sup> Mustafa Kamil echoed Cromer in his writing, claiming that “We have known for over a century, that nations can live honorably only if they follow the path of Western civilization.”<sup>29</sup> The colonial and nationalist projects thus converged in their desire to reform Egyptians into civilized and productive, i.e., mentally and physically sound, citizens for a modern nation.

The teachings of foreign missionaries, work of voluntary social welfare organizations, agendas of professional associations, and writings of the press were also constitutive of the new politics of health in semi-colonial Egypt. These groups linked public health to the various issues that concerned their members, from the status of Egyptian women to the population problem. Missionary sources, for example, reveal a belief that healthy family life was impeded by the structure of the Islamic family, where the missionaries claim the husband ruled despotically over his wife. Linking uncleanness and poor family health to the oppression and disrespect of women, missionaries thought they could empower women and earn them the respect of their husbands by teaching them principles of personal hygiene and domestic cleanliness. Missionaries also linked conceptions of personal hygiene and domestic cleanliness to moral and religious purity and taught cleanliness customs to their beneficiaries.<sup>30</sup>

The Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, a prominent British organization whose objective was the promotion of a high standard of morality and sexual responsibility in public opinion, legislation, and social practice and which operated in Egypt during the period, tied their mission to public health as well.<sup>31</sup> One of the members of the association commented on the “disastrous

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<sup>28</sup> THE EARL OF CROMER, 2 MODERN EGYPT 538 (1916).

<sup>29</sup> ‘ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-RAFI‘I, MUSTAFA KAMIL BA‘ITH AL-HARAKA AL-WATANIYYA 215 (1962).

<sup>30</sup> Samir Boulos, ‘*A clean heart likes clean clothes*’: *cleanliness customs and conversion in Egypt (1900-1956)*, 21 ISLAM AND CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS 315, 321 (2010).

<sup>31</sup> FRANCESCA BIANCANI, SEX WORK IN COLONIAL EGYPT: WOMEN, MODERNITY AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY 142 (2018).

lack of decent sanitation and hygiene” in Egypt in a private letter written in 1930. She claimed that “what is obviously needed is a general levelling up [*sic*] of sanitary conditions for everyone,” and concluded, “It is obviously a hopeless task to hope to improve Egyptian moral conditions if its present social conditions are not drastically changed.”<sup>32</sup> Here, uncleanness is linked to moral impurity.

A concern that reoccurs significantly throughout the literature of the period is the tremendously high rate of infant and child mortality in Egypt. American traveler Elizabeth Cooper (1877-1945) was told before the war that sixty-five percent of children born in Egypt died before their third birthday.<sup>33</sup> A report published in 1921 by the Public Health Department on the state of public health in Egypt from 1914 to 1918 does not substantiate this, but does, nonetheless, reflect a high infant mortality rate. According to the report, “over one quarter of the children born in the twenty principal towns never reach the first anniversary of their birth.”<sup>34</sup> Throughout Egypt, after the war, the infant mortality rate was reportedly thirty-seven percent, causing one doctor to remark that “women give birth uselessly one time in every three.”<sup>35</sup> In 1937, infant mortality was estimated to account for sixty-five percent of all deaths in Egypt.<sup>36</sup> The high rate of infant and child mortality throughout Egypt was also linked to uncleanness. Cooper wrote, for example, that ignorant mothers did not bathe their infants for eight to forty days after birth and dressed their children in rags. She lamented that such conditions rendered childhood in Egypt “absolutely a survival of the fittest.”<sup>37</sup> “One often marvels,” Cooper wrote, “that any children live at all.”<sup>38</sup>

While the colonial administration expressed concern with the infant mortality rate in early-twentieth-century Egypt, it insisted on maintaining a balanced budget and prioritizing the repayment of Egyptian debts to Europe and spared little expense for addressing it or other issues of Egyptian health and welfare.<sup>39</sup> The Public Health Department reported that provincial councils operated only a meager number of children’s dispensaries and maternity schools in Egypt from 1914 to 1918 and noted “an urgent necessity of encouraging and increasing childrens [*sic*] dispensaries and maternity homes.”<sup>40</sup> In 1921, the British high commissioner refused to invest in

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<sup>32</sup> Letter to Miss Higson (January 23, 1930) 3AMS/D/13/01 Egypt 1921-1950 (on file with the London School of Economics Women’s Library).

<sup>33</sup> ELIZABETH COOPER, *THE WOMEN OF EGYPT* 294 (1914).

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Interior Annual Report (February 23, 1921) FO 141/586/4 at 21 (on file with the British National Archives).

<sup>35</sup> BARON, *WOMEN’S AWAKENING*, *supra* 2 at 160.

<sup>36</sup> Omnia El Shakry, *Barren Land and Fecund Bodies: The Emergence of Population Discourse in Interwar Egypt*, 37 *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MIDDLE EAST STUDIES* 351, 359 (2005).

<sup>37</sup> COOPER, *supra* 33 at 272.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> OWEN & PAMUK, *supra* 10 at 33.

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Interior *supra* 34 at 21.

broadening social services, claiming that “A general provision of such by the State ... would impose too great a financial burden upon the Government, and this local need must fall to be met by local effort.”<sup>41</sup> This call echoed that of contemporary Egyptian intellectual elites and heralded a proliferation of social welfare organizations dedicated to ensuring the health of Egyptian children. The high commissioner acknowledged the growth in Egyptian civil society in 1922, writing that there was “evidence of an increasing public interest in the provision of hospital treatment for the poor shown by the readiness of the prominent residents in many localities to give land and money to provide hospitals and to help in collecting funds for their maintenance.”<sup>42</sup> The State approach to addressing public health and the infant mortality rate changed later under an Egyptian government, and this is explored in Chapter Two.

While it is outside the scope of this work to detail the situation of public health and hygiene in Egypt or the cleanliness customs observed by Egyptians at the time, there can be no doubt that public health and adjacent issues like the infant mortality rate were widely problematized in Egypt in the early part of the twentieth century. This chapter shows that Egyptian women were blamed for the poor state of public health and high infant mortality rate in early-twentieth-century Egypt. This coincided with an ongoing reorientation of the Egyptian family in popular and religious literature, wherein the woman was being recast as the central figure in shaping the child and tending the home. At the intersection of these phenomena, new discussions emerged surrounding the significance of the role of women as mothers and the proper way to perform motherhood as an Egyptian woman. I argue in this chapter that a new institution of motherhood was then constructed and concretized through medical and legal discourse and reforms in semi-colonial Egypt. I engage three examples to build this argument. The first example demonstrates that the role of women as mothers was privileged in debates surrounding the drafting of new labor legislation in the early 1930s. These discussions reveal that even as Egypt underwent rapid industrialization in the interwar era, there remained a widespread belief that motherhood and the performance of wage labor should be mutually exclusive to ensure the health of Egyptian children. The second example is that of discussions about family planning in the late 1930s. These discussions defined the duties of a mother in bearing children and ensuring the health and welfare of her children. The final example in this chapter details several ways that lawmakers worked to ensure the maturity of mothers and the mental and physical health of the Egyptian

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<sup>41</sup> UK Foreign Office, *Egypt: Annual Report 83-87* (1920), quoted in Beth Baron, *Women's Voluntary Social Welfare Organizations in Egypt* IN GENDER, RELIGION, AND CHANGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST: TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF HISTORY 85, 90 (Inger Marie Okkenhaug & Ingvild Flaskerud eds., 2005).

<sup>42</sup> UK Foreign Office, *Egypt: Annual Report 76* (1921), quoted in Beth Baron, *id.* at 90.

family through a series of controversial personal status law reforms across the semi-colonial period.

This chapter also shows that women of the upper and lower classes were taught how to perform motherhood differently. While women of the upper classes were instructed not to neglect the duties associated with motherhood, poorer women were characterized as ignorant of them. This segues into Chapter Two, which traces the foundation of several elite women's voluntary social welfare organizations in early-twentieth-century Egypt and details their role in enforcing the new institution of motherhood on poorer classes of women.

### **CONSTRUCTING THE MOTHERS OF THE FUTURE**

The supposed shortcomings of Egyptian women had long been a popular talking point among British colonial administrators. Writing in 1908, Lord Cromer expressed his belief that “The position of women in Egypt” was “a fatal obstacle to the attainment of that elevation of thought and character which should accompany the introduction of European civilization.”<sup>43</sup> When Harry Boyle (1863-1937), Lord Cromer's Oriental Secretary, penned a memorandum on the background of the Khedival family, he variously described the women of the family as lesbians, drunkards, and keepers of chaotic and disorderly homes.<sup>44</sup> According to the colonialists, the backwardness of Egyptian women evidenced the innate inferiority of the Egyptian people, the inability of Egyptian men to govern Egyptian women justly, and the need for the British civilizing project to interfere. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak notes, “Imperialism's image as the establisher of the good society is marked by the espousal of the woman as object of protection from her own kind.”<sup>45</sup>

The colonized intelligentsia did not seem to disagree with the reputed backwardness of Egyptian women, but they pointed to the concept of the potential educability of backward peoples, rather than an innate inferiority, to support their modernizing project. The many faults of Egyptian women were a significant theme in the writing of Qasim Amin (1863-1908). In his book *The New Woman* (al-Mar'a al-Jadida), published in 1900, Qasim Amin described the general opinion of women in Egypt as “inferior due to their mental deficiencies, their low status in religion, and their primary role as temptresses and agents for the Devil.”<sup>46</sup> He wrote that Egyptian women

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<sup>43</sup> THE EARL OF CROMER, *supra* 28 at 539.

<sup>44</sup> CLARA ASCH BOYLE, BOYLE OF CAIRO: A DIPLOMATIST'S ADVENTURES IN THE MIDDLE EAST 43-44 (1965).

<sup>45</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* IN MARXISM AND THE INTERPRETATION OF CULTURE 271, 299 (Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg eds., 1988).

