

**An Acre of America in Cairo: The American University in Cairo and
the Production of Americanized Egypt from 1919-1948**

Dianne Laguerta
Department of History
Senior Honors Thesis
May 2013
Holly Hanson

ABSTRACT

In 1919, after years of planning and earning financial support, the American University at Cairo (AUC) opened its doors to students from the Middle East in a building formally built as a palace turned cigarette factory turned university campus, straddling the line between “modern” and “medieval” Cairo. But the campus that people now know as the American University in Cairo at Tahrir Square – which moved in 2008 to New Cairo – has a long history of what it *hoped* to be: a campus at the outskirts of Cairo, right next to the Pyramids. By comparing the two campuses—the real and the imaginary—I argue that the AUC missionaries desired to create a hybrid campus of Egyptian and Muslim identity on the exterior but a recognizable “American” sense of space and culture within students. This internal American space became the place for teaching the “evangelical ethos” of discipline, morality, and order for students who would be “converted” within their hearts if not by name. Using missionary materials from the AUC Archives—letters, committee meeting minutes, class syllabi, pamphlets, building designs, and photographs—my project explores how prominent American Presbyterian missionaries constructed AUC as an ideal space and location for conversion of the Muslim world. By analyzing these documents, one can begin to understand the delicate balance that AUC affiliates maintained between their missionary goals and conceptions of American space, Orientalist opinions on Islam, and Egyptian identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the advisors I had over the course of writing my thesis, Professor Holly Hanson and Professor Nadya Sbaiti. Both have been influential and encouraging to the entire process. I will always be grateful for Professor Sbaiti's mentoring while I was abroad in Egypt, and for her emails and conversations when she herself was away in Beirut. I will also always be thankful for all the time Professor Hanson gave me in the midst of her busy schedule. Together, this work would not have become what it is.

Thank you Professor Fitz-Gibbon and Professor Steinfelds, for spending your time reading my work. It was a pleasure getting to know both of you in a short yet valuable amount of time.

I would also like to thank my parents, Virgilio Laguerta and Corazon Capsa Laguerta: without their support and their encouragement, I would not have been here at all, writing this final product. I am eternally grateful for their ability to let me go and allow me the freedom to travel abroad to Egypt at a stressful time; their complete trust in my dreams, and their endurance, as well as me deserves the greatest acknowledgement.

I must also thank all seven of my siblings. To Sandra, my twin, thank you for understanding my struggles completely while writing your own thesis. Thank you Karen, Len Len, Hazel, Totie, Oliver, and Lester, for being supportive any way you could, for all the simple "I love yous" when that was all you could say or do from so far away.

To all my close friends, especially Addie Cooper and Seyyada Burney, thank you for always lending an ear and providing valuable feedback whenever I struggled with my work.

Thank you Layli Amerson, my roommate and best friend. Thank you for being there whenever I needed you, and putting up with all the rough moments as we both worked hard throughout the year. Also, thank you for your amazingly soft bed and pillow when I just could not stand my own.

To Iris Parker Pavitt, thank you most of all for your unwavering belief in my thoughts, my work, and me. Thank you does not express how indebted I am to you, but I promise to return the favor(s).

To my fellow History thesis writers, especially Stephanie Gray: thank you for the coffee dates, the conversations and the support. We knew it was hard, and maybe at times thought it was impossible, but we finished and impressed each other and ourselves. Thank you for inspiring me.

To Professor Renda and the entire History Department: you all made writing the thesis worth it. With your encouraging words and smiles, the third floor of Skinner will always be my favorite place on campus.

To the Mount Holyoke community: without your classroom discussions and camaraderie, this year would not have been as amazing as it was.

And to those not named here for brevity, but have influenced me in little ways, thank you.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CAIRO AND THE AMERICAN MISSION IN EGYPT	10
CHAPTER 1	
“What is this Moslem World?”: Creating a Christian Space	17
CHAPTER 2	
A Dream That Must Come True: The Ideal Campus on Americanized Egyptian Land	42
CHAPTER 3	
An Acre of America in Cairo: The Realized Campus	68
CONCLUSION	
American University in Cairo: The New Campus	106
BIBLIOGRAPHY	109

INTRODUCTION

On the evening of May 27, 1932, at 9:30 pm, students at the American University at Cairo¹ watched a procession of the faculty in their academic dress; the students were graduating. After speeches from AUC faculty member Carlton McQuiston and Dr. Aly Pasha Ibrahim, Acting Dean of the Egyptian University², the university began the ceremony for conferring prizes and degrees. One notable student, AbdelKader Al-Husseini, went up to receive his diploma for completing the requirements to graduate from the College of Arts and Science. Once on stage, he stood at the platform and asked for the audience to listen to his words. From there, he processed to tell his listeners that the American University at Cairo was not the “scientific institution” that it presented itself to be, but a place “for spoiling religious beliefs and that [the University] attacked the Moslem religion and that for this reasons Moslems should not leave their sons in it.”³ AbdelKader al-Husseini was the son of Kazem Pasha Al-Husseini, a well-known leader in Palestine. Later it was revealed to the press that AbdelKader al-Husseini did not fulfill the requirements of the college and instead of receiving a degree like the

¹ The name American University *at* Cairo changed to the American University *in* Cairo in the 1950s. As I focus on the University from its inception until 1950, I will refer to AUC with *at* in its name.

² Now known as Cairo University.

³ “Al Balagh, May 28, 1932,” from document, “Translation of Articles in the Arabic Papers Concerning the Incident of Abdel Kader Al Husseini.” AUC Archives.

rest of the students, received a certificate that explained his failure to pass the final examinations.

In the eyes of American missionaries, the disruption at graduation shed light on how AUC conducted its identity within and outside of the wall of the institution. It was important to stress the “Christian-ness” of the university and its mission from the outset in publications read by American audiences, while de-stressing its conversion mission among Muslim audiences. This theme was a cornerstone to the Religious Objectives Conference of 1927, attended by a wide range of Christians establishing and working through missionary schools in Egypt. As Amir Boktor, teacher and head of AUC’s education program, commented in a letter written to Watson in his reflection of the conference, the students should be guided “slowly, gradually, and very cautiously” to ensure there would be no boycott from the students or the Muslim community.⁴ The most cautious approach to teaching the ACU student community came from the use of spaces, regulation, and rules that promoted a certain attitude or behavior in the students, instead of pure instruction or lecture on Christianity versus Islam in a classroom setting.

The Abdelkader al-Husseini incident sparked a public controversy among the Egyptian press and the American University. In the wake of the controversy, AUC president Charles Watson and his companions had to respond to the

⁴ Amir Boktor, “Essential Points discussed in the conference on Our Religious Objectives” April 21, 1927, History Collection, Conference: Religious Objectives 1927, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

Egyptian population as well as its American audience and supporters. After the graduation incident, Abdelkader Al-Husseini continued a crusade against the University in various Arabic newspapers, arguing that its president Charles Watson was behind the organization of the college as an evangelizing institution under the guise of a liberal college. As historian Heather Sharkey has argued, the events surrounding the AbdelKader Al-Husseini incident, as well as other previous controversial moments in AUC history, changed President Watson's view on what the university's mission should be. During this period, Watson's approach for the American University became less zealous towards the Muslim community the school largely recruited from, although this trajectory had begun as early as AUC's inception. However, AUC's commitment to a tempered evangelical mission mainly addressed its semblance of unbalanced religious teaching in its curriculum. In reality, the university sought to maintain its earlier mission in obscure ways while it was severely scrutinized by the Egyptian public in the aftermath of controversial incidents like the AbdelKader al-Husseini case.

I argue that these internal processes, invisible to the public, included the way in which American missionaries conceptualized and constructed a space that they could define as American, moral, and Protestant in contrast to the Oriental, immoral, Muslim space of Cairo. AUC missionaries believed they had the power to convert students into moral, Christian-at-heart Muslims through the design and atmosphere of the campus, which included the control of the temporal rhythms and routines of the students as well as the creation of spatial boundaries and

regulations. This allowed AUC to continue to draw in students from Egypt and the Middle East while it struggled to combat restless religious American audiences that wanted quantitative proof of missionary work in conversion numbers.

Using Timothy Mitchell's language of enframing—the creation of hierarchies in order to change assumptions about the object enframed—I argue that AUC's physical campus and makeup can be understood as a frame that redefined space within the campus. AUC's campus as a frame encased the social space it created within itself that tried to create a bridge between Egyptian identity – as seen on the outside – with an “evangelical ethos” that embodied Western democracy, discipline, and order on the inside. By understanding how these pieces fit together—pieces of American missionary discourse, ideals and goals, with the language of Egyptian nationalism—we can begin to see a complex relationship in intellectual ideas and trends that missionary history was placed within, as well as contributed to.

Simultaneously, the American University at Cairo at its façade blended into the fabric of the Cairene landscape, with architecture popular in its day. But what does it mean for AUC as a campus to take on these characteristics of “medieval Cairo” at the heart of “Modern Cairo,” next to *Midan al-Ismailiyyah*, later known as *midan al-Tahrir* (Tahrir Square) by 1919? By studying the history of the city and its urban reordering of the nineteenth and twentieth century in relation to the history of AUC's campus, one can clearly see how AUC became a space that

explored tensions of the American cultural empire—a tension that American missionaries brought abroad and incorporated into their fieldwork.⁵ As historian Eric Hobsbawm argued, “cities reflect great social transformations better than any institution.”⁶ The transformations of Cairo as a city narrated the political, economic, cultural, and social changes that occurred throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, and AUC as a physical campus metamorphosed in reaction to these historical changes. Using AUC as a frame of reference for these changes, I also argue that the design of the university—first from a suburban plan next to the Pyramids, then ultimately using a rehabilitated palace turned cigarette factory turned university—reinforced a semblance of Egyptianness through an architectural style. Use of this style to blend into the urban landscape in reality reflected a sense of history and culture shaped by Europeans defining such categories.

The unusual history of the American University campus raises questions about how space is conceptualized and ultimately redefined in meaning by new actors in the environment. Henri Lefebvre’s thesis on the production of space illuminates the type of change that redefined how AUC disengaged with the urban fabric by becoming, conceptually, “an acre of America” within a political and historic focal point of the city. Lefebvre, a social Marxist theorist, argued that (social) space “is

⁵ This group of American abroad included missionaries, travelers, diplomats, military, and writers that together created a sense of American identity.

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (New York: Random House, 1987), 76.

not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity...Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others.”⁷ What he called social space encompassed the physical, built space as well as all relations of knowledge that are embedded into the construction of that space, in addition to the immaterial connotations, actions, behaviors, and histories that present such space on its own and in contrast to others. AUC as an American, Christian campus in the middle of Cairo for mostly Egyptian Muslim students from the upper echelons of Egyptian society therefore encompasses the various cultures from America, Egypt, the West, and the East. By studying AUC as the point of intersection, one approaches a nuanced understanding of how AUC situated its identity within a American imperial context, a Christian eschatological anxiety, and a genuine desire to mold the lives of their students with a structure and plan that they believed would only better Egyptian society.

Studying AUC illuminates the intersection and interaction of this transnational history between American missionaries and Egyptians engaged with, or implemented in, missionary work in Cairo. As a university conceived within the context of the Presbyterian mission in Egypt, but separate from the Mission’s

⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.), 73.

work⁸, it maintained the American missionary narrative of the eschatological Christian world pitted against the amoral space of the Muslim world that needed to be reclaimed for the coming of Christ. As Timothy Marr explained, “Eschatological imagery and typology functioned...as an important religious buttress supporting Euro-American constructions of Islamic orientalism.”⁹ The American missionaries of AUC took this macroscopic framework of the world and played out this moral war on the microscopic scale of their campus, at least rhetorically. This imagining is important because it became the rationale for the ways in which American missionaries constructed the interior of the campus juxtaposed against the rest of the city.

To briefly outline, Chapter One looks at how American missionaries utilized their Christian beliefs in framing the world. These missionaries constructed a spiritual imagining of space where Islam and its dominion was morally in opposition to Christian space. This macroscopic view of the world had microscopic implications, as it justified the development of a controlled, moral space in the AUC campus. Chapter Two analyses AUC through the use of plans for a suburban campus, away from the city, that was never built. I argue that these blueprints of the suburban campus had radical ramifications to how AUC came to

⁸ Since the onset of the college, tensions developed between Watson and the Mission (which consisted of older, established schools run by missionaries) as to who would control the activities of the school.

⁹ Timothy Marr, “Drying up the Euphrates”: Muslims, Millennialism, and Early American Missionary Enterprise,” (New Haven: Macmillan Center, 2002), 144. <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/DigitalLibrary/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=58225>.

be what it was in the middle of Cairo. What the architects planned for the urban campus in combination with Watson's ideological visions and rationales for the planned campus became subsumed in different ways in the built Tahrir campus. I argue that this ideal campus created what I term an "Americanized Egypt" within the confines of the campus. Chapter Three therefore combines the overarching themes of Chapters One and Two into the realized campus that exists today. Prefacing the main chapters is a brief overview of important developments in the history of Cairo.

Scholars like Heather Sharkey, author of *American Evangelicals in Egypt*, draw much of their research from the same missionary materials I have used in my thesis in order to analyze the role of the American University in Cairo and its historical significance in Egypt. In *American Evangelicals in Egypt*, Sharkey concludes that over the time Watson had worked in Egypt within the missionary movement, his work became less zealous and therefore distanced himself from the Mission's "Christian polemical approaches to Muslims."¹⁰ Still, Sharkey asserts that Watson "conflated American ideals (especially democratic government and openness to social and technological innovation) with the Christianity he planned to purvey."¹¹ While recognizing the analysis made of Charles Watson and the AUC mission by Sharkey, I argue the foundations of the American University at Cairo were already set literally in stone: the presentation of the university as a

¹⁰ Heather Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt*, 157.

¹¹ Sharkey, 158.

place and entity physically embodied Watson's early rhetoric on Christianity and conversion. Simultaneously, the control of the spaces within the University and its overall relationship with the rest of Cairo as a city mapped moral meanings related to Christian ideals of work, discipline, and virtue. By studying the earliest vision of the American university (a vision never realized in completion) and the development of the city campus, I argue that the campus itself was a means for Watson's to transform his students morally. Overall, AUC maintained its Christian evangelical nature implicitly within its walls by creating a regiment that embodied a Christian and American lifestyle, while visually emphasizing a pseudo-Egyptian identity on its façade.

In writing this thesis, I looked at a wide body of primary sources: from intimate correspondence among AUC faculty and staff, to public newsletters among missionaries, newspaper clippings, photographs, syllabi, class catalogues, to books published by missionaries themselves for larger audiences. I focus largely on materials within the time frame 1919-1948, the period of Watson's presidency, because of Watson's influence in creating the university. This range of material sheds light on the interactions of meaning and discourse from macro to microscopic scales, and how each layer of conversation or interpretation shapes another. While this breadth of material was valuable in situating all sorts of narratives that intersect with the history of AUC, it can also be limiting in places. For one, Watson wrote most letters and publications I analyzed for an American, Christian audience that he wanted to recruit for funding this university abroad. He

therefore appealed to their faith for their money and prayers of support, writing and speaking about the importance of the Presbyterian Church acting in God's love to "save" Muslims and Coptic Christians. Some documents, like syllabi from professors during the first years of the college's opening, were few and far between, which made it hard to determine if classroom methods changed in evangelical rhetoric over time. To bridge the diverse sources together, I studied them in relation to the physical campus itself; I analyzed the buildings on the AUC campus, their history and their plans, and how missionary writings produced meaning for AUC its spatial relation to Cairo's physical and national identity.

BACKGROUND

A Brief Overview of Cairo and the American Mission in Egypt

In the nineteenth century, Egypt underwent great social, political, and cultural transformations that extended into the twentieth century when the American University at Cairo was built. This chapter will provide a brief overview of these historical events that were important to how missionaries saw Cairo in the midst of these changes and how they influenced missionary response. The focus will be on architectural and urban development in Cairo, as this history is central to how AUC presented a certain Egyptian identity at its façade yet embodied Western interiors.

After the end of the French occupation of Egypt in 1901, Muhammad Ali, an Albanian officer of the Ottoman army, managed to become hereditary pasha of Cairo in 1805 after seizing power in Cairo. His family maintained a ruling lineage in Cairo until 1948, when Gamal Abdel Nasser became president of Egypt. Muhammad Ali is known as the modern reformer of Egypt, and began the major urban reconstruction of Cairo as inspired by the reordered Paris of civic planner Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann. In 1845, Muhammad had created a department within the ministry of public works, called the *tanzim*, for modernizing the urban landscape of Cairo. With this plan, a period of destruction

for traffic began, with the razing of cemeteries and monuments to create wide boulevards and roads that cut through districts of Cairo.¹

As European influence increased from the encroachment of the British on political affairs (and eventual occupation in 1881) and the desire of sultans like Muhammad Ali and his family to emulate Europeans, European and Egyptian actors of the state began to associate certain Egyptian historical narratives with modernity and nationalism. Cairo, as a city, began to change and represent different stages of Egyptian history. During the mid-nineteenth century, in the prime of European preservationism, European travelers and artists became enamored with the preservation of Arab art and architecture, while defining what constitutes “Arab Art” and its periods in the first place. The creation of museums in Egypt by mostly European actors—such as the Egyptian Museum, the Museum of Arab Art (now known as the Islamic Museum), the Greco-Roman Museum, and the Coptic Museum—divided, defined, and classified which histories of Egypt would be “Egyptian,” or which would be more authentic.² The British were particularly conscious of this process of knowledge production and used art and architecture as an imperial practice. As historian Paula Sanders noted in her analysis of Stanley Lane-Poole’s writings on Egyptian history, “distinction

¹ André Raymond (trans. Willard Wood), *Cairo* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2000), 303.

² Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002).

between ‘conventional admiration’ and ‘knowing’ is significant in the colonial context, for ‘knowing is the systematic ordering that characterized the colonial enterprise itself.’”³ In December of 1881, the Khedive Tawfiq established the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe, a body in charge of preserving what they deemed as important cultural and historical monuments in Egypt. The Comité was made up of a diverse group of Europeans and Egyptians who, under the British occupation, privileged certain identities and histories over others, and came to understand and define Cairo in their own ways.

