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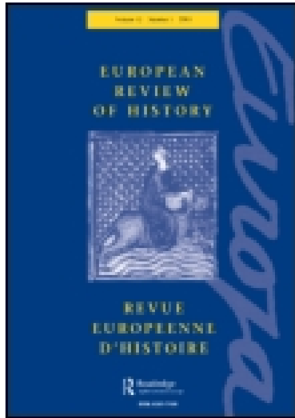

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Entangled communities: interethnic relationships among urban salesclerks and domestic workers in Egypt, 1927–61

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This paper examines the relationships among salesclerks and other lower-level commercial and domestic employees in inter-war and post-Second World War urban Egypt, especially Cairo. It argues that the Italians, Greeks, local Jews, Armenians, Syrian Christians, Maltese, Coptic Christians and Muslims who often worked side by side on the floors of department stores and private homes participated in multiethnic occupational subgroups, formal unions and leisure cultures that created a series of networks linking lower-middle-class people in workplaces, public and neighbourhood space as well as commerce. These networks spanned ethnic, religious and linguistic boundaries, and they reveal a complex shared Mediterranean culture, underpinned by a juridical system shaped by European colonialism. Although historians have documented the vertical relations within ethnic groups and the horizontal relationships among the business elite of different communities, horizontal relationships among the lower and lower-middle classes of locally resident foreigners or Egyptians, who made up the bulk of the different communities, evidence both deep entanglement and regular conflict. The history of lived Mediterranean or cosmopolitan experiences thus challenges contemporary uses of both terms.

Keywords: cosmopolitan; Egypt; salesclerk; domestic employee

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As Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell have argued, 'Mediterranean' is a complicated term to describe identity: it can be 'an essentially oppressive concept, born of imperialism and deployed in the service of politically undesirable master narratives', and although it gestures toward a geographic specificity, it is often deployed so generally and ahistorically that it has lost any real coherence (that is, it signals simultaneously a lack of belonging and an ability to live anywhere).[1] Historians have struggled over and debated the labelling of multi-ethnic Mediterranean societies, in part because the elaboration of the specific textures of such societies by historians has often come up against the philosophical deliberations of intellectuals seeking a more pluralist and tolerant politics than that of the nation-state. Much like Mediterranean, the term 'cosmopolitan' has a history and a colonial legacy that complicates its use as an analytical or descriptive term; indeed, the two terms are often used interchangeably in Middle Eastern Studies. Historical exploration of the nature of societies characterised by a plurality of ethnic and religious groups remains an important aspect of the effort to refine the analytical capacity and precision of these terms.

This article examines the social history of commercial and domestic employees to argue that the polyethnic relationships among the lower-middle classes of urban Cairo reveal a world of deep entanglement in even the most intimate aspects of social existence. Rather than just members of a series of ethnic groups living side by side, commercial and

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domestic employees interacted across ethnic, religious and linguistic boundaries to form an occupational subculture that linked them to other service workers, such as chauffeurs, waiters and servants, whose employment demanded proficiency in certain 'cultural competencies'.[2] These entanglements formed a complex shared Mediterranean culture underpinned by a juridical system rooted in European colonialism. Historians have documented the imprint of colonialism on the formation of the industrial working class in Egypt, and in particular, its inflection by nationalism because of the relative congruence of class and national identity in state-owned or state-protected enterprises such as the transport sector under British colonialism. (The foreign nationality of supervisors, owners and skilled workers helped Egyptian workers link abusive treatment in the workplace to 'their humiliation as Egyptians subject to foreign rule').[3] Although many service and commercial workers employed in the urban Westernised milieu participated in the broader nationalist movement and considered themselves Egyptians, they also at times took advantage of juridical and cultural privileges in struggles against their employers.

The Maltese, Italians, Greeks, local Jews, Armenians, Syrian Christians, Coptic Christians and Muslims who often worked side by side on the floors of stores or private homes in Egypt formed strong occupational subgroups and leisure cultures that did not necessarily require assimilation or effacement of ethnic difference, but also did not either build a uniquely liberal or accepting social space; at times these groups opposed the elite members of the communities, although at other times they operated to dampen class conflict. A variety of tensions – based in differences of gender, class, neighbourhood, nationality or even personality – shaped these subcultures, in part because the volatility of the Egyptian economy, which passed in this period through cycles of extremely rapid growth followed by stagnation and even decline, often squeezed members of the lower classes financially and socially. Cairo offers an opportunity to view this culture of entanglement more complexly than the port city of Alexandria, which has frequently been the context for studies of Egyptian cosmopolitanism. After a brief historiographic discussion of cosmopolitanism, I turn to the 1927 murder case of Solomon Cicurel, owner of an important department store in Cairo. Examining the murder as microhistory illuminates the specificity of intercommunal relationships that existed among domestic and commercial employees. I then contextualise these relationships by locating them more directly in the wider culture of department-store workplaces and the social encounters experienced in the multiplicity of lower-middle-class urban Egypt. What the thick texture of such everyday entanglements reveals is how strongly the specificities of Mediterranean location and the nature of service work combined to shape the use of cultural competencies to contest class relations.

Cosmopolitanism

As scholarly interest has grown in globalisation, so has an interest in cosmopolitanism as a political antidote for xenophobic nationalism or politicised religious ideologies; much of this work grows out of the political philosophy of Kant and other European Enlightenment thinkers.[4] Emphasis on cosmopolitanism as a 'unifying ethic' for a new global citizenship has been concurrent with a series of studies 'particularlising and pluralising' cosmopolitanism through closer reading of specific societies and historical periods.[5] Sami Zubaida has argued that cosmopolitanism essentially results from geographic and social deracination: 'What we mean by "cosmopolitan," then, is not the fact of multi-cultural coexistence, but the development of ways of living and thinking, styles of life which are deracinated from communities and cultures of origin, from conventional living, from family and home-centeredness, and have developed into a culturally promiscuous

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life, drawing on diverse ideas, traditions and innovations.'[6] Such theories of cosmopolitanism tend to suggest a deliberateness in the break with older, particularistic cultures of belonging and privilege the consciousness or ideological understanding resulting from deracination. The cadence of portrayals of the melting pot of deracinated diversity also implies the existence of a culture of egalitarianism, conflict-free borrowing and assimilation of difference.

'Cosmopolitanism' does little to describe the local specificity of the urban societies in Egypt in this period, and its complicity in a politics of colonialism and later (as a negative foil) in authoritarian nationalism has further sullied its transparency. Zubaida cautions scholars to remember that the cosmopolitanism of Egypt in the early twentieth century was structured by European colonialism. 'The subsequent nostalgia for this golden age conveniently forgets its imperial context. Cosmopolitan Alexandria, for instance, included a rigorous system of exclusions for native Egyptians, including segregation or exclusion on buses and trams, and certainly from clubs, some bars and cafés and many social milieus. Native Egyptian society provided servants, functionaries and prostitutes for the cosmopolitan milieu. They were inferiorised and despised.'[7] Indeed, colonial officials in Egypt used the term cosmopolitan and invoked a certain picture of the multiplicity of Egyptian society to reject nationalist challenges to their authority in Egypt. As Robert Tignor has written, 'Cromer and other British officials delighted in talking about the cosmopolitan nature of Egyptian society. Straddling Asia, Europe, and Africa, Egypt was seen as a melting-pot of Levantines, Turks, and Europeans. Often, when resisting nationalist demands for increased autonomy, the British cited the cosmopolitan nature of Egypt. During and just after the [First World] war, British officials drew up constitutional proposals in which an upper house or Senate representing foreigners would have a veto over certain types of Egyptian legislation.'[8] The large influx of migrants from the Southern European and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean began with Mehmed 'Ali's building and development projects designed to strengthen Egypt against European imperialist and Ottoman encroachment in the early nineteenth century and continued through the reign of Isma'il. Colonial occupation in Egypt after 1882 also created the conditions for the mobility of capital and populations, thereby opening the country to further immigration. Cosmopolitan is a not a term that exists in Egyptian Arabic, nor was it commonly used by Egyptians to discuss their own society.[9] Khaled Fahmy writes of the deep contradiction in the study of Mediterranean Alexandria: 'The explanatory power of the discourse of cosmopolitanism is undermined by its simultaneous adoption of two incompatible assumptions: first, that Alexandria was an open, tolerant city where different ethnic groups were allowed to flourish and to coexist peacefully; and, secondly, that these ethnic groups were separate from each other, with little or no interaction between them.'[10] In a cogent critique of cosmopolitanism in Middle Eastern studies and Egyptian historiography, Will Hanley warns against generalising the experiences of a small elite of cosmopolitan subjects over the entirety of society: 'Cosmopolitan as used in Middle Eastern history is restricted: political, linguistic, and social boundaries are crossed, but only by an elite. "Actually existing cosmopolitanism" is all about wealth and secularism; the poor and the religious, whatever their qualifications of geographical mobility or polyglossia, need not apply.'[11] Refining the analytical purview of cosmopolitanism and elaborating non-elite and non-utopic histories of lived practices can alleviate the implicit scholarly burdens on the terminology.