<sup>46</sup> QASIM AMIN, THE LIBERATION OF WOMEN AND THE NEW WOMAN: TWO DOCUMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF EGYPTIAN FEMINISM 115 (Samaha Sidhom Peterson trans., 2000).

must cultivate their minds, refine their manners, and gradually gain their rights, thereby following in the footsteps of Western women.<sup>47</sup>

Qasim Amin principally criticized veiling, seclusion, and early marriage and advocated for the education of women, their incorporation into public life, and reform of personal status law. His positions on these topics were widely discussed among the intelligentsia in the early-twentieth century. Salama Musa (1887-1958), a prominent Egyptian intellectual and journalist, later reflected in his autobiography that there were two subjects that he and his colleagues had discussed more than anything else during his time at the Khedival College from 1903 to 1908. These topics were “the English occupation and Qasim Amin’s movement for the liberation of women.” The students discussed these topics, he wrote, because “they concerned the whole of Egyptian society.”<sup>48</sup> Women journalists commonly engaged with the works of Qasim Amin in the press as well, which Juan Ricardo Cole notes is evidence of solidarity among intellectuals of the upper class across gender lines.<sup>49</sup>

Discussions of women’s backwardness tangled with anxieties over public health and hygiene in Egypt during the period, such that discussions of their backwardness became discussions of their uncleanliness, disorderliness, and poor hygiene. Labiba Hashim (1880-1947), the editor of a popular women’s journal published in Egypt, argued in 1911 that “the ignorance of mothers of the principles of hygiene” was one of Egypt’s central problems.<sup>50</sup> Qasim Amin wrote on this, too, claiming that “the number of children killed by ignorant women every year exceeds the number of people who die in the most brutal wars.” “Through their ignorance about health or hygiene issues,” he reasoned, women “bring sickness and chronic diseases upon their children, which place a heavy burden on them for the rest of their lives.”<sup>51</sup>

While Egyptian reformists like Qasim Amin advocated for the education of all women as a cure for their ignorance, Western observers were skeptical of the educability of the poorer classes of Egyptians. Cooper wrote that Lord Herbert Kitchener (1850-1916), the British consul-general in Egypt from 1911 to 1914, sent thousands of pamphlets to villages instructing mothers in the proper treatment of children before the war, but the fellahin could not read them. When Cooper explained the purpose of the pamphlets to a woman in one of the villages, the woman reportedly laughed and suggested that Lord Kitchener send a town crier with each bundle of leaflets. If there was anyone in the village who could read the pamphlets, they were reluctant to do so

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<sup>47</sup> *Id.* at 116.

<sup>48</sup> SALAMA MUSA, *THE EDUCATION OF SALAMA MUSA* 29 (L.O. Schuman trans., 1961).

<sup>49</sup> Cole, *supra* 9 at 402.

<sup>50</sup> Labiba Hashim, *Al-Tarbiya* in 38 *Al-Muqtataf* 274, 277 (1911) quoted in Shakry, *supra* 2 at 158.

<sup>51</sup> AMIN, *supra* 46 at 162.

because, Cooper explains, the villagers shared a general “dislike of anything the British government might do.”<sup>52</sup> Cooper portrays those in the village as unable or, at least, reluctant to learn and concludes that ignorance is an Egyptian handicap.<sup>53</sup>

Women were simultaneously being recast as the central figure in shaping the child and tending the home. Within the Islamic religious establishment, there was a recognizable shift in the focus and audience of literature that dealt with issues of childrearing beginning in the late-nineteenth century. Most of the earlier literature on the topic had been addressed to the father as the foremost parental authority.<sup>54</sup> This reflected a legal reality, which held that fathers were responsible for supporting their children and children belonged to their father. In divorce cases, mothers were vested with caretaking responsibilities until children reached a certain age, but then custody was transferred to the father. If the father died, his family took guardianship of the children.<sup>55</sup> Beginning in the late-nineteenth century, however, women were addressed more directly. Mothers began to become the central parental authority in religious texts. Scores of other books and articles were also published on the central role of women within the family during the period. These included translations of earlier works, including *Healthcare of the Pregnant, the Postpartum, and the Infant* (Tadbyr Sihah al-Hamil wa-l-Nafsa wa-l-Tifl) and *Advice for Mothers* (Nasa’ih li-l-Umahat), which were purchased by schools for inclusion in their curricula, plus a flood of original works.<sup>56</sup>

The cornerstone of a new institution of motherhood was laid at the intersection of popular representations of women as ignorant, anxieties over public health, and a reorientation of the Egyptian family in semi-colonial Egypt. The new institution of motherhood transcended class, but its components had different class origins, and it was disseminated to different classes of women via different means. Wealthier classes of Egyptian women read about motherhood in a thriving women’s press comprised of a series of mostly monthly Arabic periodicals. Baron writes that journals published by, for, and about women grew in popularity and number beginning with Hind Nawfal’s (1860-1920) *The Young Woman* (al-Fatah), which appeared in Alexandria in 1892. Women’s journals were issued in Egypt at an average rate of one per year from that point through World War I. These journals were aimed at a wealthy audience, at least partly because wealthy women were more likely to be able to read them. Censuses from the period show that

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<sup>52</sup> COOPER, *supra* 33 at 294-297.

<sup>53</sup> *Id.* at 298.

<sup>54</sup> See AVNER GILADI, CHILDREN OF ISLAM: CONCEPTS OF CHILDHOOD IN MEDIEVAL MUSLIM SOCIETY 42-68 (1992).

<sup>55</sup> AHMED FEKRY IBRAHIM, CHILD CUSTODY IN ISLAMIC LAW: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN EGYPT SINCE THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY 165-191 (2018).

<sup>56</sup> BARON, WOMEN’S AWAKENING, *supra* 2 at 158-159.

literacy rates in Egypt were very low, particularly among women. Most literate women also resided in cities, although women's journals enjoyed some pockets of readership in rural areas, too.<sup>57</sup>

The women's press helped create a new body of literature on motherhood, which argued that raising children was a job that should not be neglected nor delegated to servants or relatives.<sup>58</sup> This literature condemned the widespread practice of giving infants to a wet nurse. Writers cautioned that wet nursing might be dangerous. Reports of the accidental death of infants, suffocated by their wet nurses while both slept, for example, strengthened the effect of the writer's warnings.<sup>59</sup> Rosa Antun (1882-1955), the editor of the popular women's journal *The Women and the Girls* (al-Sayyidat wa-l-Banat), wrote in 1903 that although some women "brag about not nursing their children themselves, there is nothing in this custom to boast about."<sup>60</sup> Women in the middle class were discouraged from giving their infants to wet nurses as an economizing measure, as wet nurses would have been difficult to find and costly at the time. Writers suggested various personal remedies for women who were unable to nurse. Female intellectuals also condemned the practice of wet nursing because they claimed it weakened the bond between mother and child at a time when those bonds should be fortified.<sup>61</sup> The emerging body of literature sought to celebrate motherhood and imbue it with a new dignity. Motherhood was to be understood by women as their duty and their destiny, but also as a great reward.

## IMAGINING MOTHERS AT WORK

Anna Davin, writing on motherhood in turn-of-the-century Britain, argues that emphasis on the importance of women not neglecting the duties associated with motherhood was related to a belief that middle and upper class women were prioritizing the pursuit of new opportunities in education and employment or otherwise restricting their number of children.<sup>62</sup> It may have been true that women in turn-of-the-century Egypt were pursuing new opportunities in employment, as censuses taken in 1897, 1907, and 1917 reflect steady increases in the number of women working for pay outside their homes.<sup>63</sup> It is difficult to track trends in these censuses, though, because they were produced under different directors and teams and varied enormously in their methods.<sup>64</sup> A significant proportion of women counted among waged workers on censuses may

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<sup>57</sup> Beth Baron, *Readers and the Women's Press in Egypt*, 15 *POETICS TODAY* 217, 218-220 (1994).

<sup>58</sup> BARON, *WOMEN'S AWAKENING*, *supra* 2 at 163.

<sup>59</sup> *Id.* at 160-161.

<sup>60</sup> Rosa Antun, *Al-Murdi*, 1 *AL-SAYYIDAT WA-L-BANAT* 234 (1903), quoted in *id.* at 161.

<sup>61</sup> BARON, *WOMEN'S AWAKENING*, *supra* 2 at 161.

<sup>62</sup> Anna Davin, *Imperialism and Motherhood*, 5 *HISTORY WORKSHOP* 9, 14 (1978).

<sup>63</sup> BARON, *WOMEN'S AWAKENING*, *supra* 2 at 145, 153.

<sup>64</sup> *Id.* at 150-151.

have also been previously enslaved household laborers, who transitioned into waged positions sometime after the abolition of slavery in Egypt in 1877.<sup>65</sup> There are more than 35,000 women listed as employed servants in the 1897 census, which constituted half of all women reported as working for pay outside their homes. The reported number of women employed as household servants doubled in the 1917 census, still representing a significant proportion of all female wage earners but no longer half.<sup>66</sup> Based on the census data, it seems likely that at least part of the reason for the sharp increase in women counted among the workforce at the turn of the century in Egypt was the visibilization of household laborers.

While it is difficult to identify trends in earlier census data, Egyptian women certainly began entering the waged workforce in large numbers during the interwar period as Egypt underwent rapid industrialization.<sup>67</sup> Female labor became an important feature of a burgeoning spinning and weaving industry in Egypt after the war, and women were employed in particularly large numbers at several textile mills at Shubra al-Khayma and the spinning and weaving complex at al-Mahala al-Kubra, which was opened in 1927.<sup>68</sup> Even as women entered the workforce during this period, there remained an expectation that motherhood and the performance of wage labor were mutually exclusive. This can be gleaned from contemporary discussions surrounding the drafting of new labor law in Egypt.

The expansion of factory labor in Egypt was met with calls from workers for new labor legislation. The Egyptian parliament responded in 1931, by forming a committee, which was called the Committee of the Interior and Health Affairs (Taqrir Lajnat al-Dakhilya wa-l-Shu'un al-Sihya), to make recommendations for a draft labor law.<sup>69</sup> This committee worked alongside a representative from the International Labor Organization, a man named Harold Butler (1883-1951), who was invited to Egypt to report on labor conditions and make recommendations for new legislation on behalf of the organization. Butler arrived in Cairo in 1932.<sup>70</sup> Both the Egyptian government and the International Labor Organization were concerned with ensuring the health and longevity of the Egyptian workforce, which, in turn, relied on ensuring the reproduction of labor(ers) occurring within the family. Paradoxically, however, neither group

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<sup>65</sup> *Id.* at 153.; *See generally* JUDITH TUCKER, *WOMEN IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY EGYPT 186-191* (1985).

<sup>66</sup> BARON, *WOMEN'S AWAKENING*, *supra* 2 at 153.

<sup>67</sup> *See* HAMMAD, *supra* 2.

