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THE STUFF OF EGYPT: THE NATION, THE STATE AND THEIR PROPER OBJECTS

Elliott Colla

Contemporary critiques of the nation-state have often conflated the two terms of that compound noun. This is unsurprising. Historically state formation has often been contemporary with, and based in, nationalist political movements that used the idea of community to legitimate themselves. Culturalist analysis of the nation-state and nationalist movements has highlighted such ideas of community.¹ This culturalism, now dominant for the last two decades, has certainly enlarged our understanding of the participatory nature of mass nationalist politics and the politics of faith and persuasion on which populist regimes are based. But while these analytical models have much to say about the constructed, contingent nature of nationalism, not to mention the coercive force embedded in the consensus rhetoric of nationalist cultural formations, they often say very little about how nationalist ideology interacts with policies of governance. Perhaps unintentionally such critiques tend to ascribe agency to the cultural discourses of nationalism without interrogating the state institutions that authorise and underwrite them. Within culturalist accounts state institutions do often figure somewhere, but remain in the shadows; they may be agents but are not theorised as central.

Consider this passage from Tom Nairn, whose work on nationalism marked an important moment in the cultural turn:

Although sometimes hostile to democracy, nationalist movements have been invariably populist in outlook and sought to induct lower classes into political life. In its most typical version, this assumed the shape of a restless middle-class and intellectual leadership trying to sit up and channel popular class energies into support for the new states.²

In his well-known reformulation of nationalism, Benedict Anderson describes the nation as 'an imagined political community ... imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'.³ Anderson's description of the mechanics of political imagination has arguably been the most inspiring (or cited) moment in the cultural turn. But what does 'limited and sovereign' mean here? Clearly, in Anderson's analysis, these words have a connection to state institutions, but as the following passage suggests, that relationship is not fully fleshed out:

[The nation] is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in

1. For influential examples of the culturalist turn, see Elie Kadourie, *Nationalism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1960; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983 and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, New York, Verso, 1984. An influential example of the earlier, state-focused description of nationalism is John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1982.

2. From *The Breakup of Britain*, cited in Anderson, op. cit., pp47-8, emphasis added.

3. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, op. cit., p6.

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an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the allomorphism between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gauge and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign *state*.⁴

4. *Ibid.*, p7,
emphasis added.

Ernest Gellner shares this ambiguity when he explains the relationship between the cultural discourse of the nation, and the state institutions in which such discourse circulates and becomes policy:

[When] general social conditions make for standardised, homogenous, centrally sustained high cultures, pervading entire populations and not just elite minorities, a situation arises in which well-defined educationally sanctioned and unified cultures constitute very nearly the only kind of unit with which men willingly and often ardently identify. The cultures now seem to be the natural repositories of political legitimacy. *Only* then does it come to appear that any defiance of their boundaries by political units constitutes a scandal. Under these conditions, though under these conditions *only*, nations can indeed be defined in terms both of will and of culture, and indeed in terms of the convergence of them both with political units. In these conditions, men will to be politically united with all those, and only those, who share their culture. Polities then will to extend their boundaries to the limits of their cultures, and to protect and impose their culture with the boundaries of their power.⁵

5. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*,
op.cit., p55,
emphasis in original.

What Gellner describes as the 'general social conditions' that 'make for standardised, homogenous, centrally sustained high cultures' may involve those institutions of force and persuasion that we might identify with states. Likewise, the 'polities' of Gellner's description precede the emergence of nationalist discourse, but are the focus of analysis only insofar as they serve to extend nationalist will. It is not that these authors explicitly argue that the state necessarily follows discourse about the nation, but rather that in refraining from spelling out the relationship between the two political concepts, they seem to conflate the terms. And this conflation often implies a causal relationship: as goes the cultural discourse of nation, so then goes the state. Indeed, in Gellner and Anderson, the state seems to figure as the *effect* of the modern phenomenon of nationalism. In this essay, I would like to suggest that it is also a *cause* of the same.

In the case of Egypt, the rhetoric of popular nationalism has not been simultaneous (nor even always harmonious) with that of modern state institutions. The statist discourse that began to appear during the early

6. Nationalist historians of Egypt have asserted that Mehmet Ali, Egypt's ruler from 1805-1840, was Egypt's first nationalist. However, recent historians have exposed the flaws in this portrayal, especially since Ali, a non-Arabic speaker of Albanian descent, identified strongly with the culture of Ottomanism. For a critique of the nationalist historiography, see Khalid Fahmy, *All The Pasha's Men*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

7. See Jacques Berque, *Egypt, Imperialism and Revolution*, J. Stewart (trans), London, Faber and Faber, 1972.

8. For a comprehensive description of the movement, see Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs, The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1930*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1986, pp164-90.

9. For an accounts of premodern Egyptian traditions regarding ancient Egypt and its monuments, see Michael Cook, 'Pharaonic History in Medieval Egypt', *Studia Islamica*, 57 (1983), 67-105; and Ulrich Harmaan, 'Regional Sentiment in Medieval Islamic Egypt', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and*

nineteenth-century rule of Mehmet Ali was not based in appeals to popular consensus, and the legitimacy of its strong discourse of governance was not grounded in the representation of community.⁶ Early dominant print culture on 'national reform' imagined communities that ranged from Muslim to Ottoman to Arab to Levantine to Egyptian. Nonetheless, there was some ambivalence toward the state: reformists were sharply critical of the state's growing powers but also saw it as a vehicle for modernising Egypt. By the time of the 1881 'Urabi Revolt', national-reformist discourse (increasingly grounded in specifically Egyptian rhetoric of popular consensus and community) effectively articulated opposition to the Khedival state, which was now seen as part of an emergent colonial condominium with Britain. But territorial nationalist discourse, summed up in the phrase 'Egypt for the Egyptians', only came to dominate with the rise of mass party politics after the Revolution of 1919 - and even then it never fully eclipsed the other senses of community (especially the Muslim and Arab) that were also alive in the print cultures of Egypt.⁷

This turn toward territorial nationalist politics was also accompanied by a significant cultural turn, as Egyptian public intellectuals for the first time took up an interest in Pharaonic themes, history and material artefacts. During the decade of the 1920s, the most prominent elite nationalist discourse was that of 'Fir'awniyya', or 'Pharaonism'.⁸ As a component of nationalist discourse aimed *outwards* against colonial rule, complaints about the massive nineteenth- and twentieth-century appropriation of Pharaonic artefacts served also to articulate what was unjust about British rule in general. Moreover, speaking about the glories and treasures of the ancient Egyptian past was not only a convenient topic for discussing the exploitative economics that subordinated the colony to the metropole, it was also a useful foil for responding to, and even subverting, British claims of civilisational superiority. As for *internal* nationalist politics, Pharaonism was part of a larger project of 'imagining a community' of Egypt able to transcend religious differences. Pharaonism thus marked a conscious turn away from those long-standing images of community - such as the religious institutions of al-Azhar and the Coptic church - that this decidedly secular nationalist elite was trying to overcome. Moreover, Pharaonism was part of a wider reorientation away from the culture of the Turkish speaking elites (who had been in Egypt from before Ottoman times), toward more local sources, many deriving from the Nilotic folklore of Egyptian peasants.

