



The Turban, The Tarbush, and The Top Hat:

Masculinity, Modernity, and National Identity in Interwar Egypt¹

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On October 29, 1932 a major celebration was organized at Ankara Palace in honor of Turkish Republic Day. The Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal had invited foreign dignitaries and the local elite to the evening festivities. Among the distinguished invitees was the Egyptian ambassador, Abd al-Malik Hamza Bey. He arrived dressed in his formal regalia topped off by the symbol of Egyptian (and up to 1925, Turkish) officialdom—the *tarbush*.²

Ataturk coldly greeted the Egyptian representative and ordered him to remove the tarbush while in his presence. When Hamza Bey hesitated, Mustafa Kemal barked an order to one of his servants to demand from the guest his tarbush. In order to avoid a diplomatic incident, Hamza Bey acceded to the will of “the Ghazi.”

In spite of the Egyptian diplomat’s effort to avoid controversy, the event did escalate into an incident through, it seems, the provocation of the British press. Two weeks after the fact, the *Daily Herald* carried a report detailing the affront faced by the Egyptian ambassador in Ankara. It was only with the publication of that article that the Egyptian press and public came to learn about “the tarbush incident.” Suddenly there appeared calls for action including the severing of all relations with Turkey. The

incident was immediately framed as a question of national honor.

The prominent Egyptian historian Yunan Labib Rizk has recently surveyed the coverage of “the tarbush incident” as it was reported by Egypt’s leading newspaper *al-ahram*.³ Although he suggests that there were different “sectors of opinion in Egypt”—i.e., pro- and anti-tarbush—the possible meanings of these positions are subsumed by the larger, ostensibly more significant, story of Egyptian-Turkish relations since World War I. In this essay, I too will situate the positions staked out in the tarbush incident within a larger narrative, but the beginning and end are less clear and the main themes are internally incoherent. I will take debates about dress as a lens through which to view the shifting, contradictory, and contested nature of notions of national identity, modernity, and masculinity in the making of Egypt.⁴

Since the tarbush incident was instigated by him, one possible beginning would look to the figure of Ataturk. Mustafa Kemal’s efforts to forcefully westernize Turkey are well known; among his most famous dictates are the banning of the veil and the codification of a secular state. Perhaps less well known is his banning of the tarbush in

November 1925.⁵ In Egypt, however, this act touched off a flurry of often heated discussion on the (de)merits of the tarbush that lasted well over a decade.

The monumental decisions of Mustafa Kemal which continue to animate cultural and political life in contemporary Turkey came on the heels of other monumental and world-historical events, the aftermath of which, the region and the world in general continue to endure. At the end of World War I, France and Britain had divided up between themselves the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire that they had not previously colonized: Syria and Lebanon went to France while Palestine and Iraq went to Britain.⁶ The Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 had severely undermined the sovereignty of the defeated Ottoman state. Meanwhile, a national army of resistance was being assembled in the Anatolian heartland by Mustafa Kemal. Over the course of the next three years, through an exercise of military will and through diplomatic negotiations, the dissident faction led by Mustafa Kemal successfully procured the Treaty of Lausanne (July 24, 1923), which affirmed Turkey's national sovereignty and control of most of the territory that had been lost in 1920.

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The events that unfolded in the international theater from 1914 into the 1920s, particularly those involving the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the Turkish Republic, had far-reaching but conflicted implications for the political and cultural spheres of life in Egypt. The British war effort had placed unprecedented strain on the vast majority of Egypt's peasant population. The imposition

of martial law and the stationing of imperial troops in Egyptian cities also had material and psychological repercussions on the middle and upper classes.

By the end of the War there was a unified political opposition to the continuation of the British occupation in Egypt. However, also by the end of the War the process of re-orienting Egypt's elite cultural identity away from the Ottoman sphere—that had begun, one could argue, with the emergence of a Western-educated middle class and a new landed Egyptian elite in the mid-nineteenth century—was finally complete.

Or, so it would seem as the Egyptian nationalist movement led by the Wafd staked out its claims to indepen-

dence at the Paris Peace Conference.⁷ Following on the heels of a thoroughly unexpected mass uprising against occupation in 1919—forever emblazoned in nationalist historiography and still remembered in the Egyptian collective consciousness as the nationalist revolution of 1919—Egyptian leaders forged a national party that engaged in negotiations for three years. The British strategically and unilaterally declared Egypt independent in 1922, while reserving four areas in which it would continue to maintain control.⁸ In the following years, Egyptian political life was marked by the promulgation of a constitution, which restricted some of the traditional prerogatives of the monarch and the British, and the ensuing struggle to establish a regularized form of parliamentary political life. As these struggles over the political sphere oscillated among the three poles - the Wafd, the King, and the British - other struggles were waged in the seemingly separate cultural sphere about seemingly trivial matters like the proper headdress for men.⁹

Within these debates, the tarbush was simultaneously a sign of the modern and the traditional, the national and the foreign, the masculine and the effeminate. As the form of headdress worn mainly by a certain class of men—the *effendiyya*—the tarbush was the signifier of a problematic bourgeois masculinity.¹⁰ In the 1930s, it became invested with the additional signification of being a consumer item supporting the nationalist cause.¹¹ I argue here that the tarbush was a contested site for the production of new cultural meaning and a site through, or against, which new masculine desires and anxieties were expressed. In the contests over the tarbush, concepts such as the nation and the modern were invested with new and sometimes contradictory signification while simultaneously constituting new masculine subjectivities.¹²

Here the re-definition of the relationship between Egypt and its once imperial overlord Turkey was necessarily freighted with the different outcomes of their international and local struggles for national sovereignty. In the other version of the event with which we began this chapter, the Egyptian ambassador Abd al-Malik Hamza Bey was "given permission" by Mustafa Kemal to remove his tarbush for his own comfort. This eventually became the official line that formally closed the tarbush incident. Apparently it was very hot in the palace halls that evening, and Mustafa Kemal was simply being a gracious and thoughtful host, who knew that Egyptian diplomatic protocol required the wearer to retain the tarbush on his head until invited to remove it.

After the initial outcry, in which there were voices calling for the severing of all ties with Turkey, representations of the tarbush incident largely reflected the views of the two camps that had emerged in the preceding years: the pro-

and anti-tarbus camps.¹³ Admirers of the Turkish model of modernization, who were also generally anti-tarbus, were willing to wait for another explanation of the incident. Supporters of the tarbus, which had become recoded during the World War I period as a particularly Egyptian nationalist symbol through its public expression of opposition to the British, read the incident as yet another example of Egypt's Turkish-blooded leaders compromising its national honor.¹⁴

Dress and National Honor: Prelude to an Argument¹⁵

The question of national honor and dress in the Egyptian context is usually associated with the debates around veiling and the condition of women, which were set off by the publication of Qasim Amin's *Tahrir al-Mar'a* (Women's Liberation) in 1899. I argue that situating the question of dress in the broader contexts of colonialism, modernity, and subject formation, which requires one to consider both men's and women's fashions, will give us a better understanding of how the early debates about the veil were initiated by masculine anxieties about power and self-rule (or the lack thereof). By the latter I do not mean simply the right to self-determination in a geopolitical sense. I intend the added signification of governing one's individual self according to a particular understanding of enlightened principles. Implicit within this rubric of self is also a certain sense of having the right to fashion an individual identity. This right, however, was often perceived and construed as a force pushing against the collective will and collective identity.

It was perhaps among the new Arabic-speaking officer corps that was expanded during Sa'id's reign (1854-1863) that the first signs of an Egyptian sartorial refashioning were most evident. Although Egyptian peasants had been conscripted in large numbers in Muhammad Ali's efforts to create a modern army in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, it was only under Sa'id that Arabic-speaking Egyptians were allowed to rise to the rank of colonel.¹⁶ It was also during this period that the dress of both officers and soldiers, which had followed the patterns set by the Ottoman imperial tradition, began to change.