<sup>68</sup> *Id.* at 6; Judith Tucker, *Egyptian Women in the Workforce: An Historical Survey*, 50 *MERIP REPORTS* 3, 8 (1976).

<sup>69</sup> *See* Taqrir Lajnat al-Dakhilya wa-l-Shu'un al-Sihya, 'An Mashrou' al Qanun al Khas bi-Wad' Nizam li-Tashghyl al-Ahdath min-l-Dhukur wa-l-Inath 340 *IN* 1 MAHDAR AL-JALSA AL-KHAMISA WA-L-'ISHRYN LI-MAJLIS AL-NUWWAB (1933) (cites the expansion of factory labor as a reason for the formation of the committee).

<sup>70</sup> Mai Taha, *Reading 'Class' in International Law: The Labor Question in Interwar Egypt* 25 *SOCIAL & LEGAL STUDIES* 567, 578 (2016).

initially prioritized maternity provisions in their recommendations for the new labor law. Butler explained in a report in 1932 that adopting maternity provisions struck him as superfluous because so few married women were employed in Egypt at the time. He wrote that it remained customary in Egypt for women to cease employment when they married.<sup>71</sup> The groups instead prioritized the reduction and regulation of working hours for both women and children. Women and children were grouped together in discussions, with the implication that the groups were similarly capable and required a similar level of protection and supervision. Women needed to be protected, reasoned Dr. Abd al-Aziz Nazmi,<sup>72</sup> the rapporteur of the Egyptian Committee of the Interior and Health Affairs because they were responsible for raising “the men of the future,” who were “the pillar of the nation’s fortune.”<sup>73</sup> Butler similarly privileged the role that Egyptian women played as mothers by referring to them as “young wives to be” in his writing.<sup>74</sup>

When parliament passed Law No. 80 on the Regulation of Women in Industry and Commercial Establishments in 1933, it did include some protections for pregnant women and nursing mothers. It required women to take one month off prior to childbirth, and another fifteen days after childbirth. It also forbade employers from dismissing women during their maternity leave.<sup>75</sup> Employers that did not want to accommodate pregnant or nursing mothers, however, simply refused to hire married women and took to dismissing women who did not leave their positions voluntarily after marriage.<sup>76</sup> While the law prohibited employers from firing women during maternity leave, there were no other limitations on their ability to dismiss an employee.<sup>77</sup> This environment made plain that while young unmarried women could join the workforce, they were welcome there only for as long as they remained “young wives to be.” They were expected to mature, marry, and leave the workforce to become mothers, at which point they would work instead in their homes to ensure the health of their children and the nation’s fortune.

## **PLANNING THE FAMILY**

Whether or not Egyptian women were particularly concerned with restricting their number of children during the period is difficult to glean from the press, which did not entertain discussion of birth control nor sex and was reticent when it came to the issue of family size.<sup>78</sup> While it was not common in the press, contraception became a popular topic of discussion in professional

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<sup>71</sup> *Id.* at 580.

<sup>72</sup> Dates unknown.

<sup>73</sup> Taqyir Lajnat al-Dakhilya wa-l-Shu'un al-Sihya, *supra* 69 at 386.

<sup>74</sup> Harold Butler, Report on Labour Conditions in Egypt with Suggestions for Future Social Legislation: Unemployment 1 (1932), quoted in Taha, *supra* 70 at 580.

<sup>75</sup> BADRAN, *supra* 2 at 174.

<sup>76</sup> HAMMAD, *supra* 2 at 92.

<sup>77</sup> BADRAN, *supra* 2 at 174.

<sup>78</sup> BARON, WOMEN'S AWAKENING, *supra* 2 at 161.

circles during the period in the context of an emerging international population movement. Between 1936 and 1939, the Egyptian Medical Association hosted several forums on birth control and the population problem, and a group of university professors founded the Happy Family Society to facilitate discussions about the need for planned families in Egypt.<sup>79</sup> At the 1937 Conference on Birth Control in Egypt hosted by the Egyptian Medical Association, the attendees concluded that Egypt must work to improve the quality of its population to produce “healthy sons of the nation.”<sup>80</sup> While a consensus emerged that Egypt needed family planning, most discussion remained carefully phrased in terms of planning births, not preventing births.<sup>81</sup> The former entailed a concern for and preservation of procreation, while the latter was associated with more problematic measures like abortion, infanticide, and sterilization.

There is some evidence that Egyptian women terminated unwanted pregnancies during the period, although statistics on the prevalence of abortions are mostly unknown. Baron writes that in 1917 at least 104 abortions were performed at seven provincial maternity homes, but it is difficult to know under what circumstances these operations were performed or who the women were.<sup>82</sup> Omnia El Shakry writes that the use of folk methods to terminate unwanted pregnancies was likely widespread during the period, particularly among poorer classes of Egyptians who would resort to abortion out of desperation and poverty.<sup>83</sup> The religious establishment addressed the question of abortion in January 1937, when Shaykh Abd al-Majid Selim (1882-1954), a prominent member of Dar al-Ifta, issued a fatwa in response to an inquiry regarding the permissibility of child spacing to ensure the health of an infant, previous children, and the mother. The text of the fatwa clarified that abortion was permissible if the pregnancy endangered the health of the named parties, but only “before the child is gifted with a soul.”<sup>84</sup> The fatwa was published in the proceedings of the Conference on Birth Control in Egypt hosted by the Egyptian Medical Society that same year. When a new Egyptian penal code was promulgated in August of 1937, it criminalized abortion except in cases where abortion was necessary to save the life of the pregnant woman.<sup>85</sup>

Discussions about family planning moved slowly beyond the realm of professional associations in the following years. Proponents of family planning continued to prioritize the duty of the mother in bearing children in these discussions and argue that women should not be allowed to

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<sup>79</sup> OMNIA EL SHAKRY, *THE GREAT SOCIAL LABORATORY: SUBJECTS OF KNOWLEDGE IN COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL EGYPT* 145 (2007).

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in *id.* at 167.

<sup>81</sup> SHAKRY, *supra* 79 at 168.

<sup>82</sup> BARON, *WOMEN’S AWAKENING*, *supra* 2 at 161.

<sup>83</sup> SHAKRY, *supra* 79 at 190.

<sup>84</sup> *Id.* at 186-187.

<sup>85</sup> Egypt Law No. 58 of 1937. Arts. 61, 260-264.

terminate unwanted pregnancies. Those with more conservative views held that women should not be allowed to seek an abortion or otherwise use contraception to restrict their number of children except in cases that threatened the health or welfare of the mother or child. These discussions told women that they must bear children, except in cases where doing so would threaten their life or the life or welfare of their children. Under Nasser in 1962, the State came out unequivocally in favor of family planning and began to promote it as a matter of official policy.<sup>86</sup> Women were still expected to bear children but, as women's labor productivity became a topic of social research and widespread discussion, contraception became a technology among many others that made it feasible and expected for women to work efficiently in the public sphere and at home.<sup>87</sup>

While wealthier women were instructed not to neglect the duties associated with motherhood, women of the poorer classes were characterized as ignorant of them. As new duties came to be accepted as common knowledge, it was reasoned that those who did not perform them must be ignorant of them or at least irresponsible. The journals that wealthier women subscribed to propagated the idea that maternal ignorance was rampant among the poorer classes. Malak Hifni Nasif (1886-1918), for example, expressed concern in her writing that only educated women could imbue children with appropriate values. She cautioned her readers against allowing peasant servant women to tend to their children, because, she claimed, they were not sophisticated enough to do so.<sup>88</sup> Malak Hifni Nasif was a prolific writer, who often published in the women's press under her pseudonym – Searcher in the Desert (Bahithat al-Badiya).

Many wealthy women became involved in voluntary social welfare organizations and worked to address the issues that they read about in their journals. The press of the period is littered with references to new charities, fundraisers, and workshops organized and funded by wealthy women, for the benefit of poorer women. While the institution of motherhood transcended class, it simultaneously reinforced class hierarchies through this sort of maternalism.<sup>89</sup> The wives of colonial administrators, traveling Western feminists, and missionary women were similarly involved in social welfare organizations in Egypt during the period. The aforementioned

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<sup>86</sup> Beth Baron, *The Origins of Family Planning: Aziza Hussein, American Experts, and the Egyptian State* 4 JOURNAL OF MIDDLE EAST WOMEN'S STUDIES 31, 33 (2008).

<sup>87</sup> See LAURA BIER, REVOLUTIONARY WOMANHOOD: FEMINISMS, MODERNITY, AND THE STATE IN NASSER'S EGYPT 60-100 (2011). See also Laura Bier, *From Birth Control to Family Planning: Population, Gender, and the Politics of Reproduction in Egypt* IN FAMILY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: IDEATIONAL CHANGE IN EGYPT, IRAN, AND TUNISIA 55 (Kathryn M. Yount & Hoda Rashad eds., 2008).

<sup>88</sup> Bahithat al-Badiya, *al-Nisa' yat* 93ff (192?), quoted in Thomas Phillip, *Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt* IN WOMEN IN THE MUSLIM WORLD 277, 283 (Lois Beck & Nikki Keddie eds., 1978).

<sup>89</sup> Baron, *supra* 41 at 86.

Association for Moral and Social Hygiene is one example of an organization that counted the wives of British colonial administrators and other British feminists among its members.

The portrayal of poor women as ignorant of basic principles of cleanliness and hygiene and the focus on reforming mothers and families obscured the pernicious health effects of poverty and environmental hazards, which were aggravated by an uneven distribution of landed property. Shakry notes this, writing that major establishment figures kept with their landowning class interests by shifting blame to tangential issues. Parliamentarians, large landowners, and other elites engaged in clichéd discussions linking poverty to disease and disease to ignorance and established voluntary social welfare organizations to address these issues, all while protecting their interests.<sup>90</sup>

### **REFORMING PERSONAL STATUS LAW**

In March 1914, Zakariya Bey Namiq<sup>91</sup> proposed a bill on marital issues. Changes to personal status law were, at the time, a source of great public controversy, as matters of personal status remained within the jurisdiction of the shari'a in Egypt, and many Muslim jurists and laypeople alike were opposed to reinterpreting the law.<sup>92</sup> The bill that Zakariya Bey proposed comprised several recommendations, but a proposal to make sixteen the minimum age at which girls could legally marry garnered particular attention. The existing law contained no provision regarding the age at which a girl could marry, and it was the norm at the time for women of all classes in Egypt to marry around the age of puberty.<sup>93</sup> Following Zakariya Bey's proposal, reporters and readers alike offered their opinions on the appropriate age of marriage in the press. Some offered their own legal proposals. A significant portion of the supporting arguments relied on medical rationale. Many women argued that girls who married too young were prone to dangerous or even fatal pregnancies and diseases, such as hysteria. Zakariya Bey similarly believed that women who married too soon risked their health, and he consulted several doctors before determining that sixteen was a suitable age for women to marry and specifying it in his proposal.<sup>94</sup>

Another significant portion of the arguments in support of the proposal took a more nationalist approach and argued that women should not marry too young because mature women were better suited to producing and rearing the future citizens of the Egyptian nation. The editors of al-Ahram, in their response to the proposal, wrote, "a strong nation can only be built from a large,

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<sup>90</sup> Shakry, *supra* 36 at 353.