No comprehensive history – 'blended' or 'relational' – of pre-1956 Egyptian ethnic entanglements exists.[12] Until recently, three approaches had characterised writing on 'cosmopolitanism' in Egypt. The first is made up of a spate of nostalgic memoirs, most

often written by people who were children in the cosmopolitan communities of Egypt in the pre-First World War and inter-war periods; this literature generally focuses on Alexandria. Although many of the personal stories are quite compelling, these works tend to portray non-cosmopolitan aspects of Egyptian culture in an essentialising and even derogatory light and focus on domestic or environmental images to create a romanticising nostalgia of place and memory. They also frequently downplay the realities of the power imbalances between those benefiting from colonial and capitulatory regimes of authority and those disenfranchised by them.[13] A second, more scholarly approach has been descriptions of the individual ethnic communities in Egypt, most notably those of the Greeks, Jews and Syrians. This literature is empirically rich and generally portrays the complexity of these communities in terms of class, origin, language, religion and race, often suggesting that lines of conflict divided these groups as much as other aspects of communal identity connected them. Such studies are also important in that they legitimate through social history a place for these groups in Egyptian society – and in the best cases they provide a history that reads against the teleology of nationalism. A focus on individual ethnic groups does not, however, generally afford a view of how different groups interacted and how they together with Muslim Egyptians formed a complex, multi-ethnic society.[14] A third approach to writing the history of pre-1956 Egypt used business history to examine the interactions among people of different ethnic communities. These works counter nationalism's claim that cosmopolitan society acted as a haven for exploiting compradors who eventually led the nation to colonial dependency by documenting the routine business partnerships between Egyptian nationalist leaders and locally resident foreigners; this strategy is particularly valuable in that it integrates the history of native Muslim Egyptians with that of the cosmopolitan communities. The focus, however, on the bourgeoisie and the administration of commercial and industrial companies ignores substantial parts of the locally resident foreign communities, including the middle and lower-middle classes who worked on store and factory floors, as well as lower-level clerks in commercial and industrial firms and those in domestic service. The sources for business history also tend to downplay the structural inequalities of colonialism and capitalism.[15]

Lower-class interethnic relations in this period in Egypt thus remain relatively understudied by historians, although a new literature about the nature and experience of cosmopolitanism in Alexandria has begun to provide a more complex picture of the interactions and legal structures binding members of the various communities. These works demand a re-centering of the history of cosmopolitanism to emphasise the experiences of the city's majority groups: the lower classes and Arabic-speaking Egyptians. Drawing on consular court records, Hanley describes what he calls 'everyday cosmopolitanism' or 'vulgar cosmopolitanism' as a set of social practices in the lower classes centred more on misidentifications among Alexandrians in terms of others' language, ethnicity, religion and so forth than an urbane sophistication about and tolerance of difference or 'modernity'.[16] Fahmy has called for a social history 'of modern Alexandria in which ... native Arabs feature, if not centre-stage, then at least more prominently than they have hitherto been allowed to do.'[17] Specifically, he suggests that 'instead of stressing the infrequency of intermarriage to highlight the segregation of ethnic communities, [such a history] would have to cite the all too frequent cases of illicit sex between members of different ethnicities, classes, and neighborhoods.'[18] Although scholars have identified commerce as a definitive space of cosmopolitanism in the Ottoman Middle East, the marketplace as a site figures only as a transient space of ethno-religious mixing, a place where different subjects met but were not defined.[19] We know

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little about the actual working conditions of service and commercial workers, as they have only made intermittent appearances in the history of Egypt or most of the Middle East.[20] More so than Alexandria, Cairo – as the capital city, and one that was not a coastal port – offers historians a more nuanced opportunity to assess the character of lower-class ethnic entanglements in Egypt.

The power of the foreign

The colonial and semi-colonial states in Egypt retained a system of legal asymmetries in the form of state and consular protections that benefited locally resident foreign subjects in complex ways. Originating in the regime of Capitulations that developed in the Ottoman Empire, the broad system of allowing foreign residents exemption from Egyptian law created separate spheres of legal and criminal practice, including perhaps most visibly prison facilities, and freed foreign subjects from local taxation, although this latter benefit was muted by tax reductions under British rule.[21] Foreign residents were protected by labour laws, including accident insurance, and could demand written contracts at a time when few labour provisions protected Egyptian workers.[22] This legal landscape heightened the power of consular officials to interpret national laws and apply them to their subjects in Egypt, as criminal jurisdiction lay in the consular courts in cases involving foreigners. Despite the establishment of the Mixed Courts to handle commercial and civil litigation between residents of different nationalities, this system was widely seen by Egyptians as unfair.[23] The Capitulatory regime symbolised for many Egyptians – and buttressed in actual practice – a more general colonial perception that foreign labour, products and even cultures were superior to their Egyptian counterparts.[24] The legal consequences of these systems of protection emerged clearly during prosecution for the murder of one of Egypt's most prominent merchants, Solomon Cicurel, in the 1920s.

The murder also acts as a window onto the character of the multi-ethnic relationships among lower-middle-class commercial and domestic employees and between these service workers and their upper-class employers. In this case, I argue, the asymmetries of power created both discursively and legally by colonialism in Egypt were marshalled in class conflict in ways that reflected both the specific nature of ethnic entanglements in the Mediterranean and the particular character of service work. Entangled Mediterranean ethnicities created forms of sociability that reflected the bounded and closed nature of the maritime basin and the resulting intimate scale of its migrations and cultural exchanges. As Horden and Purcell argued, the Mediterranean produced a world characterised by connectivity rather than hybridisation or homogenisation, in part because passages in the Mediterranean were more temporary, contingent and circuitous – enabling 'crisscrossing connections' compared to the one-way transit corridors created by way other waterways, such as the Atlantic.[25] The volatility of the regional economy between the 1860s and 1930, partly driven by global shifts in the cotton market, created boom-bust cycles that pulled capital and labour to Egypt from the northern shores of the Mediterranean, created near-mythical upward mobility during periods of speculation, and could just as quickly level class difference during economic contractions. The right conditions could create local magnates from poor migrants with legal privileges, much as had happened to Solomon Cicurel's father.

The particular fluidity and multiplicity of Mediterranean ethnic entanglements was heightened in the context of service and commercial work, which was also characterised by a certain 'class transitionality'.[26] In contrast to factory workers, salesclerks had to adopt certain conventions of appearance and demeanour on the selling floor because they

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displayed merchandise for customers and interacted with them directly. Such work demanded cultural knowledge of clothing styles and the appropriate accoutrements required by various forms of sociability (proper styles of glassware or stationery, for example), knowledges that were cultivated by their employers as forms of power through which they exercised class privilege. Exposure to and education in such cultural competencies combined with unique opportunities for initiative and advancement offered in department stores to deepen salesclerk expectations of upward mobility. Service and sales work also required frequent contact with customers and household members, including handling goods that intimately serviced their employers' or customers' bodies – clothing, furnishings, linens, food and so forth.[27] In the context of Egyptian urban commercial culture in this period, colonial perceptions that privileged 'foreignness' could mix powerfully with the class transitionality of sales and service work and the cultural connectivity of Mediterraneanism to encourage members of the lower-middle class to use their competencies in cultural matters, and especially their knowledge of 'foreign' cultural practices, as 'claim-making devices' in class negotiations.[28] The variety and instability of combinations of legal, economic and cultural privilege created dramatic conflicts of status that did not easily follow the structural lines that usually mapped class conflict. The Cicurel store and household in the 1920s provides a compelling window on these complexities, as I describe below.

In a broader sense, the Cicurel murder case and the lower-middle-class milieu revealed through it contribute to a more global rethinking of how the persistence of colonial juridical asymmetries politicised post-colonial depictions of cosmopolitanism. Gyan Prakash has recently examined a high-profile murder trial in post-colonial India and its implications for the dismantling of cosmopolitanism in Bombay/Mumbai. In the sensational 1959 Nanavati murder case, Indian High Court judges invoked an old colonial legal provision that allowed the High Court, staffed by English judges under colonial rule, to overturn a popular jury verdict. The tabloid press campaign ignited by the trial ultimately mobilised a populist and communal politics against the cosmopolitanism of 'the elite milieu of the late-colonial and early-postcolonial city, a milieu rooted in the colonial experience. Here, English was the mode of communication. An anglicised and colonial lifestyle was utterly normal ... Daily life in this world included visits to the trusty department store on Hornby Road ... [c]lubs and diner parties, bearers and servants.'[29] Emmanuel K. Akyeampong similarly examines the legacy of colonial legal institutions in framing the citizenship status of Lebanese residents in post-colonial Ghana.[30] John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan have also argued for the importance of excavating the juridical structures used in the political representation of communities within colonial states as a crucial but frequently overlooked aspect of decolonisation.[31] Although the Nanavati and Cicurel murders both opened up debate about cosmopolitanism's juridical relationship to colonialism, the class and ethnic entanglements portrayed in the Cicurel murder point to the specific, complex character of interconnectivity in Mediterranean cosmopolitanism: in the Cicurel case, the elite victim was the national subject, whereas the lower-class assailants were 'foreign'. As such, I use the term 'entanglement' to capture the interconnectivity and transitionality inhering in the character of Mediterranean multiethnic relationships, although I do so with an eye to how such relationships were used to construct and challenge dominance based on class, gender and other differences.

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The Cicurel murder

Early in the morning of 4 March 1927, Solomon Cicurel, one of Egypt's most important department-store owners, was stabbed to death in his bedroom in a villa in Cairo. Aged 46, Solomon Cicurel was the eldest of the three Cicurel brothers and at the time serving as senior partner in the Cairo-based Cicurel firm. His wife, Elvira Toriel Cicurel, from another, more prominent, local Jewish family, was assaulted as well, and her jewellery, valued at LE 5000, was stolen from a dresser in their closet. Over the next few days, official investigation into the murder revealed a complex set of relationships among domestic and commercial employees of different nationalities, all locally resident in Egypt. The judicial complications of prosecuting the four men eventually accused of the crime and its political implications for colonialism in Egypt propelled the case into the front pages of local newspapers for several weeks.