It was in this period that European and Egyptian actors defined “Mamluk” and “medieval” Cairene art and architecture. These forms of architecture became the dominant design of Cairo at the turn of the century, in which AUC as a university began to be planned. Ironically, the Mamluk styles that became the dominant means of expressing “Egyptian” character were not Egyptian at all: the Mamluks were a Circassian elite that “became Egyptian” through a long historical process beginning in the Middle Ages and solidified in the nineteenth century. As Sanders explained in her chapter titled “How the Mamluks Became Egyptian: An Ottoman Imperial Story,” [insert date/century here] Egyptian chroniclers used specific terminology to describe the new ruling military elite of Turkish origin. The Mamluks themselves insisted on an identity that distinguished them from the native population they ruled over. However, by the Ottoman period and into the

³ Paula Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 24.

eighteenth and nineteenth century, Islam superseded Mamluk and Ottoman identities as an overarching identity itself, and Mamluks married into the Egyptian population.⁴

By 1890s, “medieval” became the definition of Cairo as an identity, while the “Middle Ages” was distinguished as a period in European history. It began to denote a history of “medieval” Europe, the times before the modern era, in which Cairo began to describe a place that embodied what Stanley Lane-Poole called “beautiful ruinous unprogressive disorder.”⁵ In this interpretation, medieval Cairo “worked to create a temporal distance between East and West, helping to construct Egypt, in particular, as distinct and inferior to the British West in ways that are linked to orientalism.”⁶ Simultaneously, both Egyptians and Ottomans used the identity called Mamluk medieval to assert their national identity as Egyptians separate from the Ottoman imperial and historical context.⁷ And like the British, the American missionaries who came in to establish the American University at Cairo sought to make their marks in ordering the “beautiful ruinous unprogressive disorder” they observed of the city, and in line with what their foreign co-occupants of the city were doing.

⁴ Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo*, 39-45. Stanley Lane-Poole was a British archeologist and Orientalist who wrote a history of Cairo and was greatly influential in the political and cultural production of preservationism in Egypt. He previously worked in the British Museum before arriving in Egypt.

⁵ Ibid., 50.

⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁷ Ibid., 53.

At the forefront of the political scene, landowners, military officers, religious and town notables grew increasingly frustrated at the loss of economic control to the European Caisse de la Dette. European governments created this financial body for debt repayment after the Depression of 1873, which caused the collapse of the cotton market in Egypt. In response to the new tax burdens on landowners and government cutbacks to finance military officers – in addition to Egyptian resentment to foreign intervention – Colonel Ahmad ‘Urabi mutinied against the crippled Egyptian government with other military officers in 1881. The British fears surrounding the Suez Canal and repayments for Egyptian debt were some of the factors that led to the eventual British invasion and occupation of Egypt by 1882.

The American Presbyterian Mission entered Cairo in the midst of these transformations. American missionaries arrived in Cairo as early as 1820, before concentrated efforts from the Presbyterian Church. The first American Presbyterian missionaries, the mission Charles Watson and company hailed from, arrived in the late 1800s, arrived as bible peddlers and preachers, under the American Bible Society (ABS). According to one source, the ABS sent as many as 251 missionaries between the years 1820 and 1861 to distribute Bibles and Christian tracts within Egypt.⁸ The ABS, working closely with the British and Foreign Bible Society, served as an important publishing house for the translation,

⁸ Otto F.A. Meinardus. *Christian Egypt Ancient and Modern*. (Cairo: Cahiers d’Histoire Égyptienne, 1965), 431.

publication, and distribution of the Bible and Christian texts, supporting a network of missionary schools established by the Americans.

The American missionaries arrived in Egypt by the mid-nineteenth century in order to fulfill their roles as harbingers of the coming of Christ: the missionaries would convert the “heathens” of the world through educational efforts that would not only teach the “correct” Christian faith and Christian Protestant virtues, but also instill an “evangelical ethos” which emphasized traits of industry, discipline, and order. The American missionaries concluded that the best way to meet teach these values was through the promotion of (Arabic) literacy to the Copts, and therefore, the American Mission focused on widespread literacy outreach from Lower to Upper Egypt, in villages and in cities.

At first, the Mission built schools for converting Coptic Christians, who the Presbyterians saw as Christian brethren misled by false interpretations and practices of Christianity. By focusing on the Christian population, missionaries avoided serious persecution by the Egyptian government and Muslim community for attempting to convert Muslims. The missionaries hoped that eventually, Copts converted to Evangelical Protestantism would serve as models for the Muslim population, and therefore make Christianity more palatable.

After gradual success with small missionary schools, American missionaries wanted to expand their work in the form of college for higher education. A Mission committee developed the idea for a Christian university as early as 1899. Charles Watson, an American missionary born in Egypt, became the most

dedicated proponent for building an American, Christian university in Cairo. His goal was achieved in 1919, when the doors of the university first opened to serve local Egyptians in Cairo and international students throughout the Arab world.

The campus that became the American University at Cairo reflected the architectural movements in its day with characteristics from the medieval school. Its oldest building—which became the first building AUC was housed in—had previously been a palace turned cigarette factory turned university over the period of the late nineteenth century to 1919. Afterwards, more buildings were built on the small plot of campus land to match the designs of the palace. The red and white stripes painted on the walls, called *ablaq* in Arabic and *badigeon* in French, were condemned by Comité members, though the style was popular among contemporary Egyptian tastes during the late nineteenth century.⁹ These stripes are present in the design of AUC's first building, which was heavily influenced by the neo-Mamluk architecture.

While Cairo transformed as the capitol of a rapidly changing country, the American missionaries reacted to political and social movements quickly to protect their evangelical mission. Located the heart of the city and among important government and religious institutions, Charles Watson and his fellow missionaries at AUC were sensitive to the image they presented to their neighbors, and the suspicions propagated by distrustful Egyptians. In order to protect its evangelical duties, yet present itself as a benevolent institution, AUC

⁹ Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo*, 37.

created a unique but recognizable campus for the careful onlookers by adopting contemporary architectural trends while maintaining its Christian mission within its walls.

CHAPTER ONE

“What is this Moslem World?”: Defining the Muslim Space, Creating the Christian Place

Though American missionaries have been active in Egypt since the early nineteenth century, their presence has always been held in suspicion, even if missionaries were careful about whom they targeted or how they approached religious discussion. This question of care is particularly relevant when remembering the Abdelkader al-Husseini incident in 1932. Days after his speech, al-Husseini sent the Egyptian newspaper *Al Balagh* a statement that leveled more accusations against the American University at Cairo. Within his signed statement, Abdelkader al-Husseini charged Charles Watson with an explicit missionary goal of converting all Muslims in Egypt. The student cited Watson’s personal history as a missionary and as the son of American missionaries who were part of the first generation of the Presbyterian mission to Egypt, as well as his book, *Egypt and the Christian Crusade*. In his letter to the press, Abdelkader al-Husseini claimed that within the pages of Watson’s book, “[Watson] invites the benevolent people [the American missionaries] to come and see the glorious achievements of evangelism in Egypt, and he says to the evangelists that at their hands all of Egypt will become Christian, for which they will receive good

reward.”¹ This book was kept in the University library, along with other books that helped missionaries studying at the School of Oriental Studies to “learn how to attack Islam methodically.”²

The book, published by Watson in 1907 by the Board of Foreign Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA), provided information about Egypt’s demographics, geography, history, and the history of the Mission in Egypt. Overall, it targeted the Presbyterian audience in America to encourage mission work abroad. While the book was published years before Watson resigned from his post as secretary of the UPCNA board and established AUC, the book is an important text in understanding the motivations behind the American mission in Egypt, and the influences it had on the original conception of AUC.

Many of the themes presented in *Egypt and the Christian Crusade* reflected broad ideological frameworks that American missionaries (of different Protestant denominations) shared of their work in foreign lands. Important to understanding the missionary movement in Egypt was the conception of good and evil in the world, and the proclamation of God’s reign among its entirety. Within this paradigm of Islam and Christianity as opposing forces, the American missionaries developed a plan for reforming the backward East with its students through the

¹ Al Balagh, May 29 1932. “The American University. Is it an Institution for Evangelism?” (Signed by AbdelKader el Hussein). Translated from the Arabic. AUC Archives.

² Ibid.

institution of the school. The school and its associated spaces promote distinct “Christian” features for the conversion of the students beyond the classroom. Symbolically, missionaries believed that AUC became the model for a lifestyle that would extend itself throughout the Muslim world, though its true impact was felt at the micro-level of the campus and the students. Within this larger framework of the missionary battleground for conversion, weaving in ideas of American imperialism and “the American idiom” of the home and private life, Watson and his companions built a distinct narrative of AUC as a beacon of moral light in a dark immoral world.³ Using Watson’s own writings, AUC materials, and the works of prominent missionary and writer Samuel Marinus Zwemer, I argue that the missionary conceptions of control over space and constructing Christian influence through them became an important part of the missionary ideal for progress.

First of all, The American University at Cairo was not unique as a foreign institution in its intent to construct morally sound spaces in contrast to its immoral, foreign surroundings. The AUC model drew from the moral atmospheres that were constructed at home, in American schools. For example, Mount Holyoke Seminary graduates arguably exported their experiences by

³ American idiom is a term taken from Amy Kaplan’s *Anarchy of Empire*, and concept of home life in America that can only be understood within a larger context of American empire building. The concept of American home life defended the sanctity of domesticity in a world where America’s foreign empire involved the annexation of foreign lands and bodies, with the potential disruption of American identity. This specific flavor of the home would only be recognizable by other Americans at home or abroad.

opening American missionary schools modeled after their alma mater. Mount Holyoke Seminary itself was modeled after nearby Andover Theological Seminary in Newton, Massachusetts. Fidelia Fiske, a graduate of Mount Holyoke Seminary, specifically used Mount Holyoke's vision and composition of space as a model for her own school in Urmia, Persia, emphasizing the same desire to encourage true faith and conversion for the village girls she taught.⁴ Missionary institutions like the Fiske School and AUC shared similar approaches with their students, with changes to household living like the introduction of "table manners" (and apparently, tables themselves) and the dining room, as well as prayer rooms and closets. By establishing Christian routine in place of Islamic ritual, missionary schools truly sought to transform a Muslim student by changing their lifestyle and, in conjunction, their moral lives.

Since American missionary work began, missionaries used an overarching concept of "claiming" the world as Christian territory. In the language that American missionaries used, claiming 'space' was also another way to claim 'bodies' and 'minds' for the Christian God they understood. As explained by historian Timothy Marr, "the predominant missionary response to Islam was to pit it as a strong satanic force that would ultimately bend to the power of the Holy

⁴ I argue this in a previous paper during an independent study with Professor Richard Payne, titled "'Mount Holyoke in Persia': The Reconstruction of Space and Morality in 19th Century Urmia." For further reading, refer to Lisa Natale Drakeman's "Seminary Sisters: Mount Holyoke's First Students, 1838-1849." (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1989) and compare to letters written by Fiske in Mount Holyoke Archives, as well as D.T. Fiske's *Faith Working by Love*, a biography of Fidelia Fiske.

Spirit, which the signs of the times seemed to be accomplishing regardless of their own direct efforts.”⁵ Called by historian Charles Foster the “world-conquest fever,” American Christians desired foreign missions for the conversion of Muslims and the defeat of this “strong satanic force” as early as the 1830s.⁶ In transitioning this macro-prospective, missionaries also wanted to transform spaces into Christian ones through the development of school and home, the private and the public. By asserting powerful contrasts of American life and Christian lifestyle with Arab life and Muslim lifestyle in their books, missionaries created a strong discourse for the true conversion of souls through the development of domestic space.

The missionaries’ focus on the non-Christian and non-Western home as a cultivator of immoral souls emphasized the problem traits of Egyptian life, culture, and Islam. In Watson’s *Egypt and the Christian Crusade*, the Egyptian home is described with the voice of a stereotypical Western observer “exploring” and “discovering” the Orient: in the “Mohammedan quarter” of Cairo, the streets are described as extremely narrow and noisy, along the face of mysterious and “silent” homes. Comments like “there is no door-bell, for the prophet inveighed against them” and “ [The rooms around an open court] are too public for use by the inmates of the harem” impose a certain image of the “Muslim home,” a spatial construct imbued with religious meaning. The Orientalizing of the Egyptian

⁵ Timothy Marr, “Drying up the Euphrates”: Muslims, Millennialism, and Early American Missionary Enterprise,” 72.

⁶ Ibid.

home, in conjunction with the irreligious atmosphere, framed for American audiences the goals of the missionaries: to deconstruct “evil” and its traits and reform the Muslim homes as a path to reforming the Muslim heart into a moral one.

As Lisa Pollard explained on the Western travelers and imperial planners of Egypt, “To know Egypt and to understand its peculiar political and economic institutions was to have entered its homes, traveled through its inner spaces, seen its women. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Europeans came to understand Egypt’s identity from inside the Egyptian domicile.”⁷ In response, American missionaries who traveled and studied these spaces attempted to reform their students’ lives within the context of the residential university. By combating the immoral domicile of the Muslim home, the new American-Christian residential campus would reshape the Egyptian student into a well-mannered and civilized man.

Furthermore, missionaries believed Islam to be the root of the “immoral atmosphere,” a destructive force to civilization. Influential writers like Samuel Marinus Zwemer exposed the “immoral atmosphere” created by Islam by studying Muslim societies and cultures and concluding that spiritual poverty came from “corrupted” ideas of Islam. Zwemer claimed, “missionaries and others who

⁷ Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923* (Ewing: University of California Press, 2004), 49.
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/mtholyoke/Doc?id=10069065&ppg=66>

have lived long in Moslem lands feel this environment as a real thing, although it may be indefinable, and have a desire to escape its influence.”⁸ Zwemer, a prolific writer and publisher, shaped the discourse surrounding the Muslim world for American missionaries with his works advocating Christian missions to Muslims. Throughout the course of his career as secretary to the Nile Mission Press, a professor, and world-traveler giving lectures, Zwemer extolled the need for Christians to “occupy” Muslim regions and establish true faith.⁹ Books like Zwemer’s also promoted the idea of environment and space inherently entangled together, shaping not just the moral contexts of an individual, but also a religion, country and world. As Watson described in his book, *Egypt and the Christian Crusade*, “The Mohammedan social system is so thoroughly bound up with the religion that it appears an almost hopeless task to attempt to separate the two.”¹⁰ Fortunately, good, Christian moral ideas combine well with the “higher results” of Western civilization, which logically missionaries would construct in Cairo. While missionary circles read these books, Zwemer himself impacted AUC’s work by establishing with Mr. Gairdener the Cairo Study Centre, the prototype to AUC’s School of Oriental Studies.

⁸ Samuel Marinus Zwemer, *Childhood in Moslem World* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1915), 62-63.

⁹ Heather J. Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p.111.

¹⁰ Charles R. Watson, *Egypt and the Christian Crusade* (Philadelphia: The Board of Foreign Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, 1907), 45.

The comparison of environments from a general perspective played an influential role in conceptualizing what exactly Christian missionaries are solving with the schools they develop. As Zwemer explains, "such intensity is often supposed to be a result of Mohammedan fanaticism and fatalism. More probably it is the result of life in the desert. There none succeed except those who, though often lazy and dilatory, are capable at times of becoming almost monomaniacs, fanatics, animated by the will to do some deed in spite of heaven or hell."¹¹ In order to "solve" fatalism and fanaticism, Christian missionaries would instruct their students and reform an entire group of people defined by religion. Cultural, geographical, and national differences aside, missionaries viewed the world through a religious lens, distinguishing between shades of immorality across the world. Even though the missionaries were aware of the national and cultural differences among Muslims all over the world, as well as the diversity among Christian and Jewish groups (to whom they also sent missions to), the missionaries upheld the belief that Muslims were connected through a corrupt lens of faith and lifestyle. As Zwemer noted,

Whatever economic advantages the advent of Islam may bring, and however great the contrast between the civilization of Baluchistan and Turkey or China and Morocco or Kashmir and Arabia, the social life of Islam, its intellectual backwardness, and its moral corruption are so much alike that we can only conclude that these conditions obtain not in spite of, but because of the religion of the people.¹²

¹¹ Zwemer, *Childhood in the Moslem World*, 45.

¹² Zwemer, *Childhood in the Moslem World*, 55.

National and cultural atmospheres played secondary roles to religion. This sort of discourse positioned Islam and Islamic worlds in sharp contrasts that call for no shades of grey or distinctions—it easily allowed for American Christian audiences (or in general, the West) to perceive a “clash of civilizations” type of framework for the world. As Timothy Mitchell argued when speaking of development in Egypt in the later part of the 20th century, “Objects of analysis do not occur as natural phenomena, but are partly constructed by the discourse that describes them. The more natural the object appears, the less obvious this discursive construction will be.”¹³ The “object of analysis” here is Islam and the Muslim world, conceived to be immoral premised by the environment it was “born” from and sustained “naturally” by the environment.

In contrast, American missionaries conceptualized the environment of America to be perfect for the way in which personal traits like hard work and honesty had developed as part of Christianity. As Amir Boktor, a teacher at AUC, commented in a reflection of their conference, “On Our Religious Objectives,” the missionaries should emphasize the connection between Western civilization and Christianity, noting, “it will be highly important and helpful to make it clear to

¹³ Timothy Mitchell, “The Object of Development: America’s Egypt,” in *Power of Development*, ed. Jonathan Crush (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 130.

our students that the West owes its civilization largely to the predominance of Christianity.”¹⁴

In order to account for differences in environments of the Muslim world, the writers appealed to broad characteristics of Islam. The control of the environment, and also its presentation, is explicitly needed in order to complete the missionary goals. As Zwemer noted,

“Moslem childhood is a sad commentary on the inefficiency of such moral training... No amount of moral maxims can counteract the terrible effect of an immoral environment. Moslem children come into the world handicapped. The curse of Islam, through its polygamy, concubinage, and freedom of divorce, already rests upon them.”¹⁵

The concern of moral training for Muslim children extends to the training of older young adults, who are essentially still “children” in their lack of moral knowledge. As AUC clarified in its 1929 mission statement, “The American university has the Moslem as its major problem,” celebrating its accomplishment of drawing a student body mostly comprised of Muslims, including those of prominent families.¹⁶ By instructing the students of these prominent families, AUC saw it as a “rare privilege” to “penetrate” these social circles.¹⁷ AUC therefore reinforced these perceptions of the Muslim mind in their attempts to reform along a religious vector in addition to their more secular aims (scientific

¹⁴ Conference notes, “Essential Points discussed in the conference on Our Religious Objectives”, 1927, History Collection, Conference: Religious Objectives 1927, AUC Archives.