The turn toward ancient Egypt posed some problems, however. Among the monotheistic institutions of modern Egypt there had been consensus about the ancient past: at best, ancient Egypt was irrelevant; at worst, it was wholly identified with the tyrannical figure of the pagan Pharaoh.⁹ But by positing a civilisational origin in *ancient* Egypt, Pharaonist intellectuals sought to create a coherent image around which *modern* Egyptians could rally, an image that would transcend the actual sectarian, class, and regional antagonisms that divided them. In the secular print culture of the urban

centres, an interest in things Pharaonic was part of what it meant to be secular, modern, cultured and patriotic. And since so much of the material culture of ancient Egypt was located near peasant communities, there was also a vague connection between the two: indeed, the Egyptian peasant was thought to be the unconscious inheritor of Pharaonic culture. Over the course of roughly 25 years (1915-1940), the movement produced an impressive number of novels, plays, poems, artworks (especially sculpture), historiography and political manifestos that used Pharaonic Egypt to produce themes, narratives and images for identification.

The material culture of Ancient Egypt illuminates differences between the nation and the state. For example, statist discourse on Pharaonic artefacts preceded nationalist discourse by many years. The Antiquities Service, founded in the 1850s and arguably the most durable apparatus of the state, is older than the nationalist discourse of intellectual elites.¹⁰ In other words, the Egyptian state began to discuss antiquities long before it attempted to legitimate its rule through nationalist concepts of community. However, since Pharaonism as a cultural movement arose alongside popular, nationalist politics, it marks an obvious overlap between the discourse of the state and the nation. This is not to say that the nationalist discourse subsumes the earlier statist discourse on antiquities. Even when they describe the same things, the two discourses remain significantly different: while the nationalist discourse described ancient objects in terms of aesthetic and historical *artefacts*, the statist discourse talks about them in terms of *property*. Thus these same objects figure in the first discourse as concrete markers of a nearly timeless community, and in the second discourse, as indices of state sovereignty.

As Arjun Appadurai has argued, objects are never merely things.¹¹ Instead, objects - insofar as we can know them - have a rich social life. Moreover, concrete objects (such as artefacts) and abstract objects (such as nations) are always currencies of social exchange. And whether that exchange is material or conceptual, such objects serve as the material site for mediating between different and competing social formations. Conceiving of objects in this way allows us to recognise how crucial they are to particular forms of subjectivity and sociability. Indeed, citizens, connoisseurs of art or antiquities inspectors are three examples of subjectivities that are unimaginable except in relation to their proper objects, just as wider social formations - such as nationalist movements or antiquities departments - are inconceivable without the objects that bind them. I will begin this essay by sketching the contours of Pharaonism as a literary movement. I focus on how discourse about the *things* of ancient Egypt worked to legitimate wider claims about national culture and how such discourse worked to create particular subjectivities. In the second part of the essay, I complicate nationalist accounts of Pharaonic culture by returning to the statist discourse that preceded and underwrote it: the discourse that attempted to define, legislate, control what antiquities were and what could

African Studies, XLIII, 1 (1980), 55-66. On the Qur'anic figure of Pharaoh, see Denis Gril, 'Le personnage coranique de Pharaon d'après l'interprétation d'Ibn 'Arabi', *Annales Islamologiques*, 14 (1978), 37-57.

10. For historical overviews of the Antiquities Service, see Donald Reid, 'Indigenous Egyptology. The Decolonization of a Profession', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, 2 (1985), 233-46; and 'Nationalizing the Pharaonic Past, Egyptology, Imperialism, and Egyptian Nationalism, 1922-1952' in J. Jankowski and I. Gershoni (eds), *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1997, pp127-49.

11. See Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the politics of value', *The Social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1986, pp3-63.

be done with them. The divergence between the discourses of the nation and the state is not superficial: it reveals an ambivalence about state power that lies at the centre of nationalist culture in early twentieth-century Egypt.

ANCIENT OBJECTS, MODERN SELVES

12. See Saree Makdisi, 'Postcolonial Literature in a Neocolonial World, Modern Arabic Culture and the End of Modernity', in Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (eds), *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2000, pp266-91.

13. The example of the political group, the Muslim Brotherhood, whose advent on the political scene corresponded with the end of Pharaonism, should also be noted. To such critics of Western secularism, Pharaonism naively ignored the deep-seeded religious traditions that linked ancient Egypt and tyranny. After formal independence, as Islamists suffered under the abuses and corruption of the secular Egyptian state, they would resurrect elements of Pharaonism, albeit with remarkably different values. Sadat was killed, after all, when he made himself Pharaoh.

14. Tawfiq al-Hakim, *Awdat al-ruh*, Vol. II, Beirut, Dar al-Kitab al-Libnani, 1984, my translations (henceforth *Awdat al-ruh* in the text followed by page number).

Egyptian intellectuals from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century described the culture and politics of their day as *al-Nahda*, or 'the Awakening' (also rebirth or renaissance). The word underscores the enlightenment response to the ruptures posed by the advent of modernity in the Arab World, and describes the image of intellectual mobilisation against Ottoman rule and Western colonialism.¹² It also found strong echoes in the theme of 'life after death' in the ancient texts that inspired Egyptian Pharaonism. The Pharaonist movement, as part of *al-Nahda*, produced not only a wealth of literary and aesthetic works, but also a large body of cultural criticism, political tracts, popular historiography and travel accounts.

