

GRAND PLANS IN GLASS BOTTLES: A SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND
TECHNOLOGICAL HISTORY OF BEER IN EGYPT 1880-1970

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To My Love

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ABSTRACT

GRAND PLANS IN GLASS BOTTLES: A SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND TECHNOLOGICAL HISTORY OF BEER IN EGYPT 1880-1970.

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Contrary to common perceptions, the history of beer (and indeed of other alcoholic beverages) in the Muslim-majority context of Egypt has not been a history of government officials desperately seeking to extirpate the evil of alcohol as rumrunners, backyard brewers, and moonshiners stayed one step ahead. Rather it was a history of a commercially-marketed product that enjoyed relatively wide popularity and robust growth from 1880 to 1980, and sat at the cutting edge of technological innovation in Egypt in that same period. Its success was not only evident from the profitability of the companies that sold it, but also from its increasing appearances in all popular forms of art and media. The title of my dissertation is “Grand Plans in Glass Bottles: An Economic, Social, and Technological history of Beer in Egypt, 1880-1970”. My dissertation studies Egypt during an exciting period, when the country was transitioning from being a quasi-colonial state, under British Occupation after 1882 and, until 1914, under Ottoman influence as well, to being an independent country within a highly competitive global economy. Using American, Dutch, and Egyptian archival sources, as well as Arabic literary sources, I focus on two closely linked companies, Crown and Pyramid Breweries.

Originally founded by Belgian expatriates in Egypt, these two firms in their various incarnations developed the Egyptian beer industry and cultivated a wide customer base. I take the story past the 1950s, when the Egyptian government under Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the beer industry (which was by then led by Stella Beer and owned primarily by Heineken) much as it nationalized the Suez Canal. Through the study of this beverage, my research connects the history of Egypt to Belgium, Netherlands, Britain, and elsewhere; the history of a business to developments in technology, politics, and consumer culture; and the history of the people – of “everyday Egyptians” – to business elites. Viewed through a mug of beer, we can tell the economic, political, and cultural history of Egypt at large

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the course of my research for this dissertation, I made several trips to the copy room of Egypt's national library (*Dar al-Kutub*) in Cairo. The room is truly an awe-inspiring place, endlessly engrossing for a student of the country's history. Besides being filled with the comforting smell of toner and the persistent hum of laser scanners and printers, the place is a nexus of past and present, where millennia of Egyptian history are accessed, copied, and distributed to the contemporary world. The sight of a manuscript, yellowed by the centuries, being laboriously scanned and reproduced by the latest digital scanner is a stark and compelling juxtaposition. This room is all the more striking in that it functions in a distinctly Egyptian way. You hand your copy-request slip to an employee at a desk at the end of the room, and he tells you to sit a row of chairs with the other researchers. Then, you wait until your name is called by one of the employees working at the machines. If it is microfilm you are here for, you then sit with the employee at the microfilm copier, telling him the pages that you want copied as he brusquely flips through the film. The man does all of this with the patience of one who has tens of thousands of pages to copy before the end of the day, and for whom your pages comprise a mere one hundred.

All this to say that I was quite taken aback when, one day in that copy room, the employee who was so graciously helping me, having noticed a pattern in my copy requests, asked, "Does Stella Beer still exist in Egypt?" The question shocked me at first because, for me, Stella and Egypt have long been inextricably linked. I do not think there has ever been a time when I have been in Egypt and *not* seen something

related to Stella, whether the distinctive green bottle or a chance bit of paraphernalia such as a coaster, mug, or ashtray. Moreover, Egypt is the only place in the world where I have been that a person can buy Stella. Everywhere else in the world, when you ask for Stella, you receive its Belgian cousin, Stella Artois. Therefore, I had assumed, foolishly, that this was the case for all Egyptians living in the country's urban centers—that even if they did not drink Stella due to personal taste or religious objections, they at least knew of its continued presence within Egypt.

However, the more I thought it over, the more I realized that without seeking Stella out or having a pre-established connection to it, an Egyptian could live his or her entire life without ever becoming aware of this important cultural artifact. As a product, Stella is not nearly as culturally pervasive as Budweiser, Miller, or Coors in the United States. No billboards announce it, no newspapers or televisions advertise it, and no sports teams or stadia sponsor it. Yet as I came to discover in the course of my research, this was not the default state of Stella beer. The beverage was not simply a hidden industry that had thrived in the country's dark corners. Stella once had a presence in Egyptian culture, but over the past thirty years, it has been erased. This dissertation seeks to counteract some of this erasure by telling the history of Stella beer and of the two companies that once sold it, Crown and Pyramid Breweries.

Contrary to common perceptions, the history of beer—and indeed of other alcoholic beverages—in the Muslim-majority context of Egypt has not been a history of government officials desperately seeking to extirpate the evil of alcohol while rumrunners, backyard brewers, and moonshiners stayed one step ahead. Nor was the history one of alcohol as a “poison” seeping into a “dry” country, yet another

example of colonialism's pernicious effects on the Global South. Rather, this was a story of a product that had been commercially marketed, and that had enjoyed a relatively wide popularity and robust growth in Egypt from 1880 to 1970, even despite the economic vicissitudes that Egypt experienced during this period. Its success was not only evident from the profitability of the companies that sold it, but also from the increasing frequency of its appearances in all popular forms of art and media. The history of beer was the history of a largely mundane product, on par with bottled water and carbonated drinks, that tracked Egyptian economic and technologic development more broadly in the circumstances of its production, sale, and management.

All of these factors make the study of beer and bottled beverages an ideal lens for providing a fresh history of Egypt in the century from 1880 to 1970. This dissertation seeks to tell this history through the study of the culture, economics, and technology that surrounded the production and consumption of beer in Egypt. It uses these three inter-related histories to problematize our conceptions of Egyptian society as it relates to notions of "Western," "Eastern," foreign, local, modern, pre-modern, traditional, and new—and all during a time when the country was transitioning from being a quasi-colonial state under post-1882 British Occupation, and until 1914, under Ottoman influence as well, to being a member of the neoliberal global economic system.

This dissertation presents a hybrid history, which instead of cordoning economic and cultural affairs apart from one another, argues that the two spheres only make sense when they are considered together. The need to connect the economic to

the cultural is particularly pressing in the field of consumer goods, where a company's success or failure hinges upon its ability to embrace, reject, or even change cultural norms and practices. As such, this study looks at both macroeconomic matters (e.g., global economic integration, and economic imperialism) and microeconomic matters (e.g., prices, consumption, and distribution) together with social and culture issues, including, for example, the development of a middle class, the emergence of youth culture, the politicization of religion, and changing notions of entertainment in daily life.

This study also challenges the popular and academic tendency to divide native “Egyptian” from “foreign” elements when describing nineteenth- and twentieth-century Egyptian history. The beverage industry is extremely helpful in this process because it was, from its very beginnings, a mix of “foreign” ambitions and “native” moneymaking. The industry combines both something new—the large-scale sale of beverages—and something old, given that Egyptians have been producing and selling beverages, often of the alcoholic variety, since Pharaonic times. The capital that drove the industry, the businessmen who profited from it, and the workers who made the whole enterprise go, all existed in the interstices between the so-called “East” and “West.” Likewise, the cultural and social phenomena that drove or repelled the consumption of these beverages cannot be easily grouped under headings like “Westernization,” “Modernization,” or even “Islamicization,” but rather represent the fascinating interplay of ideas and concepts from numerous traditions.

Finally, this dissertation will add to the growing literature on the history of technology. Specifically, it will examine how technological advances—such as new

techniques for brewing and distilling, refrigeration, and transport—not only undergirded trends and developments in beverage production but also shaped consumption patterns and altered cultural conceptions of food, drink, and nourishment. In addition, my focus on technology will show how the companies that succeeded were those that were most adept at using the new technologies of the era, like refrigeration, to exploit the inherent advantages of the Egyptian context, including an abundant water supply, a cheap labor force, and a large population. Thus, the history of technology will serve as another medium through which this study integrates the economic and cultural and further questions the dichotomy of Egyptian-versus-foreign that persists in the country's historiography.

Historiographical Survey

In a number of works, the distinguished scholars Roger Owen and Robert Tignor have expertly mapped out the general outlines of Egyptian economic development from 1800 to 1963.¹ The work of Tignor in particular serves as a starting point for any discussion of Egypt economics in the period from 1882 to 1963. His works, *Modernization and British Colonial rule in Egypt, 1882–1914*; *State, Private Enterprise, and Economic Change in Egypt, 1914–1952*; *Egyptian Textiles and British Capital, 1930–1956*; and *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire: State and Business in Decolonizing Egypt, Nigeria, and Kenya, 1945–1963* each set high standards for their respective topic and timeframe. More recently, other scholars, notably Robert Vitalis, Relli Shechter, and Nancy Y. Reynolds, have provided fresh perspectives on Egyptian economic history by shifting the focus of

study away from the traditional production-based outlook. Vitalis examined the composition and maneuverings of the executive sphere in the Egyptian private sector and showed how its foreign and native dimensions overlapped during the years from 1920 to 1955, a time when European and Egyptian businessmen shared common interests and capital ventures.² Shechter conducted a microanalysis of the tobacco industry in order to provide insights into the social, cultural, and economic development of Egypt in the period from 1850 to 1950.³ Reynolds examined the apparel consumption habits of Egyptians in colonial and semi-colonial Egypt between the years of 1882 and 1952 in order to assess larger cultural changes that were occurring in Egypt.⁴ This dissertation is particularly indebted to the latter two works. Like the work of Shechter and Reynolds, this dissertation draws from literature, film, and advertisements in an attempt to craft an integrative socio-economic history of the country.

Again, this dissertation covers the period from 1880 to 1970, providing a look at four distinct economic periods in Egypt. Scholars commonly think of these periods in terms of a Colonial/Semi-Colonial era (1880–1930); an Economic Nationalist era (1930–1960); and an Arab Socialist era (1960–1970). My inclusion of this last period most clearly distinguishes this study from those that have preceded it. For most studies, the endpoint is the Free Officers movement of 1952, which was marked by a government takeover by a cohort of young dissatisfied army officers. Studies that do go beyond that moment typically discuss this period in broad strokes, and the Nasser government is attributed with amazing power. Historians talk of Nasser-era policies like sequestration, nationalization, and land reform as frictionless processes, as

though these major transitions happened overnight. As I argue, nationalization was a laborious and messy process wherein the demands of an exceedingly popular government were met by varying levels of cooperation and resistance from the private sector.