¹⁵ Zwemer, *Childhood in the Moslem World*, 170.

¹⁶ “Memorandum A, Mission Statement.” 1929. AUC Archives.

¹⁷ Ibid.

education, etc). This amalgamation of science and religion is not just due to evangelical positions on science, but also through the belief that Western civilization is propped up by the Christian ethic.

Importantly, the use of children and childhood as symbols for imagining the civilizing process of Westerners imposing their wills in the rest of the world were tied to important conceptions of the East that needed to be civilized. The conception of “childhood” exists beyond age, but the corrupted, child-like mind prevails in the Orientalist conception the “Other,” which became embodied in the relationships between the missionaries and the native students. In his pamphlet, “Our Religious Policies: What Are They?” Watson used the example of “Ahmed,” a student at the university who came to exemplify the course of reformation the school aims for. In the pamphlet, Watson wrote,

Our Ahmed is just like your boy John. He came to us 95 per cent boy, perhaps 5 per cent Muslim. Last Year he faced up to the standards of Jesus in respect to personal purity and something gripped him...This led to a long talk about God's readiness to help and how we get His help...

This year, Ahmed is raising a lot of questions as to what Jesus means about life. He admits Moslem society is all wrong, but he doesn't see that the Christian social and economic order is in keeping with the teaching of Jesus either.

Do you get the point? The Christian life is a seed. It grows gradually, “First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.”¹⁸

The growth of Ahmed from a “95 per cent boy, perhaps 5 percent Muslim,” into a “young man on the Jesus-way,” exemplified AUC's mission in the face of

¹⁸ Charles Watson, “Our Religious Policies: What Are They?” AUC Archives, 10-11.

criticism for the lack of converts in a numerical sense. As Watson succinctly put it, “the process is endless. There is no ‘finish.’”¹⁹ By presenting an image of the students as “child-like” boys who later develop into good men, AUC’s existence was couched within a dialogue that supported AUC’s long-term presence for the true conversion of the Muslim world to Christianity, a mission that needed time to really change the lives of these boys.

Christian missionaries also wanted to teach these boys true faith, and saw Islam as a religion that was “hereditary rather than of conviction.”²⁰ Supposedly Christianity and Western rational thought would promote independent thinking and genuine faith. In response, the school sought to with the two tracks they offered to students to the University, the government course and the humanities course. While extolling the British presence in Egypt for their advancement of Western education (a claim that should be carefully contextualized in relation to the real impact of these British government schools), American missionaries saw their own works as leading to the success of its “moral training” in developing “an upright character so essential to a strong personality.”²¹ One of their major goals was the introduction of true “self government” for the Muslim student used to “totalitarian” mindsets indoctrinated by Islam. As mentioned in a report of student life in the hostels by AUC missionary Vandersall, “They [the students] have yet to learn that self government is government not anarchy. We need to teach them how

¹⁹ Ibid., 11.

²⁰ Watson, *Egypt and the Christian Crusade*, 37.

²¹ Watson, *Egypt and the Christian Crusade*, 54.

to take care of themselves, not turn them loose and then censure them because they fail, as fail they surely will as things are now.”²² This reflection from the end of the year demonstrated the frustrations the staff had with students, which led to the tighter restrictions and scheduling for the boarding students.

The American missionaries justified their choice of Egypt for their missionary work from its historical, cultural, intellectual and religious importance among Muslims. As Watson stated in his 1916 proposal,

But to hold Egypt is also a very serious and solemn responsibility. Is this not the Keystone to the Mohammedan arch that extends from Morocco to Malaysia? Is it not the Brain-Center of the Mohammedan world? Does not the strategy of the whole missionary campaign for reaching the Moslem world hinge upon what is being done in Egypt, the intellectual center of the Moslem world? The occupation of Egypt carries with it privilege and prestige, but it carries with it serious responsibility also. And is it not God himself who is counting on us, United Presbyterians, to do the work He has assigned us in Egypt in His Providence?²³

In order for their plan of true conversion of the Muslim world to succeed, the American missionaries established Cairo in the minds of its audience as the ultimate center for a large ripple-effect which would affect the rest of the Islamic world. Using Cairo as a backdrop for Christian zeal, Egypt as a significant religious symbol for both these Christian missionaries the “evil” Muslim forces they were combating, support for the reform of Egypt became easily

²² Charles Watson, “Report of Life at Students’ Hall 1924-1925”, AUC Archives.

²³ Charles Watson, “The Mission in Egypt and the General Assembly Project a Christian University at Cairo” 1916, AUC Archives, 7.

conceptualized in the minds of evangelical American audiences at home determined to see religious change in their geographic imagining of the world.

In the project statement made by the General Assembly for the mission in Egypt, the Board said WWI had opened up Muslims to the arrival of Christian missionaries: “There is a readiness to listen and receive instruction. There is a spirit of inquiry. None too soon can this University make headway if it is keep abreast of the need created by this new spirit within Islam.”²⁴ Not only did American missionaries believed themselves to be benevolent teachers of morality, knowledge, and the true Christian faith, but they constructed a relationship that made it clear natives were asking for their Western ideals. This was the prevailing rhetoric of American missionary activity since the conception of the American Board for Foreign Missions—missionaries were working for the salvation of these “poor” heathen souls, not just out of their own generosity and the will of God, but out of the genuine desire from the “native” pleading for their help. As Western interaction grew in the East, American missionaries saw it as “Divine Providence causing adamant walls of social custom to crumble.”²⁵ Again, discourse of the battlefield and conquering was set in the minds of the missionaries; as Watson concluded, “It is the opportunity and duty of the Church to carry the assault

²⁴ Charles Watson, “The Mission in Egypt and the General Assembly Project a Christian University at Cairo” 1916, AUC Archives, 7.

²⁵ Watson, *Egypt and the Christian Crusade*, 55.

through these widening breaches and take possession of Egyptian life in the name of Christ, her Lord.”²⁶

In response to the totalitarian yet disorganized state of Islam, Watson and his colleagues believed that education was the best route to civilizing the Muslim world, as well as leading to the true conversion (of the heart) of Muslims to Christianity. In the first place, the government schools that already existed in Egypt were “Mohammedan throughout” and the few Coptic schools were “scarcely better from a religious and spiritual point of view.”²⁷ Not only were the schools degraded from an inferior faith, but missionaries were also concerned about “the present shaking of traditional beliefs among Moslems of all classes,” a situation which “means a crisis in the life of Egypt and of the Mohammedan world which the church cannot afford to neglect.”²⁸ In his book *What is this Moslem World?*, Watson argued that

Finally, the educational method is supremely penetrating in its influence. It directs upon life the influences of new ideas, and what is more dynamic than an idea? It also molds character by the discipline of ordered habits; the customs and ways of a school play upon life in its unconscious moments, even as new ideas do in life’s more conscious periods. Is there any influence to compare with that exerted by placing young Moslem life alongside of the best, the cleanest, the most manly, the most vigorous and the keenest Christian life that can be produced by Western Christianity and to let that influence be exerted, consciously and unconsciously, in classroom and on playground, not for some

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Charles Watson, “Excerpts from the Mission Minutes re AUC Plan, Feb. 1909”, AUC Archives.

²⁸ Ibid.

casual hour of a public meeting, but day after day, and week after week, perhaps even year after year, until the educational course is completed?²⁹

This chapter in his book provided explicit reasoning to the school and how its context and contours define the students within it. But in order to legitimately establish the foreign missionary school in places like Cairo, Watson ironically described school as “a legitimate factor in any well ordered society. There is nothing abnormal, superfluous, or unnatural about a school. Its relationships to a community are neither strange nor artificial.”³⁰ By downplaying the significance of schools overall in order to make a place like AUC blend in with the Egyptian landscape, Watson appeared to say that the foreign institution would not disrupt the fabric of Egyptian society, and instead, promote good ideas throughout the city. It is understandable to see how AUC presentation of itself was part of this conceptual framework of how to create a missionary school without the pretense of conversion.

Therefore, AUC embodied these perspectives on Islam and the Muslim world and strove to reform characters through an all-encompassing atmosphere, to be created in its educational environment. At the forefront of the mission was the classroom: within it, Muslim students would be able to develop rational, independent minds. Simultaneously, the students would develop a “moral discipline,” and reevaluate how Islam teaches corruption, idleness, greed, and other sins. In the curriculum developed in the first years of the University’s

DIANNE LAGUERTA 6/25/13 7:39 PM

Comment: Deleted: double on page 32, highlighted

²⁹ Watson, *What is this Moslem World*, 163-164.

³⁰ Watson, *What is this Moslem World*, 162-163.

existence, AUC required students to take classes like Ethics (which took the form of learning about Christianity and the problems of other religions), Physiology (which taught Hygiene), and athletics. The intent of such classes relate back to a larger movement in nineteenth century Western and Christian thought which included trends in masculinity and body politics, cleanliness, and racism and imperialism (which also sought control through bodies). The books used in these classes included *A Prep School Boy's Problems*, “a course used widely in America. It covers problems actually arising in a boy's life, make use of the discussion method and presents the Christian way of meeting these problems.”³¹ The importance of the classroom setting to introduce these ideas is evident in the discourse used to describe the changes that students underwent throughout their University experience. Not only would they be introduced to such ideas, but also the embodiment of Christianity in different spaces would unconsciously mold the students into model moral beings through discipline and continuous exposure to Christian ritual.

For one, images of the house and home prevail in different writings as a means for exposure to Christian ideals and ethics. As stated in the syllabus for “Second Year Bible (Life of Christ),” professors should emphasize free discussion among the students, fairness from the teacher and most importantly, “The teacher of the life of Christ should keep open house. The power of a cup of tea is too strong to

³¹ Memorandum B: The Course We Follow and The Men Who Teach. Mission Statement 1929. AUC Archives.

be left out.”³² Casual references to “Christian” or Western lifestyle and settings coming from the missionaries present a vision of what space and their relationships can impact a student. These off-campus spaces resembled the perfected form of social life and order for visiting students, according to the missionaries.

On campus, spaces became part of a process for reforming the students by developing an environment that would instill stability, order, and discipline on the students, outside the classroom setting that taught necessary subjects of religion, morality, and ethnics. Students would be subjected to Christian “time” and “space” with the constant attendance of Christian rituals, such as prayer circles and Assembly. Watson and the missionaries also carefully controlled dining habits, the dining hall, the permissions of leaving or entering hostels, and the access to the places surrounding the University in order to maintain an environment conducive to “Christian” morality and possible Christian conversion. As the 1926 Hostel rules state for the students staying in AUC housing (a usual requirement for all non-American attendees),

“The general rules presuppose a readiness on the part of the student to enter heartily into the spirit of the College with reference to the highest ideals of manliness, courtesy, unselfishness, and a prompt observance of the customary regulations of the College as long as he remains a member of it. The student who can be governed only by threats of punishment is asked to find another school. Generally speaking, discipline by rules is reduced to the minimum. The authorities of the institution reserve the right at any time to change or add to the following regulations for the purpose

³² Charles Watson, Syllabus for Second Year Bible (The Life of Christ), AUC Archives

of increasing efficiency and good order in the school.”³³

Mr. Kerin, another attendee of the 1927 Religious Objectives Conference and teacher at AUC, shared this sentiment in a letter he wrote to Watson: “we believe in the life example and teachings of Jesus and that every teacher should, in his own sphere of action, emphasize them to the students, so that the said teachings may pervade the whole activities of the College.”³⁴ As Timothy Mitchell argued in *Colonizing Egypt*, colonization was not the mere presence of European powers on Egyptian soil, but the act of colonizing the native mind by creating “subjects” from ordered lives and spaces. Foreign educational institutions like AUC and British government schools served as these places that would instill what Sedra calls the values of “industry, discipline and order” alongside an “evangelical ethos.”³⁵ Foreign educational institutions like AUC and British government schools served as these places that would instill what Sedra calls the values of “industry, discipline and order” alongside an “evangelical ethos.” Like the British missionary schools that Sedra studied, AUC followed similar goals but with an American style to space.

The university was careful about its presentation of the itself, first among the American faithful who donated to the institution as a place for conversion, and

³³ Rules and Regulations of The Hostel of the American University at Cairo”, Elias’ Modern Press 1926, Buildings Collection, AUC Archives 3.

³⁴ Letter from M. Kerin (signature) to Watson, dated April 28, 1927. C22G index ID.

³⁵ Paul Sedra, “John Lieder and his Mission in Egypt: The Evangelical Ethos at Work Among Nineteenth-Century Copts,” *The Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 28, No. 23 221-222.

second to the Egyptians—be it the government, Islamic institutions, and the Muslim parents who enrolled their children—as a place for ascendancy into the superior Western world. In describing the University’s principles in the first catalog documented for the 1921-1922 school year, AUC officials stated that

While it is Christian in such ideals and while each student has a part of his studies some consideration of the origin and influence of such ideas and civilization, there is no attack whatever permitted in either classes or other school activities upon any student’s religious faith; nor is any verba[[]] or other confession of any faith required. All that is required of any pupil is a polite and orderly, prompt and cheerful observance of the customary regulations of the school as long as he remains a pupil.³⁶

The “polite and orderly, prompt and cheerful observance” of regulations by the students is part of the larger imagining of what the school believed would create the “evangelical ethos” in the Muslim student. Reforming the laziness and other unbecoming traits out the stereotyped “Other,” the missionaries believed that their reforms would at the very least prepare Muslim souls into ones more likely to present the Christian spirit in daily life, even if not true “converts.”

Even with the heavy criticisms coming from the American camp at home from those looking for countable results in the number of converts, Watson upheld the message of internal conversion that came from the exposure of Christian generosity twenty-four hours a day. As Watson reiterated in different writings to American audiences at home, the University missionaries “put the emphasis on *content* and not on *label* [his emphasis]. If we can get the Moslem lad to accept

³⁶ “The College of Arts and Science of the American University in Cairo, 1921-22”, AUC Archives, 1.

the content of Christianity, Christ's revelation of God, Christ's invitation to fellowship with God, Christ's way of living, Christ's ideals of uprightness and personal morality, Christ's love of others and sacrificial service—we are glad.”³⁷

The work and actions done in the spaces are what constitute them as “Christian” in nature, not just the type of room or space that is developed in the University campus. As Watson further elaborated, “Christ's honesty becomes real when you play a game of basketball with it, very real when a team loses because of it.”³⁸

American missionaries were not only concerned about Islam's moral influence, but also negatively viewed Western secularism in the face of religious conviction. In the early days of planning for the creation of an American university in Cairo, the missionaries saw the need for the option of a Christian university in Cairo in order to quell the number of Egyptians sent to Europe to receive training from “for the most part nationalistic (or rationalistic) and irreligious” institutions abroad.³⁹ In part of the arguments for the school, the AUC proponents also presented the threat of a “great American institution, purely secular in character and not Christian.”⁴⁰ Though claiming to be un-alarmist in tone, the idea of a secular American institution in Cairo before a Christian university worried missionaries. Conceptually, the American missionaries saw the world as thus: the

³⁷Charles Watson, “Our Religious Policies: What Are They?”, AUC Archives, 4.

³⁸Ibid., 6.

³⁹Charles Watson, “Excerpts from the Mission Minutes re AUC Plan, Feb. 1909”, AUC Archives.

⁴⁰Charles Watson, “The Mission in Egypt and the General Assembly Project a Christian University at Cairo” 1916, AUC Archives, 6-7.

“heathen lands” (yet to be conquered) needed to be converted into Christian strongholds, then those that were not Christian, then nominal Christian or secular lands, in preparation for the coming of Christ.

Though these conceptions of the “Other” were applied almost indiscriminately among all classes and social standings of Egyptians, the targets of AUC were the children of upper-class, prominent peoples of Egypt. The university was proud to show off the prominent citizens that chose AUC, as exemplified by the 1929 mission statement that listed students who are the sons of Sheikhs of Azhar University and descendants of the Prophet.⁴¹ Simultaneously, missionary teachings did not exclude other identities within the student body, which in reality included large numbers of Coptic, Greek and Armenian Christians plus Jewish students. Rather, the missionaries’ believed their methods for transforming the moral lives of students would also “trickle down” to the others. Coptic Christians were especially adopted into this model as a group who had huge potential in transforming the rest of the student body; though they had to learn from the American Presbyterians (who saw themselves as superior Christians) order to be perfect models.

Even from a political and economic perspective of the present-day state of Egypt for the missionaries, concern for the environment and its moral implications stand out in letters written by Charles Watson to various officials in the Egyptian government. As exemplified by the University’s Division of

⁴¹ Memorandum A, Mission Statement, 1929, AUCA.

Extension, a community-outreach initiative, Watson and his missionary brethren sought to reform lives outside of the school for the benefit of Egypt. Projects from this division included educational outreach on narcotics and the consequences of opium use degrading Egyptian society.⁴² It was this type of immoral activity that the AUC missionaries strove to protect their students from, therefore causing their careful control of the students' movements to and from the campus.

Overall, AUC connected its vision as a missionary school with an environmental purpose. By understanding a place as a product of religion – specifically Egypt as a product of the “corrupt Mohammadean” religion – the missionaries saw the purpose of AUC as part of a larger mission to transform Egyptian and Islamic society. As Watson claimed, their Christian vision would manifest itself in every space the missionaries had control of within the school, while regulating the movement of the students outside of its campus. To create the school, they drew from their expertise of living a seemingly more civilized and moral culture, as defined in the West-East dichotomy that described the world in the nineteenth century.

⁴² Charles Watson, series of letters between Watson and Sidky 1932, AUC Archives.

