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The Egyptian empire, 1805–1885

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Rising from obscurity to prominence in 1805, Muhammad 'Ali actively sought to carve out for himself an empire in the eastern Mediterranean. He might have planned to revitalize the Ottoman empire under his leadership, and may even have nursed the idea of replacing the sultan as Universal Caliph of Islam.[1] The Pasha's stormy expansionism on both sides of the Red Sea – in Arabia and the Sudan – and in Greece, North Africa, and above all in Syria, should be viewed within a grand design of independence and regional hegemony.[2] Since his other campaigns are dealt with elsewhere in this book (see chap. 6), we will concentrate here on the Pasha's adventures in the Arabian peninsula and his and his successors' drive into the interior of Africa.

Muhammad 'Ali's activities in Arabia

The Muwahidun movement – commonly known as the Wahhabis[3] – originated and developed in the remote plateau of Najd in central Arabia, outside the sphere of effective Ottoman power. Its founder, Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–92), was a puritan and steadfastly fundamentalist *muslih* (reformer) of Islam. An *'alim* of the strict Hanbali *madhhab*, the shaykh "rebuked the errors and laxity of the times,"[4] and was in particular opposed to the European cultural invasion of *dar al-Islam*. He

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[1] See Mehmet Maksudoglu, *Osmanli History* (Kuala Lumpur, forthcoming [1998]).
[2] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., "Muhammad Ali Pasha," by E. R. Toledano.
[3] Followers of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab call themselves *muwahidun* (believers in the oneness of God: *da'wat al-tawhid*). The term "Wahhabi" originated with opponents of the movement, who charged that it was a new form of Islam, and the name eventually gained wide acceptance. The movement is also sometimes called *al-Salafiyya*, those who follow the *salaf*, the great ancestors. Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (London, 1968), 104.
[4] *The Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. Bernard Lewis, A. K. S. Lambton, and P. M. Holt (Cambridge, 1970), I, 380.

sought to eliminate the consequential *bi'da* (objectionable innovations) that had distorted Islam, and he dogmatically interpreted it in his *Kitab al-tawhid*. He recalled the Muslims to the pure and unadulterated faith and practices of the ideal state of the Prophet and the four Rightly Guided Caliphs of the seventh century. His world-view, overburdening Muslims with their past, was thus imitative, historical – and obsolete.[5]

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhib branded all who disagreed with him as heretics and apostates, thereby justifying the use of force in imposing his austere doctrines and political will. Hence he declared a jihad – otherwise religiously impermissible – against all other Muslims, including the Ottoman sultan-caliph. The shaykh in fact considered the sultan the major source of evil and urged Muslims in Arabia and elsewhere to overthrow him. His other major target was Sufism, since its beliefs and practices transgressed, in his view, the all-important principle of *tawhid* (oneness of God), and were thus acts of *shirk* and *kufr*, polytheism and unbelief.

An alliance was established between the zealous shaykh and the warrior Muhammad ibn Sa'ud, ruler of a petty amirate around the town of Dar'iyya who, unlike some other tribal leaders, accepted the rigorous Wahhabi teachings. Armed with religious fervor and military skill, the Wahhibis waged aggressive campaigns that encroached upon the Ottoman domain. When the shaykh died in 1792, the house of Sa'ud established its domination, and the theological principles of the Wahhabis, over the whole of central Arabia. By the turn of the century, the first Sa'udi–Wahhabi state had been founded in Najd.

This state challenged the Ottoman sultanate at several levels. First and foremost was the military threat to provinces adjacent to Sa'udi-controlled territories, particularly in the Hijaz and Fertile Crescent. In 1802 the Wahhabis captured and pillaged Karbala', the burial place of the imam Husayn ibn 'Ali and a center of pilgrimage for all Shi'i Islam. Raids into the Iraqi provinces ensued in the following years. More serious were continuing Wahhabi attacks in the Hijaz, and the occupations in 1803 and 1805 respectively of Mecca and Medina themselves. Making matters worse, from 1807 Sa'ud ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz closed the Hijaz to Ottoman pilgrim caravans, thus insulting the Ottoman sultan and defying his claim to be Servitor of the Two Holy Sanctuaries.[6] Another dimension of the Wahhabi problem was its challenge to the whole Ottoman religious establishment with its hierarchy of *'ulama'* and patronage of Sufi orders.

Britain, for its own reasons, shared the sultan's concern. Wahhabi expansion threatened two important international waterways – the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf – that were vital to British communications with the

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[5] Abdul Hamid A. Abu Sulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind* (Herndon, VA, 1993), 4–7.
[6] P. M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent 1516–1922*, 2nd ed. (London, 1980), 179.

east.[7] Though at odds with the Ottomans Muhammad 'Ali was himself also antagonistic to Wahhabi military and religious activities. The Wahhabi ideal antagonistic to Wahhabi military and religious activities. The Wahhabi ideal of Islam, still uncorrupted by wealth, was in particular adamantly opposed to the Pasha's persistent and extensive modernizing experiments in Egypt.

To reassert his authority and restore his credibility in the eyes of the Muslims, Sultan Mahmud II (1808–39) was determined to break the power of the Wahhabis and expel them from the cradle of Islam. Conscious of his own weakness, the sultan called first upon the pashas of Baghdad and Damascus, but to no avail. His subsequent appointment of Muhammad 'Ali to organize an expedition against the Wahhabis was made in accordance with established precedent; since the extension of Ottoman suzerainty over the Arab lands, the affairs of the Hijaz had usually been overseen by the Ottoman governor of Egypt, as they had been by the Mamluk sultans.[8] This appointment may also have been a machiavellian stroke to exhaust the Pasha's resources and troops,[9] and thus prepare for the replacement of Muhammad 'Ali by another Ottoman nominee.

Muhammad 'Ali's favorable response to the sultan's command was essentially dictated by political expediency, not by loyalty or submission to his suzerain. The international situation was not conducive to any defiance; Britain and France were determined to maintain the territorial integrity of the Ottoman empire. The Pasha realized that it was in his interest not to upset the balance of power too drastically or too quickly. He temporarily concealed his ulterior motives and plans, and professed loyalty and obedience to his sovereign. He also calculated that quelling the Wahhabi revolt and winning control of the holy cities would give him immense prestige among his coreligionists, and hence enhance his chances for independence, and perhaps for the caliphate itself. He may also have seen in the engagement of his turbulent and insubordinate Albanian soldiers in faraway campaigns a chance to free himself from the threat they posed and to pursue his plans to create a loyal and disciplined army on western lines, the *nizam al-jadid*.