Police investigations revealed a fairly fluid lower-middle-class subculture of domestic and commercial employees of various nationalities in Cairo.[32] The four assailants ultimately charged with the death of Cicurel were of different nationalities: two were Italian subjects, one was Greek and the fourth was stateless, and thus considered a 'local subject'. Two of the four men charged with the crime worked as chauffeurs in Cairo. Anesthi Christo had worked as a driver for Solomon Cicurel until sometime late in 1926 (two or three months prior to the murder), when he was dismissed for 'unsatisfactory behaviour'. Christo was roughly 32 years old, a Greek subject and the son of a Greek father and Coptic Christian mother. After losing his job with the Cicurels, Christo had found employment again as a chauffeur in another prominent Cairo household, that of the Countess Debanne, who was probably from a Syrian family that held Brazilian nationality and had been 'ennobled by the papacy'.[33] Also charged was the chauffeur who replaced Christo, Eduardo Moramarco, a 23-year-old man holding Italian nationality. They were assisted by Grimaldi Dagaro, 27 years old and also an Italian subject, and Dario Jacoel, a local subject, aged 21, who was Jewish but without a specific nationality. In the course of the investigations, Jacoel's father tried to claim Greek nationality, to change the trial location from the Egyptian court to the Greek court at Alexandria, as he claimed to be a Jew born in Salonica. Later three other suspects were arrested, although it is unclear if they were ever formally charged: the Volterra brothers, who were Greek and friends of Moramarco, and Yusuf Bishara, a Syrian Catholic in his thirties, who worked as a pawnbroker in Cairo.[34]

The Solomon Cicurel household, where the murder took place and many of the suspects worked, occupied a large villa on the West bank of the Nile in the Giza governorate near Cairo. Originally owned by Auguste Luzatto Pasha, the Italian Jewish director of the Banque d'Egypte, the Cicurel house stood across the street from the villa of Henri Naus Bey, a Belgian resident in Egypt who managed the state's sugar refineries; it was surrounded by other villas of important landowners and capitalists resident in Egypt. The Cicurels were important local capitalists and were very clearly considered Egyptian, even if they were Jewish and probably spoke French amongst themselves. Solomon's younger brother, Yusuf, who in 1927 lived in Paris but had been staying at the villa until the day before his brother's death, had been earlier in the decade a founding board member of Bank Misr, the Egyptian bank established during the nationalist uprising to spearhead Egypt's economic independence.[35] Moreover, Sa'd Zaghlul Pasha, the most important nationalist leader in Egypt, sent his personal secretary to visit Mrs Cicurel in the days following the murder in order to offer his condolences and any assistance that might be

necessary. (Zaghlul himself was quite frail at this time, and died only a few months later).[36]

Although socially prominent and wealthy in the late 1920s, the Cicurels had come to Egypt in the 1880s as part of the lower to lower-middle class that Moramarco, Jacoel and the others inhabited. Solomon's father, Moreno Cicurel, was born in the early 1850s in Izmir, came to Egypt 'at an early age', and worked as an assistant in a haberdashery and toy shop located in the Muski in the mid-1880s.[37] Moreno acquired the business in 1887, and the shop, eventually called Au Petit Bazaar, gradually added new lines of goods to its inventory – drapery, silks, clothing, hosiery and hats – finally becoming a full-fledged department store by the turn of the century.[38] Au Petit Bazaar, with about 80 employees in the 1900s, remained in the Muski until 1909, when new premises were built on Bulaq Street (later called Fu'ad and 26th July streets), in the new downtown. What was significant, one of the store's competitors recalled, was this move from 'a small store in the Arab quarter ... to a new store, very luxurious, which ... occupied the entire building, which was four or five floors'.[39] Within a few years, the company changed the store's name from Au Petit Bazaar to Les Grands Magasins de Nouveautés Cicurel/Mahallat al-kubra shikuril.[40] After an accidental fire in 1920, the store was rebuilt and expanded to include a building next door, which was connected by a covered pedestrian bridge.[41] With Moreno's death in 1919, the Cicurel business transferred to his sons, and within the next two decades, the company became a retail empire.

The four men charged with the crime against the Cicurels participated in an equally ethnically entangled culture, although class inflected it in ways that distinguished it from the Cicurel milieu of the 1920s. One was spatial: although the Cicurels lived in a posh district of large villas near the Nile, the servants lived and socialised in denser parts of the city. Eduardo Moramarco lived in a second-floor apartment on Bustan Street in the 'Abdin district of Cairo; he shared his home with his mother and his brothers, according to the Nubian doorman, Ahmad Hasan. One report suggests that Moramarco's family was somewhat criminal, his uncle having been deported for his crimes and Moramarco himself having been involved in a shooting incident on Wighat al-Birka Street in Cairo's entertainment district. Moramarco was reportedly a Fascist.[42] He also had a room on the roof terrace at the Cicurel home as part of his employment. It is interesting to note that both the Cicurel and Moramarco families employed servants of different ethnic groups to mark their status. Much the way that middle-class and Europeanised urban residents might employ Nubian doormen, wealthy Egyptian subjects such as the Cicurels employed 'European' subjects like Moramarco or Christo.

Dario Jacoel's father owned a store in the jewellery bazaar, nearly adjacent to the Bercowitz jewellery store, which had recently been robbed, and its owner and his son killed. A Jewish family that claimed roots in Salonica, the Jacoel family was described as 'not a poor family', and Dario's father was addressed as '*khawaga*', a title used for foreign men of some substance. The Egyptian daily newspaper *al-Ahram* asserted that if the Jacoel family were reported to be reputable 'tradesmen', their son was 'known by corrupt behavior and for mixing with criminals'.[43] There was considerable investigation into the cord that had been used to tie the legs of the Cicurels during the robbery/murder. At first, the police identified it as the same type of cord that employees used to tie packages in commercial shops (and they noted that it was tied with unusual skill and dexterity) and thus assumed that Jacoel had obtained the cord when he worked in his father's store. Further investigation showed that the cord did not actually match that used in his father's store, and police continued to search for the commercial store from which it came.[44]

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Yusuf Bishara worked informally as a pawnbroker in the underworlds of Cairo's markets. Moramarco and Jacoel were eventually charged with having stolen a variety of smaller valuables from the Cicurel household over several weeks prior to the murder. These smaller thefts had prompted the Cicurels to purchase a safe, which was to be installed the day after the murder; it was the imminent arrival of the safe that reportedly provided a motive for the assailants, who broke into the villa to seize Mrs Cicurel's jewels in the final robbery during which Mr Cicurel was killed. It was Bishara who bought the stolen goods from Moramarco and Jacoel, at a fraction of their real value, and resold them to jewellers and others in the marketplace. Bishara declared in the investigation that he was an 'itinerant merchant, without a commercial store, and that he worked in buying gold and silver jewelry and gems from those in need and selling them in the gold market or elsewhere'.[45] A stolen watch from the Cicurels was also sold to a dealer in Opera Square.[46] Less was reported about the other defendants: Christo was described as a 'sphinx' because he would not confess or give testimony,[47] and Grimaldi appears to have played a rather minor role in the crime and was thus relatively ignored.

Linguistic plurality characterised the work and leisure worlds of the entire cast of the murder drama. The Cicurels spoke several different languages, some Arabic, French and probably English. Among the stolen items was a gold box belonging to Mrs Cicurel that was engraved 'with the initials of her name in French'; the children's nanny at the time, Miss Williams, was an English governess. The assailants themselves were also polyvocal. Mrs Cicurel reported that she heard the four men conversing 'at times in feeble English and at times in Italian' during the robbery; in another instance she reported that she knew the 'murderers had to be foreigners because they spoke in foreign languages'.[48] One of the Volterra brothers had been involved three months earlier as a witness in a libel case involving a Maltese merchant who owned a 'French-style' shoe shop down the street from the Cicurel department store on Fu'ad Street. Volterra's testimony about the conversations in Café Stambellou was recorded in English for the British consular court, but still contained both French and Italian words.[49] The Cicurel murder investigations and testimonies had to be translated into several different languages in order to be co-ordinated for use in the different cases.[50] Although polyglossia united these subjects, fluency marked class status differently for the upper and lower classes. While less-educated members of the ethnically entangled lower classes could communicate 'feebly' or in broken use in other languages, upper-class families like the Cicurels invested in private tutoring to foster the command of several languages, including French, which had become a *lingua franca* in much of the Mediterranean by this time.[51]

The men and women involved in the crime participated in a world of multi-ethnic social ties centred around leisure sites and sexual relationships. The newspapers reported that the criminals' 'plans [were] laid in a café':

> The four men were in the habit of meeting in a café in Sharia Tewfik. On the evening of the crime, Anesthi went to this café at about 10 o'clock in the motor car of Countess Dubané who had engaged him as chauffeur after he left Mr. Cicurel. There Anesthi met Eduardo and again spoke to him about his plan; saying that the present occasion was favourable as they were both free and Anesthi had the use of his employer's automobile. They communicated with the other two conspirators who agreed to carry out the robbery that night. The pact was celebrated with numerous drinks. Eduardo equipped himself with an electric torch and a mask, and they all got into the motor car and drove to the brasserie 'Les Pyramids' at Giza, where several more drinks were consumed. Then they went to the [Cicurel] villa.[52]

Moramarco's doorman also reported that Moramarco and his friends frequently consumed wine at the apartment.[53] The Volterra brothers, who were Greek subjects and were

arrested several times in the case but did not participate in the actual crime, were 'friends of Moramarco' and had reportedly been planning the burglary for three months with the other men.

Several of the men were involved in sexual or romantic relationships that crossed ethnic or religious boundaries and often developed out of a shared workplace.[54] For example, Anesthi Christo, who was Greek, had an Italian girlfriend (named Marika) who had worked as a servant in the Cicurel household until she was dismissed from that service at the same time that he was.[55] Jacoel reportedly had a 'European woman who was [his] mistress'.[56] Moramarco was also apparently dating another servant at the Cicurel household, a woman named Amelia. A worker from the Cicurel department store testified that he had seen them smoking together and also arguing over his testimony; other Cicurel servants (such as the gardeners) believed that Amelia and Moramarco lived together.[57] Yusuf Bishara, a Syrian Catholic, was also related to Moramarco, an Italian, through marriage. Bishara was married to the sister of the wife of Moramarco's brother.[58] As mentioned above, Christo himself had parents of different religious and national backgrounds – his mother was Coptic Christian and thus Egyptian, whereas his father was Greek, although his religion was never specified. *Al-Ahram* suggested that this union meant that his mother had never 'embraced the Christian religion'.[59] Much more than casual or fleeting associations, these cross-ethnic sexual and romantic relationships suggest the significant extent to which these communities intermingled.

It appears from the investigations that the chauffeurs were a tightly connected occupational subgroup in which deep (or at least self-conscious) friendships were built across ethnic or religious boundaries. Moramarco and Christo, the two charged in the case, had both held the same job, but apparently were more than just work friends. Investigators discovered in Christo's apartment, for instance, a photograph of Moramarco, who had signed the photograph and dedicated it to Christo 'as a remembrance of devotion'.[60] Several witnesses both at the Cicurel house and Moramarco's house testified that these men often spent time together in the evenings; indeed, this was how the four men (two of whom had not worked there) were admitted to the Cicurel villa, because their presence there was so familiar. Other chauffeurs in the neighbourhood and the chauffeur of Solomon Cicurel's youngest brother, Salvator, also testified in the case (about Moramarco's handedness to determine who wielded the knife). This testimony indicates that the chauffeurs spent considerable social time together during the workday. One of these chauffeurs was identified as 'an Egyptian', and he worked for the Count Sam du Saab who lived next door to the Cicurels.[61] Another servant who worked at the Cicurels with Moramarco was identified as a Muslim Egyptian (Muhammad Ahmad). The chauffeurs were apparently unionised or in a guild-like organisation, as the representative of the 'union [*niqabat*] of drivers and workers of automobiles' sent a message of condolence to Mrs Cicurel after the murder.[62]

The men obtained the supplies they needed for the assault from the Muski district of Cairo, a commercial area that laid between the fashionable downtown quarter where the new Cicurel store was located and the 'Arab bazaars' of the old part of the city. The old 'Frankish quarter', Muski Street had housed the original Cicurel shop in the 1880s and 1890s. The ether used to render the Cicurels unconscious was purchased from a Muski pharmacy belonging to a man named Abraham Tounjab. Several months earlier, Jacoel also had purchased in the same district gloves and thick socks that were used by the assailants.[63] Jacoel specified that the store was a commercial store on Muski Street located across from 'Banish's store, a watch dealer'. The Muski's shops carried *ifrangi* or

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Western-styled clothing made from cheaper materials than those retailed at the great department stores and were often frequented by lower-class Europeans resident in Cairo.

