

Nancy Y. Reynolds

NATIONAL SOCKS AND THE “NYLON WOMAN”:
MATERIALITY, GENDER, AND NATIONALISM
IN TEXTILE MARKETING IN SEMICOLONIAL
EGYPT, 1930–56

Abstract

The specific ways that cloth—“foreign silks,” “durable Egyptian cottons,” and “artificial silks”—emerged as a potent and visible symbol through which to contest the relations of colonialism and establish national community in Egypt varied with the changing realities of Egypt’s political economy. The country’s early importation of textiles despite its cultivation of raw cotton, the growth of its state-protected local mechanized industry working long- and medium-staple cotton for a largely lower-class market, and that industry’s diversification into artificial silk technologies all helped structure a shift from “foreign silks” to “the nylon woman” as tropes in popular and political discourse defining the limits of the national community and the behaviors suitable for it. Although artificial fibers considerably lowered the cost of hosiery and other goods, thereby expanding consumption, the use of synthetics like nylon rather than cotton subverted the goal of national economic unity between agriculture and industry.

Egypt had a long history of artisanal textile spinning, weaving, and dyeing, and the sector remained strong into the early 20th century by furnishing part of the ever-growing population’s local market demand. Nevertheless, the dynamics of the cotton economy contributed to the country’s political and economic subordination to Britain.¹ Often called the “cotton paradox,” Egypt’s status as a cotton grower dependent on imports of coarse raw cotton and cotton textiles resulted from the high value of its own long-staple raw cotton on the export market.² At the time Egypt achieved formal independence in the early 1920s, Britain bought nearly 45 percent of Egypt’s exports of raw cotton and supplied almost 90 percent of the 201 million square meters of cotton textiles imported annually into the country.³ Much of this imported fabric was cheap cloth, mass produced with coarse cotton yarns and destined for peasant consumption, although Great Britain also exported a range of sturdier and more elegant fabrics for sale to the smaller middle and upper classes. Most Egyptian textile artisans and local factories worked short- and medium-staple raw cotton and thread, mainly imported from India and the United States, until an Egyptian law in 1916 prohibited the importation of raw cotton to prevent the spread of cotton pests.⁴

Nancy Y. Reynolds is an Assistant Professor in the Department of History, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, Mo.; e-mail: nreynolds@wustl.edu

Calls to develop a new mechanized textile industry supplied by locally grown cotton became increasingly urgent in Egypt after World War I as the nationalist movement expanded.⁵ National self-sufficiency in textiles, some bourgeois nationalists and landowners argued, would allow cotton growers a measure of control over their market, develop the nation in a “modern” way through the promotion of industrial manufacturing, and create a unified national economy.⁶ As Tal‘at Harb, a leading economic nationalist, put it: “By using our cotton in our clothes, and especially the clothes of the poor, for which there is great demand, we would be able . . . to actively encourage agriculture and industry at a single time.”⁷ A variety of industrial concerns emerged to support the goal of textile self-sufficiency; the Bank Misr textile factories at al-Mahalla al-Kubra (the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company) and Kafr al-Dawwar (the Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving Company) established in the late 1920s and the 1930s were the most prominent, although a range of smaller specialized factories also appeared and several older concerns were reorganized and expanded.⁸ Even after Egypt achieved tariff independence in 1930, however, an inability to profit from these new mills plagued cotton growers-cum-industrialists. Although the lack of local technology and skilled labor to power the new factories worried elites, creating a local market for their new mass-produced textiles proved equally challenging.

The Egyptian press followed the emergence in India of locally produced cotton textiles as a national symbol in the anticolonial struggle, and Egyptian activists modeled some of their tactics, such as bonfires and boycotts, on Indian experiences.⁹ The material nature of Egyptian cotton restricted it, however, as an equivalent political vehicle in Egypt. Unlike India’s short-staple cotton, Egypt’s trademarked raw cotton was of a very long staple and could be used to produce exceptionally fine fabrics. It was not particularly well suited to the production of cheap textiles for a mass market. Such misallocation of resources to support the nationalist goal of cotton self-sufficiency would be akin to “countries using silver or even gold to make saucepans under the pretext of employing the primary materials that are at their disposal,” one textile expert complained.¹⁰ In the decades following the 1916 law, Egypt gradually increased the domestic cultivation of shorter-staple cottons, and local industrialists turned as best they could to the use of Egyptian cotton in their new factories, producing (at least initially) often rather rough textiles due to their “simple” weaving and spinning technologies that “specialized in coarse, low counts” of thread.¹¹ At the same time, marketers worked to cast the consumption of cloth made with Egyptian cotton as a nationalist duty. This complex campaign drew partly on Egyptian long-staple cotton’s reputation for creating fine, high-quality, almost silky cloth. The awkward translation of long-staple cotton’s reputation into marketing campaigns to encourage mass consumption of cheap, coarse cloth forms the focus of this article. These campaigns would structure the reception of new textiles and shape the nation’s gradual shift toward mass consumption in the 1940s and 1950s.

The first part of this article investigates the larger movement to develop local industries in Egypt, in order to contextualize the promotion of “national” textiles. It then examines two marketing strategies from the 1930s that helped to broaden the local market in cotton textiles and set new discursive parameters: a reconfiguration of cotton’s silkiness as durability and a depiction of cloth consumption as a way to knit together various constituents of the newly independent nation. Both tactics were particularly visible from 1932 to 1935, during a campaign to market new, locally knitted cotton socks for men,

a commodity that had been relatively unimportant in Egypt before 1920. The article then turns to the 1940s, when the growing popularity of artificial thread, especially in women’s nylon hosiery, forced a change in the local mechanized textile industry premised on the economic unity of agricultural and industry. This shift corresponded to a rise in social criticism that used images of the proliferation of goods and new “populuxe” sartorial practices, including nylon, to symbolize increasing moral, social, and political decadence.¹² In 1948, the local magazine *Ruz al-Yusuf* even published a short story criticizing the fat cats of old-regime society under the title “The Nylon Woman.”¹³

By reading nylon advertising through a broader history of “national” textiles, this article argues that the experience of cotton marketing in the 1920s and 1930s shaped the role nylon hosiery played in the creation of a postcolonial Egyptian discourse about luxury. In a larger sense, this textile history demonstrates that the material specificity of consumer goods structured how objects could help define the boundaries of national community and the behaviors deemed suitable in it. I draw on a variety of primary sources, including state archives, commercial records, trade reports, memoirs, and literary writings, to situate several marketing campaigns that appeared in the Egyptian press in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.¹⁴ The Egyptian press expanded dramatically after World War I, fueled in part by illustrated magazines such as *Ruz al-Yusuf*, *al-Ithnayn*, and *al-Musawwar*, whose circulation went beyond the small, literate part of the urban and provincial strata.¹⁵ Although precise numbers are rare and probably lower than actual readership, Arabic press circulation in Egypt grew from an estimated 180,000 daily in 1928 and 1929 to over 500,000 in the second half of the 1940s.¹⁶ The new illustrated, popular magazines, according to Relli Shechter, “introduced the concept of reading for leisure, and promoted a new style of journalism that highlighted fashion, sports, tourism, and local and international cinema. They featured attractive layouts and high-quality illustrations, caricatures, and photographs . . .”¹⁷ Although the reception of the magazines and their advertisements remains largely unknown, the marketing and satirical writings they published reveal the parameters of Egyptian commodity politics and the importance of materiality in shaping them.

NARRATIVES OF COMMERCE

The vast inequalities of wealth in old-regime Egypt often led contemporaries to attribute consumption patterns to two primary but separate dynamics: a concern about price among the lower classes and a desire to emulate European cultural practices among the much smaller upper and middle strata.¹⁸ Consumption of local textiles has been explained primarily in terms of state control of the market rather than cultural meaning: in the 1930s, tariffs restricted the variety of fabrics available to price-conscious consumers, who were forced to choose “national” fabrics or nothing.¹⁹ Scholarly acceptance of the theory of emulation, also considered a straightforward and negative process, has impeded a search for complexity in the cultural meaning of consumption among the higher classes. Post-1956 Egyptian nationalist accounts generally derided upper-class consumption as diverting critical start-up capital from substantive development projects in industry.²⁰

Several studies have examined Egyptian consumption in this period, usually as an indicator of the overall state of the economy or of popular standards of living. These

works generally provide useful statistical assessments of the consumption of basic and luxury goods by various classes, although they frequently analyze the variety of cloths and clothing items in the market in single undifferentiated categories like “textiles” or “cotton fabrics.”²¹ Others have examined in detail the multivalent histories of important local commodities such as cotton, textiles, tobacco, and wheat, demonstrating how goods can act as windows onto and catalysts of larger social and political processes.²² Since the “cultural turn,” however, transnational consumption studies have focused more on the search for meaning, employing commodities as a prism through which to write cultural history. Several very rich studies of local consumer cultures in the early modern and modern Middle East have emerged as a result. Elaborating the social and cultural contours of consumption has complicated our view of the role of foreign capital in regional underdevelopment and of the wide-ranging local networks of consumption and distribution that interacted with growing international trade in the 19th and 20th centuries.²³ Religious politics inflected colonial consumption in the region in often unexpected ways.²⁴ Although Elizabeth Thompson and others have shown that Islamist populists often sought to restrict women from urban forms of sociability, including the cinema and retail stores, religious scholars carefully balanced “ritual and economic concerns” about the need for commerce with non-Muslims and the risks of such commerce to bodily and spatial purity, as Leor Halevi has recently demonstrated.²⁵ Women’s history particularly comes into view through analyses of the history of consumer goods and ideals of consumer behavior for middle-class women that were promulgated in new forms of print advertising and school textbooks.²⁶ Some of the more culturally focused studies have not engaged the larger political and economic contexts of the circulation and consumption of goods, however,²⁷ and few studies of Egyptian consumption have linked the materiality of different commodities to the production of their meanings.²⁸

The exact ways that objects shaped the practices and habits of the self have been difficult for historians to recover. In his seminal study of “the social life of things,” anthropologist Arjun Appadurai insists “we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories.”²⁹ Semiliterate societies like Egypt have left relatively few written documents for historians interested in following the meaning of common objects. In the general absence of a rich archival record, more prescriptive but public debates in print media about the meanings of goods and their relationships to different members of society can help us identify significant changes that affected the contours of ordinary perception. Such debates suggest, as the rest of this article will demonstrate, that although industrialists and state officials marketed new cotton goods for their durability and as a political vehicle to strengthen nationalism, demand among the lower classes for cheaper clothing that could be frequently purchased to follow changes in fashion contributed to the growth of the synthetic goods that ultimately challenged cotton’s dominance.