CHAPTER TWO

A Dream That Must Come True: The Ideal Campus on Americanized Egyptian Land

In 1919, the American University at Cairo¹ opened its doors in the city's downtown district. But the AUC that American and Egyptian audiences came to know was not the university that the early founders of AUC envisioned: as early as 1916, Charles Watson and his partners imagined a campus that would be built in the outskirts of Cairo proper. While financial circumstances led to the establishment of AUC in downtown Cairo, Charles Watson's original desire was for the campus to be closer to the monuments that, for him, represented Egyptian-ness—the Pyramids. Watson believed that placing AUC next to the Pyramids would make a new statement, reimagining how temporal and historical place would inspire the contemporary modernizing movement for Egypt, according to the vision of American missionaries. Sometimes, this suburban plan was a subject of the background of discussions for AUC's development, and in some years was at the forefront of discussion. Though the campus next to the Pyramids was never built, I argue that these plans shed light on the way AUC missionaries framed their work in relationship to Egyptian and American history. These plans simultaneously influenced and reflected the design and ordering of the realized

¹ The name American University *at* Cairo changed to the American University *in* Cairo in the 1950s. As I focus on the University from its inception until 1950, I will refer to AUC with *at* in its name.

campus in Tahrir Square. Overall, the ideal version of the campus reflected the type of university Watson and company wanted AUC to present—one that was “Egyptian” on the outside and therefore “at” Cairo, yet American on the inside and therefore not Cairene at all. Yet, this ideal campus would be isolated and separate from the rest of the city, which demonstrated the desire of American missionaries to play an impactful role on Cairo and the Islamic world from a distance. The segregation of the ideal campus from the city created a discrete difference between the American missionaries and its Egyptian students’ surroundings, while paradoxically recalling Egyptian imagery in the construction of the campus fabricate a relationship innocent of zealous converting efforts. The “moral mapping” in the missionary mind went from the large scale of the world to the small site of the campus. By constructing the world in terms of religion and levels of depravity associated to each one (Christianity at the highest peak of civilized and moral life, Islam towards the bottom), that global system of thought was applied to the way missionaries saw the city and their own campus. The city was put in opposition to the campus, as it embodied the uncontrollable, amoral natures of Muslim life and culture, while the campus served not just as an oasis of higher learning, but an oasis separate from these dark areas. As AUC planners dealt with the anxieties of building an American campus in a foreign, Egyptian land, the AUC ideal campus also conjured imaginings and racial anxieties that were felt in America and abroad during the nineteenth to early twentieth

centuries. AUC therefore served as a marker for intersecting American and Egyptian histories in Egypt.

Looking at the history of the College, Charles Watson always considered the suburban plan as a future endeavor, eventually to be realized once the time was right. The plan for the Pyramids site originated as early as 1916, when Watson sought funding and support for a Christian university in Cairo. In “The Story of the Suburban site of the American University at Cairo,” the author listed the reasons for the city location as the decided location based on the failure to secure two proposed sites by the Pyramids, the costs of building the infrastructure for a “self-contained institution” off the city’s grid, and the delay in opening its doors due to construction.²

The original suburban architects for the first version of AUC were from an American firm, Murphy and Dana in New York (1916). Many architects from their firm worked on institutions built for foreign missionaries abroad; for example, Amherst graduate Talbot F. Hamlin built campuses in China that “incorporated indigenous detailing within conventional [French architecture school] Beaux-Arts compositional arrangements.”³ This Beaux-Arts school was a

² “Special Presentation of Suburban Property Being Acquired for Extension Purposes By the American University at Cairo—Prepared for Mr. Samuel Mather”. AUC Archives. The author was most likely William Bancroft Hill, Chairman of the AUC Board of Trustees.

³ “Talbot F. Hamlin” website. Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University Libraries.
http://library.columbia.edu/indiv/avery/da/collections/hamlin_tf.html Accessed Mar. 9, 2013.

model that drew from the “City Beautiful” movement of late nineteenth-century America that saw campuses as their own self-contained cities.⁴ This plan emphasized unity across all campus buildings, as well as creating a campus that created “a grand, neo-classical complex that dominates its urban expanse.”⁵ Campuses like Stanford University took to this standard by creating a grand statement in its spatial arrangement.⁶

In this first plan, the designers for the suburban campus concentrated on the lay of the land and its historical significance. Inspired by the Giza pyramids seen from the plot bought by the trustees of AUC, the campus design drew its atmosphere from their Pharaonic presence. The plan incorporated elements of Islamic architecture, with some distortions. This is especially evident with the use of funerary domes that replicated Cairo Mamluk leitmotifs, utilizing them on buildings other than mosques. The use of columns to hold up some domes was either drawn from ancient Roman or Pharaonic designs.⁷ In line with Beaux-Arts compositional strategies, the Murphy and Dana plan created a grand, elaborate campus on that drew on monumental Oriental design while maintaining a sense of congruity with the Pyramid monuments. Overall, the plan created a campus that

⁴ Johnathan Coulson, Paul Roberts and Isabelle Taylor *University Planning and Architecture: The Search for Perfection* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 14.

⁵ Ibid., 14.

⁶ Ibid., 108.

⁷ The use of either Roman and Egyptian columns make sense—if there was a clearer picture of the details of the columns, one would know whether or not the architects were drawing from Roman column designs (such as Doric, Tuscan, or Ionic orders) or Egyptian Pharaonic column designs that sometimes implemented Lotus or Papyrus buds.

would have made a bold statement for this next American, Christian university in a foreign land.

Though this creative campus design did not accurately reflect the architectural realities of contemporary Cairo at the time, it reflected the “Egyptomania” of nineteenth century architectural history in American cities. The most obvious example of this influence is the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., designed by Robert Mills in 1833 but completed in 1884. As Trafton argued,

The Egyptian Revival – especially in its nationalist mode – was thus a split sign: both of a potential ancestor of American civilization and the apprehensive ambivalence over that ancestor’s family tree, both of imperial power and the fears of racial ‘contamination’ that power inevitably invoked. Claiming ancient Egypt as an ascendant of America meant also inviting many unwelcome guests.⁸

For the American missionaries who took such fears abroad, claiming ancient Egypt served not just to distinguish their privilege in real Egypt, but ironically to invite Egyptian students as guests to their own *Americanized Egyptian* land.

What I call Americanized Egyptian land stems from this distortion of Egyptian space due to the complex, intersecting realities that become both transnational and localized within a foreign context. In creating the American University at Cairo, Watson and associates were challenged with forces that made them foreign. On one hand, AUC missionaries contended with Egyptian, anti-American, and anti-Christian groups that saw the missionaries as interlopers. In order for AUC to succeed, it had to brand itself as a university *for* Egyptians, and not as an overly

⁸ Scott Trafton, *Egypt Land* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 147.

Christian university (conspicuously) superseding Islam and its importance to the students. On the other hand, American missionaries contended with the challenge of presenting their own identity as separate and superior to the people they wanted to engage with and teach their moral standards to, without overstepping imagined boundaries. These fears and anxieties culminated in the plans for the ideal campus with juxtaposing attitudes towards Egyptian monuments and landscapes that placed the ideal AUC in intimate proximity to, yet separate from, Egyptians and Egypt's land.



Figure 1: Murphy and Dana Design, 1916. The First AUC Plan⁹

⁹ "The American University at Cairo: A Vision of the Future." Murphy and Dana, 1916. Suburban plan. AUC archives.

For example, the design by Murphy and Dana emphasized the surroundings of the suburban plan as an almost physical oasis to the rest of the desert, from where the Pyramids could be seen in the distance. This oasis was not just a metaphorical one of knowledge, as mentioned above, which implied that there was a lack of quality educational opportunities in Egypt. More importantly, the oasis as AUC in the missionary imaginings through this suburban designed served as a type of natural paradise, a place where students could be saved from the harshness of Cairene, Muslim life in a self-sustaining, refreshing American Christian university. Such imagining is echoed in a letter from Watson to the dean of the University, Robert S. McClenahan, in the discussion of school colors. Due to a discussion Watson had with Zwemer, Watson thought the school colors should be green and gold, “green, as symbolizing the Nile Valley [and not Islam, which confused Watson when Zwemer suggested it], and gold as symbolizing the desert on either side.”¹⁰ This proposal for the school colors, made in 1921 during the first years of AUC’s inception, reinforced AUC’s desire to describe itself within typical images of Egyptian identity. By using recognizable features of Egypt’s landscapes, such as the Giza Pyramids and the Nile Valley, AUC missionaries were determined to promote the university as an authentic institution of Egyptian society by implementing recognizable images and symbols in union with Egypt.

¹⁰ Letter from Watson to McClenahan, dated November 26, 1921.; “on University colors.” Folder, McClenahan, Robert S. 1918-1937 Box 10 Watson 1900s-1945. AUC Archives.

The desire to build away from the city was echoed throughout various missionary movements within and outside of Egypt. Particularly noteworthy was the Fiske Girls Seminary in Persia, built in the 1860s by Fidelia Fiske, a Mount Holyoke seminary graduate. Like AUC, the Fiske missionary seminary became a cultural and moral oasis in what was described the dirty, primitive world of rural Urmia, Persia. In the descriptions and tone presented by American missionaries like Thomas Laurie (who wrote to American audiences about Fiske), the school's physical features were idealized as an antithesis to Oriental space in general. Laurie alluded to the "distractive" quality of the Oriental world when he noted that the seminary's court " [was] invaluable as a place for out-door exercise, where the pupils may enjoy the fresh air, free from the annoyances and exposures of the streets in an Oriental city."¹¹ AUC planners maintained a sense of continuity with its other foreign missionary models that emphasized a distinct desire for developing a school for Orientals while imprisoning them for their own good from their depraved environment.

¹¹ Laurie, *Woman and her Savior in Persia*, 40. A thorough discussion of the design of women's colleges in America is taken up by Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz in her book, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s*. The discussion of routine is particularly noteworthy as a point of comparison with other foreign colleges like AUC (especially considering the long history of women missionaries who began schools abroad).

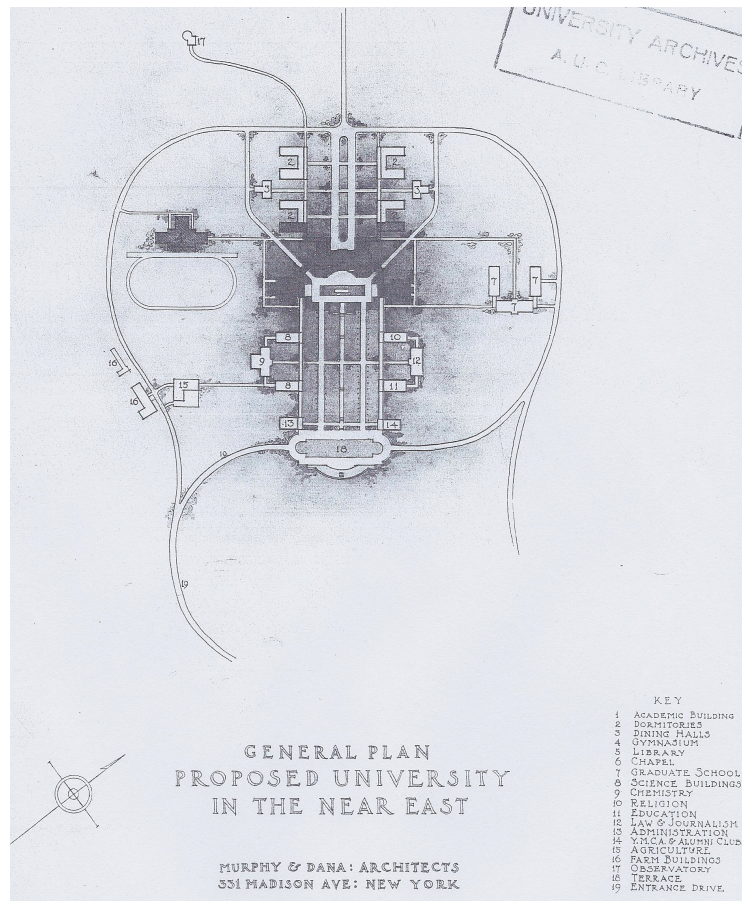


Figure 2: 1916 Plan, Aerial View. West Entrance is opposite of Entrance Drive.¹²

Furthermore, these campus designs were not just part of the attempt of AUC missionaries to associate themselves to the rest of Cairo, but it also reflected a long history of Egyptomania within an American cultural context. Ironically, Egyptian revivalism at its peak was used to design cemeteries and more

¹² "General Plan: Proposed University in the Near East." Murphy and Dana, 1916. Suburban plan. AUC archives.

importantly prisons: a message seemingly in accordance to the type of institution AUC wanted to create.¹³ On the one hand, the American missionaries were conscious of the way their campus could control and isolate their students from the rest of the amoral Muslim world, reforming their students through civilized notions of routine and teaching them civilized life through familiar American spaces (for example, dining rooms). The AUC staff's desire to control students within a tightly regulated campus resembled the tight controls of a prison (though in reality, movement was relatively fluid). The cemetery connection echoed again this sense of imprisonment, as Pharaonic iconography drew from images of mummies, sarcophagi, and tombs.¹⁴ On the other hand, they could not completely divorce themselves from the city because of its strategic importance to the mission, nor could it conceive of itself without Egyptian images framing the institution.

This mental framework was made visible even in the ways AUC mapped its own presence on a Cairo city map, emphasizing a nature of strategy for its own moral efforts. In a map titled "American University at Cairo: Location of University Property," it identified only its own properties, "strategically located on principal thoroughfares," a few outlines of major neighborhoods of Cairo, and

¹³ Trafton, *Egypt Land*, 149. Also look at Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition*, 90, citing Alexander Jackson Davis and his plans.

¹⁴ Paradoxically, American missionaries saw some of their ventures, especially with the Coptic Church in Egypt, as a way to "revitalize" a "dead" Church by teaching and converting Coptic Christians the most sincere form of Christian worship (the American evangelical form).

four major Egyptian monuments (three Pharoanic and one not, which was the Citadel). The map, void of anything else other than the Nile and major roads, emphasize the almost utilitarian nature of the missionaries' vision of their presence in Egypt.

In 1936, the suburban plan seemed to again be a reality. In a circular letter to AUC donators, Watson revealed that the Trustees of the College voted unanimously to look for and apply funds to the development of the suburban campus, "because of the superior opportunity it affords for character training and Christian influences."¹⁵ The new campus would include such places alongside the academic campus as an athletic field, dormitories, and faculty residences, forming a "self-contained educational unit" for an all-encompassing learning experience. All these spaces were imagined and written about as producers of a certain cultural character: athletic games (and by extension, the field), encouraged teamwork and discipline that the Egyptian student needed, just as the dormitories were central to providing a social and home life that juxtaposed the morally decrypted "Muslim" dwelling, from its high-class harem imagining to the grime and dirt of poor classes.¹⁶ The search for a place with enough space for athletic fields became the main attraction for the suburban Pyramid campus, in light of the nineteenth century sentiment towards athletics. From the mid-nineteenth century

¹⁵ Oct. 1, 1936: Circular Letter to the Friends of the American University at Cairo. PHS Archives.

¹⁶ Feb. 26, 1930. Circular Letter to the Friends of the American University at Cairo. PHS archives.

onwards, American campus planners began to add gymnasias and running tracks as popularity for sports and competition became a mode to disrupt class distinctions.¹⁷ As evident in the realized campus, athletics were also seen as an important tool for teaching Christian morals. For example, Watson saw that students learned Christian character-building traits through the act of playing in basketball games: “something has been accomplished there that makes for Christian manhood and training for life. Fair play is another lesson learned in action. Sportsmanship, another.”¹⁸ With a bigger campus, AUC staff could promote more of these ideal situations that embodied Christian learning in all sorts of activities, including sports.

In a plan dated November 9, 1945, serious proposals for development were brought up again. Citing postponement due to the war, the proposal outlined a new vigor for raising funds on the new campus. As described in the plan, “For a long time it has been evident to the close friends of A.U.C. that the College of Arts and Sciences could not continue on the city site and do its best work and exert its maximum influence on the students.”¹⁹ Therefore, the AUC board renewed the proposal for a new campus, with buildings to house different departments, athletic fields, and hostels for students. Importantly, the new site

¹⁷ Paul Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1984), 160.

¹⁸ Feb. 26, 1930. Circular Letter to the Friends of the American University at Cairo. PHS archives.

¹⁹ “The American University at Cairo: Plans for the Development of the College of Arts and Sciences on the Pyramid Road Site,” 9 November 1945. AUC Archives.

would only be three miles away from the Pyramids, “with an unobstructed view” of this ancient wonder of the world.²⁰ Included in this plan are Jens Fredrik Larson’s sketches for the proposed campus, as well as an outline of costs for the buildings and endowment, totaling \$1,322,000. Included in the cost was \$10,000 for moving and rebuilding an Egyptian village on the property they intended construct and expand upon.²¹

The campus itself as envisioned by architect Jens Fredrick Larson prominently displayed a layout that conjured the image of an oasis in the middle of the desert. His sketch, with the title “A Dream That Must Come True—A.U.C. Out Along the Pyramid Road,” depicted a campus enclosed by palm trees. The walkways lined with trees segregated space within the campus, as well as created borders along the campus perimeter, emulating the walls of a fortress. This plan, as well as the earlier 1916 one, echoed the concerns of nineteenth century American college planners who believed that, as Turner summed up, “[the college community] should be located in the countryside in order to escape the corrupting life of cities and to partake of the inherent purity of nature.”²² The physical boundaries created by trees emphasized that categorical nature of a prison through

²⁰ “The American University at Cairo: Plans for the Development of the College of Arts and Sciences on the Pyramid Road Site,” 9 November 1945. AUC Archives.

²¹ Removal of the native village near the suburban property was not mentioned until 1948, when serious plans were made again to move to the outskirts of the city. There was no other mention of how this village would be moved, or how villagers would be compensated if the plan were approved and building the suburban campus achieved.

²² Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition*, 90.

a natural setting that surrounded the college, embodying the feel of an oasis in the midst of a harsh and more dangerous surrounding. Larson's plan differed greatly from the early vision of Murphy and Dana (1916) in its vision for the placement and design of different campus buildings, but maintained the same connection to the land and its historical and national value and the desire for a separate peace. Again, this exemplified the desire of Watson and his colleagues to cut off from the students the potential encounters with amoral characters and activities. On the built downtown campus, the hostel and its rule recreated such a peace with physical and metaphorical boundaries.