The chauffeurs, at least, appear to have had relationships with the employees in the Cicurel department store itself, which was located downtown on Fu'ad Street. It was an employee of the store who overheard Christo tell Moramarco how angry he was at Solomon Cicurel for firing him and how 'he would take his right with his hands'.[64] Other Cicurel department-store workers testified about the sexual relationships of the chauffeurs with servants of the Cicurel household. This is not surprising, given the spatialisation of the work of drivers. The wider world of the department-store employees and workers, as I will discuss below, was characterised by similar patterns of multi-ethnic diversity and urban geography; service and commercial workers often united in political actions.

As a result of Egypt's regime of Capitulations, the four men accused of the murder were prosecuted in different courts and received different punishments. The defendants were aware of the consequences of their different nationalities: the local subject, Jacoel, was reported to have urged Moramarco to confess to having handed Jacoel a blood-stained knife to dispose of after the murder; in that way Jacoel's charge of murder might be reduced to robbery and accomplice to murder. 'Jacoel is reported to have said to [Moramarco in the course of the interrogations], "Speak the truth: if you continue to deny I shall be condemned to death by the Egyptian Assize Court, but you, in any case, will be tried in Italy where there is no death penalty, and whether or not you confess to the killing you will be sentenced to the maximum penalty of 20 years' imprisonment."'[65] As mentioned above, Jacoel was the only one of the four accused ultimately put to death for the crime. Public outrage at the protection the 'murderers' received was compounded by the case's easy comparison to another recent murder of a prominent Cairo jeweller (named Bercovitz) and his son, in which the accused was of Egyptian nationality. One of the local Arabic papers reported that the Egyptian assailant in the Bercovitz case 'receives the treatment he deserves as a robber and murderer in his dim prison, while the [foreign assailants in the Cicurel case] enjoy comforts in the palatial buildings called "the Foreigners' Prison," which is situated in the best quarter of the city where the richer class people wish their houses to be.'[66] Cases such as this helped to advance nationalist demands for legal reform.

The judicial proceedings point to the way that state power (both Egyptian and colonial European) could ultimately structure the lives of local residents holding non-Egyptian nationality. The case also illuminates the complexity of creating and maintaining status – class or other social status – through domestic service in inter-war Egypt. Worldly merchants holding Egyptian citizenship, like the Cicurels, may have felt a certain superiority by hiring 'Europeans' to serve in their homes and businesses, much as many downtown homes and businesses, including Moramarco's apartment building and the Cicurel store itself, employed Nubian doormen, who, after abolition, 'replaced slaves in paid servant positions, which maintained the prestige of the aristocratic former slave owners'.[67] Other markers of worldliness were marshalled by domestic employees in their efforts to carve autonomous space in their workplaces: domestic servants brought friends to socialise at their workplaces, drivers used the automobiles of their employers during leisure hours and servants consumed and gifted new, 'Westernised', middle-class commodities such as personal photographs to create affective ties of companionship.[68] Through such practices and their quotidian interactions in work and leisure, lower-middle-class domestic and commercial employees appear to have built a complex social world of overlapping relationships that crossed ethnic, religious and linguistic boundaries. In this, the Cicurel domestic employees shared a wider culture with salesclerks and other

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employees in the Cicurel department store downtown as well as in many of its rival businesses.

Commercial employees

Although by the late 1920s the Cicurel store was considered the largest and most elegant department store in Egypt, locally owned and international branches of department stores formed a significant part of the Egyptian commercial sector and urban geography in the first half of the twentieth century. By the early 1920s, these stores included those of the local or Middle-East based firms of Cicurel, Chemla, Orosdi-Back, Sidnawi, Hannaux, Chalons, Palacci, ‘Ades, Gattegno and Benzion as well as Morums, Stein’s, Raff’s, Roberts Hughes, Mayer, Tiring and Salamander. A number of branches of European department-store chains had also opened in downtown Cairo during this period, such as Davies Bryan and Company (based in North Wales), and at least four branches of French department stores (Au Bon Marché, Au Printemps, Aux Galeries Lafayette, and Les Grands Magasins du Louvre).[69] The department stores innovated in marketing, advertising, window display, the departmental organisation of goods, seasonal sales and promotions, as well as fixed prices. They offered a wider range of items for sale than any other single retail outlet in the country, from cloth and clothing to dining-room sets, table and bed linens, designer evening wear, gifts and toys and perfumes. Customers in department stores came from a multi-ethnic and multi-religious milieu. Egyptian law allowed commercial firms to require unpaid overtime work of their employees in preparation for and during a variety of religious holidays that were associated with gifting or purchasing: the entire month of Ramadan, the three days preceding the (Muslim) ‘Id al-‘Adha, Catholic and Orthodox Christmases, New Year (Gregorian) and authorised *mulids* (for the regions in which they were celebrated).[70] Stores offered sales and distributed catalogues to attract customers during many of these seasons, including advertising for Passover and other Jewish holidays.[71] Perhaps what distinguished these stores the most to shoppers was the presence of relatively large sales staffs. By 1909 stores such as Palacci, Fils and Hayam employed about 120 salesclerks. At the Grand Magasins des Nouveautés, 30 salesclerks worked alongside 62 workers engaged in tailoring.[72]

Egyptian commercial culture had long been characterised by a plurality of ethno-religious groups by the time of Solomon Cicurel’s death. State archives on Egyptian department stores demonstrate that Muslim, Coptic and Jewish Egyptians often worked together with locally resident foreigners of Syrian, Greek, Italian, Armenian or other descent on department-store floors; rarely did one ethnic or religious group completely dominate a selling floor. In 1914, for example, Orosdi-Back employed 245 men and women in its large Cairo department store.[73] At least 13 distinct ethno-national categories were represented among the Orosdi-Back employees, including the catch-all category ‘local subject’, a term which probably represented people born in Egypt, both Muslims and local minorities, such as Jews and Christians.[74] At least 30 Muslims were included in this list, and ‘local subject’ represented the largest group of people in the company’s employ. The category of ‘Ottoman’ subject included the next largest group of people, followed closely by Greeks. Italians were substantially represented, and other nationalities included those holding French, Algerian-French, Austrian, Swiss, Russian, Rumanian, Spanish and English protection.[75] A number of Armenians were included in the local and Ottoman categories, and the list included at least 39 Jews. Some of these employees, like Dimitri Saidi, had names that suggested their families had long resided in Egypt.[76]

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The Cicurel department store and its branches of the ORECO bargain-basement store employed salesclerks with a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds in the first half of the twentieth century.[77] By 1947, about a third of the sales force held 'foreign' citizenship and about a quarter of the Egyptian employees had recognizably Jewish names; about another 8% were Christians, and quite a few Armenians were also employed.[78] Egyptian state officials in the Maslahat al-sharikat, the department charged with monitoring compliance with the 1947 law to Egyptianise joint-stock companies, questioned the nationality status of nearly every salesclerk listed as Egyptian in Cicurel's roster, probably because the vast majority used non-Arabic names (such as Regine, Albert, Henry, Alegra or Jack) or names that were clearly those of local minorities. Such names did not necessarily indicate a particular ethnic or religious identity, however. Qadriyya al-Qattan, a 24-year-old Muslim saleswoman working at the nearby Chemla department store in 1947, was born in Cairo's Muski district. She was known as 'Catherine Cattan' at the company before 1948.[79]

Ethnic diversity in the workplace did mean that members of different religious, ethnic or national communities often worked together in specific departments. The hosiery (*shurrabat*; *bonneterie*) department at Sidnawi's main store in Cairo, for example, was very diverse in 1947; it is one of the few entire departments that can be reconstructed from the archives. The department included the department head and his assistant, a secretary (*katib*), a tailor, 24 salesclerks and two assistant salesclerks or stock assistants. Of these, approximately four were Muslim Egyptians, four Italians, three Greeks, two local Jews and 13 Arab Christians, including at least one Copt and one Armenian. A majority of these Christians had been born in Egypt to parents who had emigrated in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century from other parts of the Ottoman Empire.[80] While the majority of the sales force at the Chemla department store in 1947 probably comprised local Jews (roughly 47% of the women and 51% of the men), Italians made up about 18% of the female clerks. Among the men, Muslim Egyptians also accounted for almost 18%, followed by about 16% Italian.[81] At Au Carnavale de Venise, the sales force was roughly divided evenly among Muslims, Jews, Greeks and Italians.[82]

Department-store salary records do not suggest that these ethnic groups were ranked in a clear hierarchical order. While department stores tended to pay higher salaries to employees with foreign nationality, local Muslims and Christians often commanded high salaries, and there was no overall trend that suggested that one ethnic or religious group dominated the store floor.[83] The complex relationship among ethnicity, gender, position and pay at Sidnawi illustrates the way that ethnic groupings could be disrupted by structural differences in the workplace. Sidnawi was owned and operated by Syrian Christian (*shami*) owners who had emigrated to Egypt in the late 1870s. Sidnawi in 1947 employed 254 salesclerks, nearly one-third of whom were women. The male salesclerks consisted of roughly one-third local Muslims, one-quarter Egyptian Coptic Christians and 15% *shami* Christians, with an additional 11% either Muslim or Arab Christian (indeterminate). Other significant ethnic groups represented included local Jews (7%), and Greeks, Italians and Armenians (roughly 3% each).[84] Among the saleswomen, *shami* Christians represented the largest ethnic group (34%), followed closely by Italians (29%), and then Greeks (19%), Egyptian Copts, Egyptian Jews and Armenians (at 5% each), and finally, Muslim Egyptians (2.5%).[85] Many Muslim Egyptian women were less willing to work as salesclerks because of the public nature of the work.[86]

Common perception held that co-religionists of storeowners earned the highest salaries at department stores.[87] The reality of salesclerk salaries was more complex. At Sidnawi's store in 1947, *shami* men did receive higher-than-average salaries, but so did Italian and

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Jewish salesclerks. A small minority of Greek men earned among the highest salaries, although Greek women earned one of the lowest average women's salaries; Italian women earned the highest salaries among women. Overall, Muslim Egyptians actually earned an average salary higher than the average salary among both men and women, and Coptic and other Arab Christians earned rather average salaries.[88] Armenians earned the lowest average salaries; among the saleswomen, Armenian and Greek women earned nearly equally low salaries.[89] Among Sidnawi's department heads, Greeks, Italians and Jews earned relatively high salaries; the one Muslim male department head earned one of the lowest. The information about the relationship of salary level to ethnic group thus offers further evidence that in structural terms, members of different ethnic groups could be horizontally connected in commercial culture, sometimes more than to their co-religionists. This ethnic mixing occurred among employees at almost all rank levels (that is, department heads, salesclerks, assistant salesclerks and so forth).