In Ehud Toledano's work on this neglected period of Egyptian history (the reigns of Abbas and Sa'id), which he terms the "forgotten years," he hints at how the relationship between the opening of new opportunities for the sons of Egypt's rural notables in government and military service and the change of dress this required, spoke to a transformation of self and cultural identity.¹⁷ Although he does not put it in these terms, Toledano's argument suggests that while the change in notions of personhood, as enacted through dress, was not viewed as a threat by the Ottoman-Egyptian elite nor as a basis

for opposition by the aspirants to elite membership during the middle years, it did condition the grounds for thinking in terms of national identities. He concludes his chapter on how the social divide between the elite and non-elite was produced and represented through language, dress, etiquette, and modes of using and moving through space with a note on how the desire to cross that divide eventually gave rise to an oppositional consciousness. About the newly promoted and newly dressed, he writes:

The tensions that existed between them [Arabic speaking officers] and the other more senior officers constituted one of the main factors behind the events of the 1880s that led to the 'Urabi Revolt. At mid-century, however, they were still making their first steps up the steep ladder towards becoming full-fledged members of the Ottoman-Egyptian elite.¹⁸

So at mid-century a movement was clearly afoot, and it began with the symbolic crossing of the threshold of elite culture.

A powerful image of this transformation of self that a change of fashion effected is given in the memoirs of Ali Mubarak. In this particular recollection, Mubarak recounts the story of his return home to his village of Birinbal after fourteen years of absence.¹⁹ He had arrived wearing his "French" military dress uniform complete with sash and sword at his side. The momentary lack of recognition by his mother due to his changed appearance serves to reaffirm for Mubarak that he really had transcended his peasant roots.

Another episode again reaffirms that the movement out of peasant garb to European-style military dress was one of personal transformation and, furthermore, a change that was viewed as positive. In an audience with Abbas Pasha (r. 1848-1854), in which Ali Mubarak was given the commission of schools' inspector, the latter was also informed of the punishment for the failure to carry out his duties honestly. Along with being stripped of one's rank and benefits was a form of public shaming. The guilty official would be forced to wear peasant's clothing and to live like a peasant.²⁰ After swearing to carry out his commission, Mubarak was accorded his new rank and decorated with the appropriate medals: a silver half-crescent moon and a gold star encrusted with three diamond stones. He closes this scene by telling the reader that he left feeling happy and content.²¹

After the British occupation of Egypt, cultural issues such as dress and manners became politically charged sites in which it was often thought that the very essence of Egyptian identity were being contested. The expanding

domain of print culture—books, newspapers, and magazines—was a primary locus for the public representations of different viewpoints on matters of clothing and comportment. A general fear in the 1890s—before the veil became the seemingly all-consuming focus of cultural debate—was of the younger generation, who had come of age knowing nothing other than colonial rule, adopting Western styles of dress and self-carriage without fully processing the lessons of European superiority.

In the July 3, 1897 issue of *al-Ajyal* [The Generations], an article titled “Blind Imitation” featured an illustration with six picture boxes depicting an urban *flâneur* type (or more accurately a faux *flâneur* type). He mixes and matches the different parts of the only two suits he owns so that it would seem he is wearing a new outfit each day. Each box depicts the young effendi in various poses set against the backdrop of an urban geography that would be familiar to the properly bourgeois. In the first box, he is standing at a street corner dressed in his mix-matched suit and tarbush with his cane tucked under his right arm. He seems either to be contemplating crossing the street or just idly observing the goings on within the shopping arcade on the other side. In the second box he is seated at an outdoor café dressed in a different combination. His left arm is perched on the table into which he leans resting his head in the palm of his hand, while a small turbaned man busily shines his shoes; the expression on his face suggests he is lost in some private reverie. In the third illustration, he is juxtaposed to a man in a galabiyya and turban (it seems the same man from box two) who is attending a donkey while the effendi stands with his hands in his pockets with a cane slung over his right arm smoking a cigarette and staring into space indifferently. In box four he is paying off a carriage driver. In the fifth box he is having his picture taken. His pose is carefully drawn here: he is standing with his right arm raised and bent at the elbow which is supported by a stand (seemingly built for just that purpose) and in his hand are his gloves and cane; his left hand rests on the back of an armchair; his left leg is bent slightly and crosses his right in the front forming a forty-five degree angle. In the final box he is carrying one of his suits under his arm and preparing to enter a pawnshop.

The article offered the criticism that many young Egyptians “were under the illusion” that imitating the look and behavior of Westerners was tantamount to a genuine understanding of being modern and civilized. In fact, bankruptcy could be the only end to this superficial appropriation of Western styles of dress and life. Ostensibly, an Egyptian living within middle class means could not sustain the patterns of consumption that participation in the new urban culture demanded.

Another dimension emerges when the illustration is read slightly apart from the accompanying text. Through the striking of certain poses the body of the mimic man is made to represent a new masculinity. The different picture boxes illustrate the repertoire a man must acquire to inhabit this new subjectivity, which, it is important to note, is not being rejected. Rather, the author enjoins a cautious mediation of this new performative space of masculinity. His objective is to encourage the reader to examine the reasons for European cultural, political, and economic hegemony. Missing from the boxes are scenes of productivity on the part of the exemplar of Egypt’s future. Although the man in the galabiyya is in fact working, he is figured here as a representation of the past and in a sense as unrepresentative. In other words, the nation and modernity can only be achieved through this new figure of masculinity. However, an unexamined adoption of the signs of modernity not only signals a “blind imitation”—i.e., an unsuccessful attempt at being modern—but poses grave risks for the imitator, like financial ruin.

A few months later, *al-Ajyal* (and as far as I can tell the same author) delved further into the topic of dress and mimicry and its implications for Egyptian society.²² In a style that might be characterized as misogynistic, the author depicted men’s imitation of European dress as harmful to himself; whereas, women’s unbridled consumption of Western fashions—the focus of the second article—is drawn out as having apocalyptic consequences for the whole of Egyptian society. Men are admonished for affecting a Western style when they do so from a class position that cannot sustain such a habit and when that habit is not grounded in a deeper understanding of Western culture. What that deeper understanding might consist of becomes evident later in the author’s analysis of women’s consumption. But first, the material and meta-physical costs of being overly attentive to the adorning of the body is underscored with a poetic injunction from a “wise Arab poet”:

Oh servant of the body how you suffer in its service
Do you demand gain from what is a loss?
Attend to the soul and the perfection of the virtues
For you are by the soul not by the body human²³

The poet contrasts the baseness of submitting to corporeal desires with an ethical praxis that elevates man from the state of nature to a higher plane of existence. The author deploys the poem more as part of a strategic intervention into the present state of the Egyptian political economy in which cultural practices were deemed central to Egypt’s subjugation and conversely its liberation.

The author goes on to offer a relatively sophisticated critique of evolving consumption patterns among women,

specifically in the realm of fashion, that threaten to undo the whole fabric of Egyptian society. An act as simple as wearing the corset could be "...a major cause leading to the ruin of many households, the fall of honorable families, the affliction of disastrous calamities on the majority of humanity."²⁴ In fact, "the danger exceeds the limits of the imagination."²⁵ As with the men who mimic the West, the problem is most germane to women of the "*tabaqa al-wusta*" (middle class).

The author's critique operates on three levels: the individual, the family, and the nation-colony. He does this by making explicit the connection between household, national, and international economies. The author links the potential ruin of families that results from the desire of the wife or daughter(s) to imitate Western women with the continued subordination and exploitation of the Egyptian and Eastern economies by Europeans.

He faults the new generation of girls and women whose desire for fashionable European styles of dress lead them to make unreasonable demands on their fathers and husbands. He argues that the contemporary middle class woman is still under the impression that clothes make the individual special and set her above others of her sex. "She does not realize that it is the rational woman (*al-mar'a al-'aqila*) who is made beautiful through her virtue and made whole through knowledge and refinement."²⁶ Ostensibly, education would erode the competition for passion among women by exposing envy as a driving force of the competition and by teaching women to engage in more productive activities. The proof of this is found in the lives of their Western counterparts who are rational women and who are like Egyptian women in most respects except that "not a single one of them lives beyond her means."²⁷

Many scholars have now studied the social and political implications of this re-scripting of women's domestic roles in nationalist discourses of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.²⁸ Few, however, have paid attention to how this redefinition of femininity was constitutive of a new national manhood-the discursive field I have labeled *effendi* masculinity.²⁹ Critiquing the sartorial excesses of Egyptian women was only one of the many sites through which nationalist men-and women-sought to produce the "new woman" necessary to populate the newly-imagined national spaces, in which the lines between private and public were redrawn through political engagements with colonialism.³⁰ The masculinist performance of this condition of colonial modernity is illustrated by this text, especially as the critique moves from the individual to the family.