<sup>91</sup> Dates unknown.

<sup>92</sup> FARHAT ZIADEH, *LAWYERS, THE RULE OF LAW AND LIBERALISM IN MODERN EGYPT* 116 (1968).

<sup>93</sup> BADRAN, *supra* 2 at 127; CUNO, *supra* 2 at 130-131.

<sup>94</sup> Kholoussy, *The Nationalization of Marriage*, *supra* 2 at 320-321.

well-raised, educated offspring and such offspring can only be formed by mature mothers. The nation needs mature women, not girls.”<sup>95</sup> A similar rationale regarding the need for mature mothers was employed by contemporary reformists like Qasim Amin, who advocated for the education of women.<sup>96</sup>

The bill proposed by Zakariya Bey in 1914 was met with such significant criticism from the religious establishment that he was forced to retract it.<sup>97</sup> The general public remained invested in the matter, however, and in 1923 the Egyptian Feminist Union, which had only been recently established, directly petitioned the government for a legal provision establishing sixteen as the minimum legal marriage age for women. Law No. 56 of that year fixed the minimum marriage age at sixteen for women and eighteen for men.<sup>98</sup> The Egyptian Feminist Union celebrated this as a great success, but the decree proved difficult to enforce. The courts responsible for issuing marriage licenses were initially happy to accept verbal testimony in place of a birth certificate to prove a woman’s age. Feminists insisted that birth certificates be produced, and if that were impossible, they proposed that a woman’s age should be verified through a series of two medical examinations performed by government doctors. When this became a requirement, doctors were accused of knowingly falsifying women’s ages in their reports.<sup>99</sup> Many marriages also went unregistered for years or altogether to evade the minimum marriage age outlined in the decree.<sup>100</sup> The Egyptian government attempted to address shortcomings in earlier legislation with the passage of Law No. 78 of 1931, which consolidated the provisions issued in 1923 and further stipulated that courts could not entertain claims of disputed marriages unless those marriages were registered.<sup>101</sup> Law No. 44 of 1933 made it possible to prosecute doctors or witnesses who falsely verified a women’s age for the purpose of obtaining a marriage license.<sup>102</sup>

Opinions that a minimum marriage age should be codified reflected a desire to ensure the maturity of mothers. Those who held this opinion expressed two motivations for wanting to ensure the maturity of mothers, which were based on medical and pseudo-medical nationalist rationale. Those who made the former argument claimed that women who married and became pregnant at too young an age risked their physical or mental health or that of their children. Others argued that mothers must be sufficiently mature not only to ensure the health and welfare

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<sup>95</sup> *Zawaj al-Banat al-Saghirat*, AL-AHRAM (March 18, 1914), quoted in *id.* at 321.

<sup>96</sup> Amin, *supra* 46.

<sup>97</sup> *Mashru‘ Tazwij al-Banat*, AL-AHRAM (March 18, 1914), quoted in Kholoussy, *The Nationalization of Marriage*, *supra* 2 at 321.

<sup>98</sup> BADRAN, *supra* 2 at 127; Egypt Law No. 56 of 1923.

<sup>99</sup> BADRAN, *supra* 2 at 128.

<sup>100</sup> CUNO, *supra* 2 at 140.

<sup>101</sup> Kholoussy, *The Nationalization of Marriage*, *supra* 2 at 323; Egypt Law No. 78 of 1931.

<sup>102</sup> Kholoussy, *The Nationalization of Marriage*, *supra* 2 at 323; Egypt Law No. 44 of 1933.

of their children but to raise them to be sufficiently educable and successful. Both arguments prioritized the role of women as mothers and emphasized their central role in the rearing of children.

While the debate over the appropriate minimum age of marriage raged in the press, less controversial reforms were codified in Personal Status Law No. 25 of 1920. While these reforms did not elicit the same level of public discussion, they were no less significant in shaping the new institution of motherhood and reshaping the Egyptian family. Article 9 of Law No. 25, in particular, sought to ensure the health of the family unit. This article granted a wife the legal right to divorce her husband if he contracted a serious and incurable ailment.<sup>103</sup> Unlike later provisions that granted women greater access to divorce, this provision was not attributable to feminist lobbying but emerged from a growing Egyptian interest in the contemporary eugenics movement.<sup>104</sup> Shakry writes that, in the Egyptian context, eugenics was not discussed as a racial issue, but as an issue of removing what were perceived as physical and mental defects from the population.<sup>105</sup> This is evident in Article 9 of Law No. 25, which names specifically leprosy, insanity, and skin diseases — ailments that cause physical disfigurement or intellectual disability — as ailments that merit a woman’s right to divorce. With Article 9 of Law No. 25, legislators sought to ensure the development of physically and mentally sound families to serve as the foundation for the modern Egyptian nation.

It was this growing interest in eugenics that also inspired widespread calls to require men and women to undergo medical examinations before marriage. In a letter to the editor published in *al-Ahram* in 1914, a man condemned families that allowed their ailing and incurable children to marry and called on the government to adopt a law requiring brides and grooms to attest that they were not afflicted with any disease before marriage for the sake of their children. He referenced similar policies that were in place in the United States to support his argument.<sup>106</sup> Dr. ‘Abd al-Wahid al-Wakyl (1895-1944) similarly wrote in 1931 that medical examinations ought to be required for couples before marriage to ensure the health of the couple and the absence of diseases, especially sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>107</sup> He believed that, while contraception was a popular topic of discussion in Europe at the time, it was too soon to consider the use of contraceptives in Egypt. He argued that medical examinations before marriage were a better alternative. Dr. ‘Abd al-Wahid al-Wakyl later became the minister of health. A proposal was also

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<sup>103</sup> Egypt Law No. 25 of 1920. Art. 9.

<sup>104</sup> Kholoussy, *supra* 27 at 682.

<sup>105</sup> SHAKRY, *supra* 79 at 170.

<sup>106</sup> Ilyas al-Ghadban, *Zawaj al-Mu‘talyn wa hal min al-imkan Man‘uh*, AL-AHRAM (March 21, 1914).

<sup>107</sup> ‘Abd al-Wahid al-Wakyl, *Hal Na‘mad ila Tahdid al-Nasl?*, 40 AL-HILAL (December, 1931).

drawn up by Dr. ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘Awad<sup>108</sup> to require medical examinations for couples before marriage and sent to the senate in 1928. The proposal was not seriously considered until 1941 when it was resubmitted with revisions by the Ministry of Health. An article published in the *Journal of the Ministry of Social Affairs* in April of that year argued that the law would protect the future generations of the nation.<sup>109</sup> The bill was never passed.

Those who called for couples to undergo mandatory medical examinations before marriage sought to ensure the mental and physical health of Egyptian families. This same desire led to the drafting and promulgation of Article 9 of Law No. 25, which granted a wife the right to seek a divorce if her husband developed an intellectual disability or contracted a skin disease or other serious and incurable ailment. Women in Egypt at the time had limited other access to divorce. That they were granted the right to seek a divorce to protect the health of their children, reflects the idea that motherhood was their duty and that mothers were expected to take a central role in ensuring the mental and physical health of their children.

This chapter has shown that new discussions emerged in Egypt at the turn of the century surrounding the significance of the role of women as mothers and the proper way to perform motherhood as an Egyptian woman. These discussions grew from a constellation of others on the supposed backwardness of Egyptian women, public health, the infant mortality rate, and the role of the mother in the Islamic or Egyptian family. Through an exploration of labor and personal status law reforms and discussions of family planning, I argued that a new institution of motherhood was then constructed and concretized by medical and legal interventions during the semi-colonial period. I showed how this new institution of motherhood was constructed and enforced on the level of the population through medical and legal interventions that were opposable against women across Egypt. The following chapter turns to the ongoing construction and enforcement of motherhood on the level of the individual during the same period.

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<sup>108</sup> Dates unknown.

<sup>109</sup> SHAKRY, *supra* 79 at 173.

## CHAPTER TWO

In August 1925, an Egyptian delegation attended the first General Congress on Child Welfare in Geneva. The delegation described the situation of child welfare in Egypt, and claimed that “a prolific cause of high infant mortality in Egypt, as elsewhere, is the ignorance of the populace in all matters appertaining [*sic*] to the hygiene of infants and proper mothercraft.”<sup>110</sup> The delegation reported that the efforts of the Egyptian government to address the infant mortality rate and ensure the welfare of children in Egypt included prenatal, natal, and postnatal care for mothers and infants.<sup>111</sup> The presence of an official Egyptian delegation at the congress in Geneva and the government initiatives described in their report represent some of the earliest efforts of the Egyptian State to provide maternal and child welfare to the Egyptian people. The State’s provision of maternal and child welfare then rapidly expanded through the remainder of the interwar period. As a continuation of the State’s move into the realm of social welfare provision, the Ministry of Social Affairs was established in 1939.

I argue in this chapter that, with the establishment of the Ministry of Social Affairs and subsequent legislation on the regulation of benevolent and social societies, the State took increasing control over and began to depoliticize Egyptian civil society.<sup>112</sup> I argue further that the Egyptian government employed a legal language of rights and duties to frame and disguise its increasing control over civil society as a requisite of modern liberal governance. I show that increased State control over civil society had significant effects on mothers and the institution of motherhood in Egypt. As the State progressed from emulating the programs of social welfare organizations to tightly regulating and eventually subsuming those programs and organizations, the State extended its reach into women’s homes and intimate matters of children and the family where it was able to access and therefore transform mothers and the institution of motherhood to an extent never before achieved.