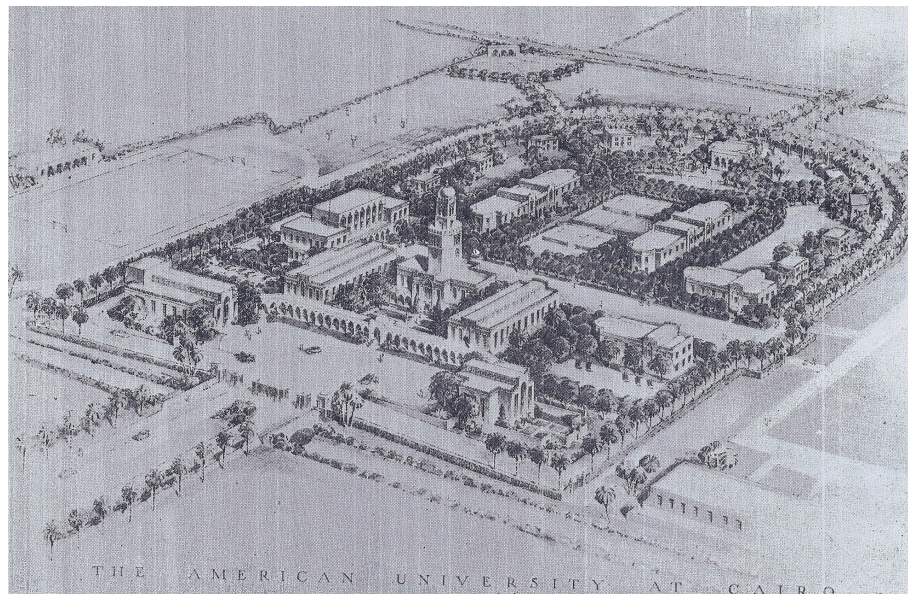


Figure 3: "A Dream That Must Come True": Jens Fredrick Larson Plan²³

²³ "A Dream That Must Come True-A.U.C. Out Along The Pyramid Road." The American University in Cairo Buildings Collection, Box 1, Campus-

This plan by Jens Fredrik Larson seemed to model what urban planners today call the “Mediterranean city structure,” a U-shaped organizational pattern that created spatial hierarchies in relation to the center of the city.²⁴ The Mediterranean city structure served to describe how cities from the region segregated their living arrangements by class, especially in relation to pre-industrial urban cores. Larson’s campus plan shared many similarities with this city structure, as his plan ranked buildings and their placement according to status. For example, he placed senior dorms at the middle of campus, where “elite residential” homes would be placed; at the “historic core” were key colleges and buildings as well as the library (the center building with the tower). While Larson’s plan might just coincidentally share in the same characteristics as the Mediterranean city structure, the coincidence invoked the “campus as city” mentality of American campus planning.

Suburban/Giza(Proposed)-Including Farm, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

²⁴ Stanley D. Brunn, Maureen Hays-Mitchell, and Donald J. Zeigler, *Cities of the World: World Regional Urban Development*, 5th ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012). 216.

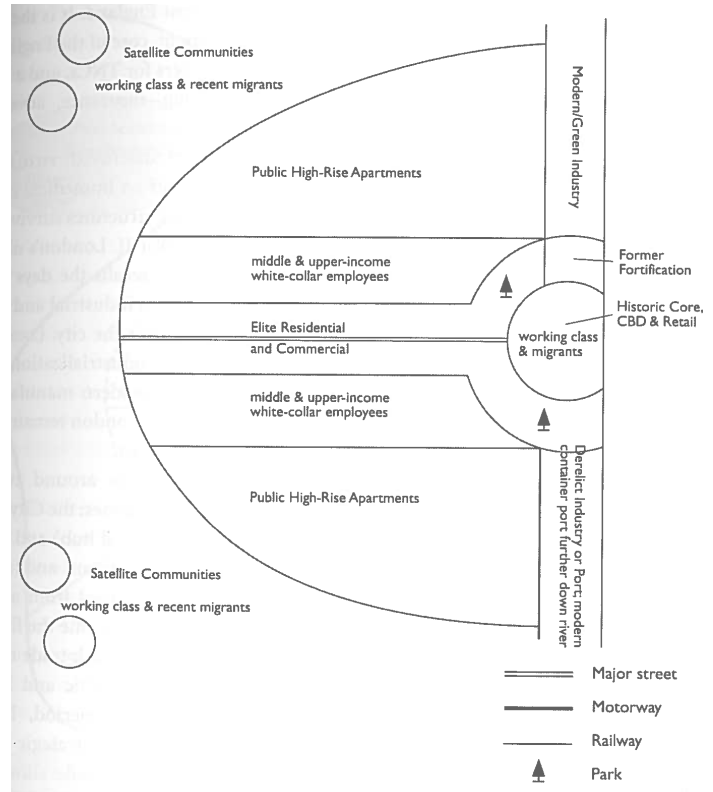


Figure 4: Mediterranean City Structure²⁵

The designs by Jens Fredrik Larson are particularly noteworthy, as Larson worked on the commission of College Architecture and College Instruction in the Fine Arts in part of the Association of American Colleges (AAC). The AAC was an association formed in 1915 that advocated for liberal education curriculums in undergraduate institutions. AUC branded itself as a liberal institution – the reason

²⁵ Brunn, Maureen Hays-Mitchell and Zeigler. *Cities of the World*, 217.

why Egyptian families and students were drawn to it – and the design of the ideal campus was another node in which AUC associated itself to AAC ideals. Larson, an architect for college development planning, wrote a book with Archie Mac Innes Palmer, the associate secretary of the Association of American Colleges, titled *Architectural Planning of the American College*. The book served to expand on the work of a previous 1929 text by the Association of American College and the Carnegie Corporation titled *College Architecture in America*, by including “the changing architectural needs of the small liberal arts college.”²⁶ Though the book was a resource that drew from American campuses—and excluding American campuses abroad like AUC—the ideas about campus space and design were echoed in the Larson design for suburban AUC and in the development of the Tahrir campus. Using this book as a resource, one can begin to see the development of AUC’s ideal campus – and by extension, the actual campus – in relation to how the American college campus was conceived and what values this social space would hold due to its design.

Larson drew from his philosophy of development plans harmonizing with the “traditional style of the region” when he drew up a campus inspired by the contemporary definitions for Egyptian architecture. As Larson explained, “in this way the architectural charm may be increased and a regional character attained which will serve as an inspiration to the communities from which the students are

²⁶ Larson and Palmer, *Architectural Planning of the American College*, 1.

drawn.”²⁷ The style of the imagined suburban campus reflected similar architecture to the finally real downtown campus, complete with *meshrabyyah* windows as well as neo-Islamic designs dominating the facades.

However, the interior schematic plans contrasted with the Egyptian-inspired designs on the outside: the designers of the interior divided and controlled space with a familiar, Western design. In the proposed Student Union building, designed by Charles A. Gunn (an architect and missionary who served in the Philippines), the cafeteria was laid out with order, marking the paths for lines to form by the checkers, where one would enter and exit properly.²⁸ The dining rooms segregated faculty from the college students and the secondary students. Such planning typified the ways American architects deconstructed the stereotypical Oriental exterior, as with AUC’s internal ordering reproducing Western routine and lifestyle. Though this cafeteria was not built, the ideas were echoed and enacted by AUC missionaries on the built 1919 campus with a different cafeteria that taught the students “democracy,” which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Still, American missionaries viewed themselves as “Egyptian”, marked by the Egyptian *bodies* and Egyptian *structure* that composed the university. In a circular letter to the “Friends of the University”, President Watson illustrated the scene from that year’s commencement, describing the crowd of red fezzes and

²⁷ Larson and Palmer, *Architectural Planning of the American College*, 30.

²⁸ Charles A. Gunn. “Proposed Student Union Building, American University at Cairo” 1939. AUC Archives. Suburban campus folder.

white turbans in the audience. According to Watson, “as the program unfolded, for the most part in Arabic, you felt that the American University at Cairo had indeed succeeded in domesticating itself. It is not denationalizing the Egyptian; it is identifying itself with the life of Egypt.”²⁹ However, this image of domestication was largely supported by the fact that Egyptians—retaining their national heritage by the use of their dress, and AUC catering to them by using an Arabic-language program—were present in the space. Once removed, these elements cease to make AUC domestic in its Egyptian context, as its character was largely American in form. This domestication, therefore, was only skin-deep: it claimed only to be identifying itself with Egypt and Cairo through the landscape and the people, but not necessarily by its internal character based on the campus designs of spaces. Even then, AUC’s mission for its students was to shape their minds and hearts according to American-Christian ideals, even if they remained nominal Muslims. I will elaborate on this process that constructed even Muslim bodies as Muslim on the outside, but Christian within, in the upcoming chapter on the built campus. For now, Watson’s words on “domestication” are pivotal to how AUC became described to both American and Egyptian audiences, drawing on a certain, historicized set of visual presentations of the campus to disguise the inner workings of the AUC mission.

²⁹ July 19th 1924, Circular letter to the Friends of Cairo University. PHS Archives (Jan. 18, 2013).

Nothing so clearly demonstrated this desire and need for a constructed history to frame AUC than a sketch titled, “Diagram of Viability of Pyramids from Academic Building.” Within the page includes three mini-sketches: the first, a view from the West Entrance (no scale); the second a profile perspective of the University and the lines of sight of the Pyramids; and third, a bird’s eye view the campus and the spatial sight of each of the Pyramids. Such careful presentation of the Pyramid vision exemplified the desire of AUC to use the landscape, embodying different codes and images, and construct a relationship to this historical identity within itself. Scott Trafton explained this process succinctly: “Egypt was thus a passageway in more way than one: it acted as a marker for the approach of the distant past, as a revivalist traveler moved backward in time, and as a marker for passage into the distant Other.”³⁰ This campus design orientated the university to place to Pyramids to its west; following the arch of the sun, eyes were therefore directed to this distant past and distant Other simultaneously. Concurrently, it was only from a spectator perspective: the distance from the Pyramids themselves, just at the horizon from the campus, while ensuring its presence, metaphorically established the relationship between this Egyptian identity to the American University serving Egyptians. The American University *at* Cairo, was just that: it was just an object of location, an object to the University as a thought or frame. Realistically, the missionaries’ ability to maintain such framing for the campus, especially from a visual perspective, was highly

³⁰ Trafton, *Egypt Land*, 143.

untenable: this vision for the campus was for a plot of land about 5 miles away from the Pyramids, which left a lot of room and possibility for other structures (like new villages) to block them from the campus view.

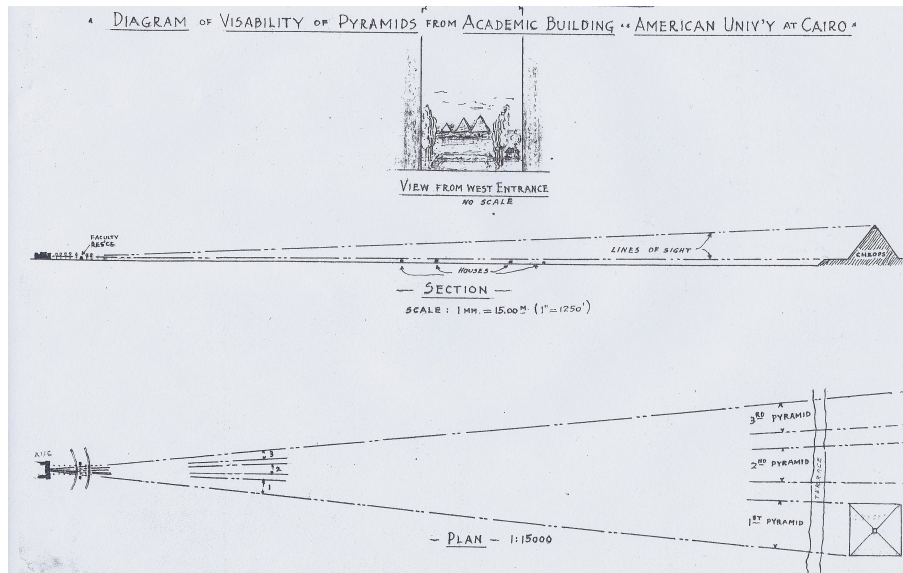


Figure 5: Diagram of Visibility of Pyramids from Academic Building³¹

In the 1948 “Arguments for College Buildings on Suburban Site of the American University at Cairo,” the AUC planners listed five goals the new suburban site would accomplish. The move to the suburban site hoped to accomplish greater attendance of the university, “serve as a valuable token to the Egyptian nation of America’s interest in Egypt’s welfare,” settle land title disputes, create visible separation between the Secondary and high school

³¹ “Diagram of Visibility of Pyramids from Academic Building.” AUC Archives. Suburban campus folder.

students from the College or Faculty students, and most importantly “enable [the faculty and staff] to control more perfectly the spirit and atmosphere of the College.”³² However, by 1948, AUC trustees were also concerned about the university’s safety in the midst of anti-American sentiment stemming from the United State’s position on the partition of Palestine.³³ The fears that emerged during this historical moment only reiterated the historical narrative for AUC’s need to detach itself from the city, not just for the benefit of the students but also for its own security.

In contrast to the idea that the college should afford “a basis for cooperation between the college and the town,” as Larson and Palmer emphasize, the new AUC campus celebrated a degree of autonomy and distance from the center of Cairo.³⁴ In the development plans for the suburban campus, the AUC members, like Hill, said they would retain the main campus and the outlets in strategic parts of the city as part of their outreach programs, but for the most part, the Giza plan would allow them to become a true “oasis” in the outskirts of the city.³⁵ This type of physical relationship amplified the sense of distance and hierarchy the American missionaries had of their Egyptian relations. Though the AUC planners

³² “Arguments for College buildings on Suburban Site of the American University at Cairo.” AUC Archives. Suburban campus folder.

³³ Special Reports to the Board of Trustees of The American University at Cairo: on Policy Planning Discussion in Cairo. By Harrison Garrett and F. M. Potter. 1948. Suburban plan. AUC archives.

³⁴ Larson and Palmer, *Architectural Planning of the American College*, 46.

³⁵ Special Reports to the Board of Trustees of The American University at Cairo: on Policy Planning Discussion in Cairo. By Harrison Garrett and F. M. Potter. 1948. Suburban plan. AUC archives.

desired the move to the suburbs partly on logical desires for more space and peace, they also wanted the move for autonomy over their students and their space. The evident desire to control campus space with monitoring checks, passes, and disciplinary action in the center of Cairo was amplified in the move to create the campus oasis outside the city center.

The voices of the American missionaries on the importance of the residential hall reflected a larger conversation from the level of planners like Larson and Palmer. The architects wrote of the importance of the residence hall as “the life of the dormitory may influence manners, develop taste, and office training in the courtesy and cooperation necessary to group living.”³⁶ Larson and Palmer spoke of the practice American colleges and universities came to shape their students. For example, the Seven Sisters colleges of Northeast America (including Mount Holyoke) incorporated strict guidelines and routines for each student. This intense planning appeared in the operation of the AUC campus in downtown Cairo, demonstrating how the AUC faculty and staff exerted Western notions of organization, control, and discipline through the most domestic setting of the university, the residential hall.

Conclusion

The suburban proposal never left the minds of Watson and his colleagues, even after the establishment of the Tahrir campus and the years of building and

³⁶ Larson and Palmer, *Architectural Planning of the American College*, 137.

maintaining that site. In the proposal drawn up by AUC by vice chairman Bancroft for Samuel Mather, Hill cited that the suburban campus remained a relevant topic because of “the experience of other institutions in America” needing inevitable expansion, the limited city site would “not possibly suffice for the Collegiate Department which required campus space, athletic fields and airy dormitories, not to mention the removal from the city for both moral and health reasons,” as well as the desire to build a School of Agriculture.³⁷

In nineteenth century America, Egyptian-themed architecture found its place among a variety of styles in a period of revivalism (also called eclecticism). During the nineteenth century, American architects were looking at classical styles—Grecian, Roman, and Ancient Egyptian—to build a growing, urban American landscape. As Scott Trafton argued, the Egyptian revival style and its use represented the racial tensions of antebellum America. The exportation of this form as shown in the plans, into the complicated architectural history of Cairo as well, created an identity that I call *Americanized* Egyptian style. The architectural showcasing of the ideal AUC campus served as a juncture where the tensions of race in America and racial imperial associations met, displaying a complicated array of identity, especially at the level of presentation found in architectural forms. The duality of both American and Egyptian (Egyptian in the sense of

³⁷ “Special Presentation of Suburban Property Being Acquired for Extension Purposes By the American University at Cairo—Prepared for Mr. Samuel Mather”. AUC Archives.

place) design created a new type of identity which made the two histories entwined and embodied within this innocent plan for a new University.

The designs of this ideal campus were easily digestible by the American audiences that saw them and constructed them. They were able to grasp the metaphorical connections, and were driven by the desire to remember an ancient past while reaching a distant Orient and making sense of it. The designs, a combination of many architectural classical forms that came together, presented a space that was simultaneously far but also not foreign: it was their own creation. But once this dream could not be constructed in reality, AUC missionaries had to create a new way in which they could still implement such processes of control and conquering. They did this through the control of internal spaces and their design, while retaining an exterior that told a different story of assimilation, at the heart of Cairo.

CHAPTER THREE

An Acre of America in Cairo: The Realized Campus

“The school has the daytime and the nighttime, the classroom and the dormitory, the playground and the social hour, every situation and every human mood, at its disposal for visualizing Christianity.”¹
-Charles R. Watson, *What is This Moslem World?*

On a map distributed by the American University at Cairo to visitors of the city, a rich, colorful image of the front University building was printed on the page. Titled, “Cairo: An Acre of America,” the map featured AUC as “a monument of Modern Egypt,” in contrast to another image of “monuments of Ancient Egypt,” which included the Pyramids, the Citadel, and the site of Pharaonic temples of Upper Egypt.² The map of Cairo itself was labeled according to the interests of expatriates or Western visitors: government buildings, clubs, Islamic monuments, and Christian (Protestant) churches. While the map itself is not surprising, the most compelling portion of this map is the

¹ Charles R. Watson, *What is this Moslem World?* (New York: Friendship Press, 1937), 163.

² “Cairo: An Acre of America” pamphlet. C1900. PHS Archives.

front illustration and the claim, “an acre of America” in Cairo. The same image is used as the cover of one of AUC’s class catalogues.³



Figure 6: Map, "Cairo: An Acre of America." Building depicted is the American University at Cairo.

The map was telling in how AUC constructed its identity within a foreign country and at a pivotal location to Cairo’s urban fabric. Through a complicated

³ Lawrence Murphy, *The American University in Cairo: 1919-1987* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1987), 60.

process of presentation and self-preservation, AUC created physical and metaphorical boundaries between itself (as a campus and community) and the rest of the city, yet simultaneously presenting itself as an integral part of Egyptian society. Ultimately, The American University at Cairo framed its institution within a particular presentation of unity with Cairo's landscape, but developed "an acre of America" within its premises.