In 1811 the Pasha broke the power of the Mamluks by treacherously massacring their leaders in the Citadel in Cairo on the occasion of the investiture of his son Tusun as commander of the expeditionary force to the Hijaz. Tusun embarked at Suez, but his army, traveling overland, was ambushed by the Wahhabis; survivors, including some senior lieutenants, retreated. The Pasha took advantage of this disaster to execute disorderly Albanian officers and force others to retire. Tusun now organized another

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[7] Sulayman M. al-Ghannam, *Qira'a jaddidah li siyyasat muhammad 'ali al-tawasu' aiyyah* (Jidda, 1980), 27–30.
[8] Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent*, 179.
[9] H. Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge, 1931; repr. 1967), 43. Cf. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent*, 179.

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campaign and secured the support of the sharif of Mecca, Ghalib ibn Musa'd, and other tribal leaders. The Egyptian army took Medina, Mecca, and Jidda, and by 1813 most of the Hijaz had surrendered; prayers for the sultan were once again offered in the holy cities. The Pasha came in person to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage and give a helping hand to his son. He also replaced the wealthy sharif for alleged sympathy with the Wahhabis and sent him with three of his sons to detention in Cairo.

This strategy backfired by inciting a number of Arab tribes to revolt, and the Wahhabis began once more to gather in the desert. Reinforcements were summoned from Egypt, but this campaign, like its predecessor, opened with a disaster, after which ten senior officers fled. Nevertheless the Egyptian army regrouped under Muhammad 'Ali himself, and in 1814 decisively defeated the Wahhabi forces under Amir Faysal ibn Sa'ud. By mid-1814 Faysal was dead, and the Sa'udi front had collapsed. The Egyptian army had pressed southwards toward Yemen,[10] but the Pasha was obliged at a critical moment to return hurriedly to Egypt either because of a rumored conspiracy[11] or, more likely, owing to the tense atmosphere in Europe following Napoleon's escape from Elba. Tusun concluded in 1815 a truce with the new Sa'udi amir, 'Abdallah ibn Sa'ud, that in effect secured the status quo. The Wahhabis retained the Sa'udi homeland of Najd and some parts of the Hijaz, while the Egyptian forces controlled the holy cities and assured the safety of the pilgrimage.[12] Tusun appears to have accepted this arrangement because he feared overextension in Najd might cut him off from his supply base in the Hijaz. In any case he withdrew from Wahhabi territory, and on November 8, 1815 he returned to Egypt, where he was treated as a conquering hero although the war was not yet over. A few days later he contracted plague and died.

European affairs having been settled by the final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, in 1816 Muhammad 'Ali resumed the war in Arabia, where Tusun's withdrawal had encouraged Amir 'Abdallah to break the truce and start fighting again. Under the capable command of his ruthless eldest son, Ibrahim, the *wali*'s forces advanced steadily into Najd from their base at Medina. Within two years the Wahhabis' desert strongholds had fallen one after another, and in September 1818 the Sa'udi capital, Dar'iyya, was finally taken after a siege of six months and demolished. Ibrahim mercilessly executed Wahhabi 'ulama' after arguing with them over matters of doctrine.[13] Amir 'Abdallah was sent to Istanbul, where he was put to death. The sultan, guardedly pleased by the defeat of the Wahhabis, named Ibrahim a

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[10] See above, p. 150.
[11] See chap. 6.
[12] Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent*, 180.
[13] Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge, 1984), 202.

three-tail pasha and appointed him governor of the Hijaz. With the awarding of this rank and title the sultan may have sought to sow seeds of dissension between father and son; Ibrahim remained loyal to his father.

Though defeated, the Wahhabis continued to resist. Ibrahim Pasha – called in Egyptian sources *qahir al-wahhabiyyin*[14] (annihilator of the Wahhabis) – failed to establish complete authority over their far-flung regions. In 1824 Najd was evacuated when Turki, son of 'Abdallah ibn Sa'ud, took power and founded the second Sa'udi–Wahhabi state which dominated the region until 1891. Muhammad 'Ali's protectorate over the Hijaz and the coastlands of Yemen lasted, however, until his general settlement with the Ottomans in 1840.

Yemen

Although Yemen had been under formal Ottoman suzerainty since early in the sixteenth century, successive imams of Sana'a remained virtually independent. By the turn of the nineteenth century, however, Yemen had been exposed to continual Wahhabi raids; the imam cautiously welcomed Muhammad 'Ali's initiative to stamp out the Wahhabis, though he suspected that the Pasha's eyes were set on his country. By 1813 the Egyptian army had pressed southwards, taken Qunfudha in Yemen, and controlled the southern region. In 1819 Muhammad 'Ali concluded a treaty with the imam that extended Egyptian influence down the Red Sea littoral to the Bab al-Mandab. The imam recovered in return extensive territories usurped by the Wahhabi sharif of Hudayyda, though he was obliged to pay tribute of 20,000 *bohars* of coffee. Muhammad 'Ali justified this tribute by alleging that former imams had been tributaries of the Porte through the pasha of Egypt, and secondly as a reward for restoration of nearly a whole province that the imam could not have reclaimed by his own efforts.[15]

Meanwhile the British East India Company looked with increasing suspicion on the Egyptian drive in Arabia. The company took advantage of an alleged insult to the British resident at Mocha to wage a naval and ground assault on the town in November 1820. The imam was compelled to sign a treaty on January 15, 1821 that established British influence in this chief Yemeni port, and gave Britain other important concessions. But Muhammad 'Ali was too preoccupied with other campaigns to pursue expansion in Yemen. He had to wait until a suitable opportunity arose.

While mired in his costly war in Syria, the Pasha was driven in 1832 to the Yemeni front by unforeseen developments in the Hijaz. These were related

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[14] Abd al-Rahman al-Raf'i, *Asr muhammad 'ali*, 4th ed. (Cairo, 1982), 164–65.
[15] Abdel Hamid al-Batrik, "Egyptian Yemeni relations 1819–1840," in P. M. Holt (ed.), *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt* (London, 1968), 282.