In Chapter One, I conceptualized law as rules that regulated the actions of women and were opposable against women across Egypt and, therefore, worked to define a proper performance of motherhood and construct a new institution of motherhood. Here, I engage a conceptualization of law and legality as a language employed by the State to frame and disguise its growing control

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<sup>110</sup> Report from Official Egyptian Delegation to the First General Congress on the Welfare of Children 3-4 (August 1925) quoted in SHAKRY, *supra* 79 at 176 [hereinafter Report from Official Egyptian Delegation].

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> See generally WENDY BROWN, *POLITICS OUT OF HISTORY* 64-89 (2001)., and Karl Marx, *Zur Judenfrage IN DEUTSCH-FRANZÖSISCHE JAHRBÜCHER* 182 (Arnold Ruge & Karl Marx eds., 1844) (on power, State formation, and the depoliticization of civil society).

over and depoliticization of civil society. This conceptualization of law represents an intertwining of the social and the legal.

This chapter proceeds in three parts. The first section traces the rapid expansion of the State's provision of maternal and child welfare surrounding the General Congress on Child Welfare in Geneva in 1925 and throughout the remainder of the interwar period. The second section of the chapter shows that the State took increasing control over and began to depoliticize civil society with the establishment of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1939. I also detail Law 49 of 1945 in this section, which further extended the power of the State to monitor and regulate charitable organizations and circumscribe the activities they could perform. I suggest in this section that the State used a legal language of duties and rights to frame and disguise its increasing control over civil society as a requisite of modern liberal governance. The last section of the chapter traces the growth of several social welfare organizations that were founded between 1908 and 1924 and provided maternal and child welfare to families in Egypt. It shows that the State imitated the programs of these organizations and that it interfered increasingly with their activities after the Ministry of Social Affairs was established in 1939. Because the existing maternal and child welfare programs were operating in women's homes and with private and intimate matters of children and the family, the regulation and eventual subsumption of these organizations allowed the State to access and therefore transform mothers and the institution of motherhood to an extent never before achieved.

### **THE STATE'S "ATTENTION TO MOTHERHOOD"**

The Egyptian delegation to the General Congress on Child Welfare reported that the efforts of the Egyptian government to address the infant mortality rate and ensure the welfare of children in Egypt included prenatal, natal, and postnatal care for mothers and infants. Prenatal care included the supervision of pregnancies and early treatment of syphilis and was provided at provincial hospitals around the country and at Qasr el-Aini Hospital in Cairo, where a prenatal clinic and maternity department had been opened in 1919.<sup>113</sup> A gynecology and obstetrics ward had been opened at Qasr el-Aini some years earlier, but the ward was mostly reserved for emergency cases that required instrumental delivery, and the number of beds available was very small. Several training schools for midwives were opened beginning as early as 1912, with the aim of reforming in-home natal care along the lines of the British gynecological curriculum that

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<sup>113</sup> Report from Official Egyptian Delegation, *supra* 110; NAGUIB BEY MAHFOUZ, THE HISTORY OF MEDICAL EDUCATION IN EGYPT 80 (1935).

was being taught contemporaneously at Qasr el-Aini.<sup>114</sup> Government efforts to provide postnatal care included the provision of child welfare centers and dispensaries. These centers offered lessons on basic health and hygiene and modern child and infant welfare practices, in addition to administering medical care and providing medicine. The report of the Egyptian delegation also reveals government plans to launch a program wherein staff would visit homes, instruct mothers in basic hygiene and health practices, and administer basic medical care. The report notes, however, that a shortage of suitably trained staff had thus far prevented the generalization of this initiative.<sup>115</sup>

The Egyptian delegation also wrote in 1925 on the role of education in government efforts to ensure the welfare of Egyptian children. “The Egyptian government is fully aware of the importance of Education,” claims the report, “not only in general, but also specialised instruction so that a campaign may be conducted to diminish the infantile mortality [*sic*] rate in the Country, and already steps are being taken to achieve the object.”<sup>116</sup> These steps included the introduction of the “teaching of hygiene, both general and personal,” at public primary and secondary schools and lessons in “infantile hygiene” in training colleges for girls.<sup>117</sup> These topics were being incorporated into the curricula at tuition-free public schools, as well as at government-operated elite schools that targeted the children of the upper class. Saiza Nabarawi (1897-1985), a member of the Egyptian Feminist Union and journalist for *L’Egyptienne*, reported, for example, that at the College Qasr al-Dubara, which opened in a mansion in Garden City in 1927, “a large part of the curriculum [was] reserved for housekeeping, domestic economy, and culinary arts.”<sup>118</sup>

In 1927, the Public Health Administration created a child welfare section, which was made responsible for the operation of a series of permanent and traveling child welfare centers across Egypt and the supervision of the work of child welfare centers, children’s dispensaries, and schools of midwifery belonging to provincial councils and municipalities. The objectives of the Child Welfare Section included specifically “Attention to motherhood, and education of mothers as to the means of care and prevention, together with encouraging them to fully perform their duties as mothers.”<sup>119</sup> The education of mothers in care and prevention was provided in terms of instruction in basic health and hygiene, and infant and child welfare practices. By 1929, there

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<sup>114</sup> Mahfouz, *id.* at 78; Hibba Abugideiri, *Off to Work at Home: Egyptian Midwives Blur Public-Private Boundaries*, 6 JOURNAL OF WOMEN OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD 254, 279 (2008).

<sup>115</sup> Report from Official Egyptian Delegation, *supra* 110.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> BADRAN, *supra* 2 at 143.

<sup>119</sup> MAHFOUZ, *supra* 113 at 88-89.

were twenty-one government-operated child welfare centers open across Egypt.<sup>120</sup> By 1933, this number had grown to thirty, and by 1935 all traveling child welfare centers had been converted to permanent ones.<sup>121</sup>

Naguib Pasha Mahfouz (1882-1974), Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Qasr el-Aini, wrote in 1935 that women who visited government-operated child welfare centers were given advice “in a simple form ... on subjects bearing on mother and child welfare and how to feed, clothe, and bathe the child ... and similar public health subjects.”<sup>122</sup> The number of new pregnant women who visited government-operated child welfare centers in 1932 was 38,575, and the number of returning visitors was 171,785. These numbers increased to 47,622 and 227,189, respectively, in 1933. The number of home visits conducted by the staff of these centers was 30,013 in 1932, and 34,870 in 1933. Both the number of babies circumcised and those vaccinated roughly tripled from 1932 to 1933.<sup>123</sup> While these numbers do not give a complete picture of the growth of the government-operated maternal and child welfare programs during the period, they make clear that by the mid-1930s, thanks to a rapid development of provisions, the State was beginning to establish itself as a major actor in a realm in which it had previously only made limited efforts.

Continuing the move of the State into the arena of social welfare provision, the Wafd, during its 1935 party congress, outlined a program of social reform that included improving healthcare and education. In 1936, a newly elected Wafd government, under Prime Minister Mustafa el-Nahas (1879-1965), transformed the Department of Public Health into the Ministry of Health. The upgraded ministry comprised eighteen departments, all centralized in Cairo.<sup>124</sup>

What early success the Egyptian government enjoyed in its provision of maternal and child welfare during this period is owed to its emulating the already successful programs of social welfare organizations that had been operating in Egyptian civil society since the turn of the century. These organizations proliferated in the relative absence of social welfare provision under both a British administration that refused to spend on the welfare of Egyptians and early Egyptian governments whose efforts were constrained by British influence and party politics. At the end of the 1930s, the State began to progress from emulating the programs of social welfare

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<sup>120</sup> SHAKRY, *supra* 79 at 177.

<sup>121</sup> MAHFOUZ, *supra* 113 at 89; WENDELL CLELAND, *THE POPULATION PROBLEM IN EGYPT: A STUDY OF POPULATION TRENDS AND CONDITIONS IN MODERN EGYPT* 59 (1936).

<sup>122</sup> MAHFOUZ, *id.* at 89.

<sup>123</sup> *Id.* at 90.

<sup>124</sup> GALLAGHER, *supra* 22 at 13.

organizations to tightly regulating those programs and organizations. The establishment of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1939 marked this shift.

### **RIGHTS, DUTIES, AND THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

The Ministry of Social Affairs was signed into existence by King Faruq with Decree Law 20 of 1939.<sup>125</sup> The Egyptian government was, at the time, led by Prime Minister Ali Maher (1882-1960), whose non-Wafdist government was described by one contemporary journalist as “pro-British” and “composed largely of landowners.”<sup>126</sup> With the foundation of the Ministry of Social Affairs, all existing nongovernmental benevolent and social societies were brought under State control.<sup>127</sup> As it took increasing control over these organizations, the State positioned itself as the leading figure in the provision of social welfare in Egypt and began to depoliticize Egyptian civil society.

Stifling political currents in civil society was a longtime project of Ali Maher who had, during his first premiership in 1936, established the short-lived Higher Council of Social Reform, a role of which was to supervise the political activities of benevolent and social societies.<sup>128</sup> Before the establishment of the Ministry of Social Affairs, and after the foundation of the Higher Council of Social Reform, Faruq had also moved to increase his authority in the political arena and assert control over civil society with the issuance of the royal proclamation of 8 March 1938. The proclamation abolished paramilitary societies, dissolved connections between associations and political parties, and prohibited associations from affiliating with political parties in the future.<sup>129</sup> The foundation of the Ministry of Social Affairs furthered this agenda and, Robert Bianchi writes, “signaled the first attempt to bolster authoritarianism [in Egypt] by sponsoring a legitimist set of interest groups, and creating the illusion of a modern welfare state.”<sup>130</sup> Jean Garrison argues similarly that the State’s provision of social welfare was a counterrevolutionary act because “it both enabled the government to deflect criticism by pointing to its reform efforts and to give discretionary grants to the very poorest who might also be the most likely to be swayed to radical ideologies.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Egypt Decree Law No. 20 of 1939.

<sup>126</sup> Albert Viton, *Britain and the Axis in the Near East*, 19 FOREIGN AFFAIRS 370, 378 (1941).

<sup>127</sup> Lisa Pollard, *Egyptian by Association: Charitable States and Service Societies, Circa 1850-1945*, 46 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MIDDLE EAST STUDIES 239, 240 (2014).

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*; AMY J. JOHNSON, RECONSTRUCTING RURAL EGYPT: AHMED HUSSEIN AND THE HISTORY OF EGYPTIAN DEVELOPMENT 51 (2004).

<sup>129</sup> Pollard, *id.* at 240.

<sup>130</sup> ROBERT BIANCHI, UNRULY CORPORATISM: ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY EGYPT 72 (1989).