Another limitation of ending studies near or around the Free Officers movement of 1952—especially studies that focus on ideas of Egyptianness and foreignness—is that this endpoint privileges the narrative that 1952 marked the true ascension of Egyptianness in the country. As I show, even after the Free Officers took over, what it meant to be or not to be Egyptian was variable. This variability was especially the case with large entities like private companies. What it meant to be an Egyptian company changed significantly between 1947, when the Joint Stock Company Law of 1947 required Egyptian companies (those with major bases in Egypt) “to offer 51 percent of their stock to Egyptians and to place Egyptian nationals on 40 percent of the board seats,” and 1961, when Nasser nationalized much of the private sector.⁵

As I have mentioned, another contribution of this study is its focus on the technological aspect of this history, particularly on the relationship of technological change to the knotty concept of “modernity.”⁶ The latter builds off the work of On Barak in his book *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt*. I examine some of the technological processes that were essential to the making of a modern beverage industry—notably refrigeration, mechanization, transportation, and bottling—and do so while tracing the transition from the pre-industrial to the industrial phases in the beverage industry.⁷ As I argue, a “modern” Egyptian

beverage industry appeared in a relatively narrow time frame, between 1890 and 1920; carried certain hallmarks; and had a significant impact on both consumption patterns and cultural conceptions of beverages. I define a modern beverage industry as one guided by what Barak refers to as the “technoscientific” ideals of Western Europe, including efficiency, accuracy, and standardization, etc. Western thinkers crafted these ideals during the massive industrialization of Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, imagining that a country’s level of adherence to them was the reason for its advancement, or lack thereof, in the teleology of progress.

In his study *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class*, Keith David Watenpaugh showed that modernity, on the cultural front, was a performative act that involved the use of new media, new social spaces, and new consumer goods to make “being modern observable and reproducible.”⁸ Nancy Y. Reynolds concurred in her own dissertation, noting that consumer goods were an important way for Egyptians to craft their identity through participation in “commodity communities.”⁹ Using these two works as starting points, I show how alcohol served as an ideal commodity with which Egyptians could perform their modernity because its consumption achieved a double effect: while linking its Egyptian drinker to the “modern” European, who drank on social occasions, beer consumption also separated the Egyptian from non-elite or religious compatriots, who were likely to view alcohol as socially suspect at best or religious anathema at worst.

Although alcohol played an important role in the definition of Egyptian modernity, there has been a general dearth of scholarship on the subject. Kathryn

Kueny in the *Rhetoric of Sobriety* has written expertly on how the early Islamic community formed its stance towards alcohol, through a critical analysis of the Qur‘an, hadith, poetry, and early history.¹⁰ Likewise, Phillip Kennedy and Th. Emil Homerin have written extensively on the wine-poetry of the Arabic literati Abu Nuwas (al-Hasan b. Hani’ al-Hakami d. 813–15) and ‘Umar ibn al-Farid (d. 1235), respectively.¹¹ However, these scholars have limited themselves exclusively to the pre-1500 Islamic world. Two close approximations of a full-length monograph on alcohol in the modern Middle East are Rudolph Matthee’s *The Pursuit of Pleasure* and Ralph Hattox’s *Coffee and Coffeeshouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East*. Matthee’s work focused on the period 1500–1900, taking an integrative look at the role of intoxicants (not only wine, but also opiates and stimulants) in Safavid Iran.¹² Hattox, studying an earlier period (1300–1600), looked at the introduction and normalization of coffee’s cultural role in the Middle East.¹³ Both works provide useful frames for thinking about the historical development of cultures of alcohol production and consumption in the Islamic world. Nevertheless, they are both removed spatially, temporally, and thematically from the focus of this work, which is, again, beer in modern Egypt.

A closer analog for this dissertation is Paulina Lewicka’s encyclopedic work, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes: Aspects of Life in an Islamic Metropolis of the Eastern Mediterranean*, which dedicates a chapter to the subject of alcohol consumption in Egypt.¹⁴ This extensive section is a richly detailed and thorough resource for the consumption habits of Mamluk and early Ottoman-era Cairenes. As such, it is both spatially (Egypt) and thematically (alcohol consumption) relevant to

this dissertation; however, its focus ends around the 17th century. Another relevant precursor to this dissertation is François Georgeon's article, entitled "Ottomans and Drinkers: The Consumption of Alcohol in Istanbul in the Nineteenth Century." This article, which is among the few works that delve into the history of alcohol in the nineteenth-century Ottoman world, argues that starting in 1800, there was a change in attitudes among residents of Istanbul towards the consumption of alcohol.¹⁵ Alcohol was no longer a private habit, to drink in shady taverns on the edge of town, but became a way to "affirm [one's] adherence to the values of the modern world" by drinking in public places located in the heart of the city.¹⁶ Published in 2002, this article was groundbreaking in its confirmation of the link between alcohol consumption and identity.

Malte Fuhrmann's 2014 article, "Beer, the Drink of a Changing World: Beer Consumption and Production on the Shores of the Aegean in the 19th Century," follows in the footsteps of Georgeon by studying the consumption and production of specific alcoholic beverage, beer, in the Ottoman domains.¹⁷ Like Fuhrmann, this study welds the histories of the consumption and production of beer in Muslim-ruled domains with its social history. However, this study looks not only at how a beer industry established itself within Muslim-ruled domains, but also what followed that establishment. Specifically, I explain how a country that increasingly imagined itself as Muslim and Egyptian grappled with a transnational industry that sold a religiously questionable drink.

Perhaps the most significant scholarly guidepost for this dissertation is Nathan Fonder's unpublished dissertation, "Pleasure, Leisure or Vice? Public Morality in

Imperial Cairo, 1882–1949.” In this fascinating dissertation, he discusses how the morality of intoxicant consumption and gambling in Cairo was defined at the nexus of popular culture, the weak Egyptian state, and the British colonial presence.¹⁸ As Fonder amply shows, the consumption of alcohol is an excellent way to probe deeper socio-political issues in colonial Egypt. However, as evidenced by the title, this dissertation is framed by the logic that alcohol consumption in Egypt is irrevocably linked to issues of morality and vice.

While I concede that alcohol consumption and production across both space and time has been a moral issue for many Egyptians, I do believe that the unquestioned association of alcohol with vice in the historiography on the region requires reassessment. This assumption of alcohol-as-vice reflects a deeper-seated issue in the same historiography, namely, the scholarly conflation of “Islamic” culture with what Marshall S. Hodgson famously called “Islamicate” culture—the latter referring to culture as actually practiced and lived by real Muslims in everyday life.¹⁹ This distinction is necessary because, due to the well-documented Islamic legal tradition and the vociferous support of Islamists for the idea, it is easy to assume that all aspects of life in any locale where Islam was the dominant religion must be, in some way, shaped by the corpus of Islamic law. It is even more important to recognize this distinction given that, as scholars have shown, the Islamic legal tradition generally reflects the tastes and priorities of ordinary people from specific times and places.²⁰

If scholars do recognize the fissure between “Islamic” and “Islamicate,” they free themselves from the need to inject religion into every cultural process that occurs

in Islamic domains. One scholar who shows how productive this mode of thinking can be is James Grehan in his monograph *Everyday Life & Consumer Culture in 18th-Century Damascus*. One of the most incisive points of his study is that the Western academy's insistence on religion as the defining feature of Middle Eastern culture strips its past of the "everyday experience of its gritty urgency and immersion in the demands and pressures of the moment."²¹

In particular, Grehan's examination of Damascenes' consumption of coffee and tobacco in light of the prohibitions of the 'ulama shows how demand dictated not only the supply, but also the religious conception of these products. As Grehan showed, the introduction of tobacco and coffee into Damascus in the 15th and 17th centuries, respectively, was met with disdain by some members of the 'ulama and outright prohibition by others.²² Despite the strong religious rhetoric, the consumption of tobacco and coffee not only continued, but also expanded tremendously after their initial introduction. The growth in consumption of these products was so great that the coffeehouse became one of the most important staging grounds for the Damascene public sphere.²³ Grehan attributes the inability of the religious authorities to stop the growth of these two habits to the fact that it was not the decision of the 'ulama to make.²⁴ Public opinion for the products was so vociferous that it overrode any attempts to limit consumption. When scholars choose to follow a path similar to Grehan's, the topics of study that are acceptable vis-à-vis the Middle East expand greatly. This study follows in the path that Grehan created insofar as it recognizes beer-drinking as a social fact in Egypt regardless of what Islamic scholars or foreign scholars have said or claimed about this practice.

With the strong linkage of alcohol and vice in the Middle Eastern tradition, this study also looks beyond Egypt for cues on how to write a history on alcohol and other bottled beverages that focuses on production, distribution, and consumption. Recently, within American and European universities, scholars have evinced a burgeoning interest in what they call “consumption studies,” which is based on a belief that “the consumption of goods, not their production, drives history.”²⁵ Nevertheless, much of this work, like Iain Gately’s *Drink: A Cultural History of Alcohol*, considers alcohol’s evolution across a vast expanse of time and space.²⁶ While this type of work can no doubt provide interesting cross-cultural comparisons, its massive span limits the amount of meaningful conclusions that one can draw. A much better template is John Burnett’s *Liquid Pleasures: A Social History of Drinks in Modern Britain* that narrows the focus to a certain time frame (1600–present) and area (Great Britain) to produce more specific conclusions.²⁷ Likewise, Emmanuel Akyeampong’s discussion of the social meaning of alcohol in Ghana, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change*, serves as an excellent example of the merits of a scope that is narrow in both region and timeframe.²⁸ Finally, Mikael Hård’s *Machines are Frozen Spirit: The Scientification of Refrigeration in the 19th Century—A Weberian Interpretation*, shows how relevant the study of technology can be in the history of beverage production and consumption.²⁹

Methodology and Sources

This analysis is based heavily on archival records found in three countries: Egypt, the Netherlands, and the United States. In Egypt, I focused on the Egyptian National Archives (*Dār al-Watha’iq al-Qawmiyya*) in Cairo and its Department of Company Archives (*Maslahat al-Sharikāt*), which, as its name suggests, preserves the

histories of most of the major companies in Egypt from the 1920s to the 1950s, which, as its name suggests, preserves histories of most of the major companies in Egypt from the 1920s to the 1950s. I have also closely consulted the archive of Egyptian periodicals housed at the National Library (*Dār al-Kutub*) adjacent to the Egyptian National Archives.