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to the mutiny at Jidda of some Albanian troops who had been encouraged and supported by the pasha of Baghdad. Their leader, Muhammad Agha, calculated on the eventual subjugation of his master by the Porte, and aspired to obtain the pashalik of Jidda for himself. He confiscated public property and Egyptian ships at Jidda, and planned an attack on Mecca. Defeated, he was forced to flee southwards into Yemen, where he captured several towns: Hudayyda, Zahid, Mocha, and in 1833 Aden itself. The rebels firmly established themselves in Yemen, with Mocha as their headquarters, and seriously interrupted the Red Sea trade. This daring insurrection presented Muhammad 'Ali with the opportunity he had long wished for to invade Yemen.[16]

The death in 1832 of the ruler of Sana'a, the imam al-Mahdi, accelerated anarchy and civil war in Yemen. Commerce with Britain was largely suspended and all the coffee of Mocha was exported instead to the USA. In these circumstances Muhammad 'Ali erroneously calculated that Britain might not seriously object to his firm control of this strategic area in preference to the weak and unstable rule of the imam.

Without explicit British approval Muhammad 'Ali in 1833 sent an expedition to Mocha. Subsequently two campaigns began, one under Ahmad Yakan to Asir, and the other into Yemen under Ibrahim Yakan Pasha. The cream of Muhammad 'Ali's modern army defeated the rebels and forced them to flee. The Asir tribes were also compelled to withdraw from Mocha, and the Egyptian army and navy took most of the main towns and ports of Yemen. Ta'iz, the key to the capital (Sana'a), surrendered, and Egyptian forces reached Aden, though they withdrew after a few days. Preparations were made to capture Sana'a, where the imam had a reputation for dissoluteness and was expected to offer only token resistance. By 1838 Egypt had taken all the Arabian coast from Suez and Aqaba to Mocha.[17] With Egyptian influence spreading throughout Arabia, Muhammad 'Ali initiated plans to exploit the lucrative commercial resources of Yemen. He established a "coffee department" at Hudayyda, and planned to monopolize the coffee trade at Jidda.

Although the object of the Arabian wars was to break the power of the Wahhabis and restore the suzerainty of the Ottoman sultan, their practical result was to establish the power of the *wali* of Egypt on the east coast of the Red Sea. This threatened Britain's strategic and commercial interests. Despite Muhammad 'Ali's repeated denials of Egyptian antagonism to British interests, the British government had every reason to believe that his ambitions extended far beyond the peninsula. By the end of the 1830s the future of the region ceased to be decided by the viceroy of Egypt and was

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[16] *Ibid.*, 284.
[17] *Ibid.*, 285.

instead determined by Britain. In 1839 the British occupied Aden and told the Pasha to evacuate Arabia. He played for time but was soon compelled to comply (in the 1840 treaty of London). Yemen was the first country to be evacuated, in May, whereupon it plunged into civil wars.

The Egyptian empire in Africa, 1805–85

Muhammad ʿAli's Arabian wars of 1813–18 were followed in 1820 by another campaign undertaken on his own initiative and account, and not that of his sovereign – although he subsequently got Ottoman recognition of his conquests. This was the campaign in Nubia, Sinnar, and Kurdufan that laid the foundation for what would be known as the "Egyptian" Sudan.

The term "Egyptian" in this context is somewhat misleading. For the Sudan was not conquered or ruled by Egyptians as we understand them today but by the Turkish-speaking elite that had dominated Egypt since medieval times. With few exceptions, true Egyptians – people of the lower Nile – were not given senior political or military posts in Egypt or the conquered Sudan. Hence the Sudanese and Europeans call the period 1821–85 in the Sudan the Turkiyya,[18] while others commonly use the clumsy neologism "Turco-Egyptian."

The strategy of Muhammad ʿAli's invasion of the Sudan has been the subject of much controversy among historians. According to many Egyptians, for whom writing is almost always an expression of patriotism, Muhammad ʿAli's primary object for what they call the *fath* ("opening up") was the welfare of the local people. The Pasha, they argue, so pitied the inhabitants of the deteriorating Funj sultanate (the Sudanese political entity best known to Egypt at this time) that he decided to step in to save them from misery and hardship, and subsequently to unite the Sudanese peoples with their brothers in Egypt in a strong state that would work for the welfare of both peoples.[19] Some Egyptian historians even claim that the Pasha undertook the *fath* "on the request of the Sudanese peoples themselves,"[20] as represented by some notables who urged it. Indeed a few Sudanese dignitaries did so, but their own motive was seemingly strictly personal and related to dynastic rivalries – they should not be assumed to have represented "the Sudan."

A prominent Egyptian historian, the late Muhammad Fuʾad Shukri, claimed that Muhammad ʿAli's conquest "firmly established Egypt's legal and historical rights" over the Sudan. The dissolution of the Funj sultanate

[18] Richard Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan* (London, 1959), 13.
[19] M. F. Shukri, *al-Hukm al-Misri fi'l sudan 1820–1885* (Cairo, 1948), 23.
[20] M. A. al-Jabri, *Fi sha'n allah* (Cairo, n.d.), 18.

made the Sudan, in his view, "a land without a sovereign,"[21] a no-man's land. Hence once the Pasha controlled it and established a government there, Egypt automatically became the indisputable sovereign by right of conquest.[22] One of Muhammad ʿAli's main reasons for visiting the Sudan in 1838–93 was to propagate this theory – the theory of "the vacuum" as he called it – and to use it to safeguard the unity of the Nile valley, that is to keep its two parts, Egypt and the Sudan, under one political system.[23]

This claim of Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan was a major theme in Sudanese and Egyptian politics until at least the 1950s. Shukri seems to have been politically motivated to support the advocates of the unity of the Nile valley against those Sudanese who advocated an independent Sudan. It should also be added that the sultan of Sinnar, though a mere figurehead by 1820, remained until then the most important ruler in the country. Moreover, Egypt could not claim sovereignty over the Sudan by right of conquest, since the invasion was officially undertaken in the name of the Ottoman sultan, the territories acquired were formally annexed to his dominions, and Egypt itself continued to be an Ottoman province at least until 1914. In any case the Funj sultanate was not the Sudan as a whole, a territorial term still vague and ambiguous throughout the period of Cairo's rule.

The "welfare hypothesis" has similarly been challenged in recent studies.[24] These, based on archival data, demonstrate that the conquest was closely related to Muhammad ʿAli's grand design of autonomy and regional hegemony.[25] This in turn required a strong army and the wealth that the Pasha obviously looked for in the Sudan. Hence exploitation rather than welfare was the prime object of conquest.