<sup>131</sup> Jean L. Garrison, *Public Assistance in Egypt: An Ideological Analysis*, 32 MIDDLE EAST JOURNAL 279, 282 (1978).

The State continued to extend its power to regulate charitable associations and circumscribe the activities they could perform with Law 49 of 1945 on the Regulation of Benevolent and Social Societies and Charitable Donations. Law 49 defined permissible and prohibited activities and gave the Ministry of Social Affairs the power to audit the finances of societies and to review their requests for funding. With Law 49, the Ministry of Social Affairs also acquired the right to inspect the membership lists and other records of organizations and required organizations to register with the ministry and provide the street addresses of their headquarters.<sup>132</sup> Reforms like these standardized and rationalized civil society, transforming a patchwork of organizations into an administratively convenient format. This increased the capacity of the State to exercise control over organizations and made possible the continued depoliticization of civil society. Law 49 also gave the Ministry of Social Affairs the power to dissolve organizations that it deemed had failed to fulfill the requirements of the new law.<sup>133</sup> This put organizations in the awkward position of acquiescing to increasingly restrictive State demands or risking dissolution.

Representatives of the State used a legal language of rights and duties to frame and disguise the State's growing control over civil society as a requisite of modern liberal governance. Ahmed Hussein (1902-1984) collaborated with Ali Maher to design and establish the Ministry of Social Affairs and claimed that it was "a supreme duty of the State" to observe, record, and study social conditions and to implement policies to uplift the poor, raise living standards, and "[assure] the biggest share of social justice to the people."<sup>134</sup> An article published in al-Ahram to mark the foundation of the Ministry of Social Affairs on August 20, 1939, celebrated the ministry as a new hope for Egypt and claimed that a State that does not provide social welfare to its people could not begin to consider itself independent. The article claims that there are millions of hungry little ones, displaced and stray children, and humiliated and struggling fellahin across Egypt, for whom the State is obligated to care.<sup>135</sup> Using a legal language of rights and duties, the State rendered the benefits provided by benevolent societies citizenship entitlements and obligations of the government and thereby framed and disguised its increasing control over those organizations and civil society at large as a requisite of modern liberal governance.

The State's increasing control over civil society had significant effects on mothers and the institution of motherhood in Egypt. I detailed in the preceding section of this chapter the rapid

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<sup>132</sup> Egypt Law No. 49 of 1945.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Ahmed Hussein, *Foreward IN MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SOCIAL WELFARE IN EGYPT* i, i (1950). Ahmad Hussein became the Minister of Social Affairs in 1950. JOHNSON, *supra* 128 at 134.

<sup>135</sup> Ibnat al-Shati', *Amal Jadid: 'Ilaj al-Sha'b al-Maryd wa Tashyh Akhta' al-Qurun wa-l-Ajyal*, AL-AHRAM (August 20, 1939).

expansion of the State's provision of maternal and child welfare programs during the latter half of the interwar period. With the establishment of the Ministry of Social Affairs and subsequent legislation on the regulation of benevolent and social societies, the State progressed from imitating the programs of social welfare organizations to tightly regulating and eventually subsuming those programs and organizations. Because, as I demonstrate in the following section, the maternal and child welfare programs of social welfare organizations were operating in women's homes and with private and intimate matters of children and the family, the regulation of these organizations amounted to an expansion of State power into the sphere of the family where the State was able to access and transform mothers and motherhood in new ways.

### **THE ROLE OF ELITE WOMEN'S SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS**

Fashions are fluctuating things, nevertheless certain elements of them appear to survive. It is to be hoped this may be the case in Egypt, for baby welfare is the fashion of the day in Cairo. In this busy cosmopolitan city, still only half awake to modernity, the idea has caught on.<sup>136</sup>

The success and rapid expansion of the State's maternal and child welfare programs in the latter half of the interwar period are owed to its imitating the established programs of contemporary social welfare organizations. When the Ministry of Social Affairs published a book about its yet brief history in 1964, it acknowledged its roots in turn-of-the-century civil society and recognized that the services it provided had first been offered by charitable organizations.<sup>137</sup> These organizations proliferated at the turn of the century in the relative absence of social welfare provision under both a British administration that refused to spend on the welfare of Egyptians and early Egyptian governments whose efforts were constrained by British influence and party politics. This section details the early operations of several social welfare organizations that were established during this boom and whose programs sought to instruct women in a proper performance of motherhood and ensure the health of their children. I compare the programs of social welfare organizations explored here to the State programs outlined in the first section of this chapter, to show that the State imitated civil society as it expanded its provision of maternal and child welfare. I also explain how the State interfered increasingly with the activities of these organizations after the Ministry of Social Affairs was established in 1939.

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<sup>136</sup> GILLIAN ELLERTON, *OTHER IMPORTANT PEOPLE* 16 (1931).

<sup>137</sup> I'DARAT AL-MA'LUMAT WA'L-'ALAQAT AL-'AMMA, WIZARAT AL-SHU'UN AL-IJTIMA'IYYA FI 25 'AMAN 87 (1965), quoted in Pollard, *supra* 127 at 252.

Fifteen years before an official Egyptian delegation traveled to Geneva for the first General Congress on Child Welfare, Dr. Nazmi addressed members of the Khedival Society for Political Economy, Statistics, and Legislation at their Conference on the Protection of Children, which was held in Cairo. Dr. Nazmi spoke on the topic of child welfare and argued that caring for Egyptian children would ensure the future of the nation. He framed child welfare as a matter of national importance. “It is in the interest of everyone, as well as their obligation,” Dr. Nazmi claimed, “to participate in actions to save children and protect the general health, [and] to fight infant mortality which annihilates the nation.”<sup>138</sup> Dr. Nazmi echoed other contemporary Egyptian intellectuals and elites in framing child welfare as a matter of national importance and a means of ensuring the future of the nation. His call for the full involvement of Egyptians in protecting the children of the nation heralded a proliferation of social welfare organizations dedicated to maternal and child welfare. By the 1940s, organizations with missions as diverse as those of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Egyptian Feminist Union, and the Egyptian Society for the Promotion of Tourism were offering similar programs that instructed women and girls in hygiene, domestic cleanliness, and modern child and infant welfare practices.<sup>139</sup>

While the maternal and child welfare programs that were established during this period were not administered by the State, they were no less regulatory or supervisory than were State institutions. These organizations understood discipline as a prominent component of their work and the programs that they offered functioned to construct, instruct, and enforce normative behaviors. Through their work, they defined what a proper Egyptian mother should be if she were to care for the health and welfare of her child, her family, and the nation.

The earliest and most significant inroads into the provision of maternal and child welfare in early-twentieth-century Egypt were made by voluntary social welfare organizations that were funded and staffed by elite Egyptian women. One of the earliest of these was the Muhammad Ali Benevolent Society (Mabarrat Muhammad Ali al-Kabyr), which was founded in 1909.<sup>140</sup> Charitable organizations of this type were not common in Egypt at the time.<sup>141</sup> Indeed, when

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<sup>138</sup> Abd al-Aziz Nazmi, *La Protection de l'enfance au point de vue médical et social*, L'EGYPTE CONTEMPORAINE 81, 82 (1911), quoted in MINE ENER, *MANAGING EGYPT'S POOR AND THE POLITICS OF BENEVOLENCE, 1800-1952* 99 (2003).

<sup>139</sup> The programs of the Egyptian Feminist Union are elaborated later in the chapter. The Muslim Brotherhood's educational program included instruction in personal health and hygiene and the Society for the Promotion of Tourism had a commission dedicated to improving hygiene among the poor. Pollard, *supra* 127 at 244; Ehud Rosen, *The Muslim Brotherhood's Concept of Education*, HUDSON INSTITUTE (November 11, 2008).

<sup>140</sup> GALLAGHER, *supra* 22 at 10.

<sup>141</sup> I do not mean to overlook the rich history of charitable endowments (*waqf*, pl. *awqaf*) in the region, but these were charitable institutions of a different sort and at this point in time their efficacy as providers of social welfare had been greatly reduced through the centralizing reforms of the nineteenth century. See generally, Pascale Ghazaleh, *Introduction: Pious Foundations: from Here to Eternity?* IN *HELD IN TRUST: WAQF IN THE*

Cooper visited Egypt before the war, she claimed that “no organized charities exist in Egypt: no poor-houses, no homes for the aged, nor the sick, nor the insane.”<sup>142</sup> The Muhammad Ali Benevolent Society was founded by Princess Ayn al-Hayat Rif`at (1858-1910), a member of the royal family, with the financial support of other princesses and aristocratic women seeking to make a “humanitarian contribution” to the Egyptian nation.<sup>143</sup> The women felt called to action by the high rate of infant mortality in Egypt at the time and began fittingly with a project to open a welfare center for children in Abdin, a poor neighborhood in Cairo. The society raised funds for the project through patronage and the sale of a stamp, which was marketed to ministries throughout the country. The stamp depicted a woman hugging a poor girl, reflecting the sense of maternal authority felt among the founders of the organization. Princess Ayn al-Hayat died shortly after the organization was founded, and Princess Nazli Halim (1864-1945) took over the tasks associated with opening the child welfare center. The center was completed and opened in 1913, and as the society continued to grow, the welfare center was turned into a hospital with an outpatient clinic.<sup>144</sup>

Another organization that garnered significant support and attention for its reform programs in the early-twentieth century was the New Woman Society (Jam`iyyat al-Mar`a al-Jadida), which took its name from Qasim Amin’s turn-of-the-century book. The New Woman Society was founded in 1920, although according to Grace Thompson Seton (1872-1959), the society had begun to take shape much earlier and already had several hundred members before the war.<sup>145</sup> Seton was an American traveler who visited Egypt in 1921.<sup>146</sup> She later published a book reflecting on the “complex picture of womanhood” in the country.<sup>147</sup> Seton met some of the founding members of the New Woman Society during her time in Egypt, and wrote that they represented “the brains, culture, and wealth of the country.”<sup>148</sup> The founders of the New Woman Society were mostly middle and upper class women who were active in the Wafdist Women’s Central Committee. Like the founders of the Muhammad Ali Benevolent Society, the founders of the New Woman Society felt a sense of maternal authority and took as their primary mission the

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ISLAMIC WORLD 1 (Pascale Ghazaleh, ed., 2011); Mine Ener, *The Charity of the Khedive IN POVERTY AND CHARITY IN MIDDLE EASTERN CONTEXTS* 185 (Michael Bonner, Mine Ener & Amy Singer eds., 2003).