“SILKINESS,” COTTON TEXTILES, AND THE NEW NATIONAL ECONOMY

In the early 1930s, the nationalist Wafd Party renewed a call for a boycott of British products.³⁰ The Wafd had gained power a decade earlier with a successful boycott of British goods that also led to the founding of a new national bank, Bank Misr, directed

by Tal‘at Harb with the mission to fund local businesses, including a new textile plant at Mahalla.³¹ The language of economic nationalism had sharpened in 1931 amidst popular enthusiasm over the Agricultural and Industrial Fair, which for the first time almost exclusively displayed locally produced items. “Egyptian industry” was of three types at the fair: “long-established industries” for commodities such as sugar, cement, cigarettes, alcohol, soap, oil, and mineral water (several of which were owned by local minorities or had utilized foreign capital, as was congruent with nationalism in this period); “artisanal industries” producing furniture, shoes, clothes, rugs, cookies, and pastries; and the “Bank Misr industries”—the press, the cinema and theater group, the fishery, linen, silk, and cotton-weaving plants, and the mother-of-pearl button plant.³² The 1931 exposition helped to launch a new phase in the development of local import-substitution industries to manufacture popular consumer goods.³³ These included Muhammad Yassin’s “National Glassworks,” established in 1934 to produce common items such as tea glasses, lamp chimneys, and eventually sheet glass,³⁴ and the tarbush (pl. *ṭarābīsh*) factory, founded in 1932 by a popular subscription campaign known as the Piaster Plan (*mashrū‘ al-qirsh*).³⁵ The marketing of the Piaster Plan’s *ṭarābīsh* united the nation regionally and historically: different models of *ṭarābīsh* sported names of momentous figures in national tarbush production history or of major Egyptian textile centers, such as the “Muhammad ‘Ali,” after the ruler who had introduced the headgear to Egypt; the “Fouah” or the “Qaha” for towns with *ṭarābīsh* factories; and “Mahalla.”³⁶

Bank Misr founded the Egyptian Products Sales Company (Sharikat Bai‘ al-Masnu‘at al-Misriyya) on 9 October 1932 to retail the products of the bank’s industries, especially its textiles.³⁷ In the early 1930s, the store carried “silk and cotton clothing and varieties of calico, plain white calico, cotton flannel, and other [products] from the Cotton Spinning and Weaving Company at Mahalla” as well as suitcases, shoes, perfumes, brass bedsteads, neckties, sterile medicinal cotton, underwear, and socks.³⁸ Its products, the company advertised, befitted modern Egyptian consumers—its cloth was “appropriate for the climate”; its silk could be used “for dresses, shirts, and neckties”; and its cotton fabrics were of “renowned durability and good taste.”³⁹ An advertisement for the store’s opening in February 1933 explicitly positioned it as a hub uniting a variety of Egyptian people and objects in the project of national development. “Only buy what you need from an Egyptian—in that way the wealth of your country will grow. Visit the stores of the Egyptian Products Sales Company: its employees are Egyptian, its wares are Egyptian, its raw materials are Egyptian, and [its products were] made by the hands of Egyptian workers.”⁴⁰ At the opening of the store’s Tanta branch in 1937, Minister of Commerce and Industry ‘Abd al-Salam Fahmi Pasha gave a long speech linking the company’s mission to the “start [of] a political renaissance . . . and an economic renaissance” in the country. Fahmi proclaimed that he was dressed “in a cotton and wool suit and a tarbush [both] of Egyptian manufacture and Egyptian raw materials and [made] by Egyptian hands.” This outfit, he declared, was “the most chic,” although he asserted that “[b]y God, if I wore canvas [*khaysh*] made by my country and by the hand of my brother the Egyptian, it would be good that I was wearing it.”⁴¹

Fahmi’s oblique association of his chic cotton clothing with rough, hand-woven canvas echoed a more populist strand of economic nationalism. This discourse had identified silk textiles with the foreign imports of colonialism, especially during the Wafdist boycotts and bonfires of European cloth in 1931 and 1932. The Committee

of the Young Volunteers for Encouraging Egyptian Goods, for example, ran a public notice in several Arabic-language Egyptian newspapers on 3 March 1931, declaring “it is better for a native to wear coarse clothes made in Egypt than to wear silks of foreign manufacture.”⁴² Similarly, *Ruz al-Yusuf* featured a poem titled “Egypt Addresses the Egyptian,” which called on Egyptians to reject “foreign silks” and consume coarser local cotton cloth.

The silk garment [*thawb al-ḥarīr*] is from your enemy, take it off and trample on it.

Light the fire and burn his old clothes in it.

By your blood he amassed his capital and money. . . .

If the son of the nation [*ibn al-waṭan*] weaves canvas [*khaysh*],
wear it and embrace it.⁴³

The boycotters also produced a buttonhole badge depicting an Egyptian spindle to “encourage national industry” by indicating that a person’s clothes were “spun and woven in Egypt.”⁴⁴

In Egypt, the call to reject “foreign silks” resonated with a strand of Islamic discourse that had singled out silk cloth, and especially its use by men, to represent degenerative luxury and the need for moral and religious reform. Abstention from silk consumption was used in the 19th century as a marker of piety among local ‘ulama’ and other exemplary men.⁴⁵ By the mid-20th century, Islamist leaders viewed luxury textiles as a cause of the decadence of the entire community. Although it is not clear that Islamist leaders, or the industries they established, entirely avoided silk, Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Society of Muslim Brothers, invoked hadiths about the moral corruption caused by luxury fabrics and railed in his sermons against “luxury” in dress and consumption.⁴⁶ In the 1940s, Sayyid Qutb wrote explicitly against silk in *Social Justice in Islam*. Citing a hadith forbidding the use of silk by men, Qutb explains that although generally the injunctions of the Prophet should be understood in their own context, the one against silk should be followed literally: “In fact, the wearing of silk, or saffron-dyed or embroidered cloth, often detracts from the worth of men [*qīmat al-rijāl*]. It moves them to softness [*tarāwa*], especially in the era of jihad.”⁴⁷ Silk—like “huge automobiles” and imported bottled water—exemplified excessive consumption, which Qutb asserts is an individual crime capable of ultimately corrupting the broader community that tolerates it.⁴⁸

Class conflict was often expressed through reference to the quality of cloth, and silk was a primary cultural marker of class differentiation. The French commercial attaché in 1911 described the widespread effects of the boom preceding the spectacular crash of 1907 in such terms. Even the small farmer, “up til now so thrifty,” he asserted, had begun to spend part of his earnings on ameliorating his situation with “a relative luxury,” such as a silk robe or silk scarf for himself, his wife, or his children.⁴⁹ Fikri al-Khuli, a peasant turned weaver at the Misr Spinning and Weaving Factory in the late 1920s and early 1930s, frequently used silkiness in his memoirs to illustrate the disparity between prosperous craftsmen and unskilled workers. One of the primary sources of conflict in Mahalla at the time was between the more urban, experienced, and affluent hand weavers from the town (the *maḥallawiyya*) and the untrained peasants recruited to work in the factories alongside them (the *shirkawiyya*, or company men).⁵⁰ Al-Khuli remarked that although the cloth manufactured in the factory was as fine as “flowered

calico that brides wear in the village," the factory workers dressed in "canvas."⁵¹ The *maḥallawī* weavers, however, wore "foreign silk [*ḥarīr ifranjī*]." ⁵² Expensive "silken clothes" (whether real silk or fine cotton) thus connoted a complicated interweaving of immorality, class difference, "foreignness" as an import, complicity with authority or colonialism, and un-Islamic practices.

KNITTING THE NATION: THE SHURBAJI COMPANY AND SOCK
PROMOTION IN THE INTERWAR MARKET

The early 1930s marketing campaigns for cloth made from local, long-staple cotton responded to the cluster of meanings attached to silkiness with a variety of strategies. Even though Egyptian cotton was one of the longest staple varieties in the world and was prized for the fine, smooth, and luxurious cloth it could produce—cloth that could even be finished to resemble the sheen of silk⁵³—marketing the silkiness of new nationalist textiles was complicated by the technical limitations of Egyptian mechanization.

The cotton piece goods produced in Egypt [in the 1920s and early 1930s], at first of a poor quality, had a thick weave and were plain whites and yellows. With the passage of time, Egyptian weaving and dyeing became more expert, but the quality of the finished Egyptian product was not as fine as that of European and Asian imports.⁵⁴

Local factories turned both to the state and to the public for help in increasing sales. The state assisted them through regular textile tariff increases throughout the 1930s. To reach the public, the factories implemented new marketing campaigns that promoted the quality of their goods.

The local press had long advertised imported goods and the wares of larger commercial establishments such as department stores. This merchandise was promoted for its quality and beauty, appropriateness for "modern" life, elegance, ability to signal bourgeois status, and even production in large, "modern" factories.⁵⁵ Advertising generally "demonstrated a concern for modernity and modern products," Mona Russell asserts, which could construct "the fashionable male . . . clad in a European suit, wing-tip shoes, fancy tie, tarbush, and sometimes carrying a walking stick and/or cigarette."⁵⁶ Women were increasingly depicted in interwar advertising adorned in narrowly cut frocks, high-heeled pumps, and stylish hats, although modest styles like draping shawls and sheer veils continued to mark women as "local," much as the tarbush did for men.⁵⁷ In the 1930s, most advertisements "remained product oriented, with uncomplicated text, few slogans, and simple illustrations,"⁵⁸ although some began to provide a more definite context for commodities' consumption by using more elaborate captions and illustrations. "Captions were also used to associate commodities with desirable lifestyles. Most important, advertisements moved their focus from the commodity to the consumer and employed status (stratification) and identity evoking elements of consumption to increase sales."⁵⁹ Uniformity in advertising—both running the same ads over a number of issues of the same periodical and promoting different products with similar ads—resulted from what Relli Shechter describes as the monopoly character of the press in which the advertising business was integrated.⁶⁰ Most advertising was produced by individual presses, and some journal publishers formed advertising agencies.