Just before his invasion of the Sudan, Muhammad ʿAli embarked on the formation of a strong and docile army trained in the European manner and personally loyal to him. While at first ruling out for many reasons[26] the conscription of Egyptian fallahin, the Pasha planned to recruit twenty or thirty thousand Sudanese Africans for his *nizam al-jadid*. More Sudanese were also needed for his numerous agricultural and industrial enterprises in Egypt, and for sale too in the slave markets. The Pasha later constantly urged, and often scolded, his commanders in the Sudan to intensify their *ghazwas* – armed slave raids – and to send the greatest possible number of Africans to the training-camp at Aswan, sited for its remoteness from the noisy Delta towns and its proximity to the Sudanese slave reservoir. He

[21] M. F. Shukri, *Misr wa al-sayyadah ala al-sudan* (Cairo, 1946), 18.
[22] *Ibid.*, 38–39.
[23] M. F. Shukri, *Misr wa al-sudan* (Cairo, 1958), 13.
[24] See e.g. H. A. Ibrahim, *Muhammad ʿali fi'l sudan*, 2nd ed. (Khartoum, 1991); and B. K. Humaydah, *Malamih min ta'rikh al-sudan fi ʿad al-khidawi ismaʿil* (Khartoum, n.d.).
[25] See above, pp. 150–65.
[26] See chap. 6.

stressed in one directive that this was the most important reason for undertaking the "difficulties and expenditure" of the conquest, and described in another this inhuman practice as his "utmost desire irrespective of the means used to do it."[27]

Although hardly a year passed until 1838 without at least one *ghazwa* for blacks in the Nuba mountains and beyond Fazughli, the supply of slaves ran very short of demand. Muhammad 'Ali's optimistic hope of swelling the slave army of his dreams was based on no thorough survey of Sudanese potential. The Sudanese blacks, moreover, stubbornly resisted the *ghazwas*, some even committing suicide to avoid enslavement. Some of those captured were lost en route while others perished by the hundreds in the Egyptian climate and from diseases.[28] Faced with this failure, the Pasha finally began conscription of the Egyptian peasantry, and soon discovered that they made much better soldiers than anyone had expected.[29]

The few blacks recruited for the Egyptian army were unsuccessful in Egypt's adventures abroad. While Muhammad 'Ali employed them in his wars in Arabia and the Morea, the viceroy Muhammad Sa'id (1854–63), in response to a request by Napoleon III, in 1863 sent part of a Sudanese battalion to Mexico to take part in the French effort to suppress rebellion there.[30] Similarly the black recruits for military service in the Sudan itself were insubordinate and rebellious. Many military risings took place in the country, of which the most dangerous were in Wad Madani in 1844 and Kassala in 1865.[31]

Equally important was Muhammad 'Ali's desire to exploit Sudanese minerals, particularly gold. On his assumption of power in 1805 Egypt was one of the poorest Ottoman provinces, if not the very poorest. The Pasha anxiously looked for a source of revenue to achieve his expensive internal schemes and foreign adventures. Obsessed from early manhood to old age with the illusion of abundant gold in the Sudan, he made strenuous efforts to discover it, particularly in the Fazughli area and around Jabal Shaybun in the Nuba mountains. Apart from urging on his commanders the necessity of gold-prospecting, he occasionally sent mineralogists to the Sudan, for example the Austrian J. von Russeger and his own engineer, the Piedmontese Boreani. The disparity between the optimistic report of the former and the pessimistic one of the latter was intriguing enough to induce the Pasha to travel to Fazughli himself in 1838–39 – at the age of seventy – to supervise

[27] Quoted in Ibrahim, *Muhammad 'ali*, 25.
[28] Hill, *Egypt*, 25.
[29] *Ibid.*, 7.
[30] Richard Hill and Peter Hogg, *A Black Corps d'elite* (East Lansing, 1995); Umar Tusun, *Butalah al-urtah al-sudaniyyah al-misriyyah fi harb al-maksik* (Alexandria, 1933).
[31] For the Madani rising see Ibrahim, *Muhammad 'ali*, 93–94; for the Kassala rising see N. Shuqayr, *Gughrafiat wa ta'rikh al-Sudan*, 2nd ed. (Beirut, 1967).

mining activities. But his three-week stay was extremely disappointing.[32] Attempts to exploit the iron deposits of Kurdufan and the copper of Hufrat al-Nahhas in southern Dar Fur were also failures.[33] Government mining activities were expensive failures, costing a great deal and producing little.

The Egyptians were more successful in improving and exploiting the agriculture of the Sudan. They sent agricultural experts who improved irrigation, developed existing crops, planted new ones, and effectively combated plagues and pests, particularly locusts. Veterinary doctors were appointed to look after the animals, and experts were dispatched from Egypt to teach the preservation of hides and skins. After the many years of political disorder in the middle Nile that had almost stopped trade with Egypt, the conquest gave greater security to northern Sudanese and Egyptian traders, and made possible the eventual introduction of European commerce.[34]

Nevertheless, prosperity in agriculture and animal wealth were apparently not used to benefit the Sudanese. Instead, the government was concerned mainly with exporting wealth to Egypt. Muhammad 'Ali imposed a strict state monopoly on almost all of the country's products and exports. Consequently considerable quantities of Sudanese products – indigo, gum, ivory, and so forth – were exported to Egypt. Similarly, throughout the period of Egyptian rule the Sudan was Egypt's cheapest source of livestock. In spite of difficulties in moving them down the Nile, with raids by thieving nomads and a lack of organized feeding and watering arrangements, a steady flow of cattle arrived each year in Egypt. Animal products such as hides and hair were also sent.[35]

Besides the primary motive of exploitation, there were political considerations behind the conquest and administration of the Sudan. While presumably hoping to get rid in the Sudan campaigns of the rebellious Albanian soldiery that had brought him to power, Muhammad 'Ali was more concerned with the remnants of the Mamluks who, after the massacre and proscription in Egypt in 1811, had escaped southwards and established themselves at Old Dongola. Though remote and insignificant in number, the Mamluks' extraordinary vitality and tenacity caused anxiety to the Pasha. As early as 1812 he sent an embassy to the Funj sultan to expel them, but he was too weak to comply. The majority of the Mamluks finally surrendered to the invading army in 1820–21 and were allowed to return honorably to

[32] A report on this journey was supposedly published in the official gazette *Vagai i misriya*. Hill and Shukri place it as an appendix to issue 618 published in Alexandria on April 21, 1839. Attempts since 1965 to locate such an appendix have been unsuccessful. A copy found in 1977 in the Centre for Contemporary Egyptian Studies in Cairo has been published as *Rihlat muhammad 'ali ila al-sudan 15 October 1838–14 March 1839* (Khartoum, 1980; 2nd ed., 1991).
[33] Ibrahim, *Muhammad 'ali*, 129–32.
[34] Hill, *Egypt*, 49–57.
[35] Ibrahim, *Muhammad 'ali*, 135–54.