Many salesclerks had emigrated within the area of the old Ottoman Empire before the fixing of national boundaries or their linking with ethnicity. Often these employees defined themselves – like Dario Jacoel – as 'local subjects'. Several of the Sidnawi salesmen were in this category. Na'im Turkmani, hired by Sidnawi in 1936, had been born in Aleppo, Syria in August 1900 and came to Egypt in 1913.[90] Paul Baruch was born in Jerusalem and came to Egypt in 1893, following his father, Leon Baruch, who had emigrated four years earlier.[91] Farid Elian was from a *shami* background; his father, Butros Elian, settled in Egypt in 1867, and Farid was born in the Egyptian rural town of Mit Ghamr in November 1899.[92] Claire Harun Cohen was a saleswoman at Cicurel who in 1954 was granted an Egyptian passport, probably as a result of her marriage to Fa'iz Ayyub Sabri.[93] Some of the biographies of individual salesclerks make clear that ethnic and religious identity did not necessarily determine marriage patterns or relationships, and that many employees or their families had undertaken complex trajectories of migration around the Mediterranean.

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Commercial-employee culture

As elements of the Cicurel murder drama suggested, commercial employees had a distinct sense of difference from workers in industries in Egypt in this period. They associated informally and formally in unions among themselves, and prided themselves in the 'cultural competencies' they had developed, many of which depended on their knowledge of other cultures and languages. In the second book of *Drifting Cities*, Stratis Tsirkas depicted the self-perception of café workers in Cairo in this period:

> A cigarette worker is not the same as a waiter. Cigarette workers are something else – how shall I say? – they're real workers, laborers. The factory boss doesn't care if you're tall or short, if you've got an ugly mug, or good manners, or if you know any foreign languages. He pays them for their output, so many thousands of cigarettes. With a waiter, it's different – the boss pays for a particular individual and particular service, see what I mean?'[94]

The social skills so valued in cafés were similar to those necessary for successful department-store salesclerks; several unions included employees from both commercial stores and coffee shops.[95] Like waiters and chauffeurs, many salesclerks spoke multiple languages. In the 1920s, local Greek and Italian saleswomen spoke French and Arabic in addition to their native languages and were compensated for their polyvocality.[96] D'Aumale noted in the 1940s: 'In Cairo, the saleswomen in the large stores, Chemla, Sednawi, for instance ... are required to speak four or five languages: Arabic, English, Italian, Greek, and always French.'[97] Many Arabic-speaking Egyptians who wanted to enter urban commercial establishments attended night school at the various cultural

institutes in Cairo and Alexandria for language training.[98] Subhi Fahmi, hired as a salesclerk at Cicurel in September 1949, had received a diploma from the Italian teacher's school in Mansura.[99] Even most of the salesclerks in training (known as '*caisse* boys') at Cicurel in the 1940s held certificates of French education.[100]

Many informal ties apparently cohered commercial workers into a specific community. Although almost all department-store employees lived outside the stores,[101] many retail employees resided together in certain neighbourhoods in the city. They often lived with their families or in small rented apartments in lower-middle-class neighbourhoods adjacent to wealthier districts, such as 'Abbasiyya in Cairo. They spent much of their leisure time together, going out in the city in mixed-gender groups, or they held 'supper parties' together in their homes;[102] one employee at Sidnawi was remembered as 'jovial, liked by everyone, a bon vivant. He went out at night, went out with women — which did not please my father. He led a dissipated life ... I remember [him] arriving home by taxi very late one night dressed as a Pierrot; he had been to a fancy dress ball.'[103] Department stores themselves might be the site of premarital romantic relationships. One sister of salesclerks met secretly with her fiancé, who also worked in retail, 'behind Chemla, the department store, on the steps. We stood at the window, next to each other, and talked and talked and talked; we exchanged a little kiss from time to time, a tender touch. That's all. I went out on the pretext of needing to get samples of fabric. That was my cover.'[104] The free social association of men and women in particular helped them to mark salesclerk identity as 'modern' and 'cosmopolitan'.

An informal social bond among salesclerks was probably reinforced by the fact that a relatively large number of sales staff members were related to each other. A common practice was to hire sisters to work as saleswomen in the same department or store.[105] An extensive salesclerk network existed among the family of Hazqil 'Ezra Danus, a Jewish merchant of calico cloth in Cairo's Gamaliyya district since probably the 1910s. One of his younger sons, Victor Danus, 23 years old, worked as a stockclerk (*murasila*) in Cicurel's Cairo store in 1947. Three years later he was hired as a salesclerk in Little Queen's Cairo shop. His older brother, Sion, went to work at Chemla in October 1929, when he was 14 years old, eventually becoming a well-paid salesclerk. Ephraim Danus, probably another brother but possibly a cousin, was hired as a salesclerk at Cicurel in November 1948 at the age of 26; that he immediately earned a high salary suggests he had been previously employed elsewhere as well.[106]

Store employees did formally associate in a number of unions, both independent and store-sponsored, that included employees of different ethnic, religious and national backgrounds. Commercial employees, domestic servants and automobile drivers all participated in a series of strikes and petition campaigns in the summer and fall of 1907.[107] Salesclerks struck with other industrial and commercial workers during the nationalist strikes of the 1919 revolution against British imperialism, and like many of those involved in the strike, they formed several unions in August 1919.[108] The employees of the department-store branches of Morums, Sidnawi, Gamal, Roberts Hughes, Singer and others in the provincial capital of Mansura, for example, formed a branch of the International Society of Cairo Employees in late August 1919. The group, which included salesclerks, hoped to address the needs of 'the employees, located in the provinces far from the commercial center and encountering great difficulties in claiming their rights'.[109] An International Association of Commercial Employees of Cairo continued to be active through the early 1920s. The group seems to have been primarily an occupational welfare group, although the leaders perhaps held more radical views. The union's general secretary, Robert Goldenberg, was an editor of the local French-language magazine

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L'Egypte Nouvelle, and the magazine published weekly bulletins on the activities of the union and its upcoming meetings.[110] The group held a conference in March 1923 on 'Work and Social Culture', in which Goldenberg 'traced the process of the capitalist evolution' from the Middle Ages, analysed the Mexican revolutions, and called for 'the reaction of the masses'.[111] Goldenberg editorialised regularly in the magazine on political issues: in January 1924, he exposed the long working hours and low pay of store employees, argued that 'it is this division of our economic structure into hierarchies or classes that causes all social malaise', and advocated that the labour laws promulgated in Europe should be applicable in Egypt.[112] The magazine chastised local department stores that engaged in unfair labour practices. In December 1923, it published a call to boycott Tiring Department store because of 'an unjust prolongation of work hours [which] ruthlessly abused the physical strength of employees'.[113] In May 1925, the magazine condemned the local branch of the French department store, Aux Galeries Lafayette, for prohibiting union membership among its employees.[114]

In the early months of 1943, at least nine unions (*niqabat*) involving commercial employees registered with the state (the Ministry of Social Affairs), after the Wafd government legalised trade unions for the first time in Egypt.[115] These local unions probably did have a visible presence in the civic polity. The Union of Freedom for Employees and Workers of Commercial Stores (*niqabat al-hurriyya li-mustakhdami wa-'ummal al-mahall al-tijariyya*), was based in Cairo and registered in 1943. One of the members of this union, Sa'id Hilmi Amin, composed a nationalistic poem to the King on the occasion of Ramadan in the middle 1940s.[116] In 1946 or early 1947, the Zaqaziq Union of Department Store Workers and Employees, because of their 'Egyptian feelings', had planned to provide the illumination for the pavilion at the centre of the town's celebrations for the King's birthday.[117] A Union of the Employees and Workers of the Egyptian Products Sales Company and Its Branches also existed by 1946. In early August 1946, the union president, Ahmad Hifni Nassar, sent a letter of good wishes to King Faruq, after a visit to the 'Abdin palace for a royal *iftar* (held 1 August 1946) as part of Ramadan festivities that year. Nassar worked as the superintendent (*amin*) of the warehouses for the Egyptian Products Sales Company, overseeing about 90 workers.[118] The union was still active in December 1953.[119]

At the same time, other more explicitly Marxist unions began to organise store clerks; these unions tended to be more multi-ethnic in character. Muhammad Yusuf al-Mudarrik was president of a union of commercial-store workers (*niqabat 'ummal al-mahall al-tijariyya*) in 1940.[120] At this time, al-Mudarrik worked as a bookkeeper in a blacksmith's shop and had contacts among the leadership of the textile workers' union at Shubra al-Khayma and among Egyptian Communists.[121] This union of commercial store workers struggled for the legal restriction of working hours in order to benefit the welfare of the workers and their families (to improve their health and culture socially and 'sportively'). The union executive board included at least nine other members in 1940. By 1944, the International Union of Commercial Establishment Employees, a more Marxist group, was led by Da'ud Nahum and was a 'union based on the clerks of the large and fashionable department stores in the European section of Cairo – Cicurel, Shimla, Sidnawi, 'Adas and Benzion'.[122] These commercial employees participated in the wider nationalist movement of the 1940s, including the strikes of 1946.[123] That local minorities such as Jews, Armenians or *shami* Christians who worked in department stores would have wanted to be considered 'Egyptian' and work within the broader nationalist movement was not as surprising in the 1940s and 1950s as later historiography (and nationalist memory) has portrayed.