In the Netherlands, I primarily focused on the City Archives of Amsterdam. I used these archives primarily to research the Heineken Brewing Company, which played a significant role in the Egyptian beverage industry. From the 1930s to the 1950s, Heineken was a major stockholder in the two largest Egyptian beer companies, Al-Ahram (Pyramid) Brewery and Crown Brewery. It was only when the Nasser government nationalized these companies in 1963 that the relationship ended. However, nearly four decades after this nationalization, Heineken re-entered the Egyptian beverage market when, in 2003, it bought al-Ahram Beverage Company, the successor to the Pyramid and Crown Breweries, which by then had expanded to become Egypt's leading alcohol producer. The records for Heineken are primarily composed of letters between the managing director of Pyramid Brewery, who was the nexus of Heineken's operations in Egypt, and Cobra, the international holding company that owned shares in Crown and Pyramid breweries.

While Egypt and the Netherlands provide information on the internal workings of the beer industry and its international reach, the United States, specifically the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, provides information on the cultural impact of the beer industry. Its records on the Presbyterian mission in Egypt, particularly its involvement in a short-lived Egyptian

temperance movement, helps us understand the pitched cultural battle surrounding alcohol in Egypt that occurred in the period under study.

I also looked elsewhere to understand alcohol's consumption in its cultural context. In order to capture the importance of beverage consumption, I focused on the "image" of the drinker, using what the scholar W.J.T Mitchell, in his book *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, terms the "Family of Images."³⁰ This "family" includes both pictorial representations and "literary" depictions. With this definition in mind, I looked not only at cartoons, advertisements and films, but also memoirs, short stories, poems (oral and written), novels, histories, social criticism, and religious polemical tracts. Most importantly, this focus on the image allows me to show how Stella Beer, the flagship product of Pyramid and Crown Brewery, was able to position itself as a preeminent brand in Egypt.

Chapter Outline

The dissertation includes seven body chapters. Chapter 2 uses a drink present before the development of a modern beverage industry, *būza* (*boza*, in Turkish)—a fermented cereal beverage that is closer to a solid than a liquid and resembles a slightly fermented farina—to discuss the complex reality of the production, consumption, and sale of alcohol in an Islamic social milieu, where alcohol was both religiously suspect and an important cultural artifact.³¹ The chapter traces the history of *būza* in Egypt from Pharaonic times to the 1880s while looking at the beverage's dual role as both a nutritive food beverage of the lower classes and a target of activist Islamic ideologues and leaders. This chapter also looks beyond Egypt to the Sudan in order to understand the long and powerful cultural history of this supposedly "low-

class” beverage. Tied to this analysis, this chapter uses *būza*, which observers so often linked with southern African migrants in Egypt, to examine the complex history of race in Egypt. Finally, this chapter discusses the production of *būza* in order to understand the technological state of alcoholic beverage production in Egypt prior to 1880.

With the background in place, Chapter 3 turns to consider the origins of beer manufacturing in Egypt in the period from 1880 to 1930. It begins by observing the technological transition of beer production into an industrial concern in the 19th and 20th centuries. The chapter situates the development of the beer industries within the general development of the alcoholic beverage industry in Egypt. I look not only at the technological innovations that initiated the industrialization of the beer industry (advances in the study of yeast, in refrigeration, in bottling, and in transportation infrastructure), but also how this history of advancement differed from traditional narratives of the East being “enlightened” by the West. The Egyptian beer industry flourished as a hybrid entity, one that was neither exclusively foreign nor Egyptian. This hybridity gave the industry both the foreign capital and the expertise to compete with the international brands, and the local business connections and market familiarity to guard against the errors that a foreign venture would likely face. However, this powerful combination of foreign and local would not have worked were it not for the concomitant cultural changes that were taking place in Egypt. This period witnessed the rise of a new middle class of Egyptians, the *effendis*, who in an attempt to meld both East and West created their own distinctly Egyptian “modernity,” signaled through the use of new social spaces and through the

consumption of new products, including modes of dress. Because of beer's social value as a modern and secular product, many Egyptians found it to be a powerful tool for communicating identity.

Chapter 4 looks at the contentious cultural battle between advertisers and Islamic Modernists over beer in the period from 1923 to 1945. Whereas advertisers portrayed beer as a salubrious and delicious drink that could refresh and revive, Islamic Modernists saw beer as a pernicious poison, whose presence in Egypt was yet another symptom of the disease that was Westernization. In addition, this chapter adds another layer to the discussion of modernity that began in Chapter 2. It looks at how "modernity" as a cultural concept in Egypt has defied easy periodization or even definition. Taking a cue from Keith David Watenpaugh's *Being Modern in the Middle East*, I discuss how "modernity" was a performative act, contingent upon the people who staged it. This characteristic of "modernity" is what explains the simultaneous existence of Egyptians who defined their modernity through their consumption of alcohol and those who did so through their abstention from it. These Islamic Modernists found common cause with members of the Presbyterian Mission in Egypt, who, at the time, were waging their own war against "brain poisons" like beer. This chapter will examine the organization that grew out of this confluence of Islamic modernism and Protestant evangelicalism, the Egyptian Temperance Association (ETA).

Chapter 5 narrows the focus of the dissertation by turning to the two most important Egyptian beer companies, Crown and Pyramid Brewery. Looking at the period from 1945 to 1952, the chapter shows how the events of World War II brought

greater involvement from both the Heineken Brewing Company and the Egyptian government. Heineken became involved in both companies, when, as part of their commitment to growing a multinational beer empire, became the lead investor in both. World War II, however, laid bare how little control they had of their investments. They thus set about not only increasing their say in all decisions the beer companies made, but also in streamlining the operations of both companies by consolidating them. As for the Egyptian government, World War II provided it a greater chance to monitor companies within its borders than ever before. This newfound opportunity, coupled with the rising tide of Egyptian economic nationalism and the end of the Capitulations, emboldened the Egyptian government to be more assertive in its relationship with limited liability companies, especially those with foreign ties.

Chapter 6 looks at the activities of Crown and Pyramid Breweries in the period from 1952 to 1958. It shows that between these years, Crown and Pyramid breweries' flagship product, Stella Beer, began its cultural ascendancy, as the two companies started to crack underneath the ever-increasing pressure of an activist Nasser-led government. It was in this period that the beer industry became a national industry that delivered a standardized product throughout Egypt, and that the industry established its national brand in magazines and newspapers. On the cultural front, beer was carving out its role as the refreshing drink of the summertime and as the drink immediately associated with youth, relaxation, and having a good time. Paradoxically, this occurred as Nasser's regime slowly worked to gain greater control of the private sector. In Nasser's way of thinking, the private sector was troublingly

subject to the control of foreign capitalists and feudalists who were stifling the economic progress of Egypt. The most remarkable aspect of this period was the government's push for the "Egyptianization" of the financial sector, which entailed identifying "foreign" workers, executives, and sources of capital, and finding native replacements for them. This process culminated with the Nasser government's nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956.

Chapter 7 shows that the period from 1957 to 1960 was characterized by a battle between the management of the Egyptian breweries and the Nasser government over what constituted a "model company." For the management of the breweries, a model company was a profitable one that had the autonomy and the efficient, disciplined, and obedient workforce to implement Heineken's methods of brewing. For the Nasser-led government, a "model company" was one that would make large profits autonomously, but was willing and able to mobilize in support of Nasser's grand projects, like the United Arab Republic, and his vision for the Egyptian economy. Tied to that, this company should house an empowered and unambiguously Egyptian workforce that was unquestionably loyal to the Egyptian government. The battle over visions for a "model company" was fought through letters and legislation. In the one area where the differing visions overlapped—namely, in the desire to make profits—the breweries were successful. In the period from 1957 to 1960, breweries witnessed unprecedented profits and deep cultural penetration. However, in every other avenue, it was the Nasser-led government and its conception of a "model" company that won out.

Chapter 8 looks at the beer industry in the period from 1961 to 1970 as it transitioned from a private to a nationalized industry. This transition was anything but smooth, as the relationship between, on the one hand, Heineken and Crown and Pyramid Breweries, and on the other hand, the Nasser-led Egyptian government, was truly contentious. On the brewery side, Dutch and Egyptian decision-makers fought against nationalization in an effort to preserve their lucrative multinational venture. Their active forms of resistance included letters and political and legal actions, while their passive resistance included the withholding and hiding of information regarding employment, finances, profits, etc. The Egyptian government, for their part, treated these companies with similar distrust, as it viewed them as ideal examples of the foreign influence that was stifling the Egyptian economy. Nasser's regime used every method at its disposal to gradually undercut the power bases of the breweries and force all "foreign" elements out. This push to remove the foreign included populist policies that strictly defined Egyptian identity as Muslim, male, and middle-class. Everyone else had to prove their Egyptianness or suffer the confiscation of their property, expulsion, or both.

For all this contention, the beer itself needed no Egyptianizing. Thanks to the work of both the Dutchmen and Egyptian entrepreneurs that the Nasser-led regime would rally against, Stella beer had become the beverage of choice for young Egyptians looking for fun. As Stella became *the* beer of Egypt, it lost some of its "foreign" veneer and allure. Along the way, many Egyptians had come to regard beer as a drink that was not simply "evil" or "fun" drink, but something in between: an everyday, if complex, part of leisure culture. Nevertheless, following Egyptianization,

Stella's new role as a state-owned and -produced beverage arguably cast a shadow over its sunny disposition—particularly as the authoritarian limits of the regime became clearer.

In sum, this study seeks to tell the history of Egypt from 1880 to 1970 through the study of the culture, economics, and technology that surrounded the production and consumption of bottled beverages in Egypt. I use the understudied history of beer in Egypt, a product whose mundaneness placed it on par with bottled water and carbonated drinks, to track the Egyptian economy more broadly. The history of beer not only provides an excellent entry point for the study of Egyptian economics of this period, but it also provides an unparalleled case study of economic success in the period from 1880 to 1970, a rare quantity considering the massive economic change the country witnessed during that time. The beer industry's success was built on a fascinating mix of technological innovation, efficient use of local resources, world economic developments, executive excellence, and shifting cultural dynamics, making it a story about far more than merely profits on the balance sheet. Beer, specifically Stella Beer, the flagship brand of Pyramid and later Crown Brewery, achieved a powerful presence in all popular forms of art and media, ranging from Arabic novels, songs, and films to newspapers and magazines. This history of beer in Egypt stretches across four economic eras, from the pre-colonial era (pre-1880), to the Colonial/Semi-Colonial era (1880–1930), to the Economic Nationalist era (1930–1960), and finally to the Arab Socialist era (1960–1970). Thus, the study study allows for a more integrative Egyptian economic history than has been previously accomplished. The study shows that Nasser's government's sequestration and

nationalization of private industries was not a definitive break point between the era of the free market and the era of Arab socialism, but rather one among several integral and interconnected steps in Egypt's economic evolution. All of these factors make the study of beer and bottled beverages an ideal medium for providing a fresh history of Egypt in the century from 1880 to 1970.