Egypt, though a few fugitives continued their flight, some toward Dar Fur, others toward Arabia, and vanished from history.[36]

Had not the Ottoman sultan insisted on an immediate Egyptian expedition to suppress the Wahhabis in Arabia,[37] the conquest of the Sudan might have been Muhammad 'Ali's first war after his expulsion of the British expedition of 1807.[38] The intelligence brought back by the embassy of 1812 that revealed the military weakness and fragmentation of the Funj sultanate encouraged the Pasha to go ahead with his plans to invade the Sudan. In 1819 he traveled to Nubia himself to supervise preparations for the expeditionary force that was sent under the command of his third son, Isma'il Kamil Pasha. Three 'ulama' were attached to this expedition to urge the Sudanese Muslims to submit to the army of the representative of their caliph the Ottoman sultan. Apart from a brief resistance by the truculent Shaiqiya tribe,[39] the invaders advanced almost without opposition until June 1821 when they reached Sinnar, where Badi VI, the last Funj sultan, surrendered. Meanwhile another expeditionary force was sent in April 1821 under the command of the Pasha's son-in-law Muhammad Bey Khusrav, the *daftardar*, to conquer the remote sultanate of Dar Fur. This force struck across the desert to Kurdufan, a dependency of Dar Fur which was conquered after a couple of brutal engagements, in one of which its governor, the Maqdum Musallam, defiantly resisted the invaders and was killed in the fighting.[40] The ultimate objective of subjugating Dar Fur itself was, however, too risky to be accomplished, and thus was shelved for some fifty years; Dar Fur was annexed in 1874.[41]

The Sudanese had not paid regular taxes during the time of the Funj sultanate, and the burden of the government had been light, particularly on the poor. But in striving to mobilize and exploit Sudanese resources the Egyptian administration extended to the Sudan an oppressive and altogether unknown Egyptian system of taxation that disrupted the economic life of the country. What made matters worse was the brutal means used by the *bashbuzq* – irregular soldiers – and their frequent insistence that taxes should be paid in cash, though the use of coin was still restricted to merchants and townspeople.[42]

The reaction of the people was immediate and often violent. Some fled to Abyssinia while others rose in desperate tax revolts throughout the period of Egyptian rule. Perhaps the most violent of these was the widespread rebellion of 1822 in which Isma'il and his staff were burned alive by *mak* (chief) Nimr of the Ja'aliyyin tribe, and thousands of Sudanese fled to the Abyssinian borders.[43] That rising was soon crushed by the government's superior firearms and by the ruthless massacres of the *daftardar* who, on hearing of the assassination, rushed from Kurdufan to the Nile. Though a rising of despair, without united leadership, this revolt alerted Muhammad 'Ali to the necessity of conciliating the resentful Sudanese if the objectives of the conquest were to be actively pursued. Hence the Pasha's serious attempt to inaugurate after 1825 a policy of allaying the fear of the people and securing the collaboration of their leaders, notably Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir wad al-Zayn (d. 1857), who progressively rose in rank to become the government's chief local advisor. The Pasha also started the practice, continued by his successors, of inviting Sudanese notables to visit him in Egypt.[44]

Despite Sudanese resistance, the Pasha continued his expansionist policy in Africa. His next major target was the eastern region where the Abyssinian marches gave a convenient refuge for malcontents from the Nile. When clemency failed to secure their return to the land of their fathers, the Pasha used force in the 1830s. There began in 1837 a series of raids and counter-raids across the borders that continued at intervals until 1889 when the Mahdist amir al-Zaki Tamal destroyed the Abyssinian army of King John IV at Qallabat.[45]

After Kanfu, the Abyssinian ruler of the frontier district of Kwara, had seemingly conspired with the Hadandawa tribes to invade the Egyptian Sudan, the battle of Wad Kaltabu, deep in Sudanese territory, in April 1837 ended in a heavy defeat for the Egyptians. Though the Abyssinians withdrew, the government was thoroughly alarmed lest the enemy annex the important frontier districts around Qallabat. Hence the governor-general, Khurshid Pasha (1826–38), got the approval of Muhammad 'Ali for a reprisal raid that was not, however, carried out because of a stern British warning against any attack on Christian Abyssinia. Khurshid's successor, Ahmad Pasha Abu Widan (1838–43), nevertheless annexed al-Taka province, the region of Khur al-Kash, and the Red Sea hills; Kassala developed as the chief administrative center. But the Hadandawa remained restive, and Ahmad Pasha al-Manikli, the new governor-general,[46] sent a punitive expedition that was carried out with such vigor (including the slaughter of

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[36] P. M. Holt and M. W. Daly, *A History of the Sudan*, 4th ed. (London, 1988), 47, 50–51.

[37] See above, pp. 144–45.

[38] A. al-Rafi'i, *Ta'rikh al-haraka al-qawmiyyah wa tatwr nizam al-hukm fi misr*, III, 'Asr muhammad 'ali (Cairo, 1930), 73.

[39] Isma'il recognized the value of the Shaiqiya and enlisted them as irregular cavalry.

[40] Musallam sent a defiant letter to the *daftardar*.

[41] See above, pp. ooo–oo.

[42] The Funj sultanate struck no coin, and most of its trade was by barter.

[43] Mekki Shibayka, *al-Sudan fi qarn* (Cairo, 1957), 33–35.

[44] Hill, *Egypt*, 46.

[45] See M. S. al-Qaddal, *al-Mahdiyya wa'l habasha* (Beirut, 1992), 141–44.

[46] Abu Widan was rumored to be plotting independence or conspiring with the Ottoman sultan for separation of the Sudan from Egypt; when Abu Widan died in October 1843 it was rumored that the Pasha had had him poisoned.

forty captured notables in Khartoum) that he won the slanderous nickname of *al-Jazzar* (the butcher).[47]

Extension of the Egyptian Sudan toward the Red Sea inevitably brought into prominence the question of future control of the important ports of Suakin and Massawa, then nominal dependencies of the Ottoman *wilaya* of the Hijaz. In 1843 Muhammad ʿAli raised the question of their status, and demanded that they should pay taxes to his Sudanese treasury. In 1846, however, Istanbul granted the ports to the Pasha on a lease, renewable annually, in return for an increase in tribute. But this lease was terminated in 1849 under British pressure, and another fifteen years passed before the ports were permanently annexed to the Egyptian Sudan in 1865.[48]

Exploration and control of the sources of the Nile is sometimes asserted to have been one of the main reasons for the conquest of the Sudan.[49] But this is far-fetched; Muhammad ʿAli exhibited interest in this geographical issue only some fifteen years after the conquest, and only in response to the growing desire of European learned societies to discover the sources of the White Nile. The Pasha seemingly expected abundant gold there as, in his own words, "the sources of the Nile should be on the same latitude as America."[50] Hence he sent the Egyptian Salim Qabudan on three famous journeys up the Nile in 1839–42.[51] Though the scientific and mining objectives were unrealized, these journeys opened the White Nile to navigation, gave great impetus to the lucrative trade in ivory and human beings, and accelerated Egyptian ventures in the interior of Africa during the era of Khedive Ismaʿil (1863–79).