In order to begin to understand the American University through the missionaries' perceptions of Egypt, Islam and the Middle East, studying the history of the physical development of the campus provides one frame of analysis. The design of the American University and its adoption of a "native" or "Egyptian" character provokes a discussion of Egyptian national identity that would require a long review of the history of colonial categorization of Egyptian art and its history, mainly divided in four narratives by Orientalist scholars, archeologists, historians and company: Ancient Egypt, Coptic Egypt, Islamic Egypt and Greco-Roman Egypt. This categorical process shaped the way in which various organizations, Egyptian and Western, restored or protected Egyptian heritage and culture in the form of monuments. The effects of conservation efforts in Egypt with the establishment of the Comité, and the establishment of museums, are integral to understanding the presentation of AUC at its façade and how it was able to seamlessly integrate itself with the Cairo landscape, through remaining separate from it.

Simultaneously, AUC staff and visionaries saw their space as a way to combat what they believed was the amoral atmosphere of Cairo and Islamic society, and therefore contribute to a larger conflict between Islam and Christianity. In this imagining of the world, Christian and Islam were in engaging in a spiritual war, a war Christians read through the secular events throughout the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. As Timothy Marr, a historian on nineteenth century missionaries in Ottoman lands described, “The predominant missionary response to Islam was to pit it as a strong Satanic force that would ultimately bend to the power of the Holy Spirit, which the signs of the times seemed to be accomplishing regardless of their own direct efforts.”⁴ While Watson was less extreme in his imagining of this spiritual battle than the early American missionaries of the nineteenth century, Watson utilized such discourse to convince American Evangelical audiences at home of the school’s Christian mission. This spiritual mission therefore framed the context of the institution, which combined intertwined Western notions of routine and structure with religious connotations of morality. Watson therefore utilized AUC to engender the space with both meanings in order to create moral and civilized students out of immoral and inferior groups.

⁴ Timothy Marr, “Drying up the Euphrates”: Muslims, Millennialism, and Early American Missionary Enterprise.” 144. 2002 New Haven: Macmillan Center.
<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=58225>

This chapter will analyze the history of AUC's campus by comparing and juxtaposing the campus's physical architecture versus the interior culture of the built spaces. I argue that AUC as a campus retained its early visions for a controlled setting to enact its missionary goal and instill Christian morals within its students. However, as it was placed within Cairo's urban core, it had to articulate its vision through surreptitious use of its internal spaces. Simultaneously, through the physical façade of the campus, it attempted to blend into Cairo's physical appearance by maintaining an Egyptian architectural culture that would not mark it distinct from the rest of the city. Overall, AUC sought authenticity through its exterior presentation, but diminished the expression of Egyptian identity in parts of its interior workings. To explain these arguments, I will first describe the evolution of the campus, from the history of the first building to the last addition during Watson's presidency. Next, I will describe the created atmospheres of the spaces within and outside of the campus, and how their purpose was entangled in various desires to create a familiar American context with Christian ideals. Reading AUC with Lefebvre's theories of the production of spaces, especially social space, I argue that AUC constructed an Americanized Egyptian plot of land, simultaneously what they called "An acre of America" but simultaneously claimed themselves as "domesticated" to Egyptian life and design.

A History of The American University at Cairo Campus

The nucleus of the American University at Cairo's campus was first a palace. According to various correspondences with AUC staff involved with AUC's founding, in the 1870s Khedive Ismail originally gave the palace to Ahmad Khairy Pasha, who served as the Khedive's minister of Education and later Minister of the Interior under Khedive Tawfik. Others tell the story differently: Khedive Ismail originally built the palace for a member of his harem, and later gave it to Khairy Pasha.⁵ The area surrounding the palace of Khairy Pasha, now known as Garden City, was built up with other palaces during the 1860s and 1870s, and included prominent government buildings nearby.

This area in which the future American University at Cairo became located in was at the boundary between the new, modern Cairo and the old Medieval Cairo. The building was not only surrounded by other historical palaces, but also new government offices, the new Egyptian Museum, the British Embassy, Qasr al-Nil Barracks, the Semiramis Hotel, and the Bab-al Luq train station, all of which were part of Khedive Ismail's drive for a "Paris on the Nile."⁶ This setting was perfect for the new institution that sought recognition as a modern yet moral university, set in opposition to secular British government schools, the Egyptian Cairo University, and Islamic Al-Ahzar University.

⁵ Murphy, *The American University in Cairo: 1919-1987*, 10.

⁶ Donald Malcolm Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 31.

In 1900, Nestor Gianalclis, a Greek, bought the palace from the Khairy family and transformed the palace into a cigarette factory. Keeping much of the design, he also added new details to the building, specifically the mock harem balconies and crenellated parapet, designed like the citadels of Egypt. It was under Gianalclis's ownership that the building took on the Islamic revival style that AUC retained. Though still debated by historians, it is believed that the architect Max Herz Pasha was hired by Gianalclis to redesign the building with the help of an Italian decorating firm. Max Hertz is credited with painting the building in red and white, "reminiscent of Bahri Mamluke architectures," and the addition of stalactites to the recesses.⁷ One speculation for understanding why Gianalclis added these Islamic motifs was that perhaps Gianacalis wanted to reflect the architectural trends of the day, imitating the Islamic revival style, and therefore placing himself within the more educated and sophisticated class of society as a tobacco industrialist.⁸

⁷ "Building the Past: From palace to cigarette factory, the main building at AUC has an interesting—and largely unknown—history". Article from AUCToday Summer 1995. pages 14-15.

⁸ "Building the Past: From palace to cigarette factory, the main building at AUC has an interesting—and largely unknown—history". Article from AUCToday Summer 1995. pages 14-15. AUC Archives.



Figure 7: "Seasons Greetings" AUC Postcard. Depiction of The Gialacis Cigarette Factory



Figure 8: Close Up of Postcard: Nestor Gialacis Cigarettes. At the top is the crenellated parapet, reminiscent of Egyptian citadels.⁹

⁹ "Season's Greetings" post card. Box 2 Buildings, Folder: Main block- Palace building, Ewart Hall, Oriental Hall (Downtown /Tahrir Square Campus). AUC Archives

The important, yet questionable connection to Max Herz would explain the relationship to Western conception of the Orient. Max Herz was a prominent architect of his day, and supposedly influenced the design of the Cairo Islamic Museum, built in 1903 to display the works of Islamic art outside the Pharaonic era displayed at the more popular Egyptian museum. However, according to Bernard O’Kane, who wrote the authoritative guide to the Museum of Islamic Art Museum (the Museum’s current name), the 1903 location of the museum was designed by another architect, Alfonso Manescalco, who was also the chief architect for the Ministry of Public Works.¹⁰ The Neo-Mamluk look of the museum is strikingly similar to the design of AUC’s Oriental and Ewart Halls, which might just be a reflection of the architectural style of the day, or of the architect himself.

The Neo-Mamluk style became popular in the late nineteenth century by architects in Egypt, with the restoration and erection of the Mosque of al-Rifa’i. The government used this style wholesale for building its institutions, such as the Ministry of Awqaf (a ministry for religious endowments).¹¹ The restoration of the Mosque of al-Rifa’i presented the ideas of architectural preservation prevalent of the day. The restoration of Cairo’s monuments was done the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe (the Comité), guided by the theories

¹⁰ Bernard O’Kane, *The Illustrated Guide to the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo* (Cairo, New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012), 10.

¹¹ Ibid.

of the French architect and theorist Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. According to Viollet-le-Duc, restoration was the practice of reestablishing a building “in a complete condition that may never have existed.”¹² In the attempt to reestablish “pure” forms of different dynastic periods that symbolized “medieval, Arab and Mohammanan” Cairo, buildings like the mosque of al-Salih Tala’i (1160) were taken down piece-by-piece and “restored” through comparative studies of other mosques and removing additions (such as a later-built Ottoman minaret) that fell outside the building’s time frame.¹³

This history of architectural restoration and remodeling was important to the way AUC came to represent itself within the Egyptian landscape. The architectural fashions that AUC retained on the exterior of its buildings exemplified a larger urban and historical process that reshaped and rebuilt an almost false Cairo—a Cairo that was defined by European architects and artists that “restored” monuments according to their own categorical methods. By keeping in line with such processes, AUC at its physical façade placed itself within this architectural dialectic, performing what was “modern” in Cairo’s urban scene. The result: a university that, to some degree, presented itself as Egyptian on the outside, emulating buildings around it that matched its design and incorporated this history.

¹² Irene A. Bierman. “Disciplining the Eye: Perceiving Medieval Cairo” *Making Cairo Medieval*. 18.

¹³ Irene A. Bierman. “Disciplining the Eye: Perceiving Medieval Cairo” *Making Cairo Medieval*. 18.

By 1908, King Ahmed Fuad rented the main building for the Egyptian University.¹⁴ The University was different from others at the time, as it gave Egyptians the opportunity of secular higher education, rivaling Azhar University, when British policy developed schools for manual labor and training. The Egyptian University rose from the *Tanzimat* period of the Middle East, in which Middle Eastern rulers sought to replicate the European example of order in their cities, armies, bureaucracy and schools. As Donald Reid described, Al-Azhar, the tenth-century university founded by the Shiite Fatimids, remained a bulwark against this “new order [which] prescribed specialized classrooms and buildings, desks, examinations, class periods, entrance requirements, diplomas, formal curricula, uniforms, grade levels, teaching and administrative hierarchies, and lists of punishments.”¹⁵ During its time on the Tahrir Campus, ex-President Teddy Roosevelt gave a speech at the Egyptian University in March 1910. The speech angered many, as Roosevelt praised British rule within the midst of nationalists fighting for a constitution and independence.¹⁶ Ironically, Roosevelt’s presence in this building enamored Charles Watson who thought, “how touching it would be if [AUC] got that spot,” and incorporate this historical event within its own narrative.¹⁷

¹⁴ The Egyptian University is now known as Cairo University.

¹⁵ Donald Malcolm Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt*. 12.

¹⁶ Donald Malcolm Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt*. 42

¹⁷ Murphy, 14.

The history of the Egyptian University at the Tahrir location was short: in the late 1910s, the university moved to a largely rural setting in Giza, where they built a sprawling campus that was completely Western—a stark contrast to the other Egyptian university, Al-Azhar. Built by European architects, the new campus for the Egyptian University utilized the Beaux-Arts school of design that enthralled American campus architects with the use of “symmetry, formality, strong axes, and grand entry boulevard,” complete with a classical Ionic portico, quadrangles, and a large dome. As Reid explained, “the university’s stately neo-classicism broke with Islamic past but was in keeping with the baroque, rococo, and neo-classical styles of the villas and offices in turn-of-the-century Ismailiyya, Munira, Garden City, and Zamalek” districts of urban, modernizing and upper-class Cairo.¹⁸ In its place, Watson refitted the building for the American University of Cairo.

By the time the American university opened in 1919, the building changed little in its outward appearance since Gianacis added the architectural features popular in his day. Ironically, American missionaries, who were critical about the inherent immoral associations of spaces like the *harem* and the Egyptian home overall, left such symbols of upper-class Egyptian homes like harem balconies on its façade. The result was seemingly to make something familiar on the outside for passersby and observers to see on the street, yet the institution within had

¹⁸ Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt*, 82-83. The Egyptian University also had a history of using palaces to conduct classes, before the campus was built.

developed curricula and spaces that challenged the exterior message. Within, AUC provided classes, activities and “living examples” through its personnel to teach a Christian moral lifestyle that its Muslim students would take up and become transformed. The dynamic use of what was indigenous in the design of the space, yet juxtaposing it with American Christian values and routine, created what I called the Americanized Egypt on this small plot of land in the middle of Cairo.



Figure 9 American University At Cairo: Palace Building from Afar.

The body of travel literature on Egypt informed American missionaries during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and missionaries themselves contributed to that body with their own experiences. Like those of their European predecessors who came to travel to Egypt and see what Timothy Mitchell called the “‘real’ exhibition,” American missionaries originally orientalized what Egypt

was like, based on exhibitions held in the Western world that attempted to reconstruct every aspect of Cairene life. In many ways, AUC as a structure of art and exhibition descended from what Edward Said called “the citationary nature of Orientalism,” in which the Orient, as described by Timothy Mitchell, “is put together as this ‘re-presentation,’ and what is represented is not a real place but ‘a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone’s work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these.’”¹⁹

In creating the rest of the campus, Watson and associates built new buildings congruent with the original palace building, celebrating the beauty of its Egyptian façade. With the building of the next two halls by American architects, Ewart Memorial Hall and Oriental Hall, the AUC founders perpetuated the citationary process of Orientalism within its campus.

Ewart Memorial Hall

In June 1926, AUC began to build a new hall, due to the generous donation of \$100,000 from an anonymous donor in memory of William Dana Ewart. Ewart was “an American gentleman,” who came to Egypt in the early 1900s for his failing health, and visited during the winters for the sunny climate.²⁰ By April 1928, the Memorial Hall was completed. The building was “designed particularly to promote its program for reaching the whole community by lectures, educational

¹⁹ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, 31.

²⁰ Ewart Memorial Hall Dedication Program. PAM, American University at Cairo Data File. PHS Archives.

pictures, and other public meetings.”²¹ In addition, “the best style of arabesque architecture has been faithfully followed, outside and inside, in every possible detail, for example in decorations, doors and windows, lamps and seat standards.”²² Even the inscription over the proscenium is given to this effect, with a line from Tennyson’s “in Memoriam” written in Kufic style, the oldest form of Arabic calligraphy. The architect, A. St. John Diament, continued with the Neo-Islamic architecture by designing the Hall with the same themes as the original AUC College building. For both the interior and exterior of Ewart Hall, Diament utilized the red and white *ablaq* stripes, trefoil crenellations, and blind keel-arched niches into the designs, inspired by the Fatimid-style.²³ Diament applied this same striping to the next building he built on the campus, Oriental Hall.

The writing of Tennyson in Arabic-like English script exemplified what I have termed the production of an Americanized Egypt. Beyond just describing the influence of a larger, visible process, such as the combination of Egyptian revival styles in America to the revival styles of Egypt, AUC also Americanized space with the use of Oriental symbols. By using a modified English font to look like Kufic script from Arabic calligraphy to write English verses on the walls of Ewart Hall, AUC builders created a metaphorical space that mixed together symbols and

²¹ Ibid.

²² Box 2, Folder 4: Ewart Memorial Hall (Downtown Tahrir Square Campus-Main Campus) Brochure, “Ewart Memorial Hall: The American University at Cairo” AUC Archives.

²³ Tarek Mohamed Refaat Sakr, *Early Twentieth-Century Islamic Architecture in Cairo* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1993), 25.

codes that meant “American” with what was “Egyptian.” It presented at its façade an indigenous style, but maintained its Western heritage. The fact the verses came from a British poet only served to emphasize the actual distance AUC designers maintained from their Egyptian students and audiences, as it associated itself within a power relation similar to the British occupation of Egypt. This “Acre of America” that was simultaneously Egyptian, at the heart of the capital, echoed in even this small text on the walls of Ewart Hall.



Figure 10: Front of Ewart Memorial Hall²⁴

Oriental Hall and the School of Oriental Studies

²⁴ AUC archives Pinterest. Accessed April 15, 2013.

From December 9-29, 1932, The American University at Cairo celebrated the opening of the new Oriental Hall and the new School of Oriental Studies at the downtown campus. As part of the celebratory activities, a number of lectures were held, in English and Arabic, by various academics invited to speak on Western and Eastern history and culture. The university published an informative brochure, titled “Where Orient and Occident Meet,” which included sketches of the new hall and its design, while explaining its significance, purpose and even architectural analysis of the Hall and the School. As the brochure explained, the Hall itself was a dramatic symbol of the relationship between the East and West, supported by American philanthropists but designed in the likeness of the East and its “Oriental beauty and art,” all culminating as “a symbol of international and interracial sympathy; more than that, of intercultural sympathy.”²⁵ But physically and metaphorically framing this relationship is a history that conjures up a specific narrative of European Orientalism and imperialism, and the West’s understanding of Egyptian nationalism through this lens. This is illustrated by the names that appear on the walls of the hall: “On its walls are inscribed great names that reveal how Greek and Hebrew, Moslem and European minds and hearts have labored to place the richest values of the Orient at the disposal of the world.”²⁶

In terms of how AUC founders viewed their presence among Egyptians of various religious, political, and social backgrounds, the addition of Oriental Hall

²⁵ “Where Orient and Occident Meet” Brochure, AUC archives.

²⁶ “Where Orient and Occident Meet” Brochure, AUC archives.

to the downtown campus encapsulated many of the issues and contradictions AUC faced as an American, yet Egyptian, institution of Egypt. Though it was built in 1932, almost 10 years after the school's establishment, AUC's Oriental Hall physically looks indigenous with its "Moorish," "Arabesque," "Neo-Mamluk" styles—all terms that reiterated the unforgotten connection to a perpetual past that described the Orient. Thematically, the design seemed fitting as the Hall was also built to house the School of Oriental Studies—a program mainly for Western scholars studying abroad, especially geared toward missionaries who were to pursue work within Cairo or outside in rural villages. However, from the brochure for Oriental Hall's opening ceremony, AUC President and company asserted a different motive. According to them, Oriental Hall would serve to facilitate cross-cultural exchange, or as the brochure's title indicates, act as "Where Orient and Occident Meet."²⁷ Ironically, this exchange was happening again in the messages sent by the exterior design: the "Neo-Mamluk" and "Neo-Islamic" styles were all constructed by a long process of European categorization and their influence on Cairo's urban transformation.

From the onset, the space of the School of Oriental Studies was framed with imagery that was quintessentially Arab, with a description that modeled the nineteenth century traveler narratives sold to a curious American audience. At the entrance of the new building, visitors were prompted to "imagine standing in front of some Arab structure such as that of the Mosque of Qait-bay, combining

²⁷ "Where Orient and Occident Meet" Brochure, AUC archives.

place of worship and school, mosque and madressa [school]...²⁸ By entering the new hall, designed similarly to the spaces nineteenth travelers sought to explore and find the “real” Egypt, the audience transgressed temporal and spatial boundaries that made the Orient exotic. This new hall became not just a place for Oriental Studies, but instead, a physical representation of what scholars would learn about the Orient and a space where such scholars could come to satisfy their curiosity of places that were usually closed or inaccessible to foreigners and ultimately deconstruct the mystery of the Orient and the fortress of Islam. Still, though this imagining allowed the reader to feel a part of this process, Oriental Hall was not a once-prohibited Islamic or Egyptian space now open to all: instead, Oriental Hall established itself as a metaphorical forbidden space now unveiled to the public, a space that held promise for such unveilings to continue through the work of AUC as an institution in Egypt. AUC served this process by constructing an Oriental space as their own, but also by using the building as a larger metaphor to how they sought to Americanize Cairo.