Here the author cites the strain that women's excessive

consumption has on marital relations. The inability of a husband to meet his wife's (and daughters') material desires calls his masculinity into question. Furthermore, the mother's desire for expensive clothes is evidence of her irrational approach to household management and a sign of her inability to provide her children with proper guidance. This can affect her daughters (if she has any) when the time comes for them to marry. If they exhibit the same desire to consume, it will scare off the few eligible bachelors there are, most already having spurned marriage because of its cost and the dearth of rational brides.

His next move makes it clear that it is not just consumption as such that is being critiqued. Women's purchase of expensive clothes, even if it were beyond their means, would not be so negative-in fact, it would be a positive action-if "textile factories were spread throughout the length and breadth of Eastern countries."³¹ Of course, then Eastern capital would remain in Eastern hands.

The draining of Eastern capital in this way has gendered consequences. Men, who are the public face of Egypt, pay the price of women's unthinking consumption of fashion. The continued economic exploitation of the nation daily reinforces the impotence of its men in resisting foreign penetration:

This money that we spend randomly doubtlessly winds up in the hands of Europeans who are laughing at us, who look down upon our intellect and who drain us of our wealth through strange tricks like these.³² (emphasis added)

The "strange tricks" the author speaks of refers to the Western capitalist production of a consumerist desire that can override rational self and national interests.³³ This magic is so powerful that it is even capable of getting Eastern women to endanger their physical well-being for the sake of fashion. He argues that most Western dress is unsuitable for Easterners, but this is especially true of the corset. He marshals scientific testimony to underscore the insalubrious nature of the corset.

It is thus the nationalist male's duty to demystify these crafty strategies intended to exploit, humiliate, and sub-

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ordinate his people. These public textual interventions into matters of dress, with men and women participating, would continue through the following decades. Public debates about dress, however, became almost exclusively focused on the place of the veil in modern Egyptian society. As the number of men wearing European-style clothing grew steadily during that period and the suit became a commonplace in the urban landscape by the 1920s, men's imitation of Western dress seemed to become a non-issue. One might argue that

the disappearance of contention around the suit took place simultaneously with the growing recognition of the validity of the claims of a particular class to represent, or speak for, the Egyptian nation. Although the 1919 revolution to a certain extent galvanized this claim and was embodied by Sa'd Zaghlul and the Wafd party, the achievement of only a nominal independence in 1922 generated the conditions for a renewed cultural criticism centered on dress.³⁴ It would appear that it was Mustafa Kemal's radical modernization policies in fully independent Turkey that sparked off a new wave of public debate about men's attire that re-engaged questions of modernity, gender, and national identity.

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The Perfection of Masculinity: Picking a Proper Hat for the Nation

In 1925 Fikri Abaza, the owner and editor of the cultural magazine *al-Musawwar*, explained that his decision to evaluate the implications of Mustafa Kemal's social policies was because they were highly relevant to Egyptians. Since "Egypt is still tied to Turkey in many ways: in terms of religion, kinship, and Eastern traditions,"³⁵ his criticism of Ataturk's prohibition of the veil and the tarbush and legislation of European dress echoes the turn of the century critics in his call for a deeper understanding of what it means to be modern. In his opinion, national renaissance required a commitment to mass education and other unstated "fundamental" social reforms. Addressing "leaders" and "intellectuals," he concludes:

Reforming the basic conditions of life is what is important. Outward accoutrements that do not develop or retard are best left on heads and bodies as an eternal marker of the renaissance nation that has retained its traditional image, its special character. Then, the crucial factor becomes what is inside the head and chest, not what covers the head and chest.³⁶

In other words, becoming modern was a much more complicated process not achieved simply through the imitation of foreign dress or the rejection of local traditions.

Fikri Abaza's problem with the Turkish model of reaching modernity (as he saw it) was explicitly gendered. Although Abaza objected to Mustafa Kemal's decree of European dress for both men and women, his reasons for each were quite different. While he does not voice so explicitly, as a wearer of the suit himself, his objection to the Kemalist reforms of men's dress was registered in terms of the antidemocratic measures underlying them as opposed to some strong commitment to the preservation of traditional male costumes. In the case of women and the *hijab*,³⁷ his argument assumes a different trajectory. He says about himself, "I used to be an 'extreme conservative,' but the fierce attacks of the 'fairer sex' have gradually weakened my passionate attachment to the venerable past."³⁸ (His following remarks make one wonder what he thought about women when he was in his extreme conservative phase!)

Abaza's first salvo against the Kemalist program for women's emancipation was personal. He attacks Mustafa Kemal's hypocrisy by pointing to his failed relationship with his wife, Latifa Hanim—a model of European-ness. He posits that despite Kemal's public proclamations, it was his wife's unveiling and her appearance in mixed company that led to the collapse of their marriage.

His next move assembles a list of European luminaries who also had cautioned against "permissive freedom for women." Some would find it interesting that Oscar Wilde appears alongside Bernard Shaw and Schopenhauer. Abaza emphasizes the import of their warnings of disastrous consequences by underlining the geographical and cultural specificity of their utterance. In other words, if social failure was feared in western Europe as a result of giving women more freedoms, then imagine what was in store for eastern Turkey.³⁹

Fikri Abaza's views on the Turkish course towards modernity were denounced by the editor of *al-Nil al-Musawwar* as reactionary and shortsighted.⁴⁰ (As far as I could tell, *al-Nil al-Musawwar* was a palace-oriented magazine; it used its pages to illustrate through regular photo the glory of a modern cosmopolitan world.) Interestingly, the editor of *al-Nil* did not raise the question of women's dress explicitly; possibly because it reflects the Palace's desire to remain neutral on such issues. On the other hand, given the content of Abaza's article, the criticism was directed implicitly at the latter's claims about women and the *hijab*.

The editor of *al-Nil* endorsed the Turkish project on the grounds that Turkish reformers grasped the nature of

the changed world in which they lived. They understood the need to dress for the times: new clothes to meet the new fast-paced lifestyle. In addition to the efficiency and productivity enabled by Western dress, the author also pointed to their suitability for the weather. Apparently the suit and brimmed hat could shield the wearer from Egypt's climate better than the galabiyah and tarbush.

The author tries to shame Egyptian reformers (*mujaddidun*) further by highlighting the fact that Egypt, which was actually a part of Europe, should have preceded the Turks in instituting cultural changes. Then somewhat contradictorily, or through a geographical re-inscription, he declares, "Alas, the East ambles along in its same old way." Taking a step away from the Turkish model, though, he concludes by framing the question of dress as a matter of having the freedom to choose.

In a final postscript addressed personally to Mr. Abaza, the editor of *al-Nil* points out that the cost of a "*baladi*" costume was more than double one of his European suits; he ends by asking Mr. Abaza: "So why do you want to block the way of others to economy?"⁴¹ The latter was probably a gesture aimed at (not) addressing Abaza's call for reformers to deal with basic social problems as opposed to debating superficial cultural matters. Of course, what the editor of *al-Nil* failed to point out and what Abaza himself did not recognize in his own argument as contradictory was that the question of women's dress was articulated as a deeply political issue with dire social consequences.