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- ² Robert Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide: Business Conflict and the End of Empire in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
- ³ Relli Shechter, *Smoking Culture and Economy in the Middle East: The Egyptian Tobacco Market 1850-2000* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).
- ⁴ Nancy Y. Reynolds *A City Consumed: urban commerce, the Cairo fire, and the politics of decolonization in Egypt* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2012).
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- ⁶ On Barak, "Egyptian Times: Temporality, Personhood, and the Technopolitical making of Modern Egypt, 1830-1930," (PhD diss., New York University, 2009)
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- ¹³ Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses : The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: Distributed by University of Washington Press, 1985). Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*.

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- ¹⁴ Paulina Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes: Aspects of Life in an Islamic Metropolis of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
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- ¹⁷ Malte Fuhrmann, "Beer, the Drink of a Changing World: Beer Consumption and Production on the Shores of the Aegean in the 19th Century," *Turcica* 45 (2014), 79-123.
- ¹⁸ Nathan Fonder, “Pleasure, Leisure, or Vice? Public Morality in Imperial Cairo, 1882—1949” (Phd Diss. Harvard University, 2013).
- ¹⁹ This bifurcation was first proposed by the eminent scholar Marshall Hodgson in Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Conscience and History in a World Civilizations* vol.1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 57-9. While generally scholars have not embraced the neologism of Islamicate, perhaps due to the word’s slight clumsiness, the reasoning behind it is still sound.
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- ²¹ James Grehan, *Everyday Life & Consumer Culture in 18th-Century Damascus* (Seattle: University of Washington, 2007), 234.
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Chapter 2: The Pharaoh's Home-Brew and Muslim Moonshine: The History of *Būza* in Egypt

From Pharaonic times until roughly 1880, the production of alcoholic beverages in Egypt remained an artisanal activity. This artisanship is especially evident in the case of the beverage known as *būza* (and by other names as well), which one scholar described as

a drink closer to a solid than a liquid, resembling nothing more than cool, slightly fermented farina, with a sort of fizzy tingle imparted by the carbon dioxide, as well as the tell-tale yeasty-sour smell and taste of the stuff leaves little doubt that it contains some, though probably very little, alcohol...¹

This apt description accurately identifies three key features of the ancient beverage—semi-solidity, carbonation, and alcohol—while also suggesting the beverage's humility. Variously made from barley, sorghum, millet, or any other available grain, *būza* differed in important respects from the European-style beer that would emerge in Egypt in the 1880s. For one thing, *būza* lacked yeast and hops, two critical ingredients for beer. More significantly, Egyptians made their *būza* by following a flexible recipe that accommodated available ingredients and that, therefore, produced beverages varying widely in consistency, taste, and alcohol content. In other words, *būza* production lacked standardization. The historian On Barak, in his monograph *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt*, defines standardization as the “perceived necessity of a correspondence between standard and example.” Standardization was one of the

numerous “technoscientific” ideals of the Western world, which in the nineteenth century were just starting to enter Egypt. The ideal of standardization would become a guiding principal for the colonial project.²

Because *būza* was cheap and pleasantly alcoholic, the drink was popular in entertainment venues such as *būza* shops, taverns, coffee houses, kebab houses, and even brothels. In some circles, the drink’s association with illicit sexual activity made the beverage controversial, and drew the ire of activist leaders. But just as significantly, *būza* was nutritious, filling, and cheap. Unlike the commercially produced beer that would debut in post-1800 Egypt, *būza* was a food as well as a drink for the otherwise under-nourished working class, providing cheap protein, iron, and other nutrients.

As this chapter will argue, understanding the history of *būza* in Egypt is critical for appreciating the indigenous social context against which late nineteenth-century beer production would emerge. Like the modern beer that descended from it, *būza* was a very real, albeit contested, part of Egyptian society. Egyptians enjoyed the beverage in the privacy of their homes and in social settings like taverns, but the drink was also an easy target for activist ideologues and leaders. And despite frequent calls to ban the beverage, its presence did not diminish until another beverage, modern beer, came along that was more closely attuned to “modern” values that entered Egypt in the 19th century.

Pharaonic/Hellenistic/Islamic Beer

Būza has generally received short shrift in the Egyptian historical record because of its humble associations. A Western analog for the beverage would be moonshine, referred to colloquially as “hooch”; that is, a beverage with questionable aesthetic appeal,

indeterminate ingredients, varying consistency, and unmistakable alcohol content. *Būza* was not a finely crafted, subtly aesthetic beverage; instead, like moonshine, it was powerfully associated with the rural and poor classes. The most famous historical mention of *būza* is in Edward Lane's seminal 1836 work, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, in which Lane refers to *būza* as the drink of Nile boatmen "and other persons of the lower orders."³

Despite *būza*'s humble associations, its lineage stretches as far back as the Pharaohs. As Egyptologists have shown, *būza* was, in both method of preparation and in composition, a very close approximation to the beer that Ancient Egyptians were famed to have consumed.⁴ The technology of beer drinking in the ancient Near East provides further proof of this, as the main method of consumption was by drinking the beer from a jar through a straw.⁵ The use of the straw is a critical piece of evidence because the almost gruel-like texture of *būza* necessitates a straw, serving as a filter so that the drinker does not get a mouthful of particulates.⁶ This necessary innovation persists today, as *būza* is most often consumed by drinking it from a plastic bag with a straw. As scholars have shown, *būza*/beer was an essential part of the Ancient Egyptian diet, not only as an alternative beverage to water, but also as a source of nutrition in its own right. The drink also had significant cultural capital, being used to pay wages and purchase brides.⁷

Equating *būza* with beer, as I do in this chapter, not only establishes beer's rightful place relative to or as a successor of Egypt's Pharaonic past, but also gives the beverage a place in the other major epochs of Egyptian history. The Greco-Roman word for

Egyptian beer, *zythos*, was a favorite topic of Greek and Roman thinkers of the Hellenistic (323 to 146 BCE) and Roman periods (1st century BCE–6th century CE). For example, the famous Greek physician Galen (130–200 CE) believed that *zythos* was bad for the body because, being fermented, it seemed to Galen to have derived from “decaying” materials.⁸ Writers from these ancient periods, reflecting their own biases, argued despite evidence to the contrary that wine was for the Egyptian elite and beer was for everyone else.⁹

Despite authors’ biases against beer, the drink was an important part of Egyptian society in both the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Egypt was at that time an exporter of beer to the rest of the known world. The Hellenistic government actually relied on beer taxes as a revenue stream.¹⁰ The famous Greek historian Herodotus (484–425 BCE), in his classic work *The Histories*, made note of the essential role of beer in the Egyptian diet.¹¹ Other authors such as Strabo (64 BCE–22 CE), Pliny (1st Century CE), and Athenaeus (3rd Century CE) all discussed Egyptian beer production as well. While these authors generally focused on the Pharaonic era, their opinions were no doubt informed by the existence of a contemporary beer culture in Egypt.

The linkage of *būza* to beer is also appropriate in the Islamic era. The Yemenites living at the time of the Prophet are said to have drunk *mizr* (Ar. beer), an intoxicating beverage made from barley. The first mention of any beer-like product in the records of Islamic Egypt occurs in the 11th century, when the Fatimids ruled Egypt. The Fatimid ruler, al-Hakim, banned the Jews of a holy shrine from brewing *mizr* and put forth a general ban on another beverage, *fuqqā‘a*. In the *hadith* literature, the Yemenites are

purported to have explained their propensity for the beverage to the Prophet by saying, “Our country is cold and gloomy, and we live from the cultivation of the soil; if not for *mizr*, we would not be able to do our work.”¹² This passage again shows the prevalence of the idea that beer/*būza* is irrevocably tied to the humble classes and their agrarian work.

The composition of *fuqqā‘a* remains ambiguous. One of the most popular medieval dictionaries, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, defined it as a “drink made of barley, and called this way after the froth that gathers on its top.”¹³ Other sources assert that its main ingredient could be a host of things, including sugar or molasses.¹⁴ In a Baghdadi cookbook from the second half of the 10th century, written by Ibn Sayyar al-Warraḡ, a description of how to prepare the barley for *fuqqā‘a* seems to indicate that production relied on malting, which is also the essential feature of *būza* and beer-making.¹⁵ Certain scholars are willing to equate this *fuqqā‘a* beverage with beer because of a similarity in ingredients and the possible use of fermentation;¹⁶ however, other scholars are more hesitant because some sources insist that *fuqqā‘a* was strictly non-alcoholic.¹⁷

The indeterminacy of *fuqqā‘a* is emblematic of the general dearth of available knowledge on alcoholic beverages in the pre-modern Arab world. While this ambiguity makes difficult any kind of firm declaration about the precise ingredients and production of certain beverages, it also provides further credence to my grouping of all fermented cereal beverages of pre-1880s Egypt into a single *būza* category. This holistic approach becomes all the more important when looking at the Mamluk period in Egypt (1240–1517). As Paulina B. Lewicka describes this period, it saw a transition in the terminology

for fermented-cereal beverages. At first, the term *mizr* featured prominently in the work of medieval chroniclers, especially in the work of Egypt's most famous medieval chronicler al-Maqrizi (1364-1442).¹⁸ For example, in his *al-Mawa'iz wa-l-I'tibar fi dhikr al-Khitat wa-l-āthār* (Admonitions and Reflections on the Quarters and Monuments), Al-Maqrizi recounts not only how *mizr* was a favorite among the populace, but also how it was a target of pre-Ottoman Egyptian rulers like Salah al-Din and Sultan Baybars, who used the prohibition of *mizr* to prove their Islamic bona fides.¹⁹

However, after al-Maqrizi, *mizr* disappeared from the chronicles of Egypt, and *būza* took its place. The first mention of *būza* comes in Ibn Tagribidi's (d.1470) chronicle, *Nujūm al-Zāhira fi Mulūk Miṣr wa al-Qāhira* (The Shining Stars from among the Rulers of Egypt), in the entry for the year 1341–42. Ibn Tagribidi describes how one amir uses another amir's history as a *būza* seller to dismiss his legitimacy as a potential sultan.²⁰ While Lewicka does entertain the possibility that the bifurcation between *mizr* and *būza* may be artificial, she ultimately deems the two drinks to be distinct based on a strict definition of beer and the ingredients that can serve at its base (barley and wheat).²¹ Thus, for her, this transition in terminology represents *būza*'s replacement of *mizr*. Still, considering the ambiguity surrounding the composition, production, and naming of beverages in pre-1880s Egypt, as discussed above, this differentiation between the two beverages is problematic.