Although “buy local” and other nationalist campaigns surfaced in the press around the nationalist upsurge of 1919 to 1924, most local producers did not have the resources to allocate funds to large advertising campaigns before the 1930s.⁶¹ The majority of advertisements even in the 1930s continued to be for imported products or those of foreign-owned firms, because “under normal conditions, established local businesses did not feel they needed to advertise in order to increase sales, and they would usually do so only under pressure of competition.”⁶² New nationalist goods like the textiles produced by Bank Misr’s firms and affiliated companies were prominently publicized, however, as they tried to gain a foothold in the market.

Cloth advertisements in the 1930s emphasized the variety of “elegant” merchandise produced by the Bank Misr industries.⁶³ Some explicitly asserted that the consumption of locally produced textiles would lead to overall national progress; along with nationalist symbols such as flags, drums, and uniforms, many used the imagery of steps and hills to mark the upward trajectory of national development.⁶⁴ The Misr Cotton Spinning and Weaving Company depicted the power of its locally produced fabrics to unite Egyptians. One illustration portrays the inside of a shop, where a smiling saleswoman displays a long swath of fabric to four customers standing side by side at the counter. The caption identifies them as “the Egyptians”: an upper-class woman wearing a thin veil; a balding, bareheaded man dressed in a light-colored *ifrangī* suit; another man wearing a dark suit and tarbush; and finally a man wearing a kaftan, turban, and spectacles. Framed by long, draping displays of fabric, the advertisement’s text declares that the “Egyptians” are “surprised” that “Egypt weaves . . . these beautiful items!”⁶⁵ Arrayed equally in front of the cloth counter, consumers would be bound together, this advertisement suggests, by national textiles.

Another solution to the dilemma of how to market the rather coarse locally produced textiles made of long-staple Egyptian cotton was to transform the cotton’s reputation for fineness and silkiness into a discourse about durability. Tal‘at Harb positioned Egyptian cotton textiles as “authentic” and “pure,” unlike cheaply made imported textiles that used finishing processes, such as adding cornstarch or glue, to achieve a temporary silky or smooth look to their products. He repeatedly stressed that one Egyptian garment was equal to three or four cloths of foreign manufacture because the former lasted longer.⁶⁶ The promotion of Egyptian cotton as more durable and “authentic” than imported yarns and fabrics carried over into the use of Pharaonic imagery in textile trademarks.⁶⁷ Narratives about Pharaonicism and durability coincided with a masculinist nationalist rhetoric associated with “strength” that became increasingly popular in the 1930s. A 1934 advertisement, for example, features a drawing of the Shurbaji cotton hosiery factory in front of the Giza pyramids, flanked by a young man in a scouting uniform and a tarbush, holding an Egyptian flag in one hand and a pair of socks in the other (see Figure 1). The 1930s Shurbaji Pharaonic logo (a falcon with outstretched wings, the Pharaonic symbol of royal protection) is prominently displayed over the factory door. The text declares: “Egypt’s ancient glory is expressed in building the pyramids. Her modern glory is expressed in al-Shurbaji’s hosiery factory. Durable like the pyramids; strong like boys [*al-shabāb*]*—Shurbaji’s socks.*”

Linking cotton textiles, especially hosiery, to the durability and duration of the Egyptian national community was part of an explicit effort to create and expand markets for local goods. Socks and stockings were not widely consumed in 19th-century Egypt, as

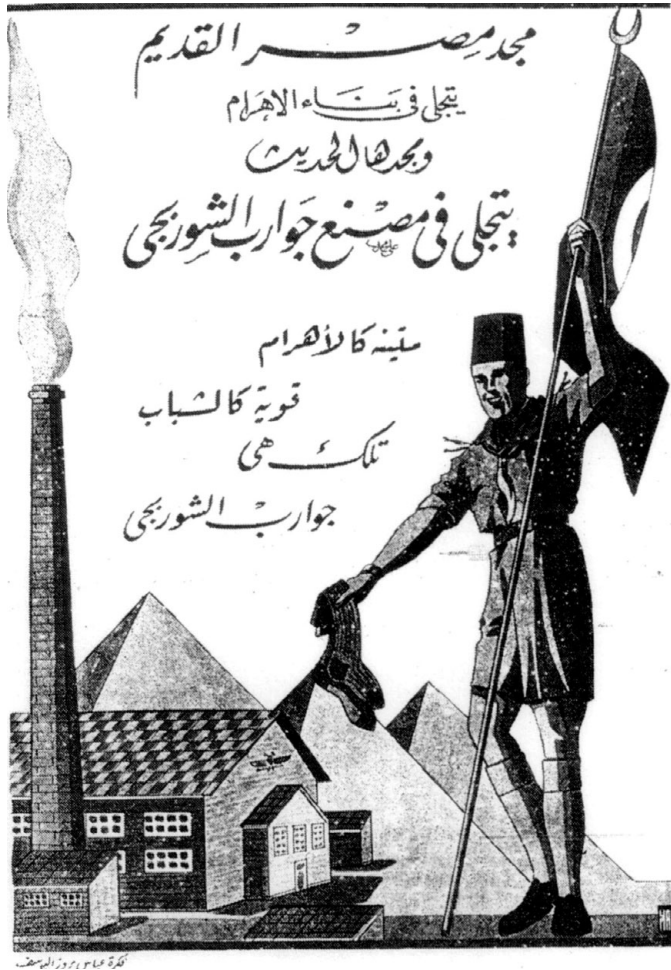


FIGURE 1. “Glory of Egypt,” advertisement for Shurbaji socks. *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 349, 29 October 1934 (special issue), 27.

they were expensive and not necessary in the mild climate or under the long, modest clothing worn by both men and women.⁶⁸ Hosiery became increasingly prevalent with new styles of footwear and fashion emerging especially in Egypt’s cities in the first decades of the 20th century.⁶⁹ As opposed to older *baladī* styles of dress, such as the long galabiya or slip-on leather shoes like the *markūb* or *bulgha*, *ifrangī* dress styles, such as trousers, suits, or laced-up shoes, required socks as an accessory to finish the look of elegance and ease they were meant to convey. Offering both men’s socks and women’s stockings in silk, lace, and silk blends, Holeproof Hosiery, for example, was promoted in the mid-1920s as “incomparably” “sturdy,” “elegant,” and “economical.” Imported from Great Britain, its products were handled in Egypt by an Alexandrian agent, Baruda Brothers, and retailed at “all department stores.”⁷⁰ Ads for Holeproof

men's socks were varied, often depicting a sock-clad foot next to an elegant shoe or a man in a dressing gown pointing out the reinforced toe and heel of his sock⁷¹; at other times ads featured the enormous Holeproof factory in England.⁷²

Responding to the growing local market in imported socks and increasing support for new factories, the local hosiery sector exploded in the 1930s and 1940s. The Department of Commerce and Industry established a training school for knitting hosiery, underwear, and dress fabrics in 1935.⁷³ Bank Misr specifically promoted small-scale development of this niche (hosiery, underwear, upholstery) in the textile industry to compete against foreign merchandise, in part by urging the immigration of several Muslim families to Egypt from Syria in the late 1920s and the 1930s.⁷⁴ By 1943, a local textile expert estimated that "the bonneterie industry has attained sufficient development to satisfy and at times surpass the needs of local consumption."⁷⁵ Much of this growth came from the establishment of small local hosiery factories, most of which employed hand knitting, although several large mechanized factories were also founded. Among the most important was the Egyptian Hosiery Company/La Bonneterie, which was established in 1924 and registered as a joint-stock company in 1935. Half-owned by the Filature Nationale, by 1937 it had an "up-to-date factory" in Alexandria with 560 workers operating 420 machines to make underwear and another 80 knitting machines to manufacture socks and stockings. These machines worked "coarse cotton yarn" from the local spinning mills, "fine cotton yarn (spun from Egyptian cotton)," wool yarn imported from the United Kingdom, and rayon yarn procured from the United Kingdom and Germany. Annual output was estimated to be 96,000 dozen pairs of socks and stockings and 72,000 sets of underclothes.⁷⁶ Although few hosiery companies consistently showed a profit,⁷⁷ the sock market continued to grow faster than the output of local industries. A Ministry of Commerce and Industry report in 1948 "estimated that tricotage factories and workshops employed 6,000 workmen and produced 70 percent of local consumption."⁷⁸ In 1954, local production was estimated at 600,000 dozen socks per year, although strong imports continued at least through the 1940s, reaching almost 458,000 dozen socks in 1950.⁷⁹

Among the numerous hosiery enterprises founded in this period, the Shurbaji Hosiery Factory was perhaps the most aggressively marketed as being essentially "Egyptian," probably because of the company's ties to Bank Misr and the fact that the Shurbajis were Muslim, though the family had emigrated from Syria only in 1932. Muhammad Shurbaji owned one of the largest weaving factories in Damascus, manufacturing natural and artificial silk textiles, which were exported to Iraq, Anatolia, the Balkans, and Egypt. The family expanded into a variety of industrial concerns throughout the Middle East in the 1920s and 1930s. In Egypt, the Shurbajis founded a number of textile factories: a knitting factory for hosiery in Cairo in 1932; a silk weaving and upholstery factory in Cairo in 1937; and two spinning and weaving factories in 1940 (one in Alexandria and another in Cairo).⁸⁰ The company was privately owned until it was registered as an Egyptian joint-stock company in April 1947, capitalized at LE 50,000.⁸¹ Although the family retained significant commercial interests in Syria through at least the 1940s, they were always referred to in the local press as "Egyptians."⁸²

Reflecting the new marketing discourse of local textiles, promotional material in the early 1930s from the Shurbaji Brothers Company heralded its new cotton socks for men and boys for their "durability and tasteful colors" and their superiority to foreign imports.⁸³ Moreover, the manufacture of cotton hosiery was presented as knitting



FIGURE 2. Advertisement for Shurbaji hosiery, showing peasant, factory worker, and socks. *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 258, 23 January 1933, 37.