The fact that men's dress could also assume political significance was evinced in the *Dar al-'Ulum* controversy which was unfolding as Fikri Abaza and the editor of *al-Nil* verbally sparred on the pages of their respective magazines. In February 1926, the students from *Dar al-'Ulum* went on strike demanding the right to substitute the tarbush and suit for the turban and robe. The Ministry of Education rejected their demand and ordered the students to return to their classes or face expulsion. The students ultimately complied.⁴²

That the students at the Arabic teacher's training college sought to alter their dress code is not terribly significant in its own right. This incident was perhaps the last time that the turban would feature as a site of public contestation. The dispute between the *Dar al-'Ulum* students and the Ministry of Ali Maher managed to retain public attention for the entire year. The discussions quickly fanned outwards to include the general question of national identity, which repositioned the debates around the tarbush and the hat. The extinction of the turban, or at least its relegation to the sphere

now understood as religious, seemed a foregone conclusion-even for the self-designated Islamic press.

A magazine of the latter camp, *al-Fath*, opposed the move to remove the turban but sided with the pro-tarbush camp against the proponents of Western-style hats. It enlisted the likes of Shakib Arsalan, Ahmad Zaghlul, and Ahmad Taymur in its efforts. By yoking the turban and the tarbush into one seamless Islamic history, *al-Fath* was insisting on a national identity that embraced Egypt's Arab and Ottoman past simultaneously. The choice of headgear became a nodal point for the articulation of national and masculine subjectivity.

Arsalan's article uses the visit by the Moroccan prince Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Karim al-Khitabi to Europe as a lesson for Egyptians on the value of customary dress.⁴³ He situates the shame/pride in one's traditional fashion in the context of colonial penetration. The domination by European powers and the submission of Arab elites to European fashions is rendered as a form of emasculation.

However, as Arsalan demonstrates through Prince Muhammad, the loss of one's masculinity is often self-inflicted. He maintains that, contrary to some people's expectations, the Prince and his entourage were celebrated and honored in Europe for preserving the Islamic fashion of the Moroccan Rif: the turban and the hooded cloak. "They do not see themselves as less than Europeans nor do they recognize the hat and pants as signs of authority or markers of superiority."⁴⁴ Their pride in themselves and their culture were recognized and respected. Furthermore, Arsalan argued, their dress was not an obstacle to progress or to functioning in the modern world. In fact, the will to adapt to the modern world (adaptation is defined here as the acquisition of knowledge) without renouncing one's sartorial heritage is the equation for a possible reclamation of masculinity:

The perfection of masculinity (*kamal al-muruwwa*) is through obtaining knowledge by whatever means and acquiring wisdom from whichever direction, while retaining national character and native dress (*al-mushakhhisat al-qawmiyya wa al-aziya' al-asliyya*) so that we are not like slaves in love with imitating their masters.⁴⁵

He also registers the possibility of achieving a more physical, or martial, masculinity enabled by the respect for Islamic traditions-in this case expressed in dress. He cites the valor of the Rif Moroccans on the battlefield, where dress was not an impediment in their destruction of the mighty armies of Spain and France.⁴⁶

Where Shakib Arsalan's intervention took a broad regional and colonial perspective, Ahmad Zaghlul's contribution to

al-Fath published a month later emphasized the local and the national. The latter's response also came on the heels of another development in Egyptian sartorial politics. After the *Dar al-'Ulum* incident, a club named the Eastern League (*al-Rabita al-Sharqiyya*) addressed a letter to the Egyptian Medical Association in the form of a questionnaire seeking a scientific ruling on matters of dress.⁴⁷ The EMA's reply caused a furor in the pro-tarbush camp.

The first question was about the health implications of wearing the tarbush and other options; the second was about the suitability of Western clothes for Egypt's climate; and the last was regarding proper footwear.⁴⁸ In all three instances, the EMA ruled that Western styles were superior to local ones. The tarbush was the major victim of the ruling as it was designated completely unsuitable for Egypt's heat. In its stead, the pith helmet and brimmed hat were recommended as healthy alternatives:

We would like to point out on this occasion that the foreigners who have settled in hot countries conducted numerous medical and scientific experiments before they arrived at the clothes that they wear now, which are the most appropriate in terms of health for regions like these. This [conclusion] is also supported by several experiments carried out by respected members of this association.⁴⁹

In short, the Egyptian Medical Association categorically endorsed what could be called colonial fashion because it was a product of scientific testing.

This decision by an official but non-governmental body blurred the lines between cultural representation and political representation in interesting ways. Ahmad Zaghlul, the brother of the nationalist hero Sa'd Zaghlul, sharply denounced the EMA's decision as well as its presumption to officiate in the matter in the first place.⁵⁰ He begins his criticism by revisiting the events of that year and relating them to the present controversy as a series of destabilizing moves for the nation. He recounts the *Dar al-'Ulum* incident and how it ended with the students returning to class humiliated after the Ministry of Education threatened them with expulsion. However, inspired by the *Dar al-'Ulum* students, another group of students from government secondary schools began to clamor for the right to wear the hat instead of the tarbush. Apparently in this instance, Sa'd Zaghlul himself gave advice to students:

The question of dress is an issue of authentic national identity (*qawmiyya mahda*). If we changed our own [style] of dress, we would change our national identity, and a people without a national identity are a people without life.⁵¹

The author adds that there were also *fatwas* issued by some religious leaders warning the students of "evil consequences" if they changed completely to European dress.

So in that environment, Ahmad Zaghlul suggests, he was shocked by the irresponsible decision of the Egyptian doctors to endorse Western dress. That "environment" was ostensibly one in which the nationalist symbolic value of the tarbush was being undermined by unthinking youth who were playing into the hands of those who would deny to Egypt a developed national identity—and "a people without a national identity are a people without life." Ahmad Zaghlul's incredulity at the action taken by the Egyptian Medical Association then was justified since, in a sense, the very existence of Egypt was at stake.

He continues his criticism by attacking the organization's unrepresentative status especially when it came to such a weighty matter as changing the traditional dress of the "Islamic community."⁵² He contrasts the Egyptian Medical Association's place in Egyptian society with the "actual representatives" of the country—the *nawwab* (s. *na'ib*, parliamentary delegate):

The *nawwab* are the spokespersons of the nation, expressing its hopes and its pains. They know what is in its best interest and endeavor to satisfy it. At their head is the great leader Sa'd Pasha Zaghlul.⁵³

So if there was in fact a public health concern around the tarbush, argues Zaghlul, it would have been the responsibility of the parliamentary Health Committee to research the matter and render a decision. But it is obvious, he continues, that this question of dress is not a salient public issue except for a tiny minority of Westernized youth who lacked "national manhood" (*al-muruwwa al-qawmiyya*) or any ambition to become productive citizens. Their voices were thus negligible, and the "nation has rejected them, recognizing them as a burden on her; it has left them to play and be merry."⁵⁴

Then he turns again to censure and shame the doctors for humoring the trivial fantasies of this insufficiently masculine constituency while there were more pressing national health concerns to address:

You did not think about your wretched peasant who suffers under the oppressive weight of sickness. You considered fashion but did not consider the condition of the villages, their filth, and rampant illness. ... It is better for you to put aside this nonsense and [work to] uplift your nation....⁵⁵

Ahmad Zaghlul's article was not just an attack on the advocates of the brimmed hat, it was a move by him to accomplish a number of tasks. The first move, in which he locates

the EMA's decision within a series of contests by youth around the proper headgear, was made to highlight the juvenile nature of this constituency and their demands. By playing to these demands, the EMA not only devalued itself as an official body, but it also overstepped its bounds. Here is where Zaghlul makes his most significant intervention. The delimitation of a problem as "national" was the exclusive domain of the new parliamentary representatives, the *nawwab* and the civic life of associations was thus confined to a consideration of questions deemed relevant by the one truly national body. This appropriation of territoriality was especially significant at the time since control of the state was contested by political parties, the monarch, and the British.

On this embattled political terrain, it is noteworthy that Zaghlul based his criticism of the hat proponents on a gendered concept of representation. The proper representatives of the nation and those deserving of representation were joined in forming a field of national manhood—united in this instance around the symbol of the tarbush. Conversely, the detractors were rendered as lacking in nationalism and masculinity, and consequently, they were outside of representation as rejects of the nation.⁵⁶

Shakib Arsalan also responded to the Egyptian Medical Association's decision.⁵⁷ He begins by summarizing the deconstruction of the health angle of the tarbush-hat dispute that had been presented alongside the EMA arguments in the August issue of *al-Muqtataf*.⁵⁸ In short, the former had concluded that it did not really matter what was on one's head since human adaptation to heat varied depending on numerous factors: most importantly geography and class. Nonetheless, Arsalan suggests, if one were to accept the EMA's conclusion about dress and climate, then clearly the turban was far superior to both the tarbush and the brimmed hat, from the perspective of health (better at shielding against the sun or blows to the head) and in terms of practicality (can double as a pillow).