The writings of a twentieth century Egyptian religious scholar, Shaykh Muhammad Farag al-Sanhuri, support my view. His 1917 treatise, *al-Muskirat (Intoxicants)*, aimed to document, describe, and rule on the legality of the alcohol present in Egypt at the time.

What makes this source important is its breadth and depth, which speak to the author's strong familiarity with alcoholic beverages. The detail in which he discusses alcoholic beverages and their effects may seem incongruous with his religious training, but in fact Islamic legal scholars very often did study their subject matter intimately in order to make strong rulings on it. Al-Sanhuri's work comes in a long line of Islamic legal writings on the subject of beverages and the permissibility of their consumption.²² In al-Sanhuri's work, he places *mizr* and *būza* in the same family, stating that the term *mizr*, which he defines as "a drink made from durra" (sorghum), is the best possible term to encompass beer, *būza*, and fermented fruit beverages.²³ Thus, for al-Sanhuri, *būza* is merely a variant of *mizr*. This synchronicity explains how scholar Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (1753–1826) could make reference to a *mazzār*, a brewer of *mizr*, in his nineteenth-century chronicle of Egypt, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār fī-l-Tarājim wa-l-Akḥbār*, around the same time that the French authors of *Description de l'Égypte* asserted that "at this time, beer is totally absent from Egypt."²⁴

Ottoman Būza

While the relationship between *mizr* and *būza* prior to the sixteenth century is certainly debatable, there is no doubt that *būza* became the preeminent Egyptian fermented-cereal drink after the arrival of the Ottomans in 1517. This predominance should not be surprising considering the cultural footprint of *būza* in Ottoman history. Like the Ancient Egyptians, the pre-Islamic inhabitants of Central and East Asia produced a *būza*-like substance prior to the arrival of the Ottomans. *Būza*'s creation was often credited to the Tartars, a Central Asian ethnic group.²⁵ Regardless of the drink's provenance, by the time the Ottomans came to rule over Anatolia and parts of Central

Asia, *būza* (*boza* in Turkish) made with millet had become popular throughout Ottoman domains.²⁶ Among the best documentations of *būza*'s presence in Ottoman domains is Evliyya's Celebi's seventeenth-century travel account, *Seyahatname (The Book of Travels)*, in its chapter on *būza* sellers in Istanbul. According to Celebi, *būza* was sold in Istanbul by some 1,110 men, primarily Tartars and Gypsies, working in 340 shops, and by others selling from carts with tent-like coverings. Two main varieties of the drink were sold, "acid" *būza* (*ekşi boza*) and "sweet" *būza* (*tatlı boza* or *kuru bozası*). The sweet variety was made from Tekirdağ millet and had a milk-like appearance.²⁷ According to Çelebi, the best *būza* came from shops in the bazaar near the Hagia Sophia and the Hippodrome, because there the cream was left atop the beverage, and it was laced "with grape syrup [*pekmez*] and sprinkled with cinnamon, cloves, ginger and coconut."²⁸ Çelebi's reliability as a source is attested by his admission to having a predilection for the sweet *būzā*, especially during Ramadan. He declares the consumption of *būza* to be licit as long as one avoids intoxication, even noting that the sweet *būza* was a favorite of scholars and sheiks. He assures readers that he could drink ten ladle-fulls without becoming intoxicated. Nevertheless, he concedes that overconsumption could cause drunkenness, gout, and dropsy.²⁹

Besides Çelebi, another testament to the cultural significance of *būza* in the Ottoman domains is an untitled manuscript housed at the library in Leiden. As shown by Hatice Aynur and Jan Schmidt in their excellent study, this manuscript was a nineteenth-century *münazara* (argumentation) between several anthropomorphized intoxicants, including opium, wine, coffee, hashish, *būza*, and *berş* (a drug concoction that contained opium) over which of them provides the greatest benefit. After much arguing,

pontificating, and some physical altercation, Opium, *Berş*, and Coffee decide to exile Wine, *Būza*, and Hashish from the mansion where the argument is taking place to three separate locations, Europe, the Tatar Khan, and Khorasan, respectively.³⁰ Before *Būza* is exiled, he is portrayed as

[A] white-bearded, old, but naive man, clad in white from head to toe, holding a handkerchief full of chickpeas in his hand, passing for a person of dignity while moving spastically...A regiment of Tatars unfurls white banners before him and a bunch of stupid muleteers and camel-drivers are gathered at his stirrup.³¹

The features in this characterization are very much in line with Çelebi's description: The figure's age represents the ancient origins of the substance; his all-white garments represent *būza*'s distinctive milky hue; his handful of chickpeas symbolizes a common accompaniment to *būza*; the retinue of the Tatars points to their supposed invention of the beverage; and the juxtaposition of faux dignity with the muleteers and camel-drivers represents the equivocal respectability of the drink. This last point is particularly interesting, for it gets to the heart of *būza*'s position in Ottoman domains. Scholars would drink *būza* unashamedly, even during Ramadan, but the drink was also consumed among prostitutes in the seedier parts of town.

***Būza* in Ottoman Egypt**

With *būza*'s significant foundation in the Ottoman culture, its predominance as the fermented-cereal beverage of Egypt after the arrival of the Ottomans should come as no surprise. Nevertheless, *būza* held a slightly different status in Egypt from the one it held in Ottoman culture. A significant source in the discussion of *būza*'s place in Egyptian society under the Ottomans is, once again, the *Seyahatname* of Evliya Çelebi.

Considering his fondness for the beverage, it is not surprising that he dedicated part of his chapter on Egypt to *būza*. One of Çelebi's favorites was *subya*, a *būza* made from rice that was particular to Egypt.³²

Beyond detailing this local variety of *būza*, Çelebi also shows how the drink was integral to the Cairene economy. He portrays the *būza* shop, like the tavern, the coffee house, and the kebab house, as important entertainment venues of late seventeenth-century Cairo.³³ This is an indication of how closely entwined the *būza* shop and café were, even setting aside their main product. Both were urban social spaces where men of a certain social status could meet, talk, and enjoy different forms of entertainment, such as listening to recitations of famous folk epics or watching dancers, jugglers, and snake charmers.³⁴ The close relationship between taverns and coffee houses is one that Ralph Hattox explores fruitfully in his monograph *Coffee and Coffeehouses*. He posits that the coffeehouse built upon the nighttime social community that had been established by the less-respectable institutions of the tavern and the gambling den, but that the coffeehouse was then able to surpass these institutions because of the product it sold.³⁵ Further evidence of the closeness of these two institutions is that some members of the *'ulema* used the term "tavern" (*hanāt*) to refer to the coffeehouse (*qahwa*).³⁶

As Çelebi notes, *būza* shops, taverns, and coffeehouses were closely associated with prostitution, as well as other illicit behavior and less-than-respectable professions.³⁷ One particularly interesting profession is that of the bazaar jobber, who subsisted on the selling of items taken from "boza shops and taverns and kebab-houses and other places of entertainment in Babulluq."³⁸ These bazaar jobbers often came upon their wares for sale

in a most unscrupulous way:

Sometimes a silly and inexperienced youth gets leave from his master to go to the bathhouse and instead comes to Babulluq where he makes out with a sweetheart in one of these huts. At some point he wants wine and kebab, so he gives three akçe to the bazaar jobber who obtains whatever the youth desires. But into the wine or the boza, the bazaar jobber puts white clove or datura or earwax or rush ashes, and when that youth drinks a cup, he topples over like a sack of henna. At once he is relieved of his clothes and his knife or dagger and his purse.³⁹

After that, Celebi adds, the unfortunate and naked youth is left to the unsavory local residents to do with him as they please. The poor youth has no recourse, for he should not have been in these questionable locales in the first place. This description illustrates not only the grittiness of the bazaar jobber's profession, but also of the culture that surrounded *būza* and the shops where it was sold. In Çelebi's passage, *būza* is almost indistinguishable from wine; he makes the seamless verbal switch from "wine" to "wine and *būza*," linking them in their illicitness. Çelebi's remark on the lack of recourse for the indulgent but wronged youth illustrates why prostitution, crime, and alcohol had such a persistent association in Muslim domains. Because a Muslim should not be in a place like a *būza* shop, he could not seek justice for the crimes that took place there for fear of self-incrimination.

The association of *būza* shops with taverns, prostitutes, and criminal activity meant not only that partaking of the beverage was dangerous, but also that the shops tended to be targeted for criticism by pious leaders. The earliest documented instance of this is in al-Maqrizi's *al-Khitat*, which recounts how Salah al-Din and Sultan Baybars aimed to close the *būza* shops. Similarly, Çelebi describes one governor in Egypt, Capoladzade

Hüseyn Pasha, who upon learning about bazaar jobbers, declares that they constitute a loss of revenue and that he, Pasha, could be held responsible for the jobbers' actions. Pasha then ordered the destruction of the places where they made their living. One of his subordinates organized a few thousand Barbaris (Nubians) and fellahin, who burned down all of the taverns, brothels, and *būza* shops and banished all the prostitutes from Cairo. Thus, as Çelebis put it, "Cairo was cleansed."⁴⁰ This activity was not limited solely to Egypt. As Fariba Zarinebaf notes, in 1597 the Ottoman government ordered the *qadi* of Galata to close the taverns, coffeehouses, and *būza* shops in Istanbul and Galata.⁴¹

The narrative of the pious leader shuttering and destroying the *būza* shop appears again in another important source for the Ottoman period in Egypt, Al-Damurdashi's *al-Durra al-Musana fi Akhbar al-Kinana (The Protected Pearl in the History of Egypt)*. As al-Damurdashi recounts in the year 1703, under the governorship of Kara Muhammad Pasha, Egypt was suffering hardship due to a shortage in copper coinage. In order to address the problem, the leaders of the country convened a council and decided to leave the regulation of money in the hands of the head (*agha*) of the Janissaries, 'Ali Agha.⁴² The *agha* accepted the posting, but only after the council agreed on certain conditions, including one that Ali Agha be allowed to "close the pubs (*khamamir*), the cafes where *buza* is drunk, and the brothels."⁴³ The council agreed to the demands, Ali Agha accepted the posting, and he followed through on his word by going around Cairo smashing *būza* shops and driving out prostitutes.