The Egyptian drive to the interior of Africa, 1863–85

While neither of Muhammad ʿAli's two immediate successors (ʿAbbas and Saʿid, 1848–63) wished to emulate his foreign adventures, the ambitious and impatient modernizer Ismaʿil embarked on an aggressive expansionist policy in Africa. Suppression of slavery and the slave trade was the reason given by the khedive for this expansion. On his initiative Egypt and Britain concluded in 1877 an anti-slavery convention that promised to stop the slave trade immediately and to terminate the domestic slave trade (that is exchange of slaves between families) within twelve years.[52]

By 1869 Ismaʿil's campaign against slavery had been reasonably successful

[47] Holt and Daly, *A History*, 68.
[48] *Ibid.*, 67; Hill, *Egypt*, 83–84.
[49] Al-Rafiʿi, *Asr muhammad ʿali*, 232.
[50] Quoted in Hill, *Egypt*, 32.
[51] For these journeys see Nasim Maqar, *al-Bikbashi al-masri salim qabudan wa al-kashf ʿan Manabia al-nil al-abyad* (Cairo, n.d.).
[52] Cf. Humaydah, *Malamih*, 142–43.

in the upper Nile around Fashoda; the slavers remained dominant south of this district and in the Bahr al-Ghazal. He, however, continued his predecessors' policy of taxation and of discrimination against the already weakened European traders. By the end of the 1860s most of them had been forced to leave the Sudan, and trade was almost exclusively controlled by Egyptians, Turks, and northern Sudanese. These last, subsequently known as *al-jallaba*,[53] were originally employed by alien merchants but had gradually acquired responsibility and power of their own. They erected a series of *zaraʾib* (sing. *zariba*, fenced enclosure) manned by armed retainers, which were used as bases for conducting forays into neighboring regions for ivory and slaves.[54]

Khedive Ismaʿil was particularly intrigued by expansion into the vast hinterland of the southern Sudan and toward the Great Lakes. His schemes to annex Equatoria were carried out by the freelance traveler Samuel Baker (in 1869–73) and the legendary Charles Gordon (in 1874–76 and 1877–79). Their terms of reference were to annex to Egypt the country south of the key station of Gondokoro, open the Great Lakes to navigation, and suppress the slave trade that had quickly eclipsed that in ivory. Lacking tact and statesmanship they, however, concentrated on crushing the slavers' power through a series of coercive measures, to the detriment of the khedive's other policies.

In spite of their advanced equipment Baker and Gordon were unable to extend Egyptian administration in Equatoria beyond a few scattered military posts. But their extensive use of violence destroyed the confidence of the southern peoples and provoked a wave of violent resistance. Rather than recognizing Egyptian sovereignty over his kingdom, as Gordon hoped, Mutesa, the king of Buganda, mobilized a powerful army against the invaders.[55] Added to this resistance were the hostility and intrigues of traders led by the Egyptian Muhammad Abu al-Suʿud, representing the firm of al-Aqqad; the formidable *sudd* barrier; and diseases that killed or invalided Baker's and Gordon's men. It should also be noted that slavery was a deeply rooted institution in African societies, and that its violent suppression disturbed their economies. While governor-general of the Sudan (1877–79) Gordon finally abandoned the Egyptian advance into the interior of Africa.

Gordon's successor as governor of Equatoria, the German doctor Eduard Schnitzer (1840–92), commonly known after his conversion to Islam as Emin Pasha,[56] inherited a weak and disorganized administration. This,

[53] The Arabic word *jallaba* derives from the noun *jallab*, which in this context means "one who brings slaves."
[54] R. O. Collins, *The Southern Sudan in Historical Perspective* (Tel Aviv, 1975), 18–19.
[55] Richard Gray, *A History of the Southern Sudan 1839–1889* (London, 1961), 110–17.
[56] See G. Schweitzer, *Emin Pasha, his Life and Work* (London, 1898); I. R. Smith, *The Emin Pasha Relief Expedition 1886–1890* (Oxford, 1972).

coupled with a mutiny in the ranks, led finally to his withdrawal during the Mahdiyya to the east coast. This disintegration of the Egyptian administration marked the *de facto* end of Egypt's rudimentary rule in Equatoria. By 1893 most of the region had been incorporated into the British protectorate of Uganda.

Meanwhile the Egyptian advance in the Bahr al-Ghazal was challenged by the powerful slave traders whose *zara'ib* were scattered throughout the region. They rallied behind the greatest of the region's traders, al-Zubayr Rahma Mansur,[57] a northern Sudanese who had come to the Bahr al-Ghazal in 1856 and within a decade had built a vast trading empire with its headquarters at Daym Zubayr. In 1872 he defeated a government expedition sent to annex Equatoria, and killed its leader, the Moroccan adventurer Muhammad al-Bilali (or Hilali). Confronted with this *fait accompli*, Khedive Isma'il officially recognized Zubayr as governor of the Bahr al-Ghazal. But Zubayr looked beyond the frontiers even of this vast province to Dar Fur, a largely untapped source of slaves. The Fur sultan Ibrahim mobilized his army and people, and put up a gallant resistance, but Zubayr's private and superior *bazinger* army defeated and killed the sultan at the battle of Manawashi in 1874.

The Egyptian government capitalized at once on Zubayr's conquest by rushing an expeditionary force from Kurdufan and formally annexing Dar Fur. Zubayr felt betrayed and went to Cairo to protest at what he considered an attempt by the governor-general in Khartoum, Isma'il Ayyub, to rob him of his rights of conquest. The khedive detained him in Cairo, and initiated policies to break up his power in the Bahr al-Ghazal. Nevertheless the slave dealers rallied to his son, Sulayman, and challenged the authority of the government to the extent of proclaiming an intention to march on Khartoum. They were defeated, and the governor of the province, Romolo Gessi, an Italian, executed Sulayman and his associates without a proper trial. The province, however, remained turbulent; Gessi himself left without authorization fifteen months after this incident and was tried in 1880 for abandoning his post. Another foreigner, the young British officer Frank Lupton, took over, but he lacked vision and ability to face the imminent threat of the Mahdist forces.