I focus here on two representative texts: the first, a novel, and the second a memoir. Tawfiq al-Hakim's 1932 novel, *Awdat al-ruh* (*Return of the Spirit*) is a *bildungsroman* set at the time of the 1919 Revolution. It draws heavily on the Pharaonic theme of life after death, as does Ahmad Husayn's memoir *Imani*. In many ways, these two authors represent extreme poles of the nationalist movement. Hakim, a liberal humanist educated in France, was associated with the most liberal elements of the Wafd Party which dominated Parliamentary politics throughout the 1920s and '30s. Husayn modelled his small party, Misr al-Fatat (Young Egypt), on the Italian Fascists. Both men were eloquent critics of the British Occupation, both were effective and respected writers on domestic politics and cultural issues. Hakim, known as both playwright and novelist, was arguably the most prominent literary figure of the Pharaonist movement. In contrast, Husayn was not known as a literary personality but rather as an opposition politician - the tactical, politics-specific nature of his Pharaonism sets him slightly apart from the more literary proponents of the movement. Although these writings by no means represent the full generic scope of Pharaonist nationalist discourse (which also includes poetry, architecture and sculpture), they gesture toward the wide range of nationalist ideologies that made thematic use of ancient Egypt. As such, they indicate the flexibility of Pharaonist discourse and nationalism more generally.¹³

The most emblematic text of the Pharaonist movement is Tawfiq al-Hakim's novel, *Awdat al-ruh*.¹⁴ The novel tells the story of the popular 1919 Revolution through the character of a young boy, Muhsin, whose identity is torn between his loyalty to his Egyptian father of humble peasant origins and his aristocratic Turkish mother. In one particularly rich segment of the novel, the character of Muhsin returns from studying in the capital to his family's provincial home. Immediately he finds himself alienated from his bickering parents and, acknowledging his attraction to the peasants,

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takes to wandering among them, all the while wearing the clothes of the *effendi* class of educated urban elites. In a scene that exemplifies the novel's attempts to imagine a natural alliance between the urban middle class and the peasantry, Muhsin wanders out into the fields and reaches a primitive hut. Curious, he gazes into the dwelling and sees a cow nursing her calf. Muhsin is astonished to see a tiny child pushing against the calf, struggling to reach the cow's udder. This pastoral image precipitates a transformation within the character of Muhsin himself:

Muhsin marveled at this scene and felt deep, powerful emotions. His mind, however, had nothing to add to that deep feeling. Emotion is the knowledge of the angels, whereas rational logic is human knowledge. If one wanted to translate his feelings into the language of reason and intellect, then it'd be said that he responded in his soul to that union between the two different creatures joined together by purity and innocence ... Although Muhsin did not yet know this with his tender intellect ... he did perceive with his heart and inner eye ... But there was one thing Muhsin was able to grasp with his intellect and that was thanks to his study of ancient Egyptian history: this scene reminded him suddenly, for no particularly strong reason, that the ancient Egyptians worshipped animals, or at least portrayed the one God with images of different animals ... (*Awdat al-ruh*, pp35-6).

Along with his sense of alienation, Muhsin struggles throughout the novel with his ability to understand without feeling and feel without understanding. It is a tension that remains unresolved until, well into the second half of the novel, this theme of ancient Egypt suddenly intrudes. The ability of the ancient to unite the apparent differences of the modern and to synthesise feeling and understanding is precisely what the Pharaonic signifies for the remainder of the novel:

Didn't the ancient Egyptians know that unity of existence and that union that transcended the different groups of creatures? Aren't all these creatures God's creation? The feeling of being merged with existence - of being merged in God - that was the feeling of that child and calf suckling together. It was the feeling of that ancient, deeply rooted Egyptian people. Wasn't there an angelic, pure-hearted Egypt that survived in Egypt? Egypt had inherited, over the passing generations, a feeling of union, but without knowing it (*Awdat al-ruh*, pp37-8).

Soon after this scene, Muhsin passes through a village inhabited by peasants who work for his father. When he overhears that feuding neighbours have poisoned a water buffalo, he draws near. The entire village mourns the loss of the animal as if it were human. Slaughtering the animal, the peasants

split up the meat to share among themselves. This scene is important because it in it Muhsin begins to think of himself as part of a nation of peasants inextricably rooted in the past. Moreover, this new identification finds its expression as a resurrection from death:

That luminous happiness, the essence of which was unknowable for him, returned to him. It came back to him ... like life coming from death. What an amazing nation these Egyptian farmers were. Could such a beautiful sense of solidarity and feeling of unity still exist in this world? The next day ... for the first time, he felt the beauty of life deep within him. For the first time, he perceived that spirit which pervades Creation ... An obscure, buried feeling welled up in him: eternity was an extension of just such a moment. And Muhsin's intuition was sound. If he had known more about the history of the [Nile] Valley, he would have understood that its ancient inhabitants had believed that there was no paradise beyond theirs and no other form of eternity, that God had not created any paradise save Egypt (*Awdat al-ruh*, p40).

If he had any doubts about whose child he was, now it becomes clear: from this moment on he feels that he is descended from the peasantry, descended from the ancient Egyptians, and thus truly Egyptian. With this transformation, the novel's references to the Osiris myth become slightly more overt: the figure of resurrection expresses Muhsin's identification with the peasant nation of Egypt, the recovery of his authentic self, and the nation's uprising against colonial rule¹⁵. In the Pharaonic myth, Osiris, God of the underworld and illegitimate son of Nut, wife of the sun god Ra, is killed by Set. Isis, his wife, searches for his body, finds his coffin embedded in a tamarisk tree and takes it home. Isis brings Osiris back to life momentarily and has a child by him, Horus. Set comes across Osiris' coffin, takes out the body and chops it into pieces, dispersing them throughout the Nile Valley. Isis then travels the length of the valley and, burying all the pieces she can find, raises a number of temples in his honour. His penis, thrown into the Nile, is never found. Horus avenges his father's death by fighting Set a number of times. The first time he captures Set, but Isis lets him go free. Horus eventually kills his father's murderer.