Most accounts of these "cleansing" activities are vague, lumping together *būza*

shops, taverns, and brothels. For example, in another instance of a leader closing *būza* shops in al-Damurdashi,

He [the governor] issued a firman closing the *buza* establishments and houses of prostitution from all the districts in Cairo, Bulaq, and Old Cairo and the Janissary Agha descended [to proclaim it in the streets]⁴⁴

The grouping of *buza* with taverns and brothels again signifies the beverage's perceived low social value and its association with immorality. In fact, whether or not the *būza* shops were actually closed is debatable, as the Janissaries, the main force behind closing the *būza* shops in the above anecdote, often profited from the sale of *būza* and other alcohols.⁴⁵ One notable exception is Al-Damurdashi's recounting of 'Ali's time in Bulaq:

He ['Ali Agha] rode with this procession [the Jawsihya, the police officials, the lieutenants and the messengers] to Bulaq where he wrecked the *buza* cafe of al-Majmara and drove out its prostitutes...He attacked and closed down the sherbet shops and attacked the Jir pub which was later rented by Ayyub Bey, who transformed it into a *wikala*...['Ali Agha] rested in the *takiya*, ate lunch, then rode to Cairo where he passed the *buza* cafe of al-Qammahin, which he demolished. He also resided in *bait al-Naqba* and drove out the prostitutes.⁴⁶

In this passage, Al-Damurdashi specifies names for each of the *būza* shops, lending the account a credibility that is generally lacking from other similar accounts. Regardless of whether these *būza* shops and their closures were real, the evidence presented in this section confirms that, despite its differing ingredients, *būza* was, like wine, still considered a religiously suspect beverage.

Merīssa

Būza's low status extended into the nineteenth century, as evidenced by the statement of Edward Lane in his *Manners and Customs*, quoted above, that *būza* was the drink of Nile boatmen "and other persons of the lower orders."⁴⁷ The association of *būza* with the lower classes must have carried significant weight because author Karl Baedeker reproduced the same statement in his 1878 travel guide of Egypt. Baedeker added that it was Nubians who primarily ran the *būza* trade.⁴⁸ The association between *būza* and black Africans was hardly new in Egypt; Umar Al-Halabi, in his *al-Nuzat al-Udaba' wa-Salwat al-Quraba'* (ca.1707), asserts that *mizr* (which I have shown to be another name for *būza*) was the preferred drink of blacks in Egypt.⁴⁹ Although *būza* had been culturally important in Egypt for centuries, the drink took on complex new meanings in the late nineteenth century as the colonial imaginings of Africans, Egyptian racial politics, and actual consumption patterns converged.

In order to discuss *būza* adequately in the African context, it is once again necessary to clarify terminology. As shown above, *būza* had various names, which has caused scholars to assume the presence of numerous different cereal-based alcoholic beverages instead of recognizing their likeness. But another term, *merīssa*, consistently appears in sources on the Sudan, and scholars are divided on whether this beverage is synonymous with Egyptian *būza*. According to 'Awn al-Sharif Qasim's dictionary of colloquial Sudanese, *merīssa* is "a drink made from an infusion of sorghum or millet... It is steeped in the liquid of the dates or something else and worked by hand until it dissolves into its constituent parts."⁵⁰ This method of preparation sounds very similar to the description of *būza*. For Qasim, this is only natural, for he defines "*būza*" in the same

dictionary as “*merīssa* and the like.”⁵¹ Qasim also notes the alternate spellings of the word (for example, this chapter’s preferred spelling, *būza*), and notes that *būza*, in other Arabic dialects, comes from a Persian word meaning “ice cream.”⁵² The detailing of alternate definitions of *būza* indicates the author’s acute familiarity with the beverage and its surrounding nomenclature.

However, Hamid A. Dirar argues in his work *The Indigenous Fermented Foods of the Sudan: A Study in African Food and Nutrition* (1993) that although *merīssa* is often referred to as *būza*, the two beverages are in fact distinct. Dirar believes they are distinct beverages because the Egyptian preparation of *būza* is far simpler than the preparation of *merīssa*, and because Egyptian *būza* is unknown in the northern parts of the Sudan.⁵³ The *merīssa*-making process he describes, which he takes to be the definitive method, is far more complex than a typical *būza* recipe; it involves at least two more steps and specifies measurements more finely than is typical in Egyptian production of the beverage. Dirar’s description is based on his first-hand observations of contemporary *merīssa*-making in the Sudan; when he details older recipes from European accounts, they are simpler and more similar to Egyptian *būza* recipes. Nevertheless, Dirar is firm in his belief that *merīssa* is distinct from *būza*.

As in Lewicka’s distinction between *mizr* and *būza*, this is another case of a scholar attributing fixity to a beverage where it is not warranted. While there were certainly particularities to the production of *merīssa* in the Sudan, it seems arbitrary to cordon off two beverages that are so similar in appearance, taste, and raw materials based merely upon minor differences in production. As Dirar notes, *merīssa* was an opaque sorghum (a

common base for *būza*) beer that can best be described as an “alcoholic food beverage.”⁵⁴ These two beverages shared numerous similarities, not least their production methods. Although Dirar is keen to note that *merīssa* production was more complex than that of *būza*, the former was similarly artisanal, involving the same basic methods and materials (fire, earthenware pots, etc.) that are used for making Egyptian *būza*. On top of all of this, Dirar’s definition of *merīssa* is very broad and includes numerous other Sudanese fermented-cereal beverages that have different preparations. All of these factors justify adding *merīssa* to the list of names for *būza*.

Equating *merīssa* and *būza* is not merely a pedantic exercise. Recognizing the two beverages’ likeness provides an important link between the drinking cultures of Egypt and the Sudan. As many outsiders observed of Sudanese culture in the nineteenth century, *merīssa* was an important, albeit perhaps unseemly, part of that culture:

As we stroll about the market-place we notice the Egyptian official stamping the wares and levying duties, and farther on give a passing glance at the bakeries and beer-shops, where durra (sorghum) bread and merissa, brewed from the same corn, are dispensed by young and middle age-aged women...In the merissa booths wild orgies are often witnessed, as the day wears on and toppers become inflamed by the intoxicating drink.⁵⁵

This short passage from the travelogue of Dr. Wilhelm Junker (1875–1878), which describes the market in Gedaref near the Ethiopian border, captures the essential elements of foreign depictions of *merīssa*: the beverage was produced by women and had strong associations with sexual licentiousness. The link between *merīssa* and female sexuality is one that Heather Sharkey explores in her unpublished thesis, “Domestic Slavery in the

Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Northern Sudan.” As Sharkey shows, prostitution and the subsidiary industry of *merīssa* production were lucrative ventures both before and after the abolition of slavery in the Sudan in 1898. Before abolition, the profitability of the *merīssa* industry induced slave-owners to push their female slaves into the industry. After abolition, the dual role of prostitution/*merīssa* sale proved to be one of the only venues through which a female ex-slave could make a profitable living.⁵⁶ Often these women would establish *anadi* (sing. *indaya*), the Sudanese term for a local bar, as their base for the sale of *merīssa*. The *anadi*, which were often near brothels, were especially prominent in Khartoum, serving as important sites of leisure activity for the non-elite.⁵⁷

Unsurprisingly, these *merīssa* shops, like the *būza* shops of Cairo and Istanbul, were targeted for regulations that aimed to stop the prostitution and other illicit activities they supposedly caused. For example, in 1795, a sultan in Darfur forbade beer drinking on penalty of execution. The sale and consumption of *merīssa* continued unabated, though, and the law became a dead letter.⁵⁸ Likewise, the Condominium government, the Anglo-Egyptian government in Sudan (1899–1956), worked hard to control *merīssa* production, issuing three ordinances aimed at regulating what they termed “Native Liquors,” in 1903, 1907, and 1913. These ordinances attempted to curb the sale of the beverage by requiring every seller to acquire a license through the state and by threatening transgressors with prison time (up to three months) and a hefty fine (ten Egyptian pounds).⁵⁹

These ordinances reflected more than just a governmental concern for the moral

fortitude of the Sudanese subjects, however. The strictures were tied heavily to the Anglo-Egyptian colonial project in Sudan. As Eve Troutt-Powell showed in her study *A Different Shade of Colonialism*, Egypt had, since the reign of Muhammad ‘Ali, justified its presence in the territory that would become Sudan through a paternalism that aimed at civilizing the barbaric “natives” in hopes of helping them advance toward “modernity.”⁶⁰ This colonialism differed from that of imperial powers like France and Britain in that Egypt was what Troutt-Powell terms a “colonized colonizer”; that is, Egypt carried out an imperial project even as the Ottomans, French, and British pursued their own projects in Egypt. Thus, Egypt’s colonial actions in the Sudan were intimately tied to its own colonial yoke. As Timothy Mitchell has shown, an essential element of the European colonial project in Egypt, which was begun by the French in 1798 and continued by the British in 1882, was the imposition of “order.”⁶¹ In domains including urban planning, military organization, schooling, and even the language of Arabic, the colonial powers aimed to impose discipline and order on what they deemed to be the unruly Egyptians. Those elements that could cause disorder, confusion, or lack of discipline were anathema to the imperial project. In Egypt’s role as “colonized colonizer,” it was not only subject to this prioritization of order, but also worked with the British to implement the same mentality in the Sudan.

Given the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium’s colonial interest, then, it is not surprising that this government would target the excessive consumption of alcohol on the grounds that it lowered inhibitions and encouraged allegedly disorderly behavior. Similarly, the *merīssa/anadi* nexus was seen to need regulation as a main vector of sexually transmitted disease. The high rates of syphilis that were affecting British

imperial armies in the Sudan, as elsewhere, were a real danger to Britain's imperial project. The anti-alcohol ordinances of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium government were an example *par excellence* of the unique colonial history of Egypt in the Sudan; however, the targeting of alcohol production and consumption was not confined there. Starting with the Brussels Act of 1890 and strengthening with the League of Nation Treaty Series, all the colonial powers (Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, etc.) prohibited "the importation, distribution, sale, and possession of trade spirits of every kind" in the continent of Africa.⁶² This legislation grew out of an infantilizing discourse that was used to justify the colonial presence in Africa.⁶³

To add one more layer to the discussion of what *merīssa* was and meant in the Sudan, we must consider the sources that provide much of our information on the beverage. Like the passage cited above, most source documents were produced by foreign visitors to the country. These observers, be they European or Egyptian, were reporting from positions of power and perceived moral superiority. Therefore, their focus on *merīssa* and the juxtaposition of its mundane production with "wild orgies" can be seen as, at best, reflections on the "barbaric" nature of the Sudanese designed to excite readers, or at worst, another example of a European recording the lasciviousness of the natives as justification for the colonial project.