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A sense of community among salesclerks was fostered as well outside the structure of union activity through more informal associations. The weekly magazine *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, linked in the 1920s with the International Association of Commercial Employees in Cairo, acted as a forum for employees in the cosmopolitan commercial culture of Cairo and Alexandria. Written in French, the magazine contained the schedules of a number of middle-class Europeanised cultural offerings, such as classical-music concerts, small art exhibitions and tea dances at local establishments. It regularly carried news (and advertisements) about local department stores, including notes in its society columns about the travels of department-store management,[124] the holiday promotions of the stores[125] and the condition of the public spaces along Fu'ad Street, the workspace of many commercial employees where a large number of department stores and boutiques were located.[126] Its classified advertising section often carried listings for placements among commercial employees, including salesclerks,[127] as well as for language lessons, piano lessons or small apartments for rent. It offered regular columns detailing the latest French fashions and their adaptation to Egypt for the new season, providing specific information needed by salesclerks working with changing clothing fashion at department stores.[128] In addition, the magazine and the union organised social events to build community among commercial employees (and raise money for the union's operations). In April 1923, the union presented a 'Grand Corso Carnavalesque', in which about 25 companies, including retail stores such as Cicurel, the Bon Marché, Mawardi, Salamandre, Paul Favre's shoe store and Palacci, Fils & Hayam designed decorated cars to promote themselves at the Cairo International Sporting Club in Bulaq.[129] The Corso was a social event, especially for store employees and their families; a dance was held after the ceremony at the Cinema Metropole, and *L'Egypte Nouvelle* carried extensive coverage of the festivities. These less-formal yet organised channels in which many salespeople associated off the selling floor particularly emphasised their 'modern', 'cosmopolitan' cultural and consumption competencies. Many employees took advantage of the colonial perception of the superiority of the foreign to establish themselves through these competencies as political actors.

This multiplicity, then, was an ordinary aspect of urban Egyptian experience in the first half of the twentieth century, not only among the many locally resident foreigners and non-Muslim ethnic groups in Egypt, including Jews, Greeks, Italians, Maltese, Armenians, Syrians, French, English, Eastern Europeans and others, but also among many of the Muslim Egyptians – often, quite problematically, labelled 'native' or 'indigenous' Egyptians – who worked, shopped or socialised with them. Urban commercial culture in particular was polyethnic and polyvocal, with employees holding different nationalities and from different religio-ethnic groups often working closely together on store floors, as well as socialising together formally or informally after work. It has been difficult to capture the complexity of urban Egypt in this period in a way that acknowledges this multiplicity of ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural communities while still attending to the differentials in power that undergirded it. As the Cicurel murder case demonstrated, such differentials could be matters of life and death but also could be utilised to contest class and labour relations more subtly. The claim-making aspect of cosmopolitanism, coupled with the relatively intimate boundaries of the spheres of Mediterreanean migration and of service and sales work, undoubtedly created an intense economy of similitude and difference in which class and racial distinctions were policed more vigilantly than in other sectors of work and residence.

Despite the intrinsic difficulty of capturing the full meanings of such encounters, it is evident that these were more than a series of largely independent communities living side

by side. Deep and overlapping ties of friendship, of sexuality, of occupational culture, and even of conflict linked the lower- and lower-middle-class members of these groups in distinctive ways. Although this polyvocal urban culture was re-politicised and became increasingly untenable in the years after the upheavals of the Greek civil war, the rise and exportation of Italian Fascism, and the founding of Israel in 1948, these mixed communities of lower- and lower-middle-class employees may have lasted in Egypt longer than those of their more wealthy (and thus more mobile) co-religionists.[130] This suggests that a view of history 'from below' of these different communities – from the floors of the Cicurel villa or store, for instance – might revise our understandings of identity, public space and culture, and even the periodisation of history in Egypt in the first half of the twentieth century. Such a picture of the ethnic entanglements of lower-class Cairo also indicates the importance of theorising conflict and specifying the local conditions in lived cosmopolitan or Mediterranean identities. Re-linking Mediterranean cosmopolitanism with colonialism allows scholars to contextualise the use of cultural competencies as not only exclusionary mechanisms but also as claim-making devices. Such an analytical practice points to the fractured nature of cosmopolitan society and helps to remind us not to romanticise cosmopolitanism or Mediterraneanism as an exceptional sphere of uniquely tolerant politics.

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Notes

1. Horden and Purcell, "The Mediterranean and 'the New Thalassology'," 725, 732, 729.
2. Stoler, in *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, uses the term "cultural competencies" to "index psychological propensities and moral susceptibilities that are seen to shape which individuals are suitable for inclusion in the national community and whether those of ambiguous racial membership are to be classified as subjects or citizens within it" (p. 84).
3. See, for example, Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 90.
4. See Harvey, "Cosmopolitanism and the Banality of Geographical Evils," 530; Cheah and Robbins, *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, 2, 22–3; Hanley, "Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies," 1346–7. On cosmopolitanism as a new term for globalisation, see Singerman and Amar, *Cairo Cosmopolitan*, 30–4.
5. Harvey, "Cosmopolitanism," 529–30.
6. Zubaida, "Cosmopolitanism and the Middle East," 15–16.
7. Zubaida, "Cosmopolitanism and the Middle East," 26.
8. Tignor, "The Egyptian Revolution of 1919: New Directions in the Egyptian Economy," 48. Cromer does elaborate such an argument in his *Modern Egypt* (London: Macmillan, 1908, 2 vols), 2: 441. See also Van der Veer, "Colonial Cosmopolitanism," 166.
9. See Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 112–13; Hanley, "Grieving Cosmopolitanism," 1348.
10. Fahmy, "For Cavafy, with Love and Squalor," 272.
11. Hanley, "Grieving Cosmopolitanism," 1358–9.
12. "Blended" is Hanley's term in "Grieving Cosmopolitanism," 1351; "relational" is Zachary Lockman's in *Comrades and Enemies*, 8.

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13. See, for example, Tzalas, *Farewell to Alexandria*; Cachia and Cachia, *Landlocked Islands: Two Alien Lives in Egypt*; Rossant, *Memories of a Lost Egypt*; Lively, *Oleander, Jacaranda: A Childhood Perceived*; Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*. Joel Beinin provides an insightful and sensitive analysis of this literature among Egyptian Jews in Chapter 8 of *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*.
14. See, for example, Kitroeff, *The Greeks in Egypt 1919–1937: Ethnicity and Class*; Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt, 1725–1975*; Reid, "Syrian Christians, the Rags-to-Riches Story, and Free Enterprise"; Shlala, "Mediterranean Migration, Cosmopolitanism, and the Law." A relatively large number of studies exist on the Jewish communities of Egypt. See, for example, Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914–1952*; Shamir, *The Jews of Egypt*; Landau, "The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: Some Socio-Economic Aspects"; Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt, 1920–1970*; Ahmad, *Al-Hayat al-iqtisadiyya wa'l-'ijtima'iyya li'l-yahud fi Misr, 1947–1956*; 'Ali, *Malaff al-yahud fi Misr al-haditha*. Also empirically rich, Beinin's *Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry* stands out as one of the few non-teleological accounts in this literature on Egyptian Jews.
15. See Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise, and Economic Change in Egypt, 1918–1952* and *Egyptian Textiles and British Capital, 1930–1956*; see also Tignor, "The Economic Activities of Foreigners in Egypt, 1920–1950"; Vitalis, "On the Theory and Practice of Compradors" and *When Capitalists Collide*; Karanasou, "Egyptianisation"; Baraka, *The Egyptian Upper Class Between Revolutions, 1919–1952*; Deeb, "Bank Misr and the emergence of the local bourgeoisie in Egypt"; Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in 19th-Century Beirut* takes a similar approach to business elites and intercommunal identity in Lebanon.
16. Hanley, "Foreignness and Localness in Alexandria, 1880–1914," 27–33. In addition, see Wahba, "Cairo Memories"; Ruiz, "Intimate Disputes, Illicit Violence" and Shlala,"Mediterranean Migration." On a similar situation in Tunis, see Clancy-Smith, "Gender in the City."
17. Fahmy, "For Cavafy," 272.
18. Fahmy, "Towards a Social History of Modern Alexandria," 281.
19. Mabro, "Alexandria 1860–1960: the Cosmopolitan Identity," 261; Rodrigue, "Difference and Tolerance in the Ottoman Empire," 87–98; Ilbert, Yannakakis and Hassoun, *Alexadria 1860-1960*, 26.
20. Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, documents female domestic labourers and commercial peddlers in an earlier period. Brief descriptions of department stores and their employees can be found in: Kupferschmidt, *The Orosdi-Back Saga*, 44; Köse, "*Basare der Moderne von Pera bis Stamboul und ihre Angestellten*"; Frierson, "Cheap and Easy: The Creation of Consumer Society in Late Ottoman Society," 248–9; Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman*, 62–7; Abaza, *Changing Consumer Cultures of Modern Egypt*, 70–80; Badran, *Feminism, Islam, and Nation*, 172–5; Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press*, 157–8.
21. On the development of the judicial system and the parquet system for investigating crimes, see Brown, "The Precarious Life and Slow Death of the Mixed Courts of Egypt," 34–5. The British reduced taxes as part of their dismantling of state services, such as education. See Chalcraft, *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories*, 128, 147; Brinton, *The Mixed Courts of Egypt*, 177–9. Although the regime of Capitulations was abolished by the Montreux Convention in 1937, foreign judicial officials continued to participate in trying foreigners until 1949.
22. Chalcraft, *Striking Cabbies*, 128; Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 184.
23. See Brinton, *The Mixed Courts of Egypt*, 6; Shlala, "Mediterranean Migrations," 3.
24. Chalcraft, *Striking Cabbies*, 127.
25. Horden and Purcell, "The Mediterranean," 733–7; Wigen, "Oceans of History: Introduction," 718–20. On Egypt as an anomaly in Horden and Purcell's study, see Bagnall, "Egypt and the Concept of the Mediterranean," 339–47.
26. Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies: Labor, Leisure, and the London Shopgirl, 1880–1920*, 27–32.
27. On the "class transitional" character of sales work, see Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies*, 23, 29, 3, 193; and Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 6.
28. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 146, proposes this term as a framework for understanding modernity, but I think it can be equally useful in the context of cosmopolitanism as a kind of modernity.