<sup>142</sup> COOPER, *supra* 33 at 329.

<sup>143</sup> Baron, *supra* 41 at 88.

<sup>144</sup> *Id.* at 88-89.

<sup>145</sup> GRACE THOMPSON SETON, *A WOMAN TENDERFOOT IN EGYPT* 46-47 (1923).

<sup>146</sup> Lucinda H. MacKethan, *Grace Gallatin Thompson Seton (1872-1959)*, 27 *LEGACY: A JOURNAL OF AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS* 177, 189 (2010).

<sup>147</sup> SETON, *supra* 145 at *Note to Reader*.

<sup>148</sup> *Id.* at 47.

raising and educating of poor or underprivileged girls.<sup>149</sup> The society began its work with the foundation of a workshop and training school for girls in the Mounira section of Cairo. According to Seton, the school initially accommodated about one-hundred and fifty girls for daytime lessons, while as many as seventy-five girls lived at the school full-time. The girls were taught handicrafts, household management, and “simple hygiene, such as the care of teeth, eyes, skin and hair according to modern standards.”<sup>150</sup> As the New Woman Society grew, it established new branches in several provincial towns.<sup>151</sup>

Huda Sha‘arawi (1879-1947), who became a founding member of the Egyptian Feminist Union in 1923, was heavily involved in the foundation of the Muhammad Ali Benevolent Society in 1909 and served as honorary president of the New Woman Society from its foundation in 1920 until 1927.<sup>152</sup> Sha‘arawi’s role as honorary president of the New Woman Society meant essentially that she was the society’s primary benefactor. It was a role that she had no trouble filling as she came from an extremely wealthy family.<sup>153</sup> By the time Sha‘arawi left her position with the New Woman Society in 1927, the Egyptian Feminist Union had already opened its own clinic and dispensary for poor mothers and children in the district of al-Sayyidah Zaynab in Cairo.<sup>154</sup> The Egyptian Feminist Union later opened a workshop for poor girls on the same premises as its clinic and dispensary. The workshop was called the House of Cooperative Reform (Dar al-Ta‘awn al-Islahi), and girls who attended its classes were taught household management, handicrafts, and basic health and hygiene.<sup>155</sup> These projects were organized under committees of the Egyptian Feminist Union, including the Committee for Childcare and the Committee for the Health Affairs of Women and Children. The stated duty of the Committee for Childcare was to care for children “from the sanitary and health aspects,” and members of the committee sometimes visited homes in poor neighborhoods to instruct mothers in basic hygiene and health practices and provide food, clothing, and sanitary equipment.<sup>156</sup> The Committee for the Health Affairs of Women and Children meanwhile oversaw the care of children, taking “special care of the cleanliness of the children and mothers,” by providing mothers with soap and

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<sup>149</sup> Baron, *supra* 41 at 91-92; Aziza Hussein, *The Role of Women in Social Reform in Egypt*, 7 MIDDLE EAST JOURNAL 440, 447 (1953).

<sup>150</sup> SETON, *supra* 145 at 47.

<sup>151</sup> Baron, *supra* 41 at 93.

<sup>152</sup> *Id.* at 89, 94.

<sup>153</sup> Badran writes that the Sha‘arawi estate in Upper Egypt where Huda was born was so vast that her father was known locally as “the King of Upper Egypt,” BADRAN, *supra* 2 at 32.

<sup>154</sup> The EFU clinic opened in 1924. BADRAN, *id.* at 111.

<sup>155</sup> *Id.* at 99.

<sup>156</sup> BAHIGA ARAFA, *THE SOCIAL ACTIVITIES OF THE EGYPTIAN FEMINIST UNION* 25 (1973).

instruction in “the proper way of childcare.”<sup>157</sup> The committee awarded cash prizes to mothers “who [took] good care of the cleanliness of their children.”<sup>158</sup>

Many of the voluntary social welfare organizations that were funded and staffed by Egyptian women during the semi-colonial period had nationalist leanings, and the women saw their work as a contribution to the national cause.<sup>159</sup> Sha‘arawi recalled in her memoir that Princess Ayn al-Hayat came up with the idea for the Muhammad Ali Benevolent Society after attending an event hosted by the wife of the British high commissioner to thank those Egyptian women who had participated in the founding of the Lady Cromer Refuge for abandoned children. The Lady Cromer Refuge was perhaps the earliest organized care facility established for mothers and children in Cairo, and it opened in 1907.<sup>160</sup> Princess Ayn al-Hayat confessed to Sha‘arawi after the event that “It is, indeed, shameful that we in Egypt do not undertake such projects,” and shared her intent to sponsor a welfare center for needy children. Sha‘arawi praised the idea and admitted that she had declined to take part in charitable works headed by English women.<sup>161</sup> The girls who benefitted from the work of those charitable organizations with nationalist leanings were imbued with nationalist principles and sometimes served as foot soldiers for their benefactors.<sup>162</sup> When the Wafdist Women’s Central Committee held a mass meeting at Sha‘arawi’s house in January 1922 to sign a petition calling for an end to martial law and the protectorate and organize an economic boycott against the British, girls from the workshop of the New Woman Society entertained the attendees by singing nationalist songs.<sup>163</sup> When the Egyptian Parliament opened in 1924, and the Wafdist Women’s Central Committee staged a demonstration, girls from the society held up signs in French and Arabic condemning the British occupation and demanding women’s rights to education, divorce, monogamy, and the vote.<sup>164</sup> It is unclear whether or not the girls carrying the signs understood or spoke French.

The work of some organizations was informed by the religious beliefs of their founders, like that of the Society of Compassion for Children (Jam‘iyyat al-Shafaqa bi’l-Atfal), the Work for Egypt Society (Jam‘iyyat al-‘Amal li-Misr), and the Society of Egyptian Ladies’ Awakening (Jam‘iyyat

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<sup>157</sup> *Id.* at 28-29.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Beth Baron, *Islam, Philanthropy, and Political Culture in Interwar Egypt: The Activism of Labiba Ahmad IN POVERTY AND CHARITY IN MIDDLE EASTERN CONTEXTS* 239, 239-240 (Michael Bonner, Mine Ener & Amy Singer eds., 2003).

<sup>160</sup> Lunde, *supra* 2 at 88.

<sup>161</sup> HUDA SHA‘ARAWI, *HAREM YEARS: THE MEMOIRS OF AN EGYPTIAN FEMINIST (1879-1924)* 94 (Margot Badran trans., 1998)

<sup>162</sup> Baron, *supra* 41 at 93.

<sup>163</sup> BADRAN, *supra* 2 at 83.

<sup>164</sup> Baron, *supra* 41 at 93. Image in SHA‘ARAWI, *supra* 161 at 133.

Nahdat al-Sayyidat al-Misriyyat). The Society of Compassion for Children was founded by Zaynab A'nys<sup>165</sup> in 1908 and was recognized in the press as one of the first charitable societies founded by Muslim women in Egypt. The group supported abandoned and orphaned children and operated an orphanage.<sup>166</sup> The Work for Egypt Society was founded by Esther Fahmi Wisa (1895-1990) in 1924. Esther Fahmi Wisa came from a Coptic notable family and was involved in a constellation of philanthropies during her lifetime. She was a founding member of the New Woman Society before she turned her attention to the foundation of her own organization. The largest project of the Work for Egypt Society was an outpatient clinic that was opened in the Schutz Ramleh neighborhood in Alexandria, but the organization also had an active educational division through which it provided childcare and lessons in basic hygiene for mothers.<sup>167</sup>

The Society of Egyptian Ladies' Awakening was founded by Labiba Ahmad (1870s-1951) about a year after the uprisings of 1919.<sup>168</sup> Labiba Ahmad framed her motivation for charitable acts in both religious and nationalist terms, writing that she was "inspired by God" and driven by a "desire to help the nation."<sup>169</sup> She believed that women's and national progress in Egypt would best be achieved through a return to Islam, and not, as others argued, by following the path of Western nations.<sup>170</sup> The Society of Egyptian Ladies' Awakening began its work with the foundation of a home for abandoned girls. The home opened in al-Sayyidah Zaynab in 1920 and initially housed about one-hundred and seventy girls. Labiba Ahmad vowed to raise and protect the girls and teach them the principles of Islam.<sup>171</sup> The society later founded a workshop to teach handicrafts and household management to poor girls, because, Labiba Ahmad wrote, the society "saw that uplifting nations is [accomplished] by uplifting the mothers in it."<sup>172</sup> Through its work, the Society of Egyptian Ladies' Awakening imbued girls with Islamic beliefs, nationalist ideals, and notions of proper motherhood. Like the girls from the workshop of the New Woman Society, the girls raised within the Society of Egyptian Ladies' Awakening also marched in demonstrations carrying banners.<sup>173</sup>

Labiba Ahmad and others like her may have envisioned their charitable work as a response to the work of European and American missionary societies in Egypt. Mine Ener makes this argument,

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<sup>165</sup> Dates unknown.

<sup>166</sup> BARON, *WOMEN'S AWAKENING*, *supra* 2 at 172.

<sup>167</sup> Baron, *supra* 41 at 96.

<sup>168</sup> Baron, *supra* 159 at 240.

<sup>169</sup> Labiba Ahmad, 1 *AL-NAHDA AL-NISA'IYYA* 3 (July, 1921), quoted in Baron, *supra* 159 at 241.

<sup>170</sup> Beth Baron, *An Islamic Activist in Interwar Egypt IN WOMEN, PHILANTHROPY, AND CIVIL SOCIETY* 225, 225 (Kathleen D. McCarthy ed., 2001).

<sup>171</sup> Baron, *supra* 159 at 241.

<sup>172</sup> Ahmad, *supra* 169 at 28.