The imperialist undertones of these foreign visitors' accounts become all the more stark when we consider the high cultural position of *merīssa* in the Sudan. The beverage was, in numerous instances, invested with a great deal of symbolic meaning. For example, among the mythology of some of inhabitants of the Nuba Mountains, *merīssa*

was supposed to have come down from heaven.⁶⁴ For other tribes of the Nuba Mountains, *merīssa* was a central element in festivals that commemorated either the beginning of the planting season or the harvest season. For example, certain tribes in either February or June, two months known for their rains, carried out the *deboia* festival. In this festival, a *deboia* (“antelope” in the local language) was caught and given *merīssa* in the presence of a *kujur* (witch doctor). When the antelope died from the power of the *kujur*, the animal’s meat was given only to the children and elderly to eat.⁶⁵ *Merīssa* also played a role in the marriage ceremonies of the Fur people, an ethnic group from the western Sudan. During the ceremony, the betrothed met two representatives from each of the tribes in attendance. Each tribal representative would present the couple with gifts commensurate with their tribe’s social standing. One of the most common gifts was a package of *‘aṣīda* (a thick paste made of flour and clarified butter), *merīssa*, and boiled and grilled meats.⁶⁶ The ceremonial role of *merīssa* even extended to Islamic rituals. It was reported that a woman composed an extempore poem at a Sufi *dhikr*, a Sufi ceremony that centered on the “tireless repetition of an ejaculatory litany, in which *merīssa* featured prominently.⁶⁷

On a more utilitarian plane, despite *merīssa*’s portrayal as a drink that brought out the lasciviousness of the Sudanese, it actually had a large role to play in the people’s work habits. With its nutritive value as a good source of protein and other essential nutrients, *merīssa* provided Sudanese workers with a day’s worth of caloric intake. The drink not only drove work; it was also a social adhesive. In rural Sudan, villagers would congregate under shade trees and drink jars of home-brewed *merīssa* brought by the village women. Any man who drank was supposed to donate money to the jar’s owner.

Those without the money to pay were still able to drink, for to deny a man his *merīssa* was to deny him sustenance.⁶⁸

The significant social value attached to *merīssa* is further supported by another foreign account of the Sudan from Ignatius Pallme (1844). In Pallme's description of the toilette of a Baqqara Arab shaykh's wife living in Kordofan, a critical aspect of this toilette is that a slave holds a gourd of *merīssa* at the mistress's side so that she can sip the drink whenever she desires.⁶⁹ This anecdote shows how multifaceted the role of *merīssa* was in Sudanese society; in this case, it is not so much an inciter of Sudanese licentiousness as a status symbol of the leisure class.

But perhaps the best indication of the importance of *merīssa* to Sudanese culture is an anecdote from Muhammad al-Tunisi's travelogue, *Tashhidh al-Idhan bi-Sirat Bilad al-Arab wa al-Sudan* (Sharpening the Intellect with Travel in the country of the Arabs and the Blacks, 1845). This anecdote comes after al-Tunisi discusses the implementation of a law in Darfur that, among other things, had come down hard on drinkers of alcohol. Al-Tunisi tells of a man in Darfur who loved drinking *merīssa* so much that he could not stop even despite the harsh penalties—eighty lashes and the smashing of all liquor in the home. The man's solution was to dig a cave for himself underground, where he could drink until he became intoxicated and then come back to the surface. He did this repeatedly until an official in Darfur heard and came into the cave to stop him. The hole-digger's response was that while the official may be able to prevent him from drinking above ground, as God granted the official rights on the face of the earth, but the laws had no jurisdiction under the Earth.⁷⁰

Notwithstanding this masculine anecdote, there certainly was some truth in Junker's statement as to *merīssa*'s associations with women and sexual licentiousness. This nexus of women, brewing, and prostitution was not strictly limited to the Sudan; rather, it reflected a major commonality between this region and the rest of Africa. For example, in Umtata (now Mthatha in present-day South Africa), women were the traditional brewers of a local variety of a *būza*-like substance (*utywala*). The work of brewing was accepted, along with child rearing, cooking, gathering wood, and tending the crops, as one of women's standard jobs in rural places. As Umtata gradually urbanized around the turn of the twentieth century, and male migrant labor became a defining feature of the area, town-based brewing became one of the most attractive professions open to women, as it was both lucrative and allowed for self-employment. The profession was particularly attractive to single women.⁷¹

As in Egypt, colonial authorities feared that the presence of single women selling beer, not to mention the attendant specter of prostitution, represented the degradation of the local African family structure. The authorities thus enacted a series of laws aimed at stopping the sale of beer and the migration of single women from the countryside into towns.⁷² Justin Willis shows in his social history of alcohol in East Africa that the sale of alcohol was an "illicit field of entrepreneurship for women in chronic conflict with the state and the patriarchy."⁷³ Willis also notes that an "alternative" economy developed, one based on selling sex, food, and alcohol, that was exploited by the predominately male population of the new urban centers that colonialism helped to create.⁷⁴ The link among women, brewing, and prostitution was also seen in western Africa, with Emmanuel Akyeampong noting similar cultural trends in Ghana.⁷⁵

The link between women and brewing was also a feature of early European brewing. For example, British domestic brewing, a major source of the country's beer prior to the nineteenth century, was primarily the domain of the housewife and was seen, as in Umtata, as an accepted domestic duty.⁷⁶ For Dutch women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the production and sale of beer also offered significant economic opportunities; indeed, it provided one of the few opportunities for a woman of the time "to act as an independent businesswoman."⁷⁷ Up to the seventeenth century, women comprised "as much as 50% of the labour force and rarely less than 20%" in the Dutch brewing industry.⁷⁸ In Holland, however, the brewing operations were generally not headed by women, but rather functioned within the patriarchal family unit. In these operations, women could serve as *brouwsters* (the overseers of boiling the wort with the hops and highest paid assistant to the brewer/father), *wringsters* (the mixers of the malt and the hot water) and the *comptoirmeyd* (the one responsible for keeping track of outgoing beer and keeping records).⁷⁹ A woman also had the option of taking over the brewery if her husband died, but not before then.

Merīssa/Būza in Egypt

This long excursus into the African heritage of *būza* is necessary to a discussion of the sale and consumption of *būza* in Egypt prior to 1880. As I have discussed above, Baedeker cites the Nubians as the primary consumers of *būza*; however, he was not the only foreign observer to note the link between *būza* and Africans along the length of the Nile Valley. J.W. McPherson (1941) also states that *būza* was the national drink of the Sudanese in Egypt and that it was heavily involved in their ritual dance of the *ringū*, which was performed at weddings, circumcision, and *mawlıds* (saints' birthdays).

McPherson, giving further evidence of the conflation of *būza* and *merīssa*, asserts that at home in the Sudan, the Sudanese referred to this type of beer, *būza*, as *merīssa*, but that term was hardly ever used in Egypt. McPherson also states that the Sudanese and the Barabira (another name for Nubians) were the most prominent owners of *būza* booths.⁸⁰ Each of these authors links *būza* to a different African group present in Egypt: Baedeker to the Nubians, the name for Muslims living along the Nile south of Aswan, and McPherson to the Sudanese, immigrants from the territories generally referred to as *Bilād al-Sūdān*.⁸¹ Although these were two distinct groups I will, for the remainder of the chapter, conflate them, and any other under group from south of Egypt, under the term *Sudani*.

This conflation is justified because, ultimately, the boundaries among designations like Nubian, Sudanese, and other black African groups in Egyptian society were porous. As Walz and Cuno show, *Sudani*, the Arabic word for Sudanese, is best translated as “black” and can be applied to various non-Sudanese groups when discussing the history of Egypt.⁸² Eve Trout-Powell observes a similar phenomenon, wherein Egyptian newspaper writers constantly conflated terms like “Sudanese,” “Nubian,” “Barabari,” and “Habashi” (Ethiopian).⁸³ This conflation seems all the more justifiable when considering that many of our sources on *būza* are accounts by foreign authors, who were more cavalier with their identification of ethnic groups.⁸⁴

The assignation of *būza* to the *Sudani* by foreign observers was not merely an innocuous statement on the consumption habits of a Cairene minority; rather, it was a value judgment on the beverage itself. As I have already discussed, Egypt’s position as a

“colonized colonizer” requires us to interrogate statements about and observations of the *Sudani* in Egypt that one might otherwise be tempted to accept at face value. This need is especially apparent in the case of alcohol consumption, which was heavily tied up in discussions of modernity and colonialism. As Troutt-Powell argues, the term *Sudani* was heteroglossic, by which she meant, borrowing from the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, that, “at any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have had under any other conditions[.]”⁸⁵

In the case of the term *Sudani*, Troutt-Powell means that in the eyes of certain Egyptian cultural critics (Yaqub Sannu‘, Abdallah al-Nadim), what was meant by the term depended entirely on the environment and context in which the word was used. When the *Sudani* were in Egypt and were exposed to the civilizing process of the country, they were passive, docile, and fit for servitude. This valuation was tied heavily to Egypt’s history of using this population to supply the slave trade, which persisted even after it was legally abolished in 1877. The racist ideas on the inferiority of blacks that were used to justify slavery maintained a currency in Egypt up until at least the 1920s.⁸⁶ These cultural commentators also noted that if the *Sudani* remained within their homelands, they were savage, lascivious, bestial beings who were dangerously and desperately in need of civilization.⁸⁷

The hoary concept of black inferiority traces its origins to the very beginnings of Egyptian nationalism. Egypt’s first proto-nationalist writer, Rifa‘a Rafi‘ al-Tahtawi

(1801–1873), believed that the *Sudani* were backwards and that civilizing them was an essential goal of the Egyptian nation.⁸⁸ Thus, when Baedeker and McPherson anointed *būza* the drink of choice for the *Sudani* of Egypt, they linked this beverage to the socio-cultural baggage of this population. Emblematic of this loaded linkage is McPherson’s description of the *ringū* and the *būza* booth:

There are recondite features connected with the origin and the analogies of this weird institution (*ringū*)...the tread-mill-like step of the dance, and the weird instruments which include a bit of a railway line, are not quite like anything else, and the rather sour and cloudy Sudanese beer (booza) served in bowls or gourds by ebony hands is equally strange: luckily tea, coffee, or *qirfa* (cinnamon tea) can be indulged instead.⁸⁹