29. Prakash, *Mumbai Fables*, 199.
30. Akyeampong, "Race, Identity, and Citizenship in Black Africa: The Case of the Lebanese in Ghana."
31. Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*, 5.
32. For the details of the Cicurel murder, I have drawn primarily on the newspaper coverage in the Egyptian daily newspapers *al-Ahram* and the *Egyptian Gazette* in March 1927. See articles in *The Egyptian Gazette*, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15 March 1927; and *al-Ahram*, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17 March 1927. The trial was also covered in *al-Siyasa* in the same period. See also Raafat, "The House of Cicurel," *Ahram Weekly*, 15 Dec. 1994 and (unpublished expanded version); Raafat, *Cairo, The Glory Years*, 258–61. Crime records and court testimony can be complex sources for historians. This case presents a unique window into the specific relationships and activities of a particular group of people, but it is difficult to ascertain from media coverage of the police investigations the absolute veracity of some of the depictions. It seems likely that the police obtained some of the information while the suspects were in police custody and under emotional (and perhaps physical) pressure to confess. The reports are somewhat lopsided because the four men did not equally supply information to investigators. The defendants holding foreign nationality, who knew they would be tried in foreign courts that did not apply a death penalty, hardly confessed at all, while their stateless comrade, who was to be tried locally and was indeed the only defendant ultimately put to death, was denounced constantly in the Cairo press for making a continual stream of confessions, possibly in an attempt to mitigate his charge and sentence. Several men also changed elements of their accounts as the investigations progressed. I have tried to read these reports with a critical eye, especially considering I have drawn on the press reports of the investigations rather than the police or consular dossiers themselves. Despite this ambivalence about the specific truth claims of the case, the testimony and coverage are still useful to historians in that the defendants and witnesses sought to be convincing and understood as telling the truth. Their attempts to seem plausible suggest to me that their testimonies do reflect at least in general, and often quite specifically, the organisation of this social world. Microhistory as a subfield has dealt with these issues. On microhistory, see, for example, Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* and "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It."
33. Ilbert, Yannakakis and Hassoun, *Alexandria 1860–1960*, 21.
34. "Murder of Solomon Cicurel: three more arrests made," *The Egyptian Gazette*, 15 March 1927, 3.
35. See Beinin, *Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*, 45.
36. *Al-Ahram*, 7 March 1927.
37. Wright and Cartwright, *Twentieth-Century Impressions of Egypt*. On the Cicurel family, see also Beinin, *Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*, 47–9; Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt 1914–1952*, 44–5; Mizrahi, *L'Egypte et Ses Juifs*, 64–5; Ahmad, *al-Hayat al-iqtisadiyya*, 38–40; and Raafat, "The House of Cicurel." See also Albert Cicurel, interview by author, Paris, 8 Aug. 1998.
38. Wright and Cartwright, *Twentieth-Century Impressions of Egypt*, 377.
39. Interview 35:1 with Yvonne Shohet (née Chemla), 20 Nov. and 10 Dec. 1964 in Israel, pp. 46–7 of transcript, deposited at the Oral History Department, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.
40. This latter was the name by 1924 (see Cicurel catalogue for winter 1924–5, printed by Léon Ullmann, Paris, in author's possession).
41. Schemiel, *Le Caire: Sa Vie, Son Histoire, Son Peuple*, 390. See Cicurel catalogue, winter 1924–5.
42. *Al-Ahram*, 5 March 1927.
43. *Al-Ahram*, 5 March 1927.
44. *Al-Ahram*, 5 March 1927; *Al-Ahram*, 9 March 1927.
45. *Al-Ahram*, 13 March 1927.
46. *Al-Ahram*, 17 March 1927.
47. *Al-Ahram*, 13 March 1927.
48. *Al-Ahram*, 5 March 1927.
49. George Debono vs. Francesco Azzopardi, HBM Supreme Court at Cairo, dossier no. 12 of 1927, in FO 841/262, UK National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.
50. *Al-Ahram*, 10 March 1927.

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51. Wahba, "Cairo Memories," 76.
52. "Mr. Cicurel's Assassination: Details of Giza Drama," *The Egyptian Gazette*, 7 March 1927, 3.
53. *Al-Ahram*, 9 March 1927. Hanley, "Grieving Cosmopolitianism," 1358, effectively critiques the use of alcohol and cafés as emblems of the secular public sphere presumably nurtured by cosmopolitanism. My interest here lies less in these sites and practices as codes for beliefs. Rather, they demonstrate circuits of sociability in which these subjects interacted.
54. Endogamy often represents the limit to communal identity in many recent analyses. See for example, Ilbert, Yannakakis and Hassoun, *Alexandria 1860–1960*, 69; see also Kitroeff, *Greeks in Egypt* (pp. 13–14) who suggests that because Greek Orthodox doctrine rejects mixed marriages, the Greeks in Egypt had the highest rate of endogamy among ethnic groups. It may be that Christo's parents were an anomaly, but this case suggests much intermixing.
55. *Al-Ahram*, 7 March and 5 March 1927.
56. *The Egyptian Gazette*, 7 March 1927, 3.
57. *Al-Ahram*, 13 March 1927.
58. *Al-Ahram*, 13 March 1927.
59. *Al-Ahram*, 13 March 1927.
60. *Al-Ahram*, 5 March 1927.
61. *Al-Ahram*, 11 March 1927. Little is known about the du Saab family, except that it reportedly included among its offspring the writer Andrée Chedid. See Raafat, *Cairo*, 262.
62. *Al-Ahram*, 9 March 1927. Chalcraft, *Striking Cabbies*, argues that although the formal roles of guilds in taxation and representation were eliminated in the 1890s, old guild leaders continued to hold an important informal status in many professions in the first decades of the twentieth century, especially among coachmen, cabbies and carters. Automobile drivers struck twice as a group in 1907. See especially pp. 167 and 176.
63. *Al-Ahram*, 13 March 1927 and *The Egyptian Gazette*, 15 March 1927, 3.
64. "Maqtal Sulamun Shikuril [murder of Solomon Cicurel]," *al-Ahram*, 5 March 1927, 1.
65. "Murder of Mr. Soloman Cicurel: Second Blood-stained Knife Discovered," *The Egyptian Gazette*, 10 March 1927, 3.
66. "The Egyptian Press: Murder of Mr. Cicurel; Difficulties of the Capitulations System," *The Egyptian Gazette*, 8 March 1927, 4.
67. Smith, "Place, Class, and Race in the Barabra Café: Nubians in Egyptian Media," 404.
68. On the consumption of photographs, see Micklewright, "Personal, Public, and Political (Re) Constructions: Photographs and Consumption" and Graham-Brown, *Images of Women*.
69. On the Louvre and Bon Marché, see advertisements, *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, 1 Jan. 1924, special issue.
70. Text of Bylaw of 15 May 1951 for "*heures de travail*", in *La Gazette Fiscale, Commerciale et Industrielle* 1, no. 11–12 (1951): 438.
71. Chemla advertisement in *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, no. 146, 11 April 1925, 441.
72. Wright and Cartwright, *Twentieth-Century Impressions of Egypt*, 368, 376–7.
73. List of employees and their nationality, enclosed in letter from Leon Orosdi to Defrance, dated Manchester, 4 Nov. 1914, le Caire-Amabassade, 602/546, le Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN). This list did not specify type of employment, except for the "*domestiques*" and directors.
74. "Local subjects" is often a confusing term in this period, as Egyptian citizenship did not exist in 1914. Before that, Egyptians would have been considered Ottoman subjects, as would have others born outside Egypt but still within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire, whether or not they had moved to Egypt. That this document distinguished between "local subjects" and "Ottomans" suggests to me, however, that in this case "local subject" did refer more specifically to those born and/or domiciled for a long period in Egypt.
75. Not all people in the employee list were classified by nationality. List of employees and their nationality, enclosed in letter from Leon Orosdi to Defrance, dated Manchester, 4 Nov. 1914, le Caire-Amabassade, 602/546, le Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN).
76. The Greeks tended to move into rural areas or provincial cities in Egypt more than other groups of migrants. See Kitroeff, *Greeks in Egypt*, 21, 85, 127.
77. This archival data comes from the investigations after 1947 of Egyptian officials in the Department of Corporations (*maslahat al-sharikat*; hereafter MS) to monitor the mandatory Egyptianisation of capital, administration and staffs of joint-stock companies registered in

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Egypt. Companies submitted lists of their employees and workers with their salaries, type of work and nationality status noted. Frequently companies offered other information on employees, such as when they were hired, date and place of birth, or more rarely in which department in the store they worked or their educational background, and so on, although this was not regularised. Often MS officials required companies document nationality status, and in these cases much additional information might have been submitted on individual employees. For a more complete discussion of these records, see Karanasou, "Egyptianisation". It is difficult to compare accurately the Cicurel employees to those at Sidnawi, Chemla and other stores because the Cicurel employee lists for 1947 do not include specific nationality of the foreign employees (they are merely listed as foreign). Although companies were not always honest in their disclosures, the nature of the MS monitoring appears to have fairly quickly encouraged compliance. See Dammond with Raby, *The Lost World of the Egyptian Jews*, 195. Since many of the employee lists include dates of hire, the files can be read backwards to glimpse salesclerk ethnicity in the 1910, 1920s and 1930s.