In a harsher tone, Arsalan dismisses the freedom-to-choose argument as essentially ignorant and superficial.⁵⁹ He says that those who maintain this position are in fact the least conscious of the meaning of life. If it meant to them the emulation of Westerners, then they should do so in all ways:

...in their seriousness and perseverance, in their love for their nations, in learning, in research, in economizing, in cleanliness, in exercise, in taking risks, in their interest in industry and art and the incorporation of these into [everyday] life, and in the ordering of their homes and their countries—none of which is dependent on the hat [they wear].⁶⁰

By questioning their motivation and casting them as poor copies of the Westerner, Arsalan, like Zaghlul, attempts to locate the desire for the hat as outside a national economy of desire and thus as untenable. The latter was especially true, in Arsalan's opinion, since Egypt already had a diverse array of headgear, to which if another were added would mean total "chaos" for Eastern fashion. In other words, if the Western hat too became a fixture of Egypt's fashion landscape, then how would Egypt be recognized as distinctly Eastern? Arsalan contends that outsiders would see an "amorphous society" (*hayya' ijtimaiyya khunfashariyya*). Despite the gravity of the problem, Arsalan is ultimately ambivalent about the best course towards the unification of a national style of dress. He finds enforcement by the sword, like in Turkey, an undesirable model.

Interestingly, the article in the August issue of *al-Muqtataf*, which Arsalan cites above in dismissing the health benefits of wearing the brimmed hat, had also offered its own reading of difference, recognition, and the East-West divide that diverged markedly from Arsalan's position.⁶¹ The author of "The Tarbush" or "The Hat" makes an argument about power and the institution of difference that intuits an understanding of the East as being on some levels a cultural construct—one with political ramifications. He suggests quite plainly that all of the present anxiety around the question of dress emanates from a sense of powerlessness:

If it had been that we were in the position of power and prosperity and that the people of Europe and America imitated us in our food, drink, dress, and home furnishings, then it wouldn't have bothered us if we were walking around barefoot or wearing the *balgha*⁶² on our feet and black rags on our heads. But we are connected to peoples who have surpassed us in everything and who want to retain their distinction from us and do not want us to resemble them in our dress. It is like the master of a house who does not want his servants to dress like he dresses.⁶³

So here, it is the maintenance of cultural difference through the preservation of Eastern fashion that becomes an act complicit with imperialist politics. The author points to the efforts in other aspects of life to erase the distinctions between East and West—in knowledge, wealth, transportation, household management and home furnishings. Even in terms of dress, the tops of heads are given as the last remaining frontier of the (male) body that separates "us from them." Or so it would seem.

This author actually manages to extricate himself from the narrow confines of the cultural politics of headgear to partially see the wider social world in which those debates were largely meaningless. Although he spins out

the implications of his argument and suggests that switching to the hat would be logically the final move to achieve identity with the European male, a large social and demographic fact is allowed to intrude and to complicate his cultural discourse. Essentially, in a country in which nine-tenths of the population, according to the author, had never made the switch to pants, jackets, and tarbush, it was folly to expect a major change of fashion in a year or even several years. Furthermore, he is pessimistic about tarbush-wearers switching to the hat in large numbers without the leadership of the king.

Ultimately, for this critic, cultural adaptation was a historical process from which there was no escape for a nation that did not wish to be enslaved by another. Dress was an important surface on which cultural dependence and independence were simultaneously expressed; likewise, holding on to an inviolable and unchanging notion of Eastern fashion, which evinced a more basic attitude that was out of sync with the times, was tantamount to dependence and domination without end. Of course, how simply a shift in attitude could bring about social or political emancipation for the vast majority of Egyptians still wearing the galabiyya and the turban and working the fields is never addressed.

(Ad)Dressing Desire

The problem of the tarbush and the hat was deemed such a significant national question by some that even the intimate engagements of prominent figures with fashion and identity were shared with the public. For example, Ali Abd al-Raziq contributed a poignant analysis, to *al-Siyasa al-Ushbu'iyya* of the Egyptian clothing debates from Paris.⁶⁴ He begins the article titled, "Farewell to the Turban," with the claim that for most people in the world dress was an issue of importance on par with food and drink, and possibly of even more importance. In any case, he believes that only a minority see in the issue of dress no significance whatsoever. By including the detractors, he makes clear from the start that it is not only in terms of meeting basic needs that dress commands attention but also as a contested cultural terrain.

Abd al-Raziq continues by making explicit some of the ways in which dress assumes social, economic, and political significance in modern times. He argues that "the institutions of modern life" presuppose the importance of different styles of dress. In other words, each social context commands its own sartorial image, and conversely that image reflects a particular social context. This, he suggests, would come as no surprise to anyone who knows of the fashion houses ("*buyut al-moda*") in the world's capitals and of "their influence on our economic life, our character, and our customs."⁶⁵ Of course,

all women, with "no difference between ages, colors, or classes," are members of this "madhhab" which accords fashion a central place in their lives. Men are slightly more differentiated in that there is a small minority, who are neither old nor young, who believe that clothes have absolutely no signifying value.

This group, according to Abd al-Raziq, rejects all the previous social and political claims made on dress, and deny the transformative power that some like to accord to it. Essentially, ugly is ugly, violent is violent, ignorant is ignorant, and there is nothing that dress can do about it. They also oppose the connections made between nationalism and dress; since, the latter is ephemeral, a form that fluctuates with the fluctuation of time, the nation is beautiful and stable eternally. Finally, they find the ascription of religious significance to dress objectionable and misguided.

Abd al-Raziq seems to be using this unnamed group of middle-aged men and their views on dress metaphorically, signifying a political position that is disconnected from its social and cultural bases. He suggests that the truth can be found between these extreme two positions, and that that truth should be acceptable to both. The middle position-between those who view dress as an issue of primary importance and those who deny it any importance - is to insist that men should not be allowed to discuss, act on, or even think about the question of dress. In the name of mediation, Abd al-Raziq is in fact staking out his own political and moral ground here. He argues that even if dress is considered by most to be of great significance, men should concern themselves with other issues - ones that were ostensibly more pressing. He does not elaborate on how or by whom those other issues would be determined.

The rest of the article is a personal testimony through which he bids farewell to the turban. He admits that this is a reversal of his own position and that the turban's extinction might in fact be a positive development; nevertheless, due to its special position among dress and its "beloved status in spirit," it was deserving of a formal elegy. "Even if the departed Shaykh Muhammad Abduh hated the turban and disparaged it," wrote Abd al-Raziq, there was a time when it signified a kind of social and religious virtue.⁶⁶ Furthermore, it held a "special place" in the life of the author and his family.

The "noble tradition" *turath karim* of the Abd al-Raziq family is then briefly narrated to illustrate the grand heritage of which the turban was an important symbol. Although he is nostalgic for that past time and sad that he would not be able to pass on the turban to his sons as his ancestors had done before him, he acknowledges that the time had come for its retirement. This was true

in part because the changing times had rendered the noble tradition of the turban obsolete, and the turban had been taken up by a class he alludes to as being composed of ignorant and violent types. So in a wistful tone, he brings his narrative to a close, literally bidding farewell to "the beloved turban."

Sheikh Ali Abd al-Raziq's article on dress and the extinction of the turban expresses a number of different concerns or anxieties about his society and the place of people like himself in it. Before turning to an analysis of these issues, it might be instructive to consider another personal testimony from a different perspective. Mahmud Azmi's story of switching from the tarbush to the hat appeared in *al-Hilal* a year after Abd al-Raziq's article in *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'yya*. Azmi informs the reader that he was invited by the magazine to recount his personal narrative, of how he came to the decision to wear the bowler hat. Interestingly, in this narration he presents a version of the history of the tarbush/hat controversy that takes the reader from the turn of the century to the author's present, 1927.