together various social groups into a national community. In January 1933, for example, a *Ruz al-Yusuf* advertisement connected three social groups (see Figure 2). A peasant man on top of the frame looks out over a field of cotton, below him a worker leans against a miniaturized factory, and spreading out from the factory are cotton threads that metamorphose into socks—a commodity awaiting a consumer. “Oh, Egyptian!” the text exhorts. “The cotton of Egypt. From it, the Egyptian worker manufactures fine socks for you—socks that are Egyptian by their raw materials, manufacture, and capital.” Other Shurbaji advertisements in the early 1930s focused on knitting together diverse groups of male Egyptians via expanding consumption. A 1934 advertisement, for example, portrayed different generations of customers—a middle-aged effendi, a young upper-class man, and a boy—all dressed elegantly in *ifrangī* clothes and clustered around a pair of al-Shurbaji socks, which “the old and the young prefer.”⁸⁴ Al-Shurbaji marketed different types of socks for “people of various classes.”⁸⁵ In 1935, the company planned to launch several “durable, good-quality, and cheaply priced” lines for the general middle-class public—“student socks [*jawārib tilmīdh*]” and “government-employee socks [*jawārib muwazzaf*]”—as well as a more expensive, deluxe (*fākhir*) model for the “special class of people [*tabaqa khāṣṣa min al-sha‘b*]” who prefer and can afford a more sumptuous model.⁸⁶

Although differentiated, these male identities were linked through a universal consumption: socks were positioned, like the *tarbush*, as part of a “modern” national dress required of men from all groups and classes of Egyptians. One promotional article asserts that “socks are almost the only type of clothing that all people share in wearing—from a suckling infant to an old adult, from a worker to a government minister.”⁸⁷ Another asks, “How many Egyptians, in their differences of class and contrasts of income, finances, and creed, don’t plunge their feet and legs into socks?”⁸⁸ Such publicity generally depicted men’s whole bodies or faces rather than just their sock-clad legs and feet. Advertisements and promotional materials for Shurbaji in the 1930s, then, pitched their goods to a wide audience of Egyptians, linking together different male identities—based on class and occupation (peasants, workers, government employees, students), consumption culture (elite, practical, elegant), and age—into a single, stratified but conflict-free national community, thereby equating the purchase of men’s cotton socks with participation in the polity.

Shurbaji’s sock campaign of 1933 to 1935 made the most deliberate use of the imagery of interlinked male identities, although several other firms promoted men’s socks in similar ways during this time. The Ahmad Halawa Stores advertised the “largest storehouse of hosiery” for men, women, and boys, depicting elegantly dressed upper-class adults and a young schoolboy.⁸⁹ Bata also marketed a line of variously priced imported men’s socks, including more luxurious models from silk and “refined cotton” and less expensive ones such as the “cotton screen” and the “practical.”⁹⁰ Nunu Brothers, another Cairo knitting and weaving factory that manufactured men’s and children’s socks in the late 1940s, used national symbols such as flags and scouting images, as well as tropes of modern retail, such as elegant packaging and dapper salesmen, to market their “scientific socks” for men.⁹¹ New nationalist hosiery advertising campaigns stood out in the local press, since prior advertising for imported men’s socks merely listed hosiery among other goods for sale and promoted them by price.⁹²

Evidence suggests that consumers did not always respond to the sober messages of fabric durability or the visions of a neatly ordered class-stratified nation that were promoted in the 1930s. Rather, they demanded cheaper fabrics, more frequent purchases, and the blurring of social classification that mass consumption could offer—the possibility of upward mobility. Short-staple cotton textiles, many of which were imported from Japan, Italy, or even England and found markets despite the continually rising tariff barriers, offered other rubrics that competed with silkiness or “durability” in conveying status to consumers. Inferior grades of cotton, with shorter staple lengths, could produce, for example, a fabric with a “thicker feel” than those made with longer, silky fibers.⁹³ The longevity of fabrics was not a meaningful attribute to consumers who wanted multiple outfits or frequent changes of style. Cheaper fabric allowed for more variety in wearing apparel, a factor some local textile experts considered of primary importance to the textile market. To explain a general lack of domestic interest in textiles woven with long-staple cottons, Eman noted during World War II that although “Egyptian cotton produced more durable and resistant fabrics. . . . This advantage. . . is not even appreciated by the consumer who always prefers to buy two outfits instead of one and thereby follow the progress of fashion.”⁹⁴ Cheaper fabrics thus appealed for different reasons to both the very poor and those slightly better off who wanted more variety in their clothing fashions.

THE ADVENT OF ARTIFICIAL SILKS

Despite improvements in local textile technologies in the 1940s, manufacturers like the Shurbaji brothers began to protest that yarns made from Egyptian cotton were too expensive and often too physically defective for the production of hosiery for the rapidly expanding middle-class and lower-class markets.⁹⁵ By the end of the 1940s, therefore, Shurbaji had turned to producing nylon hosiery; in fact, it claimed to be the first local factory to knit nylon hosiery in Egypt, a production previously “monopolized” by the United States.⁹⁶ By 1950, the Shurbaji hosiery factory in Imbaba alone produced nearly 800 pairs of nylon hosiery (*jawārib*) per day.⁹⁷ By 1954, the French commercial counselor in Egypt noted that “[i]t appears that in the hosiery industry, nylon has practically replaced all other fibers.”⁹⁸

Egyptians had already begun to consume substantial amounts of other artificial silk fabrics, such as rayon, in the early 1930s.⁹⁹ British trade officials noted in 1931 that “[f]ine white shirtings are being to some extent replaced by new articles altogether, such as . . . artificial silks.”¹⁰⁰ Local plants began weaving rayon textiles from imported thread in the mid-1930s, and by 1937 approximately 2,000 looms were in operation.¹⁰¹ Bank Misr enterprises capitalized on this new consumer interest. By 1936, the Misr Silk Weaving Company was weaving several fabrics of imported threads of artificial silk, especially rayon, and the cloths were sold at Bank Misr’s Egyptian Products Sales Company as well as through local textile chains such as `Adès.¹⁰² An Egyptian consumer, in an interview with Harb, praised the high quality of the fabric’s weaving, dyeing, and strength, despite its plain appearance.¹⁰³ In 1946, Bank Misr founded a rayon plant at Kafr al-Dawwar near its Fine Cotton Weaving and Spinning Company, and it became the third most capitalized textile firm within a decade.¹⁰⁴ Production at the plant began in 1948, and the “company made rapid progress thereafter, manufacturing rayon and nylon filaments, viscose staple fiber, nylon staple fiber, and transparent fiber.”¹⁰⁵ In 1954, the company branded its artificial silk thread “Misrilon,”¹⁰⁶ suggesting its hope to capitalize on the nationalist markets built up around “Egyptian cotton” in the preceding two decades—or at least pointing to its fear about losing control of them.

Artificial silk possessed many of the qualities of long-staple cotton fibers that local elites had been promoting in Egypt during the 1930s and 1940s. Artificial fibers could be used to create silky, relatively durable fabrics, and thus a direct competition gradually emerged between artificial silks and some cloth woven from long-staple cotton.¹⁰⁷ A special 1950 issue of the local newspaper *al-Misri* devoted to cotton included a long article detailing the specific technologies used in manufacturing artificial silk. The article explicitly compared artificial silk fibers to the properties of Egyptian long-staple cotton and reported the permanent conversion of many Lancashire factories from weaving only long-staple Egyptian cotton to using artificial silk.¹⁰⁸ In such ways, artificial silk threads emerged as a threat to Egyptian cotton growers by the late 1940s and early 1950s.

SELLING STOCKINGS, SATIRIZING NYLON

As local production of nylon threads and textiles increased, so did their distribution. The postwar mass marketing of women’s nylon hosiery differed, however, in significant ways from the promotion of men’s socks in the 1930s. In part, the sheer nylon hosiery market

of the late 1940s was molded by tensions in selling women's natural-fiber hosiery in the preceding decades. Women's sheer hosiery had remained an expensive luxury through World War II because it was primarily produced with natural silk.¹⁰⁹ (Although nylon stockings were first sold in the United States in 1940, wartime constraints held up distribution until 1946.)¹¹⁰ In mid-1920s Egypt, silk stockings cost from three to eight times the price of cotton stockings, twice as much as wool, and much more than men's socks. The demand in women's fashion for sheer stockings escalated with the popularization of shorter dress cuts in the interwar years.¹¹¹ Using the language of light and reflection, *al-Musawwar* advertised imported Kayser stockings for their beauty under short hemlines: "Cover your legs with Kayser Miroclear stockings so that the world's spotlight will shine on them, especially under the short dress styles in fashion this year."¹¹² The sheerness of these stockings implied a new mobility and visibility of women's bodies in society (shorter, leg-revealing skirts) and a new adornment of such bodies to express "luxury" as a reflection of class aspirations. Such fashions represented a substantial change from older status markers in women's public sumptuary practices, which tended to link covering, rather than revealing, with upper-class status. Advertisements for women's silk stockings through the 1930s played on similar associations of luxury, rarely mentioning prices but rather emphasizing the fine quality and elegance of the products and the potential for these attributes to pass on to consumers.¹¹³ Popular stories in the press parodied the upward mobility women believed silk stockings could confer. One such story in 1942 depicted the social snubbing of a lawyer's wife for bragging about the cheaply priced (and as it turned out, cheaply made) silk stockings she found in a local department store.¹¹⁴

After the late 1940s, the advent and dominance of nylon radically altered the women's hosiery market and the communities of consumers associated with it. Priced about 50 percent lower than pure natural silk hosiery, artificial silk hosiery was more affordable to a larger market of Egyptian women, and production and consumption accordingly expanded.¹¹⁵ In 1952, imports of stockings made from pure artificial silk and artificial silk blends reached 144,560 dozen pairs. Large quantities were also produced by the domestic industry.¹¹⁶ Because of a lack of market surveys and the general grouping of nylon hosiery with other artificial silk fabrics in statistical reports, it is difficult to give absolute numbers as to the size of the market expansion. It is likely that nylon stockings came within reach of the budgets of lower-middle-class and middle-class women and that they were worn to work and social events more often than their silk counterparts, even if they were still not casually purchased. The vast majority of rural women were not consumers of nylon stockings.¹¹⁷

Despite the profusion of stockings in the market and the proliferation of the kinds of consumers able to afford them, women's nylon stockings in the 1940s and 1950s were often advertised through unitary, sexualized images of women. When Chemla and other local department stores listed the variety of brands of nylon stockings available and their prices, the different stockings were not illustrated in the ad copy nor linked to particular groups of consumers.¹¹⁸ Shurbaji's marketing of its luxurious "Shehrezade" stockings to women in the 1940s and 1950s focused primarily on women's legs (see Figure 3). Graphically, these advertisements often represent a single woman, adorned in a very short or raised skirt, seated with pointed toes or reclining, or they show disembodied legs in much the same pose.¹¹⁹ Other manufacturers promoted their stockings in similar ways. The Id company advertised its selection of nylon stockings ("the strongest in