Here the novel changes course and converts this intuitive identification with the Pharaonic past into a self-conscious one. The patriotic feeling of unity with the Pharaonic past is not complete until it is also explicitly known. Muhsin's parents entertain a British inspector and a French archaeologist while Muhsin is treated to a lesson in the history and relevance of ancient Egypt. The scene begins when, relaxing after lunch, the French expert criticises the British colonial figure for not giving Egyptian peasants the respect they deserve:

These 'ignorant' people know more than we do! ... It's a truth that unfortunately Europe doesn't understand. This people, whom you

15. al-Hakim's novel seems to have little to do with the myth on the level of plot. On the level of thematics, the connection is deliberate, even clumsy. The psychological and political transformations that occur throughout the novel are described as rebirths, resurrections and a re-collection of scattered parts.

consider ignorant, does know many things. It knows by means of the heart, not Reason. Supreme wisdom is in their blood although they do not [consciously] know it. There is a force within them of which they are not aware ... (*Awdat al-ruh*, pp40-1).

We should not lose the irony of this. In a story about how Egyptians become conscious of their true self, the ancient spirit of Egypt, and in this consciousness rise up against the oppression of colonial rule, it is a French Egyptologist who connects all the dots for the protagonist. The European archaeological expert becomes the central figure for articulating the notion of an unconscious connection to the past, a force which lies buried in the identification with ancient Egypt:

Yes, the Egyptian may not know it, but there are brief moments when that knowledge and experience surface to assist him even without him knowing their source. For us Europeans, this explains those moments of history when we see Egypt leap forward quickly ... You don't imagine, Mr Black, that the thousands of years in Egypt's past have disappeared and left no trace in these descendants? (*Awdat al-ruh*, p58).

The statement that 'the Egyptian may not know it' lends urgency to the project to make explicit what is now merely latent. Later the French Egyptologist adds that Egyptians 'don't know the treasures they possess' (p60). The interpretative authority of European characters in this passage is significant and recurs throughout the literature of Pharaonism. Despite its apparent affirmation of Europeans' scientific superiority, however, this literature poses an essential difference between the superficial quality of their knowledge *about* ancient Egypt and the deeper knowledge *of* ancient Egypt that modern Egyptians directly experience. al-Hakim's novel here presents two colonial figures in discussion of the possibilities if modern Egyptians were to remember their distant past: how they would re-inherit their land, modernise and increase its productive capacities. As Muhsin listens, and groups of peasants continue to work outside the window, the French Egyptologist tells the British official:

There is definitely a tie [between modern and ancient Egypt]! Those peasants singing in unison represent individuals who, by faith and feeling, have merged into a single social body. Here today these grandchildren, these peasants, feel the unity which surrounds them ... It was such feeling which built the Pyramids ... How do you suppose this people was able to build such an edifice unless they transformed themselves into a single human mass enduring pain for a single goal? ... Don't look down on those poor people today. The force lies buried within them. ... Don't be surprised if ... they bring forth another miracle besides the Pyramids (*Awdat al-ruh*, pp65-7).

Soon afterwards Muhsin returns to study in Cairo where the revolution breaks out. All the transformations and revolutions of the novel are channelled through the assertions of these passages: ancient Egypt represents the soul of the modern Egyptian; the national struggle cannot take place until this connection is resurrected.

al-Hakim's novel does not know what to do about European colonial mediation between modern and ancient Egypt. Indeed, Egyptian intellectuals coming to terms with the ancient past were confronted by European domination of the field of Egyptology. Moreover, at the turn of the twentieth century, ancient Egypt virtually belonged to Europeans, ranging from the most authoritative Egyptologists to gallivanting amateurs, from long-time colonial bureaucrats to passing tourists. Egyptians trying to approach the subject had no choice but to go through European channels.

A clear picture of this dynamic emerges from the autobiography of one of the Egyptian intellectuals most closely identified with Pharaonism, Salama Musa.¹⁶ Immediately upon his return to Egypt in 1909 after having spent a year in France, Salama Musa visited the Thomas Cook travel agency in Alexandria and booked a place on one of their sightseeing tours in the South, Upper Egypt, or al-Sa'id (Thomas Cook held the concession for steamboat travel on the Nile, and the Egyptian elite had few choices but to visit Upper Egypt on its steamboats).¹⁷ For the next two months, Musa travelled as a tourist and studied the antiquities of the Sa'id. The moment is an important one in the story of Musa's education and, in his words, the aesthetic appreciation of Pharaonic artefacts became more than simply a matter of good taste; it was a necessary precondition for becoming a *modern* Egyptian. Musa writes

I was motivated to take this trip [to Upper Egypt] for rather painful, even shameful reasons. In Europe, whenever I met someone, I was immediately asked questions about the history of the Pharaohs, but I had no answers. We had completely ignored this history, because the English had felt it had better be left unstudied by the twentieth century descendants of the ancient Egyptians as it might incite in them an undue sense of pride and glory, and even feed our demand for independence.¹⁸

Here we see a straightforward chain of reasoning that mirrors al-Hakim's novel. It begins with a sense of shame that ancient Egypt has come to belong to Europe; this in turn generates a desire to recover that lost tradition; then because for Egyptians like Musa, this tradition is not invented but is a rightful inheritance, there emerges a powerful sense of self-identification (learning about the distant Pharaonic past becomes tantamount to reappropriating one's own present self). This generates an easy shift from self to community, seen in the pronoun shift from 'I'

16. Salama Musa was a Copt who, as a student in England, became a Fabian. He maintained his commitment to radical elite politics when he returned to Egypt, translating works by Nietzsche while continuing to write on ancient Egypt, Shaw, socialism, Darwinism and secularism. Citations here refer to the translation of his autobiography, *The Education of Salamah Musa*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1961.

17. See Piers Brendon, *Thomas Cook, 150 Years of Popular Tourism*, London, 1991.

18. Musa, *The Education of Salamah Musa*, op. cit., p57.

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to 'we'; the discovery of the Pharaonised self implies a typicality of his personal Pharaonic experience, and so the recovery of the self is simultaneously an identification with an imagined community; and finally, this recovery leads naturally and inevitably to anti-colonial militancy.

The most striking element here is the way that Musa's motivation develops, his dawning realisation that he *needs* to appreciate Pharaonic antiquity. His interest in ancient Egypt first arises in the context of his colonial encounter with France where he is asked about ancient Egypt but is unable to answer. Musa claims to be motivated by shame - the result of his ignorance of European knowledge. He even attributes the general ignorance of Egyptians to the scheming of the colonial power. This is a profound irony - even as he says it is the English colonial regime that prevented him from learning about ancient Egypt, it is an English tour company that takes him there.