<sup>173</sup> Baron, *supra* 41 at 97.

writing that the desire of Egyptian philanthropists to contribute particularly to educational projects arose as much out of fear of missionary inroads as it did from any concern over a general lack of provisions.<sup>174</sup> Missionary organizations were prevalent in Egypt during the semi-colonial period, and they performed similar work and served similar populations as did Egyptian social welfare organizations. While Egyptian organizations generally believed in the educability of their beneficiaries and sought to uplift the nation through their work, missionaries were steeped in colonial rhetoric of the superiority of Western culture and conceptualized their aims in terms of a civilizing mission. Missionary societies operating in semi-colonial Egypt shared in widespread anxieties surrounding public health and the infant mortality rate and linked their work and their goals to these issues chiefly through the teaching of hygiene and domestic cleanliness in missionary schools and at maternal and child welfare centers and the administration of medical treatment. Samir Boulos, writing on European Evangelicals in Egypt in the first half of the twentieth century, observes that medical missionaries were often deployed in Muslim and Jewish communities in the Middle East where open proselytizing was not usually fruitful and could cause problems with local authorities. Medical missions served to “break down prejudices,” as missionaries often phrased it, and create more favorable circumstances for their religious work.<sup>175</sup> At a Student Volunteer Missionary Conference in 1900, a missionary associated with the Church Missionary Society, which operated in Egypt during the semi-colonial period, aptly referred to medical missionaries as “the heavy artillery of the missionary army.”<sup>176</sup>

Beyond those explored here, thousands of other charitable societies also emerged in Egypt during the semi-colonial period, and they primarily addressed the needs of children, medical needs, and education.<sup>177</sup> Aziza Hussein, the wife of Ahmed Hussein, reported delightedly in 1953, that “there are at least one hundred social organizations run entirely by women,” and that the many successful projects led by these organizations were “a tribute to the efficiency of the new Egyptian woman.”<sup>178</sup> Marsot writes that the elite Egyptian women operating social welfare organizations in Egypt during the semi-colonial period “were more successful in their projects than their husbands were in running the country.”<sup>179</sup> Despite their success, the actions of these organizations were increasingly curtailed by the State after the Ministry of Social Affairs was

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<sup>174</sup> ENER, *supra* 138 at 103.

<sup>175</sup> SAMIR BOULOS, EUROPEAN EVANGELICALS IN EGYPT (1900-1956): CULTURAL ENTANGLEMENTS AND MISSIONARY SPACES 99 (2016).

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> ENER, *supra* 138 at 130.

<sup>178</sup> Aziza Hussein, *supra* 149 at 446-447.

<sup>179</sup> Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *The Revolutionary Gentlewoman in Egypt* IN WOMEN IN THE MUSLIM WORLD 261, 272 (Lois Beck & Nikki R. Keddie eds., 1978).

established in 1939. Hanna Fahmi Wisa, the son of Esther Fahmi Wisa, revealed in his family memoir that the Work for Egypt Society was audited annually beginning in 1939. Eventually, the premises on which its outpatient clinic operated in Alexandria were appropriated by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The director of the Ministry at the time told the Wisa family that the aims of the organization had grown outdated and were “irrelevant to the Ministry’s plans for the development of social affairs.”<sup>180</sup> The space was transformed into a handicraft school for girls.<sup>181</sup>

The Muhammad Ali Benevolent Society and the New Woman Society eventually merged their efforts under the name of the former organization and continued operating until 1964 when the organization’s hospitals and clinics were nationalized, and its staff turned over.<sup>182</sup> Nancy Gallagher writes that, by all accounts, the standards in its hospitals and clinics suffered when the Muhammad Ali Benevolent Society was relieved of its administration because the government personnel who replaced the original staff did not have the same experience nor devotion to public service.<sup>183</sup>

Labiba Ahmad died in 1951 before the *coup* but had the Society of Egyptian Ladies’ Awakening continued to operate after her death its workshop would have been confiscated as training centers were shortly brought under the control of the State.<sup>184</sup> The histories of these organizations are difficult to trace in detail, but, to summarize, their programs, which had provided much-needed maternal and child welfare in early-twentieth-century Egypt, were brought under the control of the State or otherwise dissolved within some twenty years of the foundation of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the promulgation of the earliest laws on the regulation of benevolent and social societies.

While the organizations explored here did not share political or religious beliefs nor organizational missions, they each understood discipline as a prominent component of their work and operated in women’s homes and with private and intimate matters of children and the family. Through the teaching of handicrafts, household management, simple hygiene, and child and infant welfare, these organizations shaped mothers and the institution of motherhood in Egypt. As the State rapidly expanded its provision of maternal and child welfare in the latter half of the interwar period, it emulated the established programs of these social welfare organizations. I have argued in this chapter that the State progressed from imitating the programs of these

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<sup>180</sup> HANNA FAHMI WISA, *ASSIOUT: THE SAGA OF AN EGYPTIAN FAMILY* 258 (1994), quoted in Baron, *supra* 41 at 99.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*; GALLAGHER, *supra* 22 at 171.

<sup>183</sup> GALLAGHER, *supra* 22 at 171.

<sup>184</sup> Baron, *supra* 41 at 99.

organizations to tightly regulating those programs and organizations with the foundation of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1939 and that the State employed a legal language of rights and duties to frame and disguise its increasing control over and depoliticization of civil society as a requisite of modern liberal governance. As the State tightened its control over and eventually began to subsume the maternal and child welfare programs that were already operating in women's homes, it extended its reach into the family sphere where it could access and transform mothers and the institution of motherhood to an extent never before achieved.

## CONCLUSION

On July 22, 1933, al-Ahram printed an article called *The Purpose of Women in Humanity* (Wazyfat al-Mar'a fi al-Insanya), written by a woman named Zaynab al-Hakim.<sup>185</sup> Al-Hakim argues in her article that women must be granted the same rights as men to education and work and must be allowed to participate equally in public life. She calls on an assortment of famous thinkers to support her argument. Al-Hakim quotes Gandhi, writing that he believed in equal rights for men and women and that gender equality would be one of the founding principles of a modern and independent India. Leo Tolstoy, Albert Einstein, and even Plato had given significant thought to the proper position of women in society, al-Hakim claims, and all had come to the same conclusion that men and women ought to be equal. After a meandering introduction, al-Hakim tells her readers why she believes women ought to be granted the same rights as men and invited into public life. It is the significance of the role of women as mothers, she writes, that necessitates gender equality and the incorporation of women into public life. The children of ignorant, sheltered, or unsound mothers will never succeed, and thus mothers must be reformed. They must study, work, and otherwise participate in public life. Motherhood is, after all, as the title of her article foreshadows, “the purpose of women in humanity.”<sup>186</sup>

I have recounted the article that al-Hakim wrote in 1933 because it raises many of the themes explored in this thesis. In her argument, Al-Hakim privileges the role of women as mothers presumably because she believes that motherhood is a woman's duty and destiny. She calls it their purpose. This reflects the body of literature that was growing in the women's press in early-twentieth-century Egypt that sought to celebrate motherhood and implored mothers not to neglect the duties associated with motherhood. When al-Hakim writes that she does not believe that ignorant women are suited to bearing and rearing successful children, she reflects the beliefs of the founders of maternal and child welfare organizations that educated women in household management and simple hygiene to ensure a future for their children. When she writes that she does not think that intellectually or physically disabled women are suited to motherhood, she echoes more sinister discussions and interventions that sought to ensure the mental and physical health of the family and emerged from growing Egyptian interest in the eugenics movement at about the time she was writing. Al-Hakim also expresses her opinions on what women should study and whether or not mothers should join the workforce. Taken together, the ideas in al-Hakim's article comprise an opinion on the proper way to perform motherhood, and they do so

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<sup>185</sup> Dates unknown.

<sup>186</sup> Zaynab al-Hakim, *Wazyfat al-Mar'a fi al-Insanya: 'la Bisat al-Bahth wa-l-Tamhys*, AL-AHRAM (July 22, 1933).

in a way that seems to align with many of the popular discussions that were explored here. The article that al-Hakim wrote and published in 1933 is one of dozens of articles cataloged in the al-Ahram digital archive during the semi-colonial period that mention motherhood (*umuma*) and attest to growing interest in the topic as it emerged as a new institution during the period.

I argued in Chapter One that a new institution of motherhood was constructed and concretized through medical and legal reforms and the discussions surrounding them in semi-colonial Egypt. I presented three examples to make this argument. First, I demonstrated that the role of women as mothers was privileged in debates surrounding the drafting of new labor legislation in the early 1930s. Even as Egypt underwent rapid industrialization in the interwar period, there remained a widespread opinion that motherhood and the performance of wage labor should remain mutually exclusive to ensure the health of Egyptian children. Next, I explained how discussions of family planning in the late 1930s worked to define the duties of a mother in bearing children and ensuring the health and welfare of her children. The last example I employed was a series of controversial personal status law reforms through which lawmakers sought to ensure the maturity of mothers and the mental and physical health of the Egyptian family. This chapter showed how a new institution of motherhood was constructed and enforced on the level of the population, through medical and legal discourse and interventions that were opposable against women across Egypt.

While Chapter One explored the construction of the new institution of motherhood on the level of the population, Chapter Two detailed some of the ways that motherhood was taught and enforced on the level of the individual in maternal and child welfare programs that sought to instruct women in a proper performance of motherhood and ensure the health of their children. I argued in this chapter that, with the foundation of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1939 and subsequent legislation on the regulation of benevolent and social societies in Egypt, the State took increasing control over and began to depoliticize civil society and this had significant effects on mothers and the institution of motherhood in Egypt. As the State progressed from emulating the programs of social welfare organizations to tightly regulating and eventually subsuming those programs and organizations, it extended its reach into women's homes and intimate matters of children and the family where it was able to access and therefore transform mothers and motherhood to an extent never before achieved. I also suggested in this chapter that the Egyptian government used a legal language of rights and duties to frame and disguise its increasing control over civil society as a requisite of modern liberal governance.

Modernization claims to liberate the individual, and many of the persons that I wrote about here seem to have embraced this vision. The nationalist speeches of Mustafa Kamil and Saad Zaghloul, petitions of the Egyptian Feminist Union, organizational missions of the Muhammad Ali Benevolent Society and the New Woman Society, and publications by Aziza Hussein, Malak Hifni Nasif, and even Zaynab al-Hakim, who published her opinions about motherhood in al-Ahram in 1933, are replete with mentions of progress and modernization entangled with conceptions of liberalism and legality. Modernization, however, only pretends to liberate the individual, while behind its facade, it instead creates elaborate systems for their discipline. I hope that this work has laid plain the dialectical process of modernization through its exploration of the new institution of motherhood that was constructed in its name in semi-colonial Egypt. Further, I hope that this exploration has shown how women, as those who are expected to (re)produce future generations and, therefore, society itself, are central to this process. The reading of women as vectors of a pernicious process of modernization should not be interpreted as a dismissal of their agency, but rather as an acknowledgment of their remarkable power.