FIGURE 3. Shurbaji advertisement for women's nylon stockings. *Al-Musawwar*, no. 1260, 3 December 1948, 39.

our market”) with a photograph of two sets of women’s legs, positioned next to each other and nearly identically attired in short skirts, stockings, and high-heeled pumps; the picture was cropped from the women’s skirt hems (at the knee) to their shoes.¹²⁰ In 1956, Shurbaji even presented a float in the parade celebrating the final evacuation of

British troops that featured an enormous model of a female leg, cut from the thigh down, toes pointed, and adorned in a nylon stocking.¹²¹

Paralleling and reinforcing this objectification of women in advertising was a discourse of sexual pleasure associated with nylon stockings. At the opening of the Shurbaji store in Zamalek in 1958, one woman reportedly was “unable to control her emotions due to her excessive pleasure” and let out a trill of approval.¹²² The feminist writer Amina al-Sa’id proclaimed her “delight” at “the women’s stockings in terms of taste and durability. . . . ‘Allow me,’ she told the Shurbajis, ‘to become a customer [tonight] rather than a journalist. What I see is clear proof of the range of progress in our national production—a noble progress.’” Even the governor of Giza, General ‘Uthman Khalil, was photographed intently running his hands over women’s nylon stockings on a store mannequin at the opening.¹²³ Such publicity emphasized femininity and sexual attractiveness over women’s different occupational, generational, or reproductive identities. It also contrasted sharply with the plurality of men’s identities (and the graphic focus on their faces and personalities) marshaled in new nationalist sock advertisements targeted to men a decade earlier. The sale of nylon stockings coincided with a global postwar climate of the 1950s that emphasized a “new look” and a new “femininity” for women. Marketing of nylon in Western Europe and North America in this period also tended to objectify women and represent them in this singular mode.¹²⁴ What made the case of Egypt different from other nylon markets was the congruence of the cotton and artificial silk markets—their direct competition for the same market niche for silky fabrics, which charged this representation with powerful social conflict.

Silkiness and durability, the two hallmarks of Egyptian textile marketing, thus reappeared as essential traits in the selling of nylon. The threat of new fabrics to the established base of the Egyptian old-regime cotton economy, however, was reflected in a discourse of sexual danger and threat in nylon marketing. Popular political commentary and social satire inflected nylon silkiness with an overt sexuality capable of sapping the nation’s energy. Inverting the linkage in early 1930s nationalist sock advertising between cotton fabric and national cohesion, nylon came to symbolize the fracturing and declension of the nation’s unity by the late 1940s.¹²⁵ In his 1948 short story “The Nylon Woman,” ‘Ashur ‘Ulaysh decries the inequalities of postwar Egyptian society through a contest over an objectified woman. He describes the plight of a young lawyer, Ahmad, unemployed because he lacks the social contacts and registration fees needed to apprentice and advance in the profession.¹²⁶ Lamenting that his hard-won education has resulted only in “hunger, vagrancy, and privation,” Ahmad watches a chic, beautiful woman say goodbye to her lover departing on the night train. She gazes at herself in a mirror on the wall, “looking attentively at herself in infatuation . . . She expends every effort to display her beauty.” “Like a dog appearing for a bit of meat,” he follows her to her sleek car, “regarding her closely, precisely examining her features, almost devouring her [*yalatihamuhā*]. . . . She began to adjust her dress part by part from top to bottom . . . She wore thin, transparent clothes [*thiyāb hafāfa shafāfa*] that revealed her charms and beauty like a full moon.” Ahmad suddenly “began to boil like a cauldron,” as he realizes: “‘She wasn’t for us . . . She’s for him who can pay the price! Everything for him who owns everything and nothing for him who owns nothing. She was ‘nylon,’ she herself.’”¹²⁷ The story’s illustration depicts Ahmad in a poorly fitting overcoat and trousers and the “nylon woman” in a short, tight skirt with sheer stockings and very

high heels. Mistress of the corrupted upper classes who dominated society, politics, and the economy in this period, the nylon woman signals the wide, corrosive effects of current social inequalities. The images of reflection (mirror, moon, shiny car, transparent clothing) linking the woman-mistress to nylon underline the way nylon refracted broader social and political struggles.

Another 1948 cartoon, in *Akhir Sa‘a* magazine, depicts a *baladī* woman named Zulaykha asking for nylon flip-flops at an elegant urban shoe store.¹²⁸ An important character from Qur’anic sacred history (Joseph’s mistress and the wife of his Egyptian master), Zulaykha usually symbolizes female desire and upper-class decadence. By the 1940s, Barbara Stowasser asserts, exegeses of “Joseph and the women” began to cast the story as

a parable with communal rather than just gender-related meaning. For Qutb, the main theme of the story is the struggle between religious righteousness and a corrupt society. . . . [whose] representatives were the highborn, spoiled and headstrong Aziz’s wife [Zulaykha] and . . . society’s aristocracy who spent their days in idleness and materialistic pleasures.¹²⁹

This Zulaykha, like the “Nylon Woman,” captured a wider condemnation of monarchical society. Coded by the language of textiles, the sociopolitical critique reflected a new moment in Egypt’s political economy and nationalist imaginary.

A NEW REGIME?

In the popular unrest of 1951 and 1952, “luxury” and “silks” circulated as symbols of the political and social decadence of the state and sociopolitical elites. Cotton prices jumped dramatically in 1950 and 1951 due to international shortages caused by the Korean War, and the entire Egyptian cotton crop was sold at high prices. The resulting profits and foreign currency financed record imports, especially of “luxury items,” into the Egyptian economy, leading to a massive trade deficit in 1951.¹³⁰ In June 1951, Ahmad Husayn (founder of the opposition party Young Egypt, later charged with instigating the Cairo fire of January 1952) denounced Wafdist leader Fu’ad Sirag al-Din—and the “pasha class” he represented—as “immersed in silk.”¹³¹ The king’s excessive consumption and gambling, including his lavish wedding in May 1951 to Queen Nariman, whom he had met in a gold store,¹³² incensed a broad front of opposition groups as well. This protest culminated in the burning of the central Cairo commercial district on 26 January 1952. Most downtown streets were impassable for days because of the acrid-smelling piles of burned rubbish, including “carcasses of automobiles still smoking” and “cardboard boxes from which were sticking out a pair of socks, a necktie or a scarf, [and] half-burned shirts.”¹³³ The local correspondent for the London *Times* reported that “luxury shops were favourite targets. . . . Goods were removed and in some cases used as fuel for bonfires in the streets.”¹³⁴

Artificial silks and “nylon women” also furnished the metaphorical punch for political critiques under the new regime of the Free Officers, which took power in 1952. In many ways, the new regime marked a significant change in Egyptian society, politics, and economy. Over the 1950s, Gamal Abdel Nasser would gradually place large sectors of the economy under government control, including many of the textile factories and large stores, as part of a new “socialist” vision of national self-sufficiency. In the period from



FIGURE 4. Shaykh Matluf at Cicurel. *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 1476, 24 September 1956, 19.

1952 to 1956, however, the new regime struggled to reform Egyptian politics, gradually concentrating policymaking into its own hands and neutralizing other centers of power. Another cartoon on nylon hosiery appeared in *Ruz al-Yusuf* in September 1956. Set in the women's lingerie department at the local department store Cicurel, it depicts an *ifrangī* woman customer, scantily dressed in a short skirt, high heels, and a low-cut, sleeveless shirt, trying on a pair of sheer stockings (see Figure 4). In front of the counter stands a turbaned shaykh literally drooling over the customer's legs. The caption reads: "Shaykh Matluf at Cicurel. The saleswoman [says]: 'Sir [*ya sayyidnā al-shaykh*], the men's underwear department is on the third floor!'"¹³⁵

The cartoon is a dense cultural text that can be read on many different levels, especially given the support of the magazine's editor, Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus, for the regime by this time.¹³⁶ At the center of the conflict is the shaykh's lascivious behavior. Based on Molière's character Tartuff, Shaykh Matluf was a popular caricature of the provincial religious cleric. Corrupt, hypocritical, and lewd, with a beaklike nose and enormous turban, he was a lustful, sexual predator hiding behind his religious garb.¹³⁷ The 'ulama' were a constituency whose autonomy was under attack by the state in this period. Having successfully crushed the more radical Muslim Brothers over the past several years, Nasser moved to neutralize the mainstream 'ulama' after 1955, when he abolished the shari'a courts and began the reorganization of al-Azhar. Depicting religious leaders, physically burdened by the garb of tradition, as insincere or predatory—and specifically intoxicated by silk—would help the state relegate them to the forces of "reaction." The

state-sponsored press’s appropriation of the Islamic discourse on degeneracy caused by silky fabrics and the nylon women who consumed them is striking in this cartoon.

Such critiques made sense in the broader context of linking the consumption of hosiery and other textiles to the unification of a larger body politic. Unlike the way cotton was positioned to unite Egyptian men in the 1930s, however, nylon reduced women to a singular identity and cast them as reflective mirrors for the collective or communal tribulations of postwar Egypt. Nylon—its transparency, shine, and “artificiality”—came to symbolize behaviors and consumption practices thought to cause moral decay or intensify differences within the national community itself. Although artificial fibers lowered the cost of hosiery and other goods considerably, thereby expanding consumption, the use of synthetics like nylon rather than cotton subverted the model of national economic unity between agriculture and industry.

The specific ways that cloth—“foreign silks,” “durable Egyptian cottons,” and “artificial silks”—emerged as a potent and visible symbol through which to contest the relations of colonialism and establish national community in Egypt varied, then, with the changing realities of Egypt’s political economy. The country’s early importation of textiles despite its cultivation of raw cotton, the growth of its state-protected local mechanized industry working long-staple cotton for a largely lower-class market, and that industry’s diversification into artificial silk technologies all helped to structure a shift from “foreign silks” to “the nylon woman” as tropes in popular and political discourse defining the limits of the national community and the behaviors suitable for it. Ultimately, the postcolonial Egyptian state would appropriate the condemnation of silkiness to legitimate its own assumption of power. Teasing out the subtleties and dynamics of old-regime textile marketing illuminates how postwar references to “luxury” helped to establish the authority of the regime that emerged after 1952. As radical as were many of the changes wrought by Nasser in the 1950s, they were also facilitated by a persistent ambivalence toward silkiness that challenged old-regime efforts to fabricate a seamless national community.