This call to tour southern Egypt had been a part of the nationalist rhetoric of northern elites since at least the 1890s. As the headmaster of one school argued, to become a tourist of the South was a duty for any serious patriot (al-watani).¹⁹ By the early 1890s, there had been at least one tour arranged through the school system to introduce Egyptian students to the antiquities of the Sa'id. The liberal Muslim reformist Ibrahim Mustafa writes that his group was motivated to tour the Egyptian countryside:

To see what the ancient[s] had left for us in the way of monuments, towering structures, fine engravings and skilled frescos, and to see what secrets they had hidden for us in those monuments. It's a fact that Southern Egypt is like the family home as far as all Egyptians are concerned. And a person ought not to be ignorant of his own house, or stay away from it too long, lest the foreigner come to know it better than he.²⁰

Coupling the promotion of domestic tourism was the recognition that this was a place of pilgrimage for European tourists. Touring the sites of southern Egypt, the modern Egyptian would have direct experiences of, and form attachments to, the places, monuments and artefacts of ancient Egypt. Tourism explicitly enabled modern Egyptians to connect with (and make claims upon) the material culture of ancient Egypt. It also served the important task of familiarising Northern urban élites with the territories of the impoverished rural South.

Examples of this are to be found in Ahmad Husayn's political organisation which was heavily invested in the idea of resurrecting the glory of the ancient Egyptian dynasties. In his memoirs, Husayn describes how, as a youth, he toured Southern Egypt in 1928, constantly connecting the grandeur of the monuments to the power of the Egyptian folk, the

19. Ibrahim Mustafa, *al-Qawl al-mufid fi-athar al-Sa'id*, Bulaq, al-Matba'a al-Kubra al-Amiriyya bi-Bulaq, 1893.

20. *Ibid.*, p6.

21. Ahmad Husayn, 'Imani' Mu'allafat Ahmad Husayn, Cairo, Dar al-Shuruq, 1981, p19, (henceforth *Imani* in the text followed by page number).

peasantry. Learning and teaching this connection becomes especially imperative for Husayn, but generally he focuses on the fact that for most Egyptians outside the elite, the tie between ancient and modern Egypt was neither obvious nor especially relevant. Husayn's tone is emphatic as he admonishes fellow countrymen: 'Egyptians have cut their ties to their ancestors, and they talk about them and look at their accomplishments exactly as tourists and foreigners do. God forbid! Egyptians look upon them with less awe and respect than tourists do!'²¹ His reprobation is so strong that Egyptians who ignore or deny the connection become in effect traitors to the nation, obstacles to its progress: 'Nothing distinguishes us [as a nation] as does one thing. This is what keeps us underdeveloped. It keeps us in a wretched condition, tortures us, leads us off the right path. This thing is ignorance, ignorance of our country, ignorance of our history, ignorance of ourselves and our potential' (*Imani*, p20).

Husayn's memoirs describe his own conversion into a Pharaonist, and his censure is partly directed toward his preconverted self. He systematically presents his personal transformation in relation to Egyptian monuments and artefacts: concrete objects, the frescos of tombs, temple walls and columns. Effectively, his subjectification as a nationalist can take place only when he recognises the specific significance of the Pharaonic objects he encounters. This process is (according to Husayn) spontaneous, intuitive, but not ignorant. It reaches its climax when his group visits the Luxor Temple at night:

Everything that surrounded us filled our souls with enchantment. The moon, the silence and those walls. Even the place itself, in whose shadow tens of thousands of people had once stood to touch the [sacred] pool and ask blessings of God. This place has witnessed the triumphant armies of Egypt departing, filled with strength and spirit, only to return, singing songs of victory... Suddenly, powerful feelings overcame me and I launched into some songs from *The Glory of Ramsis* [*Majd Ra'msis*, a popular play by Mahmud Murad first produced in 1923] ... I began to shout from the depths of my soul, while some of my companions who knew the words joined me: 'Carry on in the face of passing time, O Egypt, O beautiful homeland! Destroy your enemy on Judgment Day! Heed the call and sacrifice yourselves!' (*Imani*, pp20-1).

Subjectification is something like a double possession: Husayn's character lays claim to the Pharaonic objects around him only insofar as they too lay claim to him. This sense of possession increases as Husayn's tour group enters the temple complex:

My blood was burning in my veins from the anthems we'd been singing. My heart was beating on account of my passing into this solemn monument that I had heard about for so long. I wanted to swallow

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everything around me. I wanted to carry it with me and hide it in the folds of my soul ... I stood while my companions marvelled at the extraordinary expertise which had raised these walls and which had righted these cloud-scraping columns. We stood next to these columns, when suddenly the place engulfed us and we almost lost consciousness of our own existence ... (*Imani*, pp21-2).

After standing dumbfounded by the sublimity of the temple, Husayn goes on to say that he suddenly stood on a rock and, in a scene that prefigures his career as a public speaker, uses the example of the antiquities to exhort his companions to (re)build the Egyptian nation:

This greatness which surrounds you should not seem foreign to you. Those who have built it have bequeathed upon you their determination and strength. And Egypt, which at one time carried the banner of humanity, should be resurrected anew and returned to her original path. We need to shake off the dust of indifference and sloth. We need to fill ourselves with faith and determination. We need to gird ourselves with inner strength. We need to labour until Egypt is reborn with her strength, with all her sublimity and greatness (*Imani*, pp22-3).

Husayn concludes his account of Luxor Temple by describing it as a personal rebirth that could become the model for a national renaissance:

I was reborn, a new creature ... I had been resurrected. And in this way every young man in Egypt ought to be resurrected. I had been created anew, just like every young man in Egypt ought to be created. I [now] saw the columns of Karnak and its monuments, not as ruins, but as if they were a living thing that spoke ... I stood there as if I were receiving orders and instructions (*Imani*, p23).

This further illuminates the theme of double possession. Husayn's account features the relationship between 'patriot' and 'ancient monument' as more than merely that between a living subject and an inanimate object. Insofar as the objects of his description remain as active as his subjects, Husayn suggests that subjects and objects relate in a fully dynamic and animate fashion.

In Pharaonist discourse, the objects themselves provided tangible proof of the sorts of civilisational claims Egyptian intellectuals were posing, concrete indicators that the imaginary community of Egypt was not merely a recent fiction. Yet if Pharaonist subjectivity was based upon the confirmation of Pharaonic objects, those objects needed to be present to Egyptians and, more importantly, directly accessible to experience. Not surprisingly, such access could not be taken for granted in colonial Egypt.