The visual description of the hall’s interior made this process clearer: by entering the quintessentially Arab setting, one is given the impression of discovering the static world of the Orient. The writer’s use of established a temporal relationship of the unchanging, monolithic Orient, but within the context of the American missionary space. The room itself is described to have an Orientalist setting, creating the impression of the mysterious Oriental space while

²⁸ “Where the Orient and Occident Meet” Brochure, AUC archives.

presenting it as a place for East-West interaction. The writer described the interior as such:

Here comes the culminating impression of the whole structure. You are in a Hall some forty three by thirty one feet whose every line and furnishing breathes the romance of the Orient. The eyes rest a moment on the attractive yet not over ornate design of the chief window of the room, mashrubieh [latticed windows] in character yet suggesting iron grill. Then one's gaze is drawn, as by a magnet, to the glory of arabesque work which constitutes the ceiling. Here, lines and colors and gold, stalactites, "coubbas" and niches, play with their appointed parts to create the dominant feeling which was deliberately sought after, namely, appreciation of Oriental art. The floor also calls for comment, with its terraced "diwans" which serve to practical purpose of platform and gallery, while the sunken section gives to the entire ceiling an impression of height which would otherwise be missed. Most effective are the colored patterns of sound-proof rubber flooring, while the furniture of the Hall, specially designed for this building, gives the impression that one has walked into some Oriental fairyland of long ago.²⁹

In one sense, the description evokes an image of a stagnant past—the Hall is made up of cultural accents from an earlier era of Egyptian Ottoman history. But the intention of the hall is to promote conversation for progress—a progress that seemed more in control of the Americans who built the hall with its “outstanding impressions by this architectural monument to Western generosity and to Oriental culture.”³⁰ Overall, it the Hall framed a certain arena for where progress would occur in the discussions between Western and Eastern parties, but in reality, it is the West that will dominate the discussion and enact change, creating a setting for uneven exchange. In reality, the constructed nature of the entire space by AUC

²⁹ “Where Orient and Occident Meet” Brochure, AUC archives.

³⁰ “Where Orient and Occident Meet” Brochure, AUC archives.

performed the same process of Western Egyptologists over Egypt's national identity: it redefined it from its own sense of superiority and expertise.

The walls of the hall further emitted the dominance of Western parties who constructed the building with their knowledge and historical narratives. The heavy Arab motifs used in the design of the rooms reflect an Orientalist imagining that draws heavily from a historicized vision of the "East." This history is intimately displayed by the epigraphs etched on the walls, with the names of famous European Orientalists who shaped Egyptian identity are found within the auditorium. Names like Gasson-Camille-Charles Maspero, a famous French Egyptologist who contributed to the creation of the Egyptian museum, and Jean-François Champollion, who discovered the Rosetta Stone in 1822, are featured around the room. Other names that were inscribed on the walls included Wilhelm Friedrich Freytag, Paul Anton de Lagarde, John Butorf, Friedrich Heinrich Wilhelm Gesenius, Michael Jan de Goeje and Ignas Goldziher, all noted for their work on expanding the scholarship on Islam and Arabic studies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By displaying these names on the walls of the Hall, AUC framed one part of its existence within the historic narrative of the Napoleonic invasion and the consequences of the hyper study and investment in Egypt and its landscape in a particular moment, rather than the present era they recruited from. This framing of the school is conceptually similar to how Donald Preziosi discussed the building of the Western quarter of Cairo in contrast to the "Old City": the names enframed an intellectual past that used "Islamic culture as

merely a bridge between the West's own antiquity and its modernity—which, after all, was the ultimate point of Orientalism as such.”³¹ The celebration of such figures along the walls of the hall were very similar to how the Egyptian Museum—built in 1902 in Tahrir Square near AUC—inscribed the names of Egyptologist fathers on its façade, with Latin inscriptions that “not one Egyptian in a thousand could read” (Latin was not taught in any Egyptian government school of this period).³²

Altogether, Ewart Hall, Oriental Hall, and the original palace building represented a certain construction of Egyptian identity and history. This construction and production was heavily influenced and enacted by foreign forces in Egypt, and not Egyptians themselves. At its facades, the buildings gave the impression of situating themselves within the urban design of Cairo. The architects for these AUC buildings kept or built in harmony with the architectural trends of its day, reflecting a sense of being a part of the city. Yet, such processes occurred literally at the facades of the buildings. The interior spaces of the campus however, differed greatly from what AUC presented through its design. As I will further discuss, there was very little in the atmosphere and social use of the spaces that resembled Islam or Egypt. In reality, AUC dismantled the

³¹ Donald Preziosi, from “The Museum of What You Shall Have Been” in *Making Cairo Medieval.*, ed. Nezar AlSayyad, Irene Bierman, and Nasser Rabbat (Lanham: Lexington, 2005), 130.

³² Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, 5.

performance at its façade by recreating American spaces within the campus.

Recreating the American Domestic: Governing the Campus and the Hostel

Even with all the exterior presentations that promoted a type of Egyptian identity, the interior spaces of the campus told another story. While the campus looked, to some degree, authentic in the way it blended in with Cairo's urban appearance, the classrooms and University Hostel were strikingly different. Within the institution, the AUC faculty and staff attempted to create an atmosphere to instill what one can call the "evangelical ethos" in the students. The AUC faculty and staff developed a two-fold process that would recreate the American domestic and Christian living. The first part was the actual development of spaces that were stereotypically American, such as the dining room, athletic field, and hostel. The second part included the development of routine for the students, creating a distinguishing pattern of American life for the AUC students. These plans were strictly for the (non-American or European) students studying at the College of Arts and Sciences; this was made clear in the case of the Student Hostel, where Western students studying at the School of Oriental Studies were encouraged to look for housing within the city instead.

The Student Hostel, also known as Students' Hall, was established in 1924 on the campus. As Watson described,

The building will accommodate forty students, in addition to a supervisory staff. This staff consists of a matron who is a Christian [American] woman sufficiently advanced in years to "mother" the boys; two of the strongest short term teachers who will live in the hall; and an Egyptian proctor. Every effort has

been made to throw around this selected group of students the most wholesome influences. It has been the aim to provide them activities and "traditions," to make the intellectual, character-building and religious influences that we desire them to be. This, however, cannot be the achievement of a day, but must depend upon a consistent effort throughout each year.³³

The structure of hostel life seemed to be a purposeful rendition of "democratic" American life, as described in discussion of the home in other missionary writings. Though typical for a woman missionary to be talking of the home as a learning space, this discourse extended beyond the women's sphere of domesticity imported from America to Cairo. AUC envisioned the hostel as a place to instill propriety and morality to its male-only institution (AUC did not begin to admit women until the late 1920s) through the replication of elements from the American domestic home.

The model of the boarding hostel as an American private home is derived from the boarding institutions of American schools. The American seminaries that missionaries studied at and came from—schools like Andover Theological Seminary, Harvard, Oberlin, Mount Holyoke Female Seminary and Amherst College—shaped the structural and atmospheric forms of the missionary schools abroad. Many missionaries that established educational facilities created schools much like their own: for example, the Fiske Seminary in Urmia, Persia, established routines that Fiske took and applied from her time at Mount Holyoke.³⁴ The Assiut College for Boys, built 235 miles from Cairo as part of the

³³ Circular letter to the Friends of Cairo University "Special News Bulletin," Nov. 14, 1924. PHS Archives (Jan. 18, 2013)

³⁴ See Note 3 in Chapter One.

early missionary village work in upper Egypt, also modeled such American schools. AUC's Dean Robert S. McClenahan worked at Assiut College before coming to AUC with Watson, and his direction of the College was greatly influenced by his time at Assiut.

Similar to the goals of women missionaries, who were seen to better penetrate harems, or the private home spaces of women, the boarding element to the American University at Cairo fulfilled the roles of education that women missionaries played in the field by exposing the students to similar physical conceptions of home life and teaching them the same methods of lifestyle. As Lisa Pollard argued in *Nurturing the Nation*, "The portrait of modern Egypt that was the result of tours through Egypt, both those actually undertaken by tourists and those that took place in the armchair, were constructed out of Egypt's hidden spaces as well as its monuments, pulling the private world inexorably into the process through which Egypt was known."³⁵ The American missionaries, like other European missionaries, viewed their missionary work through this historical conception of the Egyptian home as an atmosphere that needed reform in order to develop a well-ordered and well-mannered Egyptian. The American missionaries blended the language of British imperialism with their attempts to convert Muslims to Christians, using the space of the hostel as one means to

³⁵ Pollard, Lisa. *Nurturing the Nation : The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923*. Ewing, NJ, USA: University of California Press, 2004. p 56.
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/mtholyoke/Doc?id=10069065&ppg=73>
 Copyright © 2004. University of California Press. All rights reserved.

conduct their mission. The fact that a matron was used in the care of the hostel echoed the use of women missionaries as agents of civilizing the natives through the domestic sphere.

Integral to this relationship was the missionary desire for control, enacted in their imaginings of the interior spaces and their design. One great example of the type of atmosphere the missionaries wanted to set up was the domestic space of the dining room. As Larson and Palmer claimed, the dining room's atmosphere "is collegiate in the proper sense of the term, and hence not only promotes certain valuable qualities, but is often highly congenial to the students," while being an economic operating choice.³⁶ Larson and Palmer suggested care in decorating and designing the dining hall, as "taste in decoration and a general impression of orderliness will do much to improve manners and morale."³⁷ In contrast, Larson and Palmer did not support the use of a cafeteria in place of a dining hall, as "the student's meal is liable to be poorly balanced or insufficient in quantity; and the tendency to carelessness and hurry is detrimental to manners if not to health."³⁸ However, AUC used a cafeteria to serve the students' meals, in part for its efficiency to the school's timetable, as well as to keep students from leaving campus during the day.³⁹ The cafeteria, like other spaces within the campus, had

³⁶ Jens Fredrick Larson and Archie Mac Innes Palmer, *Architectural Planning of the American College* (New York and London: MacGraw-Hill Book Company Inc, 1933), 154.

³⁷ Larson and Palmer, *Architectural Planning of the American College*, 154.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Murphy, *AUC*, 43.

further transformed a once-Egyptian palace-cum-factory-cum university, now served to democratize students: “in a land where every one has servants, the daily practice of carrying a tray has a most dramatic effect.”⁴⁰

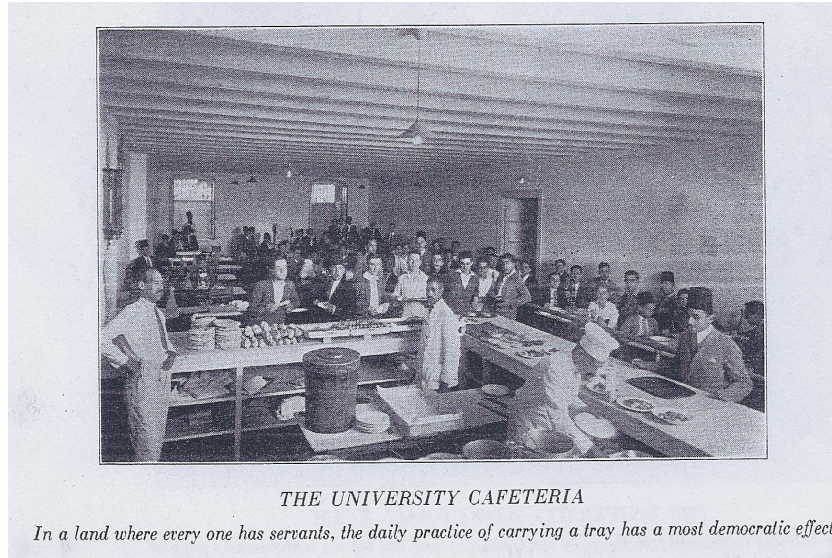


Figure 11: The University Cafeteria: Demonstrating Democracy. Caption below reads, ‘In a land where every one has servants, the daily practice of carrying a tray has a most democratic effect.’⁴¹

The emphasis on the residential hall and the models of faculty who can take in boys for home cooked dinners at home seemed to serve as the supplement to the cafeteria of the school and challenge the detrimental character of the cafeteria that Larson and Palmer described. This mindset again echoed the opinions of AUC staff of the Tahrir Campus, when it added its own cafeteria for a desire of

⁴⁰ AUC Archives Buildings. **Box 1, Folder 1: Campus/Downtown Tahrir Square.** Random page, “With aerial view of downtown cairo”, undated.

⁴¹ AUC Archives Buildings. **Box 1, Folder 1: Campus/Downtown Tahrir Square.** Random page, “With aerial view of downtown cairo”, undated.

efficiency, economy, and control but recommended faculty to bring students to their own homes occasionally for dinner.

AUC's attempts at teaching democracy were not limited to the cafeteria, but were found in places like the hostel. As Vandersall highlighted in the "Report of Life at Students' Hall," one of the main goals for the hostel (and the College) was to instill self-government in the students. In his review of the 1924-1925 school year, Vandersall found "they have yet to learn that self government is government not anarchy. We need to teach them how to take care of themselves, not turn them loose and then censure them because they fail, as fail they surely will as things are now."⁴²

The control of students through the use of passes are exemplary of the need to create a self-disciplined atmosphere, but also constrict the geographic landscape of the students in order to continue enact this process. The stricter guidelines laid out by Vandersall from the year's problems promoted the need for an application process in order for the student to obtain overnight and midnight passes. In addition, passes on Saturday were only until 9 p.m., so that students will attend the Saturday evening meetings in the Hostel.⁴³

Such limitations and ordering of the students movement and time echoed the modernization efforts of the Ottoman Empire (and by extension, Egypt) in its military. Called the *nizam jadid*, or "new order," the Ottoman Empire introduced

⁴² "Report of Life at Students' Hall," 1924-1925. AUC Archives.

⁴³ "Report of Life at Students' Hall," 1924-1925. AUC Archives.

the innovative practices of using a common code of discipline, instruction and barrack training for a new military force from the Prussians and French.⁴⁴

Similarly, AUC established such codes of discipline, instruction and controlled living in the Hostel, all to instill a type of “Christian” order for the betterment of the students’ moral selves.

In the case of discipline, Vandersall explained that he “tried to use Western fair play with them. They need, no, they want [his emphasis] hard-boiled enforcement of the rules, not leniency.”⁴⁵ Vandersall’s strictness seemed to be derived from a culture prevalent in nineteenth century Egypt from schools established with Western-style curriculum and discipline from foreign institutions like British and French missionary schools, to those sponsored by the modern Egyptian government. Therefore, AUC practices were not new, but couched in a language that revealed their missionary zeal to create moral Christians out of Muslims, if at least in heart and not in professed conversion. The discipline and routine would ultimately civilized the uncivilized, and one of the best places for that civilizing to occur was in the domestic sphere.

The idea of the uncivilized ‘Other’ was intimately connected to the home in various ways. The home as a space served to be instructional for the moral characters of its inhabitants. Extending as back to the eighteenth century, Western travelers compared and contrasted the private lives within homes to their own

⁴⁴ Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, 36.

⁴⁵ “Report of Life at Students’ Hall,” 1924-1925. AUC Archives.

experiences, while simultaneously applying their own senses of what home life should be (this included perceptions of gendered space). As Hsuan L. Hsu reminded us, the discourse of the Christian household in nineteenth century American domestic fiction, “extend[ed] the racial and religious values of such households beyond the home, across the continent, and into foreign fields.”⁴⁶ American missionaries by extension used such discourse in their own writings, especially amongst themselves through the letters sent back home describing foreign home life. As Hsu argued, “whether understood in terms of ‘manifest destiny,’ ‘tender violence,’ or the ‘tense and tender ties’” of empire, domestic discourse enlarged the scale of the household by conjoining Western kinship practices with worldwide ecumenical ambitions.”⁴⁷ The AUC staff put such work of empire in practice, through the thorough implementation of a moral atmosphere and routine in its home-like settings, the classroom, and the campus overall.

At the same time AUC staff implemented a Christian moral atmosphere for its students within the campus and its spaces, they were also held to embody such standards as well. Most importantly, the teachers living with the students were also subject to the rules and regulations to some degree. As boarders of the hostel, they were there to serve as examples of real Christian living, giving the students models to live up to. The need for an all-encompassing environment for the

⁴⁶ Hsuan Hsu, *Geography and the Production of Space in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 94.

⁴⁷ Hsu, *Geography and the Production of Space in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, 94.

students, via the structure and format of the rooms to the example of the teachers in residence, meant for a strict adherence to the ideals of Christianity the university wanted to enforce. The need for teachers as great representatives of Christianity and morality is due to the desire to instill Christian life at every outlet of the University. The hostel therefore, was not just important for the way it presented American and Christian space in order to instill order, but rather, it was important for the way it bounded *bodies* together in interaction, so that the students would learn from superior examples of morality, alongside learning what their own bodies were made to be doing through routine and discipline.

The model of the teacher extended beyond the character of those living in the hostel. More importantly, the teachers would conduct themselves in a similar manner within their classes, as they were made to become models in opposition their Egyptian counterparts. As Erdman Harris related in his book, *New Learning in Old Egypt*,

You, as an American teacher, will be called upon to meet, in the class room, boys who when new to the college know very little of a self-sustained, inwardly controlled, non-imposed order during a recitation period. You will be encouraged to do the very thing not expected of Egyptian teachers: to fraternize with students after school hours, on the athletic field, at the coffeehouse, in your own apartment, in their homes. The questions you will undoubtedly raise are these: Is it possible to develop a “democratic” spirit in the classroom with those who habits of response have been built up in an “autocratic” environment? Is it possible to be friendly without thereby incapacitating one’s self for the task of maintaining order?My own conclusion, after three years at the job, is that real results will belong to those who consistently and constructively attempt to apply the democratic principle.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Erdman Harris, *New Learning in Old Egypt*, 15-16.