The Egyptian acquisition of Suakin and Massawa in 1865,[58] in return for increased tribute to the Porte and presents to the Ottoman ministers, opened a new phase in the relations of Egypt and Abyssinia. Khedive Isma'il, who gave substantial support to Britain against Abyssinia in 1867–68, expected British neutrality at least in his own contemplated war with Abyssinia. In 1871 he appointed an aggressive Swiss adventurer, J. A. W. Munzinger, as

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[57] For Zubayr's own account of his career see Shuqayr, *Gughrafiat*, 568–99.
[58] See above, p. 210.

governor of Massawa, and subsequently extended his authority over the whole Red Sea and Somali coasts, including the sultanate of Harrar in eastern Abyssinia in 1875. After Munzinger died in 1875 in an ambush, the khedive continued his efforts to expand the Egyptian empire in East Africa. But the outcome was calamitous for Egypt and her army. Two expeditionary forces sent in 1875 and 1876 to invade Abyssinia underestimated the strength of an enemy fighting in his own country. They were overwhelmingly defeated after costing the depleted Egyptian treasury about 3 million pounds. The khedive had now no option but to negotiate a humiliating peace by which the Egyptian army withdrew from Abyssinia in disgrace.[59]

The outbreak of the Mahdist revolution in 1881 shook the very foundation of Egypt's rule in all its African dependencies, which by then comprised, in addition to the Sudan itself, the Eritrean and Somali districts. The most serious immediate consequence of the annihilation of the Egyptian army commanded by the British officer Hicks Pasha at Shaykan in November 1883, was the collapse of the Egyptian administration in the Bahr al-Ghazal and Dar Fur. The latter province had been ungovernable since its annexation in 1874, though its governor since 1881, Rudolf Slatin, publicly professed Islam in a vain attempt to secure the loyalty of the Muslim army and populace. By 1882 the unrest in Dar Fur had assumed a Mahdist complexion, and the Mahdi sent his cousin and a rebellious subordinate of Slatin, Muhammad Khalid Zuqul, to end Egyptian rule there. By December 1883 Slatin had submitted.[60] The provincial capital, al-Fashir, surrendered to the Ansar on January 15, 1884 after a week's siege. As for the Bahr al-Ghazal, it was already on the verge of anarchy when the Mahdi sent a certain merchant, Karamallah al-Kurkusawi, on a full-scale invasion of the province. Its governor, Lupton, who seems to have accepted Islam in terror, surrendered in 1884. His capitulation ended the brief Egyptian rule in the Bahr al-Ghazal.[61]

The Mahdi's next target was Khartoum, capital of the Egyptian Sudan, which was still in communication with Cairo by both the Nile and Suakin–Red Sea routes. Under the amir 'Uthman Diqna the Mahdists struck in 1884 in the strategic hinterland of Suakin. Within a few months they controlled the Suakin–Berber road and threatened Suakin itself, which remained in Egyptian hands only because of British military intervention to protect the Red Sea ports. Simultaneously Mahdist forces, under the command of Amir Muhammad al-Khayr, succeeded in cutting off the Nile

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[59] For Egypt's expansion in East Africa see al-Rafi'i, *Asr isma'il*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Cairo, 1882), 136–52.
[60] For Slatin see Richard Hill, *Slatin Pasha* (London, 1965).
[61] For the collapse of Egyptian rule in Dar Fur and the Bahr al-Ghazal see P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1970), 73–80.

route; Khartoum was virtually cut off from Cairo. The Mahdi now left Kurdufan and placed the capital under close siege.

Egyptian rule in the Sudan was dominated during its last two years (1883–85) by British policy in Egypt. Britain had occupied Egypt in 1882, but regarded the revolt in the Sudan as outside its responsibilities – though Egypt was advised against large-scale operations to regain lost territory. Following the disaster of Shaykan, however, the British prevented despatch of the reorganized Egyptian army to suppress the rising, and ordered the Egyptian government to evacuate the Sudan. The premier, Muhammad Sharif, rejected this so-called "Granville doctrine"[62] and resigned in protest. He was succeeded by Nubar Pasha, who proceeded to implement the abandonment policy.

Thus there came about Gordon's third and tragic mission in the Sudan. It is not necessary to describe the train of events that led to this mission and the confusion that surrounded it, as these have been detailed in a flood of controversial literature the like of which the Sudan has never seen before or since.[63] It suffices to state here that Gordon totally underestimated the religious devotion, military strength, and political skill of the Mahdi, and that he abandoned the role to "report and advise" on the peaceful evacuation of the country, and assumed instead the authority to execute such a policy. A pious Christian, General Gordon seemed to have viewed the issue as a personal struggle between himself and the Mahdi, particularly when the latter strongly advised him in March 1884 to accept Islam and the Ansar uniform, the patched *jubba*. Hence Gordon openly spoke of the need "to smash up" the Mahdi, but the outcome was his beheading on January 26, 1885, and the loss of what remained of the Egyptian empire in Africa once and for all.

The Egypt legacy in Africa

The nineteenth-century Egyptian drive in Africa was largely unsuccessful in attaining its basic objectives, exploitation of African wealth, expansion of Egypt's dominions deep into the interior of Africa, and an immediate end to slavery and the slave trade. Egyptian rule, though not so disastrous as some critics have suggested, was oppressive, corrupt, and incompetent. Nevertheless Egypt left behind a legacy that cannot and should not be denied or ignored, particularly in that part of Africa that became known as the Sudan.[64]

It is generally agreed that modern Sudanese history starts with the

Egyptian campaigns of 1820–21. With the conquest of Sinnar and Kurdufan the nucleus of what is now the Republic of the Sudan was established. Egyptian control of the northern and central Sudan was rounded off in 1841 by the conquest of al-Taka, while Dar Fur, Equatoria, the Bahr al-Ghazal, and the Red Sea coast were all incorporated in the Sudan during the reign of Khedive Ismaʿil. On the eve of the Mahdiyya the Sudan had thus formed an immense block of territory extending from the second cataract to the equatorial lakes and from the Red Sea to the western marches of Dar Fur.[65]

Apart from politically uniting the Sudan within frontiers approximating those of the present republic, the Egyptian regime also started the process of modernization. The chief technological innovations introduced by the Egyptians were firearms, steamers, and the telegraph, which was extended to the Sudan during the reign of Khedive Ismaʿil. Their use played a vital part in Egypt's southward drive and was instrumental in the centralized administrative system established by the Egyptians in the nineteenth century and subsequently inherited by the Mahdists, the Condominium regime, and the independent Sudan. Egyptian centralism had gradually "imposed on the heterogeneous peoples of these diverse regions a greater uniformity than they had ever previously known,"[66] and Egypt's modernizing tendencies were continued by the Condominium administrators and dominated their administrative and educational systems.