COLONIAL ARCHAEOLOGY, STATE LAW

The history of Egyptian state involvement in antiquities is inseparable from the history of colonial archaeology and the massive, state-funded museum acquisition projects of the early nineteenth century. Traditional accounts of European Egyptology have run into problems while attempting to describe the early nineteenth century. For the most part, they assert that the era's crassly commercial and aggressive collection techniques were necessary and beneficial, even if they lament the unfortunate and 'vulgar' abuses that attended museum acquisitions.²² To this day, this rhetoric of the aesthetic and scientific ends versus regrettable imperial means pervades Western academic writing about the acquisition of Pharaonic objects. We see this in one recent, well-received history of early Egyptology:

The exploits of Salt and Drovetti [early nineteenth-century collectors for the British Museum and the Louvre] sometimes make sad reading these days. An archaeologist, or anyone who cares about the past, resents these grave robbers and artefact hunters, for these people do irreparable damage to the remains of the past. It seems tragic that for more than a century the Nile Valley was subjected to the depredations of people like Salt and Drovetti, their hired plunderers, and others more destructive ... Many professional collectors were well-intentioned people who thought they were performing a useful service to scholarship while making money ... There is some consolation in the fact that many of the antiquities that were taken from Egypt during the nineteenth century eventually found their way to museums where they could be protected and appreciated - indeed, many artefacts were probably saved by being removed from Egypt - but even in those cases there was a loss that could never be made good.²³

More critical histories of Egyptology have been less ambivalent about early nineteenth-century European acquisition projects, describing them in terms of organised thievery, pillage, and rape.²⁴ In the West, Afrocentric accounts of this history have been the most perceptive about the consequences of colonial dispossession of artefacts.²⁵ Martin Bernal and others have pointed out that the task of possession went far beyond the basic question of property rights: material possession was also the condition of interpretation, which was itself a condition for Pharaonist culture in general. As Bernard Cohn has written with regard to colonial archaeology in India:

It was the British who, in the nineteenth century, defined in an authoritative and effective fashion how the value and meaning of the objects produced or found in India were determined. It was the patrons who created a system of classification which determined what was valuable, that which would be preserved as monuments of the past, that

22. James Stevens Curl, *Egyptomania, the Egyptian Revival, a Recurring Theme in the History of Taste*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1994; and Jean-Marcel Humbert, *Egyptomania, Egypt in Western Art 1730-1930*, Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, 1994; and John David Wortham, *The Genesis of British Egyptology, 1549-1906*, Norman, The University of Oklahoma Press, 1971.

23. Scott Thompson, *Sir Gardner Wilkinson and His Circle*, Austin, The University of Texas Press, 1997, pp25-7.

24. See Brian M. Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile, Tomb Robbers, Tourists, and Archaeologists in Egypt*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975; and Peter France, *The Rape of Egypt, How the Europeans Stripped Egypt of Its Heritage*, London, Barrie & Jenkins, 1991.

25. See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena, The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1987; and Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization, Myth or Reality*, Chicago, Lawrence Hill Books, 1974.

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which was collected and placed in museums, that which could be bought and sold, that which would be taken from India as mementoes and souvenirs of their own relationship to India and Indians. The foreigners increasingly established markets which set the price of objects. By and large, until the early twentieth century, Indians were bystanders to discussions and polemics which established meaning and value for the Europeans. Even when increasing numbers of Indians entered into the discussion, the terms of the discourse and the agenda were set by European purposes and intentions.²⁶

There are at least two significant differences between what Cohn describes and the Egyptian situation. Colonial Egypt's system of classification did not precede the establishment of markets for Pharaonic markets, but developed concomitantly with them. And although Egyptians were subordinate participants in Egyptology, from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards the Egyptian state was actively involved in the commerce and preservation of objects.

The roots of antiquities law in Egypt lie in the sentiments of travel writers of the 1820s and 1830s, following the great museum acquisitions of the early 1800s. These travellers often complained that many of the best pieces of Pharaonic art and architecture were no longer to be found in Egypt. They wrote, to see the wonders of Egypt, one now had to travel from London to Paris, Turin, Leiden and Berlin. This period also witnessed the first complaints about the antiquities market in Egypt. Although active for some time, this market had considerably developed through state acquisition projects and early tourist industry. Travellers complained at length about the neglect and greed of acquisition agents, excavators, and dealers; but they also complained about the 'ignorant' practices of peasant communities that had lived for centuries in and around antiquities sites. One such traveller, Jean-François Champollion, the famous Egyptologist credited with deciphering the hieroglyphs, was so alarmed by what he saw in Egypt in 1828 that he drafted a memo to Mehmet Ali, imploring him to enact strict laws concerning the antiquities.²⁷

In this memo Champollion appeals to Egypt as a nation among nations - though he clearly regards it as existing under the watchful eye of Europe. He demands that antiquities be protected by the state, for the sake of European travellers and European intellectuals - 'flocks of Europeans belonging to the most distinguished social classes'. His concern about 'barbaric destruction' and the cupidity of commercial interests primarily targets the peasants (fellaheen) of the Sa'id: though the memo expresses outrage about the damage done by European travellers and acquisitionists, it is peasants who figure as the chief villains of the antiquities market. Champollion argues that, whether acting for themselves, or as 'incapable agents' of others, the peasants wreak devastation on monuments while

26. Bernard Cohn, 'The Transformation of Objects into Artefacts, Antiquities and Art in Nineteenth-Century India', *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge, The British in India*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996, p77.

27. Champollion, as quoted in Antoine Khater, *Le Régime juridique de fouilles et des antiquités en Égypte*, Cairo, Imprimerie de L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1960, pp30-32.

greedily chasing after European money.

Champollion's impassioned reference to the 'well-known conservation policies' of Mehmet Ali gestures towards the policies adopted by the Egyptian state, largely in response to French and British diplomatic pressure, that effectively divided the territory of Egypt into two zones of collection activity: the East Bank of the Nile belonging to the French, the West Bank to the British. The government at this time was taking an active interest in the activities of collectors, but there was no coherent, unified policy towards antiquities. Excavators travelled through the Egyptian provinces armed with an official concession from Cairo whose authority had to be constantly renegotiated by local governors, officials and local bosses. This began to change when, in August 1835, the Egyptian state issued a decree to centralise the administration of antiquities under a single authority in Cairo.