Overall, the missionaries desired to develop a carefully controlled environment to teach its students. What it could not control, however, was the world outside, a world drastically contrary to the one within the confines of the campus. Therefore, AUC missionaries executed checks and regulations to the movement of students entering and leaving the campus. In its “freedom and privileges” section of the rule and regulations of the Hostel, students were required to spend their time within the confines of the Students’ Hall, the College grounds, or the limits of Kasr el Doubara district or Geirah—but never allowed to go “into the city” during the week. Only on Saturday afternoons with consent could a student be permitted to go into the city, and no student was allowed outside of the Students’ Hall grounds after 7:30 pm without permission.⁴⁹ In Erdman Harris’s account of his time as a professor at AUC, he recounted that during the first year of the college’s existence, the university tried a “free gate” policy, which allowed the students to enter and leave the campus during the day. However, the free gate was abandoned, as students would spend their time in cafes in lieu of their classes, and, in the words of Harris, “laughed up their sleeves at the simple-minded Americans and their ideas of freedom.”⁵⁰ In place of the “free gate” system was a “sliding scale of privileges” that allowed older students more mobility, while respecting the wishes of Egyptian parents who, according to Harris, saw the “free

⁴⁹ “Rules and Regulations of the Hostel of the American University at Cairo,” 1926. Box 2, Folder: Housing—Students/Dormitories/Hostels. AUC Archives.

⁵⁰ Erdman Harris, *New Learning in Old Egypt*, 22.

gate” idea in the first place as “ the most absurd libertarianism.”⁵¹ The opposition of the parents to the free gate privilege went hand in hand with the AUC missionary desire to keep students within the campus, but AUC administrators were also keen to distinguish between controlling and self-discipline on the part of the student. As mentioned earlier, AUC missionaries associated too much authority to the corruptive, despotic force of Islam, and therefore did not want to emulate it too much for fear it’s true intention would not reach the students.

This tight regulation of students’ times and routines came from the desire to formulate the characters of the students into model citizens. Weekend absences “will be granted only on the first Saturday of each month, as the program for Saturday evening and Sunday is regarded as essential to character development and to the *esprit de corps* of Students’ Hall.”⁵² Within the hall, students developed their character through interaction with each other, learning and playing with staff, attending lectures, study hours, assemblies, and group sessions that created an intimate atmosphere of camaraderie. Within this atmosphere, students would imbibe Christian ideas of work and morality. Leaving the hostel during the weekend would disrupt the program and weaken the hold of Christianity on the student, though well-behaved students could leave relatively with ease.

⁵¹ Erdman Harris, *New Learning in Old Egypt*, 23.

⁵² “Rules and Regulations of The Hostel of the American University at Cairo,” Elias’ Modern Press 1926, AUC Archives.

The seemingly conflicted methods of punishment and privileges, especially in regards to the Hostel, stemmed from the missionary desire to create well-behaved, self-disciplined young men out of their students. These students were seen as inherently rowdy and lazy, coming from homes that cultivated immoral behavior and poor self-discipline. As Erdman Harris described, the students they received at the college were “coming from homes where the word of the father is law, requiring unquestioning obedience, from schools where the slightest infringement of regulation brings serious penalties, from a more or less well-regimented social situation where each one is obedient to some one above him until you come to the tops, our boys were in no position to run themselves, nor are they today when they first come to us.”⁵³ The goal of the university, therefore, was to benevolently bestow order and morals to these students. This goal was inherently connected to the way AUC missionaries developed spaces that produced typified Christian American life, in its design and in the social behaviors enacted within them.

In contrast to hostel life, other activities and spaces developed a more masculine, and morally sound student, which domestic space could not instill.⁵⁴ Athletics on campus served to similarly teach the students lessons of Christian, American life. Physical education was part of “Christian renewal” which took hold of the Western world during the late nineteenth century, in which Christian

⁵³ Erdman Harris, *New Learning In Old Egypt*, 23.

⁵⁴ As domestic space was seen as a part of the “women’s sphere,” athletics here is not considered a part of that space—it is well within the realm of the masculine world, according to gender roles and binaries of the day.

educators believed that the physical upkeep of the body was connected to one's moral strength. Without physical education, the "body politic" would be diseased, therefore hindering the democratic process informed by rational, moral men. This idea spread into the Middle East, with the establishment of groups in Egypt like the Young Men's Muslim Association, modeled by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).⁵⁵ As mentioned earlier, the desire to incorporate athletics in the university curriculum was evident in the suburban plans, but the faculty and students had to make due with the limited courtyard areas surrounding the buildings downtown.

⁵⁵ Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*. 103-104.



THE UNIVERSITY BASKET-BALL TEAM

Basket-ball was introduced into Egypt by the University and has become tremendously popular

Figure 12: AUC Basketball Team⁵⁶

However, athletics was one of the hardest programs introduced to the early AUC curriculum. Students took two hours of athletics each week as part of their schedule, but many students resented the requirement due to their association of physical activity to lower classes.⁵⁷ Others found the uniforms uncomfortable, and the idea of athletics foreign to a college curriculum. However, it soon became popular with the introduction of Sports Day and the prestige of supporting AUC against outside groups (such as the YMCA and American Mission teams) in

⁵⁶ AUC Archives Buildings. Box 1, Folder 1: Campus/Downtown Tahrir Square. Random page, "With aerial view of downtown cairo", undated.

⁵⁷ Murphy, 53.

competitive team games.⁵⁸ The celebrations surrounding physical accomplishment made the athletic curriculum more popular among the students, as Watson celebrated the important lessons learned from the games: “something has been accomplished there [on the field] that makes for Christian manhood and training for life. Fair play is another lesson learned in action. Sportsmanship, another.”⁵⁹ The reading of such activities with a Christian lens became the framework for justifying the work of AUC at all types of scales, within the campus to the city, country and region as a whole.

CONCLUSION

AUC’s real campus integrated various processes that defined the university as Egyptian and American simultaneously. In a larger historical process, the reimagining of urban Cairo under Khedive Isma’il— who began the indigenous imperative to connect Westernization and modernization to what can become Egyptian ideas of nationalism—was what allowed a *place* like AUC⁶⁰ to become a campus that “blended” in with Cairo’s landscape, while maintaining its distinction as a foreign space. These histories and identities—and the attention given to each one—shaped the way Cairo’s cultural heritage was preserved or celebrated, and how nineteenth and twentieth century city architecture reflected

⁵⁸ Murphy, 53.

⁵⁹ Feb. 26, 1930. Circular Letter to the Friends of the American University at Cairo. PHS archives (Jan. 18, 2013)

⁶⁰ The distinction here of *place* emphasizes the idea of the site taking on its own identity, which was not consciously shaped by missionaries.

these preferences. As AUC was created in the midst of these historical processes, the school enveloped (and became surrounded) within a certain context of what Egyptian identity and history came to mean. It sought authenticity through its exterior presentation, but diminished the expression of Egyptian identity in parts of its interior workings. Within, the American Christian (of the Presbyterian variety) identity became the lens in which the school was run, an identity that became synonymous with the routine, discipline and planning of the students' lives and actively reshaped the space with such moral meanings.

The Americanized Egypt as exemplified in the AUC campus brought together seemingly opposing ideas into one unit. Though AUC was somewhat separate from the actions of the British colonial work at the time, it seemed to embody what Mitchell described as the work of the colonial order:

The argument that the native town must remain 'Oriental' did not mean preserving it *against* the impact of the colonial order. The Oriental was a creation of that order, and was needed for such an order to exist. Both economically and in a larger sense, the colonial order depended upon *at once creating and excluding its own opposite*.⁶¹

In the same way, AUC created and excluded its own opposite in its physical projection of what was Egyptian/Islamic, while recreating what was American/Christian within. Coming full circle, the American University at Cairo in Tahrir Square did its best to become the ideal campus it hoped to be. It was simultaneously indigenous, yet distinct, from its surroundings, an identity that AUC was comfortable having.

⁶¹ Preziosi, "The Museum of What You Shall Have Been," 129.

CONCLUSION

AUC in New Cairo

In September 2008, the American University in Cairo finally reached its goal to move out of the center of the city. Situated in the satellite city uncreatively called New Cairo, 45 minutes away from Tahrir Square, AUC's new suburban campus was built on 260 acres and with \$400 million. Though not outside the Giza pyramids (about an hour away drive in the opposite direction), the visionaries of the new AUC claimed it served as a monument to modernity and tradition through its design. The architectural motifs of *ablaq* stripes, use of inner courtyards, and manufactured mashrabiyyah windows tied the new campus to its historic, Egyptian identity, while it still identified itself as modern, state-of-the-art with advanced technological equipment in its classrooms.

The old campus next to Tahrir Square is still in use, especially for noteworthy lectures in Oriental Hall. However, the continued political disturbances in Tahrir Square threaten the security of the small campus. Less students travel to the Tahrir Campus for anything but the occasional lecture, though buses run regularly to it every day. Staffed with AUC security guards at its small side entrance (the grand entrances to the older buildings are chained, since they face Tahrir Square), those with IDs can carefully enter after a thorough security check.

The great distances AUC traveled, temporally and physically, since its inception in 1919 is evident in the make up of its new campus. While the new campus

fulfilled many dreams that Watson had when he first conceived of AUC—such as the isolation and the wide use of space for different activities, like athletics—its sense of American missionary history has waned. Many students and faculty did not know American Presbyterian missionaries founded the university, and “missionary” is not used in the description of AUC on the university’s main “About” page nor its “History” section.¹ Instead, “Americans devoted to education and community service in the Middle East” founded AUC, with no hint of its Presbyterian missionary root.² The moral atmosphere is of a different one as well: codes and regulations have been derived from Muslim culture and custom, not Christian moral visions that AUC missionaries tried so hard to construct and implement.

Simultaneously, even without the missionary history, the American University in Cairo did not lose its sense of isolation and “Otherness” to the wider Egyptian population. Egyptians still regarded AUC with suspicion, with the caution that Abdelkader Al-Husseini warned his nation in 1932. In most recent history, various Egyptian groups, especially Salafist and Muslim Brotherhood, have called various students of AUC as American informants, traitors to Egypt and Islam.

¹ AUC Egypt website, “About” and “History” pages. Accessed April 19, 2013. The use of the word “missionary” is not used to describe even Charles Watson. The history of the Presidents page is also not directly linked in the “About AUC” webpage or the “History” page—it can be found searching “missionary” in the search bar.

Note: As of June 25, 2013, the “history” page now has a brief summary of former presidents, including Watson, and mention his work with the American Presbyterian Mission.

² Ibid.

Egyptian political parties and news outlets have also noted the ambivalent role of AUC during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, during the violence that broke out next to the campus in Tahrir Square. Overall, the suspicion over AUC has not dispelled since its inception, but time has changed what various Egyptian groups were suspicious of when looking at AUC.

As my thesis has argued, AUC constructed itself as an Americanized, Egyptian space. It transferred various elements of American history and its tensions with race and empire, and blended them into a university also defining itself within a complicated, Cairene context that included a history of European influence, and Egyptian national envisioning. Overall, the American missionaries had created a campus that was Egyptian at its façade, yet entirely American and Christian within. It held itself in opposition to a city that was perceived to be inherently amoral as part of the Muslim world, yet attempted to sell itself as a place “domesticated” by Egyptian life, in unity with the city’s urban fabric.

These tensions that AUC missionaries dealt with are now not only forgotten, but echoed differently in a new historical context. Watson’s AUC is gone—what made the university Americanized Egyptian was the connotations embedded in the space. Now, new meaning has emerged in the Tahrir Campus and the New Cairo campus, as such notions of control, discipline and morality have lost the Christian missionary context. Instead, the new AUC repositioned itself more closely to Egyptian life and culture, even if still held with suspicion by various

parts of Cairo's community. Only time will tell what this new AUC, out in the desert, will come to mean and represent.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books and Articles

- AUC Today*. "Building the Past: From palace to cigarette factory, the main building at AUC has an interesting—and largely unknown—history." Summer 1995.
- AlSayyad, Nezar. *Making Cairo Medieval*. Edited by Irene A. Bierman and Nasser Rabbat. (Lanham: Lexington, 2005).
- Bierman, Irene A. f "Disciplining the Eye: Perceiving Medieval Cairo" in *Making Cairo Medieval*., ed. Nezar AlSayyad, Irene Bierman, and Nasser Rabbat. Lanham: Lexington, 2005.
- Brunn, Stanley, Maureen Hays-Mitchell, and Donald J. Zeigler. *Cities of the World: World Regional Urban Development*, 5th ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012.
- Coulson, Johnathan, Paul Roberts, and Isabelle Taylor. *University Planning and Architecture: The Search for Perfection*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Harris, Erdman. *New Learning in Old Egypt*. New York: Association Press, 1932.
- Hsu, Hsuan. *Geography and the Production of Space in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Larson, Jens Fredrick, and Archie Mac Innes Palmer. *Architectural Planning of the American College*. New York and London: MacGraw-Hill Book Company Inc, 1933.
- Meinardus, Otto F.A. *Christian Egypt Ancient and Modern*. (Cairo: Cahiers d'Histoire Égyptienne, 1965)
- Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonising Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Mitchell, Timothy. "The Object of Development: America's Egypt". In *Power of Development*, edited by Jonathan Crush, 129-157. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Murphy, Lawrence. *The American University in Cairo: 1919-1987*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1987.
- O'Kane, Bernard. *The Illustrated Guide to the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo*. Cairo, New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012.
- Pollard, Lisa. *Nurturing the Nation : The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923*. Ewing, NJ, USA: University of California Press, 2004.

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/mtholyoke/Doc?id=10069065&ppg=66>

- Preziosi, Donald. "The Museum of What You Shall Have Been", *Making Cairo Medieval*, ed. Nezar AlSayyad, Irene Bierman, and Nasser Rabbat. Lanham: Lexington, 2005.
- Raymond, André, trans. Willard Wood. *Cairo*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Reid, Donald Malcolm. *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Reid, Donald Malcolm. *Whose Pharaohs?* Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002.
- Sakr, Tarek Mohamed Refaat. *Early Twentieth-Century Islamic Architecture in Cairo*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1993.
- Sanders, Paula. *Creating Medieval Cairo*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2008.
- Sharkey, Heather J. *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Trafton, Scott. *Egypt Land*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Turner, Paul. *Campus: An American Planning Tradition*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1984.
- Watson, Charles R. *What is this Moslem World?*. New York: Friendship Press, 1937.
- Watson, Charles R. *Egypt and the Christian Crusade*. Philadelphia: The Board of Foreign Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, 1907.
- Zwemer, Samuel Marinus. *Childhood in Moslem World*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1915

Websites and Digital Collections

"Talbot F. Hamlin (1889-1956)." Columbia University Libraries. Accessed Mar. 9, 2013.

http://library.columbia.edu/indiv/avery/da/collections/hamlin_tf.html

Timothy Marr, "Drying up the Euphrates": Muslims, Millennialism, and Early American Missionary Enterprise." 144. 2002 New Haven: Macmillan Center.
<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=58225>

Thomas Laurie, *Woman and her Savior in Persia* (1863; Princeton Theological Seminary), Internet Archive,
<http://archive.org/details/womanhersaviouri00laur>

Archival Materials

Note: Some materials from the Rare Books and Special Collections Library at the American University in Cairo, did not have box labels, or were in process. When available, complete information is given for all folders.

American University in Cairo, Office of the President Charles Watson, 1919-1944, Folder 1, Publication: The American University at Cairo. Land Title Building, Philadelphia, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

Conference notes, "Essential Points discussed in the conference on Our Religious Objectives", 1927, History Collection, Conference: Religious Objectives 1927, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

[Unlabeled box, "abdelqader al husseini"] 1932, History Collection, Controversies over AUC's Religious Mission-Criticisms by Students-Including AbdelKader al Hussein incident at 1932 Commencement. University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo

American University in Cairo, Office of the President Charles Watson, 1919-1944, "The Mission in Egypt and the General Assembly Project a Christian University at Cairo" 1916, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

Records of the American University in Cairo, Office of the President Charles Watson, 1919-1944, American Presbyterian Mission in Egypt: Excerpts, from Meeting Minutes Relating to Establishment of a University 1903-1917, Office of the President Charles Watson, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

American University in Cairo, Office of the President Charles Watson, 1919-1944, Syllabus for Second Year Bible (The Life of Christ), University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

The American University in Cairo Buildings Collection, Folder 2, Housing – Students/Dormitories/Hostels – Including Kasr el Aini Street Hostel, Zamalek Dormitory/Hostel, AUC Buildings, University Archives, Rare

Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

The American University in Cairo, Folder 1, College of Arts and Sciences, Catalogs Bulletin 1921-1922, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

American University in Cairo, Office of the President Charles Watson, 1919-1944, Box 10, Folder 1, Publication: The American University at Cairo. Land Title Building, Philadelphia, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo

American University in Cairo, Office of the President Charles Watson, 1919-1944, Box 10, Folder 1, "Residence Hall 1924-1925", University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo

American University in Cairo, Office of the President Charles Watson, 1919-1944, Box 10, Folder 1, Publication: The American University at Cairo. Land Title Building, Philadelphia, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

American University in Cairo, Office of the President Charles Watson, 1919-1944, Box 10, Board of Foreign Mission of the United Presbyterian Church of North America—Anderson W.B. 1919-1925, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

American University in Cairo, Office of the President Charles Watson, 1919-1944, Egypt, Gov't of—Prime Minister Sidky, Ismail, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

The American University in Cairo Buildings Collection, Box 1, Campus-Suburban/Giza (Proposed)-Including Farm, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

American University in Cairo, Office of the President Charles Watson, 1919-1944, Box 10, McClenahan, Robert S. 1918-1937, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

The American University in Cairo Buildings Collection, Main block- Palace building, Ewart Hall, Oriental Hall, AUC Buildings, University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

The American University in Cairo Buildings Collection, Folder 3, AUC Buildings, Oriental Hall/School of Oriental Studies Building (DT/Tahrir),

University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo.

“Oct. 1, 1936: Circular Letter to the Friends of the American University at Cairo”, Presbyterian Historical Society Archives.

“Feb. 26, 1930. Circular Letter to the Friends of the American University at Cairo,” Presbyterian Historical Society Archives.

“July 19th 1924, Circular letter to the Friends of Cairo University.” Presbyterian Historical Society Archives.

Ewart Memorial Hall Dedication Program. PAM, American University at Cairo Data File. Presbyterian Historical Society Archives.