NOTES

Author’s note: I am grateful to the following people for their helpful comments on various drafts of this article: Jean Allman, Joel Beinun, Khaled Fahmy, Dan Klingensmith, Zachary Lockman, Mary-Louise Roberts, Aron Rodrigue, Mario Ruiz, and participants of a research workshop at the Kevorkian Center, New York University. I also thank Beth Baron, Sara Pursley, and the anonymous *IJMES* reviewers for their insightful suggestions on how to sharpen my arguments. The research was made possible by an award from the Joint Committee on the Near and Middle East of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies with funds provided by the U.S. Information Agency, grants from Stanford University’s School of Humanities and Sciences, and research funds from Washington University in St. Louis.

¹Robert Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles and British Capital, 1930–1956* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1989), 8–17; Sidney H. Wells, “L’Industrie du tissage en Egypte,” parts I and II, *L’Egypte contemporaine* (4 November 1910): 578–84; (5 January 1911): 52–73; and Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy 1800–1914* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 94.

²H. Clayton Hartley, “Some Aspects of the Prospective Establishment of Textile Factories in Egypt,” *L’Egypte contemporaine*, no. 110 (July 1928): 599; Pierre Arminjon, *La Situation économique et financière de l’Egypte* (Paris: Librairie générale du droit, 1911), 207; ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi‘i, *Fi A‘qab al-Thawra al-Misriyya*, 3rd ed., vol. II, 1947–1951, reprint (Cairo: Dar al-Ma‘arif, 1987), 308; and André Eman, *L’Industrie du coton en Egypte* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1943), 1.

³E. Homan Mulock, *Report on the Economic and Financial Situation of Egypt, April 1923* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1923), 35, 48. See Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles*, 57.

⁴Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles*, 46–47.

⁵Eric Davis, *Challenging Colonialism: Bank Misr and Egyptian Industrialization, 1920–1941* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983); and Robert Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise, and Economic Change in Egypt, 1918–1952* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁶For an example of privileging mechanization, see Egypt, La Commission du Commerce et de l'Industrie, *Rapport* (Cairo: Imprimerie Nationale, 1918). Davis, *Challenging Colonialism*, attributes the development of Bank Misr and its industrialization plan to the desire of some cotton growers to control the market.

⁷Interview with *al-Ahram*, 31 July 1935, reprinted in Muhammad Tal'at Harb, *Majmu'at Khutub Muhammad Tal'at Harb Basha*, vol. 3 (Cairo: Imprimerie Misr, 1957), 161.

⁸Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles*, 11–17.

⁹The Indian case was complex and had been followed for a number of years in Egypt. See Noor-Aiman Khan, "The Enemy of My Enemy: Indian Influences on Egyptian Nationalism, 1907–1930" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2006). The early 1930s witnessed a new spate of comparisons. See "The Meeting of the Wafd and the Present Political Situation," *al-Ahram*, 2 March 1931, in FO 141/770/515, U.K. National Archives; confidential note from Keown-Boyd to Commercial Secretary, 4 May 1932, in FO 141/711/465, U.K. National Archives; Hartley, "Some Aspects," 599; and back cover cartoon of *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 332, 2 July 1934. On the Indian campaign, see C. A. Bayly, "The Origins of Swadeshi (home industry)," in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 285–321; and Lisa Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation: Homespun and Modern India* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2007). China had a similar "national products" campaign in the 1920s; see Karl Gerth, *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003). The United States provides another obvious example: see Michael Zakim, "Sartorial Ideologies," *The American Historical Review* 106 (December 2001): 1553–586.

¹⁰Eman, *L'Industrie du coton*, 201. See also Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles*, 46.

¹¹Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles*, 46. The factories also tended to select the shortest domestic raw cotton available, although growers were slow to switch away from long-staple varieties.

¹²See Cissie Fairchild, "The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1993), 228. Fairchild defines "populuxe" goods as "cheap copies of aristocratic luxury items." One of her main examples is the market in silk stockings, which by the end of the 18th century had become a mass-consumption item in France. Many Egyptian cartoons featured stores littered with merchandise in the late 1940s and 1950s. See *al-Ithnayn wa-l-Dunya* (hereafter *al-Ithnayn*), no. 673, 5 May 1947, 37; *al-Musawwar*, no. 1263, 24 December 1948, 55; *al-Musawwar*, no. 1244, 13 August 1948, 7; and *Almanach du progrès égyptien* (1953): 123.

¹³Ashur 'Ulaysh, "Imra't Nylun," *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 1026, 11 February 1948, 33–34.

¹⁴This article is part of a larger study on commerce and consumption in Egypt in the first half of the 20th century, for which I read representative segments of the Egyptian press, in Arabic, French, and English, from the 1910s through the 1950s in various libraries in Cairo. Although I examined some fifty different journals and newspapers, I focused on *Ruz al-Yusuf*, *al-Musawwar*, *al-Ithnayn*, and *al-Ahram*, especially in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, because of their relative significance in terms of circulation and the importance of the interwar years to my study. In my reading, I concentrated on issues of consumption, marketing, trade, and politics, as well as advertising. My primary state-archival sources are holdings from the department of corporations, the palace, and the council of ministers at the Egyptian National Archives in Cairo, and foreign affairs, claims, and trade correspondence in French and British archives. See Nancy Y. Reynolds, "Commodity Communities: Interweavings of Market Cultures, Consumption Practices, and Social Power in Egypt, 1907–1961" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2003).

¹⁵See Relli Shechter, "Press Advertising in Egypt: Business Realities and Local Meaning, 1882–1956," *Arab Studies Journal* 10/11 (2003): 44–66; and idem, "Reading Advertisements in a Colonial/Development Context," *Journal of Social History* 39 (Winter 2005): 483–503. On visual literacy, see Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005). On advertising in the pre-1922 period, see Mona Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman: Consumerism, Education, and National Identity, 1863–1922* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 61–78; and Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), esp. 69, 94.

¹⁶Shechter, “Press Advertising,” 49. This was still a small fraction of the Egyptian population, which stood at roughly nineteen million in 1947.

¹⁷Shechter, “Reading Advertisements,” 485. He discusses the correlated expansion of readership on pages 485 and 486.

¹⁸See, for example, Alfred Dennis, “Economic Conditions and American Trade Possibilities in Egypt,” *Commerce Reports*, no. 30, 5 February 1921, Washington, D.C., in *Afrique 1918–1940: Egypte 63*, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris (hereafter MAE); Department of Overseas Trade, *Report of the United Kingdom Trade Mission to Egypt, February–March 1931* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1931); and U.K. Board of Trade, *Report of the United Kingdom Trade Mission to Egypt, the Sudan, and Ethiopia, February 1955* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1955).

¹⁹See Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles*. In this book, Tignor aptly documents many changes in the textile sector from the point of view of business administration, the Egyptian state, and British industrialists. I have drawn extensively from his narrative in writing about the cultural history of the period.

²⁰See United Arab Republic, *Twelve Years of Industrial Development, 1952–1964* (Cairo: Government Printing Offices, 1964).

²¹See, for example, Mahmoud Amin Anis, *A Study of the National Income of Egypt* (Cairo: Société orientale de publicité, 1950); Charles Issawi, *Egypt at Mid-Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954); Patrick O’Brien, *The Revolution in Egypt’s Economic System* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966); Donald C. Mead, *Growth and Structural Change in the Egyptian Economy* (Homewood, Ill.: Richard Irwin, 1967); Bent Hansen, “Income and Consumption in Egypt, 1886/1887 to 1937,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10 (1979): 27–47; and Bent Hansen and Girgis A. Marzouk, *Development and Economic Policy in the UAR (Egypt)* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1965). Galal Amin, in *Whatever Happened to the Egyptians?* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000) and *Whatever Else Happened to the Egyptians?* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2004), views consumption as an index of social health.

²²Roger Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy, 1820–1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles*; Timothy Mitchell, *The Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2002), esp. chap. 8 on wheat and sugarcane; and Relli Shechter, *Smoking, Culture, and Economy in the Middle East: The Egyptian Tobacco Market, 1850–2000* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

²³Examples of new studies include Donald Quataert, ed., *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550–1922* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2000); Haris Exertzoğlu, “The Cultural Uses of Consumption,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 (2003): 77–101; James Grehan, *Everyday Life and Consumer Culture in 18th-Century Damascus* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 2007); Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1995); and Diane Singerman and Paul Amar, eds., *Cairo Cosmopolitan* (New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2006), esp. contributions by de Koning, Kuppinger, and Ghannam.

²⁴Leor Halevi, “Christian Impurity versus Economic Necessity: A Fifteenth-Century Fatwa on European Paper,” *Speculum* 83 (October 2008): 917–45; Gregory Starrett, “The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo,” *American Anthropologist* 97 (March 1995): 51–68; and Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

²⁵Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); and Halevi, “Christian Impurity.”

²⁶Baron, *Woman’s Awakening*; Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman*; Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805–1923* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005); and Relli Shechter, ed., *Transitions in Domestic Consumption and Family Life in the Modern Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

²⁷See, for example, Mona Abaza, *Changing Consumer Cultures of Modern Egypt* (Boston: E. J. Brill, 2006); and Uri Kupferschmidt, *The Orosdi-Back Saga* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Center, 2007). Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper argue that this is a general problem in the study of colonial states, and they call for a colonial history that is both attentive to cultural constructions and grounded in “specific relations of production and exchange.” See Stoler and Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Stoler and Cooper (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997), 18.

²⁸Exceptions include Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman*; and Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Romance of Resistance," *American Ethnologist* 17 (1990): 41–55.

²⁹Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction," in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5. Lucie Ryzova has tracked the circulation of personal journals and photographs, among other commodities, in 20th-century Egypt. See Ryzova, "'I Am A Whore, But I Will Be A Good Mother': On the Production and Consumption of the Female Body in Modern Egypt," *Arab Studies Journal* XII.2/XIII.1 (2004–2005): 80–123.

³⁰The boycott was organized by upper-class women. Al-Rafi'ī, *A'qab al-Thawra*, 341; Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 170–77.

³¹Davis, *Challenging Colonialism*, on Bank Misr; and Malak Badrawi, *Isma'īl Sidqi* (Richmond, U.K.: Curzon, 1996).