Azmi writes that the social and political significance of dress first occurred to him during his boyhood years as a student in secondary school. He remembers it as the time when everyone was talking about Qasim Amin's recently published books on women and the veil. After listening to numerous opinions on the books and then reading them for himself, he became a staunch opponent of the veil. He recalls that he was mainly opposed to the veil because of its foreign origins and its introduction to Egypt through conquest. His thinking on the issue was guided by two questions: What constitutes modest dress and what dress is Egyptian in material and make.

Early in the century the same sort of concern for properly national attire turned some against the tarbush. According to Azmi, some declared the tarbush foreign and unhealthy and called for a return to the ancient Egyptian headdress. He remembers himself being driven by similar reasons to reject the veil and the tarbush and feeling a powerful nationalist sentiment in doing so. However, as his understanding of nationalism changed while studying in Paris, so too did his attitude towards dress.⁶⁸

In France, the author learned that nationalism was a "feeling of pride" that one should hold within oneself and not "spread on his surface."⁶⁹ Hence, the symbolic value of fashion was reconfigured for Azmi along an internationalist cultural axis. He was inspired at that time, he writes, by the prevailing concept of inclusion (*al-tadamun*), and he felt that dress was one of the most visible sites expressing this new attitude.

According to Azmi, this kind of cultural fusion was very

obvious in Egypt. Over time, Egyptians on a popular level had borrowed all manner of dress from different dominant cultures. There was, however, one item of foreign clothing that had been denied popular approval because it was the symbol of Ottoman tyranny - "the symbol of the power of Cairo and the autocratic Sultan."⁷⁰ This was the tarbush.

The tarbush was not to remain forever a despised symbol. According to Azmi, the tarbush was re-coded with the exact opposite signification through the course of the First World War. It was re-signified and re-politicized, Azmi argues, as the British imposed a protectorate on Egypt in 1914. The sudden declaration of Egypt as an unwilling supporter of the British war effort against the Ottomans had surprising ramifications on the popular level. Azmi does not mention the tremendous human suffering experienced by the majority of Egyptians during this time, but surely this was a major factor in radicalizing the political landscape and preparing the grounds for the re-appropriation of the symbol of Turkish despotism as a distinct sign of Egyptian nationalism.

Azmi does describe, however, an interesting relationship that emerged during World War I between the way Egyptians viewed the Ottoman-Circassian elite⁷¹ and the stigma attached to the hat. He suggests that those who switched from the tarbush to the hat were trying to "flee from 'Ottomanism' and get closer to the protector state, or avoid the hostility of Australian soldiers."⁷² He alludes to how this sartorial switching by the members of the ruling class was read by the masses as cowardice. This and their alignment with the Protectorate are given as the two main reasons that the tarbush then became the marker of those expressing the popular will. In other words, by continuing to wear the tarbush in public, the wearer was showing his willingness to defy openly the occupying forces and stand up to whatever "humiliation" he was subjected.

Azmi refers to the period following the war as a *nahda*. It was through this renaissance-ostensibly tied to the new nationalist consciousness embodied by the popular uprisings of 1919-that Egyptians came to see the tarbush itself as reborn with the nation. It was normalized as a symbol of being "Eastern and Egyptian." As the *nahda* became a regular feature of everyday life institutionalized in Egypt's new "constitution" and "representative" government, and as "freedom" became an important principle to all, as a sort of understanding was reached with the British, a new space for moderate public discourse emerged.

Within this space, Azmi continues, some began to revisit the question of modern culture, and thus the tarbush again became a contested symbol. He maintains that the climate in which these debates occurred was

markedly different from the past. The most telling example of how much the times had changed was in the absence of accusations of blasphemy. In fact, there was change everywhere. Azmi cites the progress of women as best evinced in their "liberation from the veil." He notes the advances made in Turkey and how there was no religious opposition, and throughout the Arab lands there was a *nahda* and movements for independence.

In the Arab world there was also a split emerging which Azmi classifies as a civilizational choice: between Arab and modern. Some had come to the conclusion that attempts at finding common ground were futile because of the deep rift that existed between the past and the present of Islamic societies. He does not elaborate this further. He mentions the speed with which modern society was moving forward. Perhaps he believed that with such a rapid pace of change, reconciling with the past was impossible. He writes that he himself had made the choice to draw on modern civilization; furthermore, he felt that it was a choice society as a whole needed to make.

After delineating the historical context and illustrating the social and political significance of dress, he finally narrates the actual moment of decision in which he switched from the tarbush to the top hat. This autobiographical section is rare for this period because it publicly presents the intimate thoughts of a private person as he self-consciously embarks on making a change in his physical appearance. It is also rare in that it gives the reader an exceptionally vivid picture of what an agonizing process a seemingly simple act like choosing between two hats could be in 1920s Cairo.

Azmi writes that he had resolved in the summer of 1925 to put his convictions about being modern to the test. He announced to his friends and family that he would be switching to the bowler hat on the first of July. He says that he gave this date so that they would have some time to adjust to the idea.

Then he describes in great detail the anxiety he was struck with when the day finally arrived for him to make the switch. As he approached the hat store on Qasr al-Nil Street, he noticed that his footsteps had gotten heavier and that moving forward was becoming increasingly difficult. When he finally reached the front of the store, he froze and found that he could not open the door much less enter. Eventually, he turned around and walked back in the direction he had come from. He writes: "I noticed that I had started to accuse myself under my breath of cowardice and of still being under the influence of *al-akhta' al-wirathiyya*."⁷³

Extirpating the latter from himself and from society is deemed a significant and necessary step towards becoming modern. For Mahmud Azmi, this project of overcoming the inertia of tradition and expunging the old took another full year. He admits that he was emboldened by the ruling on the tarbush issued by the Egyptian Medical Association in the summer of 1926: "I headed directly the next morning—the third Saturday in the month of July, 1926—to the hat salesman, and I bought a summer hat. ... And since that day I have been wearing the hat, alternating between different types depending on the season."⁷⁴

From the two reactions that Azmi relays here, it seems that his wearing of Western hats was received favorably, even lauded. One of his friends, whom he describes as a leading Arab writer and intellectual, said the following: 'Now the Easterners are beginning to think with their heads!'⁷⁵ Another friend was inspired to write to *al-Siyasa* with his own views on the headdress question. Azmi quotes from his article: 'The struggle is not between the turban, the tarbush, and the hat, but rather it is a struggle between different structures of thought and taste (*suwar mukhtalifa min tafkir wa al-dhawq*) each of which wants to be dominant.'⁷⁶ With that said, this friend also sides with the Western hat and pronounces the turban and the tarbush as outmoded forms of headdress—and by extension, they symbolized obsolete forms of thought and taste.

The personal testimonies of Ali Abd al-Raziq and Mahmud Azmi richly illustrate the complicated negotiations of a certain class of individuals with their sartorial presence in an Egyptian public sphere of the 1920s. They attest to a very conscious engagement with and production of a conceptual landscape, underwriting a modern Egyptian masculine subjectivity. However much they differed in their positions on dress, both men were insistent on its significance to a culture in terms of its image but even more so in terms of its content. Abd al-Raziq accepted the passing of the turban because it no longer signified a virtuous life, and Azmi was ready to adopt the hat when it seemed to him that the tarbush no longer signified emancipation. While Abd al-Raziq's reasoning was grounded in an understanding of Islamic law and tradition, it is clear that Azmi was thinking through the principles of the Enlightenment.

Ali Abd al-Raziq's formal farewell to the turban inscribes the passing of a world in which men of religious learning had represented moral-and mediated political-authority. The cultural landscape that Abd al-Raziq surveys must necessarily foreclose a desire for the turban because its proper genealogy had been terminated by the social and political transformations of Egypt. Although he longs to pass on this symbol of a noble tradition to his heirs, the kind of masculine personhood metaphorized by the turban was no longer an ideal worthy of aspiration.