The 1835 ordinance stated that:

Although the remarkable structures and admirable monuments of art and antiquity of the Sa'id ... ceaselessly lure numerous European travellers to those lands, we have to admit however that during the last years the taste for, and passionate pursuit of all objects they call by the name of antiquities has resulted in a undeniable devastation of the ancient monuments of Egypt. Such has been the state of things until this day that we fear, with good reason, to watch these monuments - the pride of the passing centuries - disappear before too long from the Egyptian sun, along with their statues and all the precious objects they contain, in order to enrich, until the end, foreign countries.²⁸

28. *Ibid.*, pp.37-8.

The decree went on to prohibit the future destruction or export of antiquities, and adopted measures for their preservation, and for the setting up of a 'special place in Cairo where they can be preserved and conveniently arranged for public exhibition, particularly for travellers and foreigners who arrive daily to view them throughout the country'. It argued that: 'This wise measure would have the double effect of forever preserving the integrity of the monuments for travellers and insure, at all times and in the heart of Egypt itself, the permanent existence of a rich collection of antiquities, truly meriting attention'. Thus the Ordinance spoke the language of protection and conservation; but if Champollion had implied that the antiquities rightfully belonged to the eyes of Europeans, the 1835 Ordinance was quite explicit about it.

This decree has often been hailed as the beginning of enlightened state policy on antiquities. But as Antoine Khater astutely points out, such a document should neither be confused with policy nor with actual practice. The law was non-retroactive which meant that, on the one hand, claims were not made against existing museum collections in Europe, and on the other, currently valid concessions were able to continue for years afterwards.

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Moreover, it failed to define a number of things including 'excavation', 'exploration' and, most importantly 'an antiquity'. Finally, it contains many ambiguities with regard to state gifting, property rights, punishments and the relationship between this new antiquities administration and the other departments of state. Indeed, state gifting was so common that the museum legislated by the decree finally closed during the 1850s when the Egyptian Khedive bestowed what few objects remained in it to a minor European royal figure visiting Cairo.

Of all these ambiguities, those connected with legal definitions were the most pressing. Take for example a simple legal case from October of the same year. The governor of Qusayr wrote to the Viceregal Council (*al-Majlis al-Mulki*) asking for clarification of the new law with regard to a mummy and a wooden sarcophagus that had been transported from Luxor to Qusayr by camel. In Qusayr, the mummy and sarcophagus had been loaded onto a British Ship bound for India when it came to the attention of the governor. In his letter, he asks whether or not the recent laws prohibiting the export of Egyptian antiquities were meant to apply to the infidel corpse-mummies (*juhath kafira*) that had just appeared in his jurisdiction. The governor's question highlights the lack of legal clarity concerning what constituted an antiquity proper. This point is reflected in the Council's response to the governor, which admitted that 'insofar as the prohibition relating to antiquities is mute on the subject of infidel mummy-corpses', 'it did not oppose the departure of such mummies'.²⁹ Thus it was fine to allow the export of such objects since they were not yet expressly included in the definition of antiquities whose export was prohibited by the Ordinance.

29. *Ibid.*, p45.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Antiquities Service attempted to administer its objects, it repeatedly had to answer a fundamental, but surprisingly difficult question: what is an antiquity? In 1874, a by-law defined antiquities in terms of aesthetic value and age, but it said nothing about objects whose aesthetic value was not clear, such as pieces of old buildings, fragments and shards. This definitional issue was addressed in 1912 when the Antiquities Service passed legislation banning the old practice of using debris mounds (containing disintegrated mummies, pottery, stone, etc.) as fertiliser, or *sibakh*. On this point, the category of antiquity was opened to its widest, to include pieces or fragments. 'Ruins of [ancient] buildings, whether stone or brick, columns, inscriptions, statues, figurines, amulets, pearls, jewels, gold or silver money, papyrus, parchment, sarcophagi, human and animal mummies' were now defined as antiquities, and according to the law belonged to the 'Public Domain of the State'. 'Brick fragments, shards, glass fragments, cut stone, cement' and other less valuable objects belonged to the Antiquities Service.³⁰ This extensive coverage meant that the Antiquities Service, and the state, would now have jurisdiction over objects commonly found in nearly every area of cultivated land in Egypt. Implicit in this expanding jurisdiction was a set of ethical dispositions toward objects of antiquity, and a concomitant set of prohibitions.

30. Khater, *Le Régime juridique*, op. cit., p285.

ALLOWANCES, PROHIBITIONS, AND THE STATE

Two questions structured Egyptian administration of antiquities from its inception: what was one *allowed* to do with antiquities? and what *should* one do with them? The 1835 Ordinance cut in these two directions. On the one hand, it was *prohibitory*, forbidding the export of all antiquities from Egypt. And on the other hand, it was *productive*, establishing a 'special place' (*mahall khass*) in Rifa'a al-Tahtawi's School of Translation, located in Ezbekiyya, for the collection and display of antiquities for Egyptians, but 'particularly for European visitors'. These two principles of prohibition and construction came together most explicitly in the Third Article which granted to the state the right 'not only to prevent hereafter the destruction of ancient monuments in Upper Egypt, but also to take measures to insure their conservation throughout'.

In the subsequent legal discourse, prohibitions focused on specific activities and types of exchange. The productive element of this discourse often focused on less tangible, moralistic goals, such as 'preservation of the monuments against the ravages of time', or the cultivation of appreciation among Egyptians and tourists. The ban on unauthorised excavation was directed chiefly at two primarily non-European practices: the excavations performed by local Egyptian peasants who had long been engaged in the harvest of artefact-commodities for European markets; and 'treasure seeking' ventures, associated with North Africans searching for gold and jewels on their passage through Egypt.³¹ The Egyptian State also expressly prohibited other practices by which antiquities were put to non-scientific or non-aesthetic ends. In particular, the use of stones and debris to build homes was prohibited, and the use of temples as habitations was put to an end. The result, of course, was that the state was empowered to confiscate extensive lands and place them under the jurisdiction of the Antiquities Service.³²

Much of the legal prohibition was explicitly directed at the rural peasantry and so too was the moralist equivalent of this legal discourse. Ahmad Najib, in the preface to his 1895 guidebook for Egyptian tourists to Upper Egypt, praises the benefits of antiquities and the importance they should have for 'cultured, modern Egyptians'; however regarding the peasants of Upper Egypt he writes:

Among the reasons which pressed me to write this book is that when I was appointed to the Antiquities Service to protect historical monuments throughout Egypt, I went to Upper Egypt to perform my duty [and there] I found ignorant people - uncultured mobs - attacking monuments to destroy them. Nothing can prevent them from doing this, and nothing can protect the antiquities from those people who listen not to sound advice and who have no shame ... They meddle with the dead and scatter their bones. They rip up towering monuments, they pull apart the joints [of mummy bodies] and sell them. They deface papyri. They

31. Treasure seeking - al-matlab - is addressed also in the 1869 Ottoman antiquities bylaws, Articles 7, 11 and 13. See Khater op. cit.