³²See Bordereau d'envoi, 20 April 1931, including a letter from Grandguillot to Ministère du Commerce et de l'Industrie, Cairo, 20 March 1931, a/s "Egypte: Exposition agricole et industrielle," *Afrique 1930–1940: Egypte* 107, MAE; see also "al-Sina'at al-Wataniyya fi al-Ma'rad," *al-Musawwar*, special issue, 8 March 1931, 12.

³³See al-Rafi'ī, *A'qab al-Thawra*, 340–41.

³⁴See G. H. Selous, *Economic Conditions in Egypt, July 1935* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1935), 52; and idem, *Report on Economic and Commercial Conditions in Egypt, May 1937* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), 104–105. See also Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise, and Economic Change*, 135–36.

³⁵Al-Rafi'ī, *A'qab al-Thawra*, 342. See *al-Ahram*, 28 October 1951. On the fate of the factory, see also Ibrahim el-Mouelhy, "Le Tarbouche et son histoire," *Almanach du progrès égyptien* (1953): 68; and James Jankowski, *Egypt's Young Rebels: "Young Egypt," 1933–1952* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1975), 12.

³⁶See *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 329, 11 June 1934, 52; "Fi 'Alam al-Sina'," *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 328, 4 June 1934, 34; advertisement, *al-Ahram*, 29 October 1938, 6.

³⁷In his study of Bank Misr, Davis treats the retail company only briefly. See Davis, *Challenging Colonialism*, 135, 187. On the company's main store opening, see "Fi Dar al-Sharika al-Jadida," *al-Ahram*, 4 January 1933, 7.

³⁸*Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 264, 6 March 1933, 21; and *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 316, 12 March 1934, 27. See also *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 291, 11 September 1933, 14.

³⁹*Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 316, 12 March 1934, 27.

⁴⁰*al-Ahram*, 25 February 1933, 5. Similar characteristics marked clothing as Chinese in this period as well. Gerth, *China Made*, 120.

⁴¹Unless otherwise noted, all information on the Tanta opening, including quotations from speeches, is from the article "Yawm Tanta al-Mashud," *al-Ahram*, 13 February 1937. It was the fourteenth branch of the store to open.

⁴²"Formation of a Committee for Encouraging Native Manufactured Goods," a notice appearing in *al-Fallah*, 3 March 1931 and *al-Dia*, 3 March 1931, FO 141/770/515, U.K. National Archives.

⁴³*Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 221, 9 May 1932, 5. *Ruz al-Yusuf* was pro-Wafd and strongly nationalist in this period.

⁴⁴Al-Rafi'ī, *A'qab al-Thawra*, 341.

⁴⁵Ali Pasha Mubarak described, for example, the chief Maliki mufti in such terms in the 1880s. See Indira Falk Gesink, "'Chaos on the Earth,'" *The American Historical Review* 103 (2003): 722.

⁴⁶*Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*, trans. and annotated by Charles Wendell (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1978), 19, 83, 86, 124. Grehan, *Everyday Life*, argues that religious elites accepted silk blends more easily in 18th-century Damascus, even though many Islamic jurists considered silk "morally dubious" (p. 214). The Muslim Brothers in Egypt did found a short-lived and small textile mill (the Muslim Brothers' Company for Spinning and Weaving) in Shubra in 1947, as well as a commercial company in 1952 at al-Mahalla al-Kubra. The commercial company, according to Richard Mitchell, "produced textiles, household goods, clothing—ready-made men's clothing and accessories, including ties and scarves—notions, office and school supplies, and electrical equipment." Although it is highly likely that ties, scarves, and other items were made of silk, the Brothers' economic institutions were designed to promote the national economy and better the situation of the "poverty-stricken masses," which suggests they produced affordable, modest cotton textiles. Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 272–77; see also Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism*,

Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882–1954 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 374–75.

⁴⁷Sayyid Qutb, *al-‘Adala al-Ijtima‘iyya fi al-Islam* (1953; Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1975), 145. See also idem, *Social Justice in Islam*, trans. John B. Hardie, revised translation and introduction by Hamid Algar (1953; New York: Islamic Publications International, 2000), 160. On silk as a distraction from the worship of God, see also Bayly, “Origins,” 290.

⁴⁸Qutb, *al-‘Adala*, 138–46, esp. 143–44.

⁴⁹M. Lefevre-Meaulle, “L’Egypte: Rapport de M. Lefevre-Meaulle, attaché commercial en Orient,” 60, enclosed in Lefevre-Meaulle à Selves, Paris, 28 July 1911, in *Nouvelle Série* 118, Egypte, MAE.

⁵⁰The memoirs were composed in colloquial Arabic while he was imprisoned in the late 1950s and early 1960s for labor activism. Although composing memoirs was not a typical activity of the average textile worker, Joel Beinin has argued for the authenticity of al-Khuli’s text because of its uniqueness as a memoir, especially because it does not follow the accepted ideological canon of communist memoirs. See Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chap. 4, esp. 104.

⁵¹Fikri al-Khuli, *al-Rihla*, vol. I (Cairo: Dar al-Ghad, 1987), 46.

⁵²Al-Khuli, *al-Rihla*, 172. He makes at least four references to this on pages 174 through 177.

⁵³M. El Darwish, “Where Egyptian Cotton Scores,” *The Manchester Guardian Commercial*, special issue on Egypt, 19 March 1931, 35.

⁵⁴Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise, and Economic Change*, 129.

⁵⁵Advertisement in *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 306, 25 December 1933, 50; see also Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman*, 64.

⁵⁶Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman*, 62.

⁵⁷See, for example, the illustrations of “Ziyy Sharqi Hadith” accompanying the article on “Azya’ al-Sayyidat,” *Majallat al-Mara’ al-Misriyya* 6, no. 8, 15 October 1925, 436–38; and “Ahdath al-Azya’,” *Majallat Misr al-Haditha al-Musawwara*, no. 4, 25 January 1928, 28.

⁵⁸Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman*, 61.

⁵⁹Shechter, “Reading Advertisements,” 486.

⁶⁰Shechter, “Press Advertising,” 51.

⁶¹On early nationalist advertising in the 1920s, see Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman*, 72–78.

⁶²Shechter, “Press Advertising,” 53–54.

⁶³See, for example, al-Nahhas advertisement, *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 221, 9 May 1932, 15; and Misr Company for Silk Weaving advertisement, *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 290, 4 September 1933, 27.

⁶⁴Advertisement in *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 306, 25 December 1933, 50. A similar advertisement depicting workers carrying bolts of fabric from the factory up a series of steps made by piles of other bolts of fabric ran in *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 303, 4 December 1933, 49.

⁶⁵Advertisement in *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 307, 1 January 1934, 47.

⁶⁶Interview with Harb in *Misr*, 19 December 1936; and press statement in May 1938 reprinted in Harb, *Majmu‘at Khutub*, 138, 173, 141.

⁶⁷Fédération égyptienne de l’industrie, *Foreign Trade of Egypt* (Cairo: Société orientale de publicité, 1955), 221–26. Many of the trademarks had been in use for a number of years. See *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 248, 14 November 1932, 32; and *La Femme Nouvelle*, March 1949.

⁶⁸Edward Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836; reprint, London: East–West Publications, 1989), 40.

⁶⁹Lefevre-Meaulle, “L’Egypte,” 45; see also Uri Kupferschmidt, “Who Needed Department Stores in Egypt? From Orosdi-Back to Omar Effendi,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43 (2007): 182.

⁷⁰See, for example, the following advertisements for Holeproof Hosiery: *al-Musawwar*, no. 50, 25 September 1925, 11; *al-Musawwar*, no. 51, 2 October 1925, 14; *al-Musawwar*, no. 85, 28 May 1926, 11; *Majallat Misr al-Haditha al-Musawwara*, no. 4, 25 January 1928, 33; and *Majallat Misr al-Haditha al-Musawwara*, no. 5, February 1928, 81. Holeproof Hosiery was listed, along with a number of other British brand-name products, as an advertiser in the Egyptian press in E. Homan Mulock, *Report on the Economic and Financial Situation of Egypt, June 1926* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1926).

⁷¹*Misr al-Haditha al-Musawwara*, January 1928, 33; and *al-Lata’if al-Musawwara*, 22 November 1926, 15.

⁷²*Al-Lata’if al-Musawwara*, vol. X, no. 469, 4 February 1924, 17.

⁷³See “Qism al-Triku,” *al-Ahram*, 5 October 1935.

⁷⁴Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt, 1725–1975* (Stuttgart, Germany: Steiner, 1985), 140. These included the “Shurbaji, Qabbani, Mardini, Halbuni, Abu ‘Auf, and Kasm families.”

⁷⁵Eman, *L’Industrie du coton*, 115.

⁷⁶Selous, *Report on Economic and Commercial Conditions, May 1937*, 105.

⁷⁷Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles*, 58.

⁷⁸Cited in Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles*, 56.

⁷⁹“Note sur le marché de la bonneterie en Egypte,” April 1954, 3–4, le Caire-Ambassade 602/253, Centre des archives diplomatiques-Nantes.

⁸⁰See “Masani‘ al-Shurbaji bi-Imbaba,” *al-Ahram*, special issue 1950, 34; and “al-Mudhakkira” (Note), n.d., “Bunuk: 1945–99,” Abdin: Maliyya no. 264: Bunuk wa-Sharikat, 1909–1949, Dar al-Watha‘iq al-Qawmiyya, Cairo (Egyptian National Archives, hereafter DWQ). Nearly LE 300,000 was transferred from factories outside Egypt to the Shurbaji Brothers in Egypt through various accounts in the Ottoman Bank and Bank Misr in 1941 and 1942.

⁸¹*L’Egypte nouvelle*, no. 161, 16 May 1947, 387; and Clement Levy, *Stock Exchange Year-Book of Egypt, 1957* (Cairo: Stock Exchange Year-book of Egypt, 1957), 714–15.

⁸²This could be because the local press was predominantly owned and run by Syrians resident in Egypt. It is worth noting that the Shurbaji plant was renowned for its unjust treatment of its workers. See Beinun and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 434, 392.

⁸³“Masna‘ Jawarib Shurbaji,” *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 358, 31 December 1934, 35; and “Sina‘at al-Jawarib fi Misr,” *al-Musawwar*, no. 572, 27 September 1935, 2. See also advertisement in *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 307, 1 January 1934, 27.

⁸⁴*Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 343, 17 September 1934, 18.