Mahmud Azmi's mapping of his decision to take up the Western hat illuminates a bourgeois understanding of the modern as a steady progression toward a future utopia. The past is inscribed in his personal narrative as part of a forward-moving trajectory and a teleology, not as a site of loss. The self-constituting individual is the desired subject position of Azmi's narration. It is a subject-position endorsed by science and resisted by an irrational Eastern mind. His courage in overcoming both the conservatism of his social milieu and his own internalized repression are publicly offered as testimony to the possibility of changing traditional tastes and frames of mind. Thus, the hat becomes the symbolic marker not only of modernity and the modern, but also of a possible future.

So when the tarbush incident came to the Egyptian pub-

lic's attention at the end of 1932, the cultural field had already been worked over to some extent and in a sense prepared for its reception. This might explain why a controversy that aroused loud outcries in late November became a dead issue by late December—both on the diplomatic level and in public discourse.⁷⁷ The cultural debates on the modernity and appropriateness of the tarbush for Egyptian men had already taken place. Its position as a nationalist icon had been secured against internal assault. The final chapter of the tarbush story would be written only two decades later.⁷⁸ Conversely, as Mahmud Azmi's testimony evinces, cultural space had been created for men to wear Western headgear without renouncing their masculinity or Egyptian-ness—so long as it was a private affair that did not impinge on the territory already staked out by the tarbush.

END NOTES

* In revising this article I have benefited greatly from the comments of members of the Middle East Studies Dissertation Writing group and the History of Women and Gender program at NYU. The criticisms of Michael Gasper, Elizabeth Smith, and Alison Redick were particularly helpful, as was the incomparable hospitality of Michael Gilseman. Of course, any shortcomings in the final product are entirely my own fault. In addition to funding from the American Research Center in Egypt and the Foreign Language and Area Studies program, the research for this project was supported by a grant from the Program on the Middle East and North Africa of the Social Science Research Council with funds provided by the U.S. Information Agency.

1. The use of "top hat" here is only for the purpose of alliteration; the actual hats in question at the time were versions of the bowler hat. Since there is not an extensive theoretical section to this essay, I offer the following brief explanation of terms. Masculinity and national identity are understood as performative subject-positions as well as discursive fields with identifiable genealogies. Modernity marks the space in which the other two concepts obtain their particular content; therefore, it is/was paradoxically conceived as a global condition and local practices. The Arabic word *madaniyya* is translated here as modern when it is used to signify a temporal phenomenon and as civilization when it marks a spatial formation. (The literature on each of these terms is so vast now that even a partial bibliography cannot be provided here.)

2. The tarbush (pl. *tarabish*), as it is called in Egypt, is more commonly known as the *fez*, ostensibly signaling its Moroccan origins. It is a brim-less hat of red felted wool with a flat circular top and a tassel. Depending on the period, they came in varying heights, proportions, and styles of tassel. (The *fez* was mandated as official headgear for Muslim men—except the *ulama*—in the Ottoman Empire as part of broader clothing reforms decreed by Sultan Mahmud II in 1829. In Egypt, Muhammad 'Ali had already dressed his soldiers in a version of the North African *fez*.) For a comparison of the cultural significance of the 1829 decree mandating the *fez* and the 1925 decree banning it, see Patricia L. Baker, "The *Fez* in Turkey: A Symbol of Modernization?" *Costume* 20 (1986): 72-85. Baker's analysis situates the movement for and against the *fez* within the frameworks of modernization and nationalism and relies on religious/secular and East/West dichotomies to explain these two different moments in

Ottoman-Turkish history. In the Egyptian case that I analyze here, by looking at the gendered aspects of men's anxieties about dress, the tarbush makes visible a much more complex field of cultural signification. (Henceforth, tarbush will appear in normal font.)

3. "The Ambassador's Tarbush," *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* 650 (7-13 August 2003): <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/650/chrncls.htm>.

4. This paper has benefited from the collection of recent approaches to the historical study of clothing and textiles in a special issue of *Gender and History* 14/3 (November 2002) titled "Material Strategies."

5. In fact, while the *fez* was banned by law in Turkey, the veil was only restricted through administrative regulations—e.g., prohibiting them in government schools and other facilities.

6. For an excellent overview of the political and military history of this critical period, see "World War I and the End of the Ottoman Order," in William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000): 146-167.

7. A few years later (1926), another conference—of religious leaders from the Islamic world—was convened in Cairo under the patronage of King Fuad to ponder the future of the Caliphate. The meeting could be—and has been—seen as Fuad's bid for the office after Atatürk's abolition of the Caliphate after over four hundred years of Istanbul as its seat. Seen through the lens of sartorial politics, however, the conference assumes added significance as another site for the production of cultural meaning. Unfortunately, I do not have the space here to elaborate on the conference.

8. Scholarly works on the history of nationalism in the Middle East has tended to cast Arab nationalism as the heir to Ottomanism, often missing out entirely the important early period of the emergence of nation-state nationalisms. Rashid Khalidi makes this critique in his review "Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature," *American Historical Review*, 9/5 (December 1991): 1363-1373. James Gelvin offers the critique, which would include Khalidi, that argues for a non-elite approach to the study of nationalism in the region, in "The Social Origins of Popular Nationalism in Syria: Evidence for a New Framework," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 26/4 (November 1994): 645-661. For Egypt, the major work on nationalism remains Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Egypt,*

Islam, and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1930 (New York, 1986) and *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

9. The relegation of dress to the domain of the trivial is not simply a past bias. Historians of Europe have only recently begun to mine this area for historical meaning. See Philippe Perrot's critique in *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century* trans., Richard Bienvenu (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

10. This article is based on a chapter of my dissertation tentatively titled "Effendi Masculinity: Culturing the Body and Building the Nation in Modern Egypt, 1870-1940." The effendiyya were generally a class of men who occupied positions in the modern professions and in government service; upper-level students were often included in this category. It is a problematic synonym for middle class and can connote a certain kind of bourgeois identity. I argue in the larger project that during the interwar period this category was invested with new definitions of masculine subjectivity that were based on diverse sets of cultural translations, that included in their purview physical culture, dress, and sexuality.

11. Detailed information on the production, styles, and consumption of tarabish during this same period can be found in a recent dissertation by Nancy Reynolds, "Commodity Communities: Interweavings of Market Cultures, Consumption Practices, and Social Power in Egypt, 1907-1961" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 2003): 344-359. Unfortunately, I have only had the opportunity to read this dissertation while making revisions to this article. Although there is some overlap in our material and analyses, I believe that my focus on the tarbush as a contested site of gendered cultural signification nicely complements Reynolds' reading of the materiality of the tarbush in its circulation through relays of production and consumption.

12. I have written more in depth about the kind of masculinity constituted by turban wearers in a chapter of my dissertation on the re-making of the futuwwa; therefore, the tarbush and the "top hat" receive more attention in this article.

13. This formulation is obviously reductionist and should be read as an awkward shorthand used to designate a much more complex field of cultural debates. For example, the proponents of the Western style hat were not always anti-tarbush, and similarly defenders of the tarbush were not necessarily anti-hat; and the turban-wearers occupied a position that could be labeled rejectionist, uncertain, or simply disinterested.

14. Ironically, the tarbush was retired from active symbolic duty under accusations of embodying feudal, aristocratic, and anti-nationalist meanings after the 1952 revolution.

15. This section is mainly a background to the debates around the tarbush that emerged during the 1920s. My research on dress for this earlier period was much less extensive and therefore my remarks here are mostly preliminary and tentative.

16. The best work on Muhammad Ali's army is Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

17. Ehud Toledano, *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 160-163.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

19. Ali Mubarak, *Hayati* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Adaab, 1989): 21-22.

20. This form of punishment for government officials was apparently standard during the rule of the viceroys. Nassau William Senior, *Conversations and Journals in Egypt and Malta*, 2 vols. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1882): vol. 2, p. 85. Cited in F. Robert Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives, 1805-1879* (Cairo: AUC Press, 1999): p. 84, fn 10. Also mentioned in

Toledano, p.162.

21. Mubarak, p. 23.

22. *Al-Ajyal* (October 19, 1897): 242-244.