The Egyptian opening of the south, the Nuba mountains, and Dar Fur offered new opportunities to the *jallaba*. While only a few of them had visited before the Egyptian conquest, many rushed in, particularly in the 1870s, after those regions became accessible from the north. The *jallaba* played an important part in extending the frontiers of Arabic and Islam in the south, Dar Fur, and the Nuba mountains. But the frequent resort to violence and a contemptuous attitude toward the African population succeeded, with other important factors,[67] in nurturing the distrust and fear that today dominates relations between the northern Sudan and those marginalized regions, particularly the south.

The religious life of the northern Sudanese people was also greatly affected by changes resulting from Egyptian rule. Though both the Egyptians and Sudanese had been loyal to Islam as such, there was a great gulf between the official Sunni Islam of the Egyptian administration and the Sufi Islam of the Sudanese that had developed since the Funj period. In the Sudan, as in Egypt, it was the policy of Muhammad ʿAli and his successors to establish a secular state in which Islamic institutions would have a minimal role, and mostly in personal matters. Consequently the Sufi Islam of the Sudan, which

62 See Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsat, *Egypt and Cromer* (London, 1968), 57.
63 See Richard Hill, "The Gordon literature," *Durham University Journal*, see series, 16, 3 (1955), 97–101.
64 See Nasim Maqqar, *Misr wa bina al-sudan al-hadith* (Cairo, 1993).

65 Besides the Sudan proper, the Egyptian Sudan included the Eritrean and Somali coasts.
66 P. M. Holt, "The Islamization of the Nilotic Sudan," in Michael Brett (ed.), *Northern Africa: Islam and modernization* (London, 1973), 19.
67 On this subject see M. O. Beshir, *The Southern Sudan* (London, 1975).

already had a profound grip on rulers and ruled, was bound to suffer severe blows. The Egyptian administration consistently underestimated the prestige of local religious leadership, which consisted of the hereditary *fakis* (teachers) of the Sufi orders. The Egyptians promoted orthodox Islam. By maintaining a hierarchy of 'ulama' and facilitating their education at al-Azhar, the Egyptian administration confronted the *fakis* with a rival group "more orthodox and alien in its outlook, and more directly dependent on the government." By the end of Egyptian rule, the prestige of traditional religious leaders had therefore "undergone considerable diminution." The essence of this policy that aimed at building up an orthodox Muslim establishment was subsequently adopted by the Condominium administrators to combat Mahdism and the Sufi orders which they regarded as "potential seed-beds of subversion and fanaticism."[68]

The process of modernization was accompanied and fostered by an increasing number of foreign residents and visitors,[69] both European and North American. While very few Europeans had visited the Sudan before 1820, the Egyptian conquest opened up the country to foreigners who came as travelers, traders, and missionaries, as well as technical experts and employees of the administration. Those employees, who were rapidly introduced into the service, particularly during the decade preceding the outbreak of the Mahdiyya, made an impact on Sudanese society both in the Arabized north and in other regions. Alien in language, customs, and religion, they created tension among the mass of the Sudanese people. Excessive use of Europeans in posts for which they were usually unsuited in fact provoked Sudanese resentment of foreigners to such an extent that xenophobia became general. Though employees of Muslim Egypt, these officials were, moreover, accused of serving Europe and Christianity rather than Egypt and Islam.[70] The Mahdi's declared intention of freeing the country from alien and Christian control therefore found ready support from the populace.

[68] Holt, "The islamization," 21.

[69] Rifaʿa Rafiʿa al-Tahtawi, one of the pillars of modernization in Egypt, spent a few unhappy years in Khartoum (1849–54), in virtual exile and without noticeable impact on the cause of modernization or education there.

[70] Mekki Shibayka, "The Expansionist Movement of Khedive Ismaʿil to the Lakes," in Y. F. Hasan (ed.), *Sudan in Africa* (Khartoum, 1971), 155.

9

The 'Urabi revolution and the British conquest, 1879–1882

DONALD MALCOLM REID

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Introduction

Between September 1881 and September 1882 the 'Urabi revolution in Egypt tried to roll back Anglo-French financial and political predominance, the Turco-Circassian[1] monopoly on high military posts, and the authority of Khedive Tawfiq. Like Colonel Nasir, Colonel Ahmad 'Urabi gave his name to an upheaval that challenged the Muhammad 'Ali dynasty and European power. While Nasir's revolution was a qualified success, however, 'Urabi's failed, ending in outright British occupation and reducing the nominally restored khedive almost to a figurehead.

Egyptian partisans of Tawfiq and many westerners have dismissed the 'Urabi movement as a mere military revolt. It is called a revolution here to emphasize the movement's extensive civilian involvement and social depth. For some, a failed revolution is by definition only a rebellion or a revolt. But if we are to continue calling the failed upheavals of Europe in 1848 and Russia in 1905 revolutions, there is no reason to single out the 'Urabi movement for demotion to "revolt."

The military demonstration at 'Abdin palace on September 9, 1881 began

This chapter relies primarily on Alexander Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptians! The Sociopolitical Crisis in Egypt 1878–1882* (London, 1981). The German original, *Ägypten den Ägyptern! Die politische und gesellschaftliche Krise der Jahre 1878–1882 in Ägypten* (Zurich, 1972), has fuller notes. The comparative approach of Juan R. I. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement* (Princeton, 1993) yields additional insights. See also Michael Serge Horn, "The 'Urabi Revolution: Convergent Crises in Nineteenth-Century Egypt," Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1973.

[1] "Turco-Circassian" rather than "Turkish" is used here to emphasize the Circassian origin of many of the Turkish-speaking elite. Ehud R. Toledano, *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge, 1990), 77–82, prefers "Ottoman-Egyptians." Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, "The Transformation of the Egyptian Elite: Prelude to the 'Urabi Revolt," *The Middle East Journal*, 21 (1967), 325–44, emphasizes the assimilation of many "Turks."