⁸⁵“Masna‘ Jawarib Shurbaji”; and Shurbaji advertisement in *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 307, 1 January 1934, 27.

⁸⁶“Masna‘ Jawarib Shurbaji.”

⁸⁷“Masani‘ al-Shurbaji li-l-Shurabat!” *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 347, 15 October 1934, 28.

⁸⁸“Ziyara li-Masna‘ al-Shurbaji,” *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 328, 4 June 1934, 26.

⁸⁹*Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 301, 20 November 1933, 29; another ad depicted the same three people dressing: *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 307, 1 January 1934, 26.

⁹⁰*Al-Musawwar*, no. 534, 4 January 1935; see also *al-Balagh*, 10 October 1942. Although Bata opened stores in Egypt starting in the early 1930s, it would not open a local factory until 1938.

⁹¹See *1956–1957 Egyptian Trade Index* (Alexandria, Egypt: Middle East Publishing Company, 1957), 451. See also advertisements in *al-Ithnayn*: no. 680, 23 June 1947, 29; no. 685, 28 July 1947, 31; no. 662, 17 February 1947, 28.

⁹²For example, see advertisement for the Egyptian Clothing Company, *al-Ahram*, 1 February 1931, 13.

⁹³See M. A. E. Turner and L. B. S. Larkins, *Economic Conditions in Egypt, July 1931* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1931), 48.

⁹⁴Eman, *L’Industrie du coton*, 201.

⁹⁵Subhi Shurbaji to the Egyptian Finance Minister, dated Alexandria, Egypt, 10 April 1942, in ‘Abdin, Maliyya, no. 264: *Bunuk wa-Sharikat*, 1909–1949, DWQ. See also Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles*, 58. Despite Shurbaji’s claims, there is no evidence that existing fibers were necessarily deficient or inadequate.

⁹⁶See “Masani‘ al-Shurbaji bi-Imbaba,” 34.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸In 1952, imports of stockings made from pure artificial silk, and artificial silk blends reached 144,560 dozen pairs. “Note sur le marché de la bonneterie en Egypte,” 4.

⁹⁹Selous, *Report on Economic and Commercial Conditions, May 1937*, 76–77.

¹⁰⁰Turner and Larkins, *Economic Conditions, July 1931*, 48.

¹⁰¹Selous, *Report on Economic and Commercial Conditions, May 1937*, 116.

¹⁰²Interview with Harb in *Misr*, 19 December 1936, reprinted in Harb, *Majmu‘at Khutub*, 173.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles*, 55–56. See also Davis, *Challenging Colonialism*, 144.

¹⁰⁵Tignor, *Egyptian Textiles*, 56.

¹⁰⁶Eli Politi, *Annuaire des sociétés égyptiennes par actions, 1955* (Alexandria, Egypt: Imprimerie du commerce, 1955), 415.

¹⁰⁷*Official Report of the International Cotton Congress Held in Egypt, 1927* (Manchester, U.K.: Taylor Garnett Evans and Co., n.d.), 38; and “Haya Kulaha Nylon,” *al-Ithnayn*, no. 678, 9 June 1947, 10.

¹⁰⁸“Al-Tawsi‘a fi al-Istikhdam al-Khuyut al-Sina‘iyya,” *al-Misri*, special issue on cotton, 1950, 71.

¹⁰⁹A pair of fine silk stockings cost between PT 45 and PT 60, whereas more common types of cotton mesh or muslin stockings cost PT 7 to PT 15.

¹¹⁰Susannah Handley, *Nylon* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 48.

¹¹¹“Where We Get the Silk for Our Jumpers and Frocks,” *The Egyptian Gazette*, 3 June 1925; and *al-Musawwar*, no. 686, 3 December 1937, 19.

¹¹²*Al-Musawwar*, no. 686, 3 December 1937, 19.

¹¹³See Sidnawi advertisement for Van Raalte stockings in *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 304, 11 December 1933, 38; and *The Egyptian Gazette*, 5 October 1934, 6. See also *The Egyptian Gazette*, 2 November 1934, 6; 5 October 1934, 6; and 19 October 1934, 6; and *al-Musawwar*, no. 686, 3 December 1937, 19; *al-Musawwar*, no. 559, 28 June 1935, 29. Although some other luxury goods were advertised without prices, this was most pronounced with silk stockings.

¹¹⁴G. de R., “Bas de Soie, Bas de Fil,” *L’Egypte Nouvelle*, no. 9, 22 May 1942, 18.

¹¹⁵Jean Schatz, “Le Commerce Extérieur de l’Egypte pendant les Deux Guerres Mondiales,” *L’Egypte contemporaine*, no. 228–29 (1945): 796 (tables); “Note sur le marché de la bonneterie en Egypte,” 4.

¹¹⁶Commercial reports rarely break out nylon from overall hosiery production. See “Note sur le marché de la bonneterie en Egypte,” Appended *statistique* on imports and pp. 3–4; and “Masani‘ al-Shurbaji bi-Imbaba,” 34.

¹¹⁷Anecdotal evidence suggests that even for middle- and upper-middle-class women, nylon stockings were a splurge item in the 1950s. A 1955 article explains in detail the differences of gauge, durability, and flexibility of different types of nylon stockings (those for work, leisure, or evening wear) and opens with a panicked lament of a woman consumer who has just torn a new pair of nylon stockings. “Shurrabi . . . Shurrabi!” *Hawwa al-Jadida*, special issue, 1 May 1955, 67. See also the Shurbaji store advertising in *al-Musawwar* in the winter of 1957 to 1958.

¹¹⁸Chemla advertisement, *Akhir Lahza*, no. 74, 31 May 1950, 2.

¹¹⁹See, for example, *al-Musawwar*, no. 1258, 19 November 1948, 39; and *al-Musawwar*, no. 1686, 1 February 1957, 37. See also Shurbaji advertisement, in special issue of *al-Ahram*, July 1959, 71; Gabary Store advertisements, in *al-Ahram*, 22 November 1951, 2 and *Bint al-Nil*, December 1954, 80; Bata stockings (silk and artificial silk), *al-Ithnayn*, no. 562, 19 March 1945, 22; Kayser nylons, *Images*, no. 170, 9 February 1952; 14; and Cameo nylons ad, *Hawwa al-Jadida*, no. 11, 1 November 1955, 70.

¹²⁰*Al-Ahram*, 20 November 1951, 1.

¹²¹*Al-Musawwar*, no. 1655, 29 June 1956, 32.

¹²²All quotes from the opening are taken from Marzuq Hilal, “Ahya’ al-Qahira fi Diyafat al-Zamalik; Rigal wa-Nisa’ Yahtafun: la Ghala’ ba’d al-Yawm wa-la Sina‘a Ajnabiyya bayn al-Qawm,” *al-Musawwar*, no. 1730, 6 December 1957, 22–23. See also “Nuwab al-Sha‘b ma‘a Abtalna alladhina Hatamu al-Hisar al-Iqtisadi,” *al-Musawwar*, no. 1735, 10 January 1958, 35.

¹²³Hilal, “Ahya’ al-Qahira.”

¹²⁴Handley, *Nylon*.

¹²⁵On social unrest in the 1940s, see, for example, Ahmad Abdalla, *The Student Movement and National Politics in Egypt* (London: al-Saqi Books, 1985); and Beinín and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*.

¹²⁶‘Ashur ‘Ulaysh, “Imra’t Nylun,” *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 1026, 11 February 1948, 33–34. See also the graphics of “al-Tawsi‘a,” 71.

¹²⁷‘Ulaysh, “Imra’t Nylun.” The pun on nylon-attired legs being a “piece of meat” perhaps alludes to *gawz kawāri‘* (sheep’s trotters) as slang for “a pair of pretty legs.” See Bayram al-Tunisi, *Fawazir Ramadan*, no. 44: *al-Shurrab*, in *Ash‘ar Bayram al-Tunisi*, ed. Muhammad Mahmud Bayram al-Tunisi (Cairo: Madbuli, 1985), 313.

¹²⁸*Akhir Sa‘a*, no. 697, 3 March 1948.

¹²⁹Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 54–55; see also 50. As a lover of Joseph, who was Jewish, Zulaykha may also refer to the increasing politicization of industry after the 1948 war in Palestine and the implementation of the 1947 company law, which sought to Egyptianize joint-stock companies registered in Egypt, many (but by no means most) of which were owned by locally resident Jews. On the complexity of the identities of locally resident Jews, see Joel Beinín, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998).

¹³⁰Keith Wheelock, *Nasser's New Egypt* (New York: Praeger, 1960), 139–40; and P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 391.

¹³¹Ahmad Husayn in *al-Sha'ib al-Jadid*, 4 June 1951, cited in Joel Gordon, *Nasser's Blessed Movement: Egypt's Free Officers and the July Revolution* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1996), 27–28.

¹³²Samir Faraj, *Nariman: Akhir Malikat Misr* (Cairo: Ahrām Publishing, 1992).

¹³³R. T., “La Journée du 26 janvier,” *Almanach du progrès égyptien*, 1953. On the Cairo fire, see also “Maṣat al-Qahira fi 26 Yanayir 1952,” *al-Ahrām*, 12 February 1952, 1–3; Confidential report from Stevenson to Eden, “Damage to British Interests in Cairo in the Riots of 26th January, 1952,” dated Cairo, 5 February 1952, in FO 371/96957, PRO; Jamal al-Sharqawi, *Hariq al-Qahira* (Cairo: Dar al-Thaqafa al-Jadida, 1976); and Anne-Claire Kerboeuf, “The Cairo Fire of 26 January 1952 and the Interpretations of History,” in *Re-envisioning Egypt, 1919–1952*, ed. Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson, and Barak A. Salmoni (New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 194–216.

¹³⁴“Extremists’ Role in Riots,” *The Times*, 29 January 1952, 4.

¹³⁵The text appears to be misprinted as “Shaykh Manluf.” I appreciate the assistance of Arthur Goldschmidt, Jr. on this issue. It is also possible this alluded to shaykh Hasanayn Makhluḥ, state mufti until 1954. See also Muhammad Husayn, “Imraʿa fi Shariʿ Fuʿad,” *Ruz al-Yusuf*, no. 1023, 21 January 1948, 34.

¹³⁶Gordon, *Nasser's Blessed Movement*, 196.

¹³⁷Carol Bardenstein, “The Role of the Target-System in Theatrical Adaptation,” in *The Play Out of Context*, ed. Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 146–62.