78. See 1947 employee lists for Cicurel, MS 75, Egyptian National Archives (*Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya*, DWQ).
79. See Chemla employee lists and notes, 53, 204–5 MS 73, DWQ: she had to submit her birth certificate to the MS to convince them that she was Muslim Egyptian, since her name had been 'Europeanised'.
80. See employee lists and supporting biographical data for the 1947 employee lists and the 1949 employee lists in Sidnawi's file: MS 76, DWQ.
81. See employee lists for 1947, Chemla, MS 73, DWQ. At least two department heads were Chemla family members: Albert Sabban and Leon Shohet. For the identities of the cousins, see Interview 35:1 with Yvonne Shohet (née Chemla).
82. See 1947 employee list, MS 164, DWQ.
83. See 1947 employee list, Sidnawi, MS 76; 1947 employee lists, Chemla, MS 73, DWQ.
84. These figures on ethnicity should be considered rough. Wherever possible, I have followed the notations made by MS inspectors on the employee lists or the self-descriptions (of foreign nationality) provided by the companies. In other cases I have tried to categorise employees based on their names. Karanasou, who has also estimated ethnic breakdown for Sidnawi, writes, "the largest ethnic group (74.5 percent) [of the company, not merely of salesclerks] were the Arabs, half of them native Egyptians and the other half Shawam [*shuwam*]. The other ethnic groups, much smaller in numbers, were the Jews, various Southern Europeans and the Armenians" (Karanasou, "Egyptianisation," 275). She also notes that "[b]y looking at the religious denomination of employees we find that Christians, be they foreigners, naturalised citizens or Copts, were dominant numerically (64.3 percent). ... [T]his was a result of the Sidnawis' preference for their co-religionists" (Ibid., 278).
85. See 1947 employee lists and following lists for inspectors' notations, Sidnawi, MS 76, DWQ.
86. See Karanasou, "Egyptianisation," 273, 282–3.
87. See Karanasou, "Egyptianisation," 278, 327.
88. Muslim Egyptians (both men and women) earned on average LE 19.776; the average overall salary was LE 18.129. The average men's salary was LE 20.760; Muslim Egyptian men earned on average 19.997. Copts averaged LE 18.148 and Arab Christians LE 18.374; the general average salary among salesclerks was LE 18.129. Arab Christian men earned on average LE 22.222; Coptic men averaged LE 18.796. The average salesmen's salary was LE 20.760.
89. The salary figures for Sidnawi are computed from its 1947 employee list, MS 76, DWQ.
90. Employee lists and doc., 50–60, Sidnawi, MS 76, DWQ. He obtained Egyptian nationality papers in 1950.
91. Employee lists and doc., 50–60, Sidnawi, MS 76, DWQ.
92. Sidnawi, MS 76, DWQ.
93. On Danus and Cohen, see 1956 employee lists, Cicurel file, MS 75, DWQ.
94. Tsirkas, *Drifting Cities*, 271. The waiters, who work for "a Swiss who owned a confectioner's shop and bar, with two branches in town" (Groppi?) were "Greek and Italian" (p. 270). Born in Cairo in 1911 to Greek Christian parents, Tsirkas was known as an accurate portrayer of the lower-middle-class cosmopolitanism of Egypt in the 1930s and 1940s. See Rodenbeck, "Alexandria in Cavafy, Durrell, and Tsirkas," 153. Tsirkas, whose real name was Yannis Hadziandreas, grew up in the 'Abdin neighborhood of Cairo.

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95. A "Union of the workers of the Groppi stores and company" was registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs with 140 members. Groppi owned a chain of fashionable confectioners and tearooms in Egypt. '*Niqabat 'ummal al-maqahi wa'l-mahallat al-'umumiyya*' was based in Alexandria. See "Bayan bi'l-niqabat al-musajjala bi-Wizarat al-Shu'un al-Ijtima'iyya," 1943, 'Abdin, 529, DWQ.
96. French consul to Mme. Cruppi, Cairo, 14 April 1921, le Caire-Ambassade 602/245, CADN. See also the *petites annonces* in *L'Egypte Nouvelle*; Letter from Lefevre-Pontalis to Millerand, Cairo, 15 Feb. 1920, a/s marché du travail en Egypte, le Caire-Ambassade 602/245, CADN.
97. Jacques d'Aumale, *Voix de l'Orient, souvenirs d'un diplomate* (1945), 75, quoted in Kupferschmidt, *The Orosdi-Back Saga*, 45; see also Ilbert, Yannakakis and Hassoun, *Alexandria 1860–1960*, 110.
98. Rizq 'Abd al-Raziq 'Abd al-Ghani, manager of Cicurel's Alexandria branch store, interview by author, Alexandria, 25 May 1997.
99. 1949 employee lists, Cicurel, MS 75, DWQ.
100. "Taqrir al-taftish," (of main Cairo store, Fu'ad Street), 10 July 1950, 53–4, Cicurel, MS 75, DWQ.
101. This is in contrast with many employees in nineteenth-century European department stores. See Miller, *The Bon Marché*, 105–6.
102. 'Abd al-Ghani interview, op cit.; Yusuf Darwish, interview by author, Cairo, 8 June 1997.
103. Interview with Ines Toussieh Escojido, in Dammond, *The Lost World*, 264–5.
104. Ibid., 268.
105. See Sidnawi 1947 employee lists and doc. 50–60; Sidnawi 1951 employee list, MS 76, DWQ.
106. Hazqil Danus's national identity card is copied in both the Little Queen and Chemla files. See 1947 employee lists, Cicurel, MS 75; 1950 Little Queen employee lists, MS 73; Chemla employee lists and docs. 129, 204–5; 1949 Cicurel employee lists, MS 75, DWQ. For another example of a family of salesclerks, see interview with Ines Toussieh Escojido, in Dammond, *Lost World*, 264–71.
107. Chalcraft, *Striking Cabbies*, 176.
108. See Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 111. See also "L'Agitation travailliste: les employés de commerce et d'industrie," *La Bourse Egyptienne* (Alex. ed.), 22 Aug. 1919, 2.
109. "Un Nouveau Syndicat," *La Bourse Egyptienne* (Alex. ed.), 27 Aug. 1919, 2; "L'Agitation Travailliste: dans un magasin de notre ville," *La Bourse Egyptienne* (Alex. ed.), 17 Sept. 1919.
110. See "Un Délit d'Opinion," *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, no. 91, 22 March 1924, 8. Goldenberg was arrested and jailed for his activism in March 1924.
111. *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, no. 38, 17 March 1923, 12.
112. Goldenberg, "Employeurs and employés," *L'Egypte Nouvelle* 2, n. 80, 5 Jan. 1924, 2. For another example, see Goldenberg, "Autour du Movement Prolétarien: Syndicalisme et Syndicats: Quelques Considérations Générales," *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, n. 26, 24 Dec. 1922, 11–12.
113. *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, n. 75, 1 Dec. 1923, viii.
114. *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, n. 150, 9 May 1925, 591.
115. "Bayan bi'l-niqabat al-musajjala bi-Wizarat al-Shu'un al-Ijtima'iyya, 1943," 'Abdin, 529, DWQ. On Law 85 of (Sept.) 1942, which granted legal recognition to the trade unions, see Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 291–6.
116. It is likely that this poem was written for a royal *iftar*, as it is enclosed with other documents relating to those festivities and it is undated without a cover letter. The poem is enclosed in a folder marked '*niqabat al-hurriyya li-mustakhdami wa-'ummal al-mahall al-tijariyya/ bidun tarikh*' in Folder 530 (*iltimasat*: *niqabat*, 1946–9), 'Abdin, DWQ.
117. Shakwa from 'Abd al-Wahhab?, president of the Zaqaziq Union of Department Store Workers and Employees [*niqabat 'ummal wa-mustakhdami al-mahall al-tijariyya bi-zaqaziq*] to the King, dated Zaqaziq, 27 Feb. 1947, in 'Abdin, box 26, DWQ.
118. 1947 employee lists, Egyptian Products Sales Co., MS 74, DWQ.
119. Letter from union secretary to MS, dated 16 Dec. 1953 (doc. 82), Egyptian Products Sales Co., MS 74, DWQ.

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120. Petition to the King dated 13 Jan. 1940 and signed by Yusuf al-Mudarrik and nine others. Petition and summary of petition enclosed in file marked "*niqabat muwazzafi al-mahall wa'l-sharikat al-tijariyya*, 21 November 1947," in 'Abdin 529, DWQ.
121. By early 1945, al-Mudarrik had joined the communist group later known as New Dawn (*al-fajr al-jadid*). See Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 315.
122. Ibid., 328–9; see also 333–5.
123. On these strikes, see Ibid., 335–49.
124. See, for example, the news that Samy Goldstein, the former director of Morums department store, had left Egypt for a new job (*L'Egypte Nouvelle*, no. 2, 9 July 1922, 12); the report of a fire on the terrace of the Bon Marché (*L'Egypte Nouvelle*, no. 59, 11 Aug. 1923, vii); the change of directorship of the local branch of the Galeries Lafayette in Aug. 1924 (*L'Egypte Nouvelle*, no. 114, 30 Aug. 1924, iii.)
125. See, for example, its coverage of the 14th of July celebration at Au Bon Marché in 1923 (*L'Egypte Nouvelle*, n. 55, 14 July 1923, 20); or its coverage of the season's catalogues of different local department stores (that is, *l'Egypte Nouvelle*, n. 125, 15 Nov. 1924, vii–viii; or no. 126, 22 Nov. 1924, vii).
126. See, for example, articles on the conditions of the trees lining the street and the sidewalks, *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, n. 118, 27 Sept, 1924, iii; no. 121, 18 Oct. 1924, iv.
127. See, for example, *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, n. 125, 15 November 1924, viii.
128. The "*Chiffons*" column was a regular feature of the magazine in this period, aimed certainly at those who shopped at department stores and fashionable boutiques, but also providing the "merchandise training" to complement the knowledge that the clerks developed on the job. The columns covered very specific areas of fashion in exacting detail, that is: coats; hats; dresses; lingerie; furs; gloves; tennis shoes; and so on. See, for example, *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, n. 68, 13 Oct. 1923, iii; or *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, n. 111, 9 Aug. 1924, iii.
129. See *al-Lata'if al-Musawwara*, vol. 9, no. 430, 7 May 1923, 5, 8–9; "Cairo Corso," *The Egyptian Gazette*, 25 April 1923, 6; and various articles in *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, including "Nice au Caire," n. 41, 7 April 1923, 13; back cover advertisement, n. 43, 21 April 1923; "Le Corso Carnavalesque," n. 44, 28 April 1923, 15–16. See also "Le Corso Fleuri," *La Bourse Egyptienne*, Alexandria edition, 24 April 1923, 3.
130. Based on anecdotal information, I suspect many of these employees remained in Egypt after the nationalisations of 1956–61. On the debates about the departure of the Greek community, see the contributions in *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 35, no. 2 (2009).

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