23. *Ibid.*, p.242.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

27. *Ibid.*

28. For Egypt, see Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Clarissa Lee Pollard, "Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of the 1919 Egyptian Revolution" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, UC Berkeley, 1997); Mona

Russell, "Creating the New Woman: Consumerism, Education, and National Identity in Egypt, 1863-1922" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University, 1997); 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*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998). On representations of women in nationalist discourse, see Beth Baron, "Nationalist Iconography: Egypt as a Woman," in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab World*, eds. James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997): 105-24. The literature on this subject for other geographical areas is too vast to cite here.

29. The only study I am aware of for Egypt is by Marilyn Booth, "Woman in Islam: Men and The 'Women's Press' in Turn-of-the-20th-Century Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33(2001): 171-201. For a general reference on masculinity in the Middle East, see *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*, eds. Mai Ghousseub & Emma Sinclair-Webb (London: Saqi Books, 2000).

30. On this point, see Partha Chatterjee, "Nationalist Resolution of the Woman's Question," in *Recasting Women*, eds. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989): 233-253; and Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Difference-Deferral of a Colonial Modernity: Public Debates on Domesticity in British Bengal," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997): 373-405. Also, see Shakry's revision of Chatterjee's inner/outer formulation for Egypt in "Schooled Mothers."

31. *Al-Ajyal* (October 19, 1897): 243.

32. *Ibid.*

33. This early awareness of how Egyptian consumption of European fashion could be complicit with the foreign capitalist exploitation of the East continued to animate cultural criticism before the War. See Salih al-Tantawi, "Real Civilization or Harmful Imitation," *al-Irshad* (February 2, 1906): 2.

34. For the political history of this period, see Marius Deeb, *Party Politics in Egypt: the Wafd and its Rivals, 1919-1939* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979); Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment: 1922-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); and for a history that includes the labor movement, Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

35. Fikri Abaza, "Mustafa Kemal: His Triumphs in the World of Fashion," *al-Musawwar* (September 11, 1925): 2.

36. *Ibid.*

37. By hijab here, the author means both the face veil and the seclusion of women.

38. *Ibid.*

39. The dichotomous geography that Abaza describes works by instituting a temporal difference in the relation to modernity occupied by East and West; such that, any hasty attempt to cover the gap could only result in a fall—in this case of Turkish society.
40. The Editor, "Between the Turban and the Tarbush," *al-Nil al-Mussawar* (February 25, 1926): 7. A seemingly neutral article covering the radical changes declared by Mustafa Kemal appeared in *al-Nil al-Mussawar*, (September 10, 1925): 24, a day before the *al-Musawwar* issue containing Fikri Abaza's article.
41. *Al-Nil al-Musawwar* (February 25, 1926): 7.
42. News of this "minor" incident made it as far as New York. "Western Dress in Egypt," *New York Times* (February 9, 1926): 8.
43. Shakib Arsalan, *al-Fath* (June 30, 1926): 14.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. Arsalan underscores this accomplishment by situating the might of their opponents on a geopolitical scale: "[France and Spain] are not second-class states like Greece or Bulgaria." *Ibid.*
47. The letter was dated May 18, 1926. The letter and the EMA's response were published in the August 1926 issue of *al-Muqtataf* (pp. 147-148).
48. See chapter five of Reynolds' dissertation, "Commodity Communities," for an excellent study of the significance of footwear in nationalist discourse and the formation of a consumerist public in Egypt from the 1920s through the 1950s.
49. *Ibid.*, *al-Muqtataf*, p.148.
50. Ahmad Zaghlul, "The Tarbush and the Hat," *al-Fath* (July 22, 1926): 12.
51. *Ibid.*
52. This slippage between Egypt and the Islamic community seems to be a rhetorical deployment aimed at emphasizing the breadth and gravity of the action taken while simultaneously highlighting the ridiculousness of any claims to representative-ness made by such minor bodies.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*
56. Women's exclusion from formal political participation (voting and standing for elections) had been decided by the 1923 electoral law, which, interestingly, violated the universal suffrage provision of the national constitution that had been promulgated only three weeks prior. Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); in particular, see the chapter on "Suffrage and Citizenship," pp. 207-219.
57. Shakib Arsalan, "Healthy Clothing," *al-Fath* (October 14, 1926): 10-11.
58. "The Tarbush or the Hat," *al-Muqtataf* (August 1926): 140-148.
59. For an example of the freedom of choice argument, see "The Turban and the Tarbush in Dar al-'Ulum," *al-Hawi* (March 9, 1926): 5. Also, see *Ruz al-Yusuf* (October 20, 1926): 1.
60. Arsalan, *al-Fath*, p.11.
61. It was well known during this period that the owners of *al-Muqtataf*, Faris Nimr and the Sarruf brothers, were huge proponents of the Kemalist project. See Wajih Kawtharani, *al-Dawla wa al-Khilafa fi al-Khitab al-Arabi aban al-Thawra al-Kamaliyya fi Turkiyya* [The State and the Caliphate in Arab Discourse in the Wake of the Kemalist Revolution in Turkey] (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1996): 33-34.
62. These are the leather slippers with curly toes that were—and are—often used to symbolize an exotic and medieval Islamic East in the Orientalist imaginary. For its history as a material object in Cairo's shoe market, see Reynolds, "Commodity Communities," Chapter Five.
63. *Al-Muqtataf* (August 1926): 142.
64. Ali Abd al-Raziq, "Farewell to the Turban," *al-Siyasa al-Usubu'iyya* (November 13, 1926): 17. Ali Abd al-Raziq (1888-1966) was an al-Azhar trained shaykh who had also studied at Oxford. After his return to Egypt, he was appointed as a Shari'a Court judge in 1915. The publication of his book *Islam and the Principles of Government* in 1925 angered the king and resulted in the revocation of his degree from al-Azhar. He then practiced as a lawyer and went on to serve in the Majlis al-Nuwwab, followed by the Majlis al-Shuyukh. He also taught *fiqh* at the University of Cairo for twenty years.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.* He might have been referring to Abduh's Transvaal fatwa of 1903. Responding to a query from a Muslim in southern Africa about wearing European hats, Abduh answered that if the context—social or climactic—required it then it was not haram. M. Canard, "Coiffure européenne et Islam," *Annales d'Institut d'etudes orientales* (Algiers), VIII (1950): 205; cited in Baker, "The Fez in Turkey."
67. Mahmud Azmi, "Why I Wore the Hat," *al-Hilal* (11/1927): 52-56. An extract from this article was incorporated into another article published nearly a decade later titled, "The Hat as a Symbol of Culture: The Issue of the Tarbush and the Unity of Fashion," *al-Majalla al-Jadida* (November 1936): 17-20.
68. Of course it could very well have been the opposite—that his attitude towards nationalism changed as his understanding of fashion changed—but in a retrospective account justifying the controversial decision to switch to the Western hat it was important that the explanation be couched in terms of nationalism.
69. *Ibid.*, Azmi, p. 53.
70. *Ibid.*
71. Azmi never explicitly names or categorizes this group, but from the context it would have been clear to the contemporary reader to which class he was referring.
72. *Ibid.*, Azmi, p. 54.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 56. Inherited flaws, weaknesses, but could also be interpreted in this context to mean backward traditions.
74. *Ibid.* The excerpt that appeared in *al-Majalla al-Jadida* in November 1936 ends here.
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.*
77. After an exchange of secret notes between the Foreign Ministries in December, Ankara decided the affair over without any further response from Cairo.
78. For an interesting story of cultural life in Egypt that takes the tarbush as a central metaphor and is told from the perspective of one of its cosmopolitan communities, see Robert Solé, *Le Tarbouche* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).
79. Of course, since there was no apocalyptic climax this might beg the question of what these movements among the different styles of headdress meant for Egyptian masculinity during this period? In this article, I have been able only to hint at an answer by referring to masculinity as a performative practice. It is necessary to look at other sites of performativity and their interrelationships, as I do in the dissertation, in order to see the consolidation of an "effendi masculinity" that was legitimized through its claims on the nation and modernity and materialized through objects like the tarbush, practices like weightlifting, and ideologies like heteronormativity.