32. See the 1835 Decree in Khater, *Le Régime juridique*, op. cit. The vagueness of the 1869 Ottoman bylaws on antiquities allowed the state to lay claim, in the name of conservation, to all sorts of land. One such example is Article 23, 'Dans le cas où le Gouvernement voudrait exécuter lui-même des fouilles sur des points qui ne sont pas mulk, ni dépendents de localités habitées et où la découverte d'antiquités serait probable, ces endroits ne seront cédés à personne', p277.

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Later he addresses his targets more directly:

You people of Upper Egypt ... don't you realize that once you have completely robbed Upper Egypt of its antiquities, visitors will stop coming? ... In a few years, with so few visitors, you will grow rebellious, rant and rave, send delegations and claim 'economic depression' and the spread of 'corruption' and 'poverty' ... Whenever there are hordes of foreigners in your neighborhood, you destroy monuments and sell them away. You're like the one who cuts down the tree to pluck its fruit!³⁴

Najib's tone indicates the moralistic tenor of statist discourse on antiquities, and its difference from the inclusionary, unifying tone of nationalist discourse. Indeed the state's prohibitive and repressive rhetoric marks the boundaries of that community imagined by Pharaonism. Southern peasants formed the unreformable target of this discourse, not the subjects of it.

The historiography of Egyptology reveals a consensus among Western and Egyptian nationalist intellectuals. They all applaud the Egyptian state's active intervention into the management of ruins and assert that the preservation of antiquities for public display and tourist consumption was an enlightened policy. But what if we were to ask different questions? What if we were to see the state's administration of antiquities as not only a 'just and necessary' initiative to protect monuments and relics, but also as a mechanism by which the state extended and normalised essentially repressive powers?³⁵ Indeed, the administration of antiquities could be seen as one of the strongest mechanisms by which the central government extended rule over its southernmost territories, territories whose peoples had long been opponents of Cairene rule. State decrees worked to establish an administrative branch of bureaucrats, archaeologists and inspectors who oversaw enforcement. One charged word recurring in the texts of these decrees is surveillance.³⁶ When one begins to recast the legal and moral prohibition of certain practices in terms of a regime that surveils relationships and dispositions - encouraging some and prohibiting others - one begins to see within the mission of the Antiquities Service the outlines of both a State-led pedagogy and a disciplinary order. This is a pedagogy that legitimates specific concepts and practices - practices and concepts that implied a certain subjectivity. And it legitimates a disciplinary regime that actively polices the fields of its jurisdiction and punishes those who crossed it. What if we were to see the discourse on antiquity not just as the narrative of an enlightened state, but also as a discourse about the state that sanctions its monopoly on legitimate violence? This threat of

33. Ahmad Najib, *Kitab al-athr al-jalil li-qudama' wadi al-nil*, Bulaq, al-Matba'a al-amiriyya, 1895, p5, my translations.

34. *Ibid.*, p81.

35. See Michael Taussig, 'Maleficium, State Fetishism', in E. Apter and W. Pietz (eds), *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993, pp217-47.

36. Article 3 of the 1835 Decree stipulated the posting of armed soldiers around sites, whereas Article 9 subordinated local officials to the authority of Antiquities Inspectors, and Article 10 authorised inspection tours throughout Upper Egypt. Article 6 of the 1869 Ottoman bylaws authorised government agents to guard monuments while Article 9 placed all authorised excavations under the direct supervision of government agents and Article 21 stipulated, 'Si l'emplacement à fouiller se trouve séparé des localités peuplées par une distance qui rendrait difficile toute surveillance continue de l'autorité, un employé sera adjoint au possesseur d'autorisation aux frais de ce dernier', cited in Khater, *Le Régime juridique*, op. cit., p277.

violence was a necessary condition for the communitarian tone of Pharaonist nationalism.

In arguing here for the specificity of and difference between statist and nationalist discourses in Egypt, I do not mean to reintroduce the category of the State writ large and abstract, nor the image of the state as 'an autonomous entity whose actions are not reducible to or determined by forces in society'.³⁷ It was precisely against such reified models of the state that the cultural analysis of nationalism was a reaction. State institutions such as the Antiquities Service described here are not abstractions, nor are they separate from the social antagonisms of the national polities that they limit and over which they are sovereign. Rather, as Timothy Mitchell suggests, the discourse of the state marks an attempt to represent the struggles and conflicts within a society as if they were outside it:

The distinction [between the State and Society] must not be taken as the boundary between two discrete entities, but as a line drawn internally within the network of institutional mechanisms through which a social and political order is maintained. The ability to have an internal distinction appear as though it were an external boundary between separate objects is the distinctive technique of the modern political order.³⁸

37. Timothy Mitchell, 'The Limits of the State, Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics', *American Political Science Review* 85, 1 (1991), p82.

38. *Ibid.*, p78.

This seems to shed light on the opposition between nationalist and statist discourses on antiquity. If the former is based on a politics of community and a rhetoric of inclusion, the latter is based in a politics of distinction and a rhetoric of exclusion. Perhaps the difference between what I have been calling statist and nationalist discourse is merely one of genre and the institutions of writing and interpretation that support them, the difference between poetry, novels and autobiography and law, the difference between the emerging literary institutions and the emerging systems of law in modern Egypt. But, to follow Mitchell, if the genres of the state serve to externalise social antagonisms within the polity, the nationalist genres attempt to unify differences that mark boundaries, real exteriorities that exist inside, and threaten the image of community. Nationalist genres used Pharaonist themes and objects to imagine community and active, human connection, between the modern present and the ancient past, and between the urban elite and the rural peasantry. And yet the difference posed by statist genres underscores the way in which the nationalist discourse on community was actually based on the subordination of certain groups to others, peasants to urban elites, the South to the North, the countryside to the capital.