From the passage, it is immediately obvious that McPherson considers the culture of the *Sudani*, of which *būza* is a very important part, inherently exotic. In this short passage, he calls the ritual and the beverage “strange” and “weird.” The clearest sign of the exoticization of the *Sudani* and their drink, *būza*, is how McPherson describes the image of the beverage being passed in strange receptacles (bowls and gourd) between ebony hands. If that image is not enough, his qualifying statement at the end that “luckily” there are more mundane beverages (coffee, tea) to drink reaffirms that *būza*, like its drinkers, were inherently at odds with the culture of the author and the assumed reader. As I have shown in the above discussion of *merīssa* and *būza*, this linkage of drink to population certainly contained elements of truth; that is, the *Sudani* had quite an extensive history with the beverage. Nevertheless, by asserting this connection, outside observers were also imputing the drink with a low but exotic status. Another foreign observer Edward Pococke (1745) echoes this valuation by noting that only “the most vulgar people” were

consumers of *būza*.⁹⁰

It was not only Western observers who linked the *Sudani* to *būza*; Egyptians did so as well. The clearest statement of the link between the *Sudani* and the sale of *būza* comes in the newspaper of another important Egyptian nationalist, Abdallah al-Nadim (1845-1896), *al-Tankit wa al-Tanbit* (Satire and Reproach), who included a parable in the newspaper to warn the public of the dangers of both *būza* and *Sudani*. In this parable, two *Sudani* slave women, Nakhla and Oshama, earn a significant sum from the sale of hashish and “beer” (read *būza*) in their neighborhood, but the sale brings a curse upon their neighborhood. Al-Nadim included this parable in his newspaper to spur Egyptians to educate and civilize the *Sudani* lest they bring an atmosphere of ignorance and immorality into Egypt.⁹¹ Beyond the edifying purpose of this article, its patent linkage of *Sudani* women, *būza*, exoticism, low status, and irreligiousness is a perfect encapsulation of the role of the beverage in Egyptian society.⁹²

But how strong was the actual link between *būza* and the *Sudani*? It is hard to tell because names associated with *būza* in the historical record so often provide very little information on the origins. One hint of the etymology is a complaint made in the 1930s by a *būza* shop to the police department, alleging that a group of police officers were targeting the shop with attacks. In a letter describing the incidents, the complainant notes that these *būza* shops were run by *sudāniyāt*.⁹³ While it would be easy to assume that this reference means Sudanese women were running these shops, as noted above, the reference could simply indicate black Africans. Regardless of which meaning is intended, the point is that, at least anecdotally, the *Sudani* were still participating in the sale of *būza*

in the 1930s. Further evidence of the link between the *Sudani* and *būza* in Egypt comes from the Islamic scholar Muhammad al-Sanhuri. As noted above, his 1917 treatise, *al-Muskirat*, is an excellent source for discussion of alcohol in Egypt in the twentieth century. In the section entitled *al-būza al-baladī (Native Būzā)*, al-Sanhuri notes that, “in our county [Egypt] Nubians, Barbaris, and the Ethiopians (*al-Aḥbāsh*)” drown in the stuff.⁹⁴ Al-Sanhuri’s statement at once elides the differences among black African groups in Egypt, and situates them as the primary consumers of the beverage.

The link between *būza* and the *Sudani* appears to be logical considering the position of the *Sudani* in Egypt. As noted above, they did not enjoy a high social valuation, with society deeming them either docile, unintelligent beings whose natural position was one of servitude, or as wild men of Africa who were in dire need of civilization. At that time, many *Sudani* were slaves, but there were also freedmen who worked in coffeehouse, ran messages, served in the army, and worked as guards, haulers, and wood collectors. A *Sudani* could even reach the position of a high-level servant administering the estate of an elite household.⁹⁵ However, these positions were rare, and most avenues for advancement were closed to the great majority of *Sudani* at the time. Because of their former slave origins, they were on the bottom rung of society.

In this context, it makes sense that the *Sudani* would flock to the *būza* business, as it was one that was profitable, familiar, and open to them. *Būza* shops were a significant feature of the Egyptian urban landscape. Terrence Walz estimates that there were ten *būza* shops in Cairo at the time of the 1848 Egyptian census. ‘Ali Mubarak (1823-1893), the famous Egyptian “official, cabinet minister and writer,” recorded in his seminal *al-*

Khitat al-Tawfiqiyya al-Jadida that there were over forty *būza* shops in Cairo.⁹⁶ There was enough business for the *būza* sellers in Cairo to organize a guild.⁹⁷ An Egyptian guild was, at the most basic level, “a group of town people practicing the same occupation and headed by a shaykh.”⁹⁸ While the organization and activity of guilds varied greatly, they generally provided some regulation of crafts through their control of licensing and formed a “community for craft and service workers in particular professions.”⁹⁹ Guilds were sometimes organized along particular identities (confessional, ethnic, national). So it seems reasonable to suppose a strong link between the culture/race of the *Sudani* and the craft of producing and selling *būza*.

Despite the profitability of *būza* sales, it was open to the *Sudani* because it was a low-status occupation. As noted above, *būza* carried the same religiously suspect reputation as wine, so its public sale was not a respectable profession. On top of this, similar to in the Sudan, the link among *būza*, women, and prostitution was strong in Egypt. For example, in the court records on one 1877 theft case in Alexandria, the three accused were reported to have gotten drunk at a *būza* shop and stopped by a nearby brothel before they committed their crime.¹⁰⁰ More broadly, governmental officials and social reformers grouped *būza* shops with coffee shops and taverns, considering them all dangerous places in desperate need of reform.¹⁰¹

Thus, it certainly stands to reason that the humble *Sudani* were consumers of the beverage, for *būza* was the cheapest alcohol available and would not put a strain on their meager incomes. Yet the *Sudani* were not the only poor to enjoy the cheap price of *būza*. As al-Sanhuri notes, it was the drink of all those who were barely making a living.¹⁰²

Like moonshine, *būza* was valued for the ease of production and the cheapness of its raw materials; all that was needed to produce it were some excess cereal grains and water.

Another overlooked aspect of why *būza* was so appealing to the lower classes, Egyptians and *Sudani* alike, was that in its unfiltered form, it provided significant nutritive value.

As noted above, *būza* was an essential driver of labor in the Sudan. In the case of the poor in Egypt, because *būza* contained fat, protein, carbohydrates, iron, and calcium, it actually offset the vitamin deficiencies of the typically meager diets of the lower classes.¹⁰³ This nutritive boost was especially important in the towns and cities where urban poor had to purchase, rather than farm, most of their food.¹⁰⁴

The Technology of Būza

While this chapter has discussed the social and cultural import of *būza*, it is the technical aspects of the production of the beverage that make it the quintessential alcoholic beverage of Egypt prior to 1880. Its artisanal production was generally reflective of all alcohol production prior to industrialization and can provide a counterpoint to the next chapter, which discusses this industrialization in depth. The source that best captures the process of *būza* production is al-Sanhuri's *al-Muskirat*:

Grains of durra (sorghum), millet, rice or the like are soaked for around 12 hours. They are placed in a hole filled with leaves, covered with more leaves and left there for two nights. On the morning of the third day they are removed and you should see that they have opened and sprouted similar to the way fava beans or fenugreek sprout. The sprouts are removed, dried, and ground up. Then you make a fine paste out of the flour of the grain (be it rice, durra, etc.) then sprinkle more of the flour made from the sprouted grain all over it. Place it into a good container, and keep the container in a dry place for two whole days. On the third day remove the cover and you should see the beginnings of fermentation. Dissolve the paste in the just the right amount of water so that mixture does not become too weak or thin. When the paste has soaked in the water put it through a

strainer made of palm leaves attached to a bag with a small opening and a wide base to get rid of the dregs (which will resemble the siftings of flour). Then close up the dough for five days in the winter, or three in the summer. This period will be enough to cause fermentation, which will look something like soap bubbles. The end result will be fragrant and bitter.¹⁰⁵

As this recipe demonstrates, producing *būza* was an inherently artisanal process. First, every step could be performed with ingredients and materials that were readily available to most Egyptians. Another artisanal characteristic is that the recipe is composed of general guidelines rather than hard and fast rules; for example, the only specified value in the recipe is time (e.g. 12 hours, two whole days, etc.); otherwise, there are no concrete measurements. A third artisanal characteristic is that the explanations used to clarify ambiguous points draw upon traditional sources. For example, when discussing how to identify fermentation, the recipe notes that the process should produce soap-like bubbles. The best example of the artisanal nature of the recipe is its informal discussion of the primary ingredient, which, as the recipe notes, can really be any type of grain. This nonchalance regarding the primary ingredient gives further credence to my argument that when discussing cereal-based beverages, it is more prudent to treat them as a whole rather than trying to establish artificial boundaries among varieties like *mizr*, *merīssa*, and *būza*.

Even with the artisanal nature of the recipe, *būza*'s production still relied upon the process that is central to beer-making: fermentation, the conversion of sugar into CO₂ and ethanol, the drinkable form of alcohol. Every stage of the recipe was aimed at drawing out the fermentable sugars from the grain so that they could be made into alcohol. The

first few steps, soaking the grain and leaving it in a covered hole until it sprouted, constituted a form of malting, which facilitated the breakdown of starch in the grain and the release of fermentable sugars.¹⁰⁶ These malted grains were then baked, crushed up, and made into a paste. Baking the grains (called “kilning” in modern parlance) added flavors, while crushing them brought forth even more sugars. Sealing the product and leaving it for two days began the fermentation process. Fermentation was then halted because there were still some complex carbohydrates in the grain that needed to be broken down into even more fermentable sugars. The next step, dissolving the slightly fermented paste in water (analogous to the modern process of mashing), broke down these complex carbohydrates and produced the soupy, white paste that, when it was filtered and stored for three to five days depending on season, became *būza*.

What is most noteworthy about this recipe is that the only ingredients are grain and water. Two key ingredients that are missing from this recipe and whose presence would be the greatest differentiators between *būza* and modern beer are hops and yeast. Hops, as will be discussed later, is a plant that gives beer its flavor. Hops do not grow naturally in Egypt, so its exclusion seems inevitable. But the other ingredient, yeast, is today the essential actor in the fermentation process. In modern beer-making, this organism is most responsible for turning sugars into ethanol and CO₂, and yet this ancient recipe makes no mention of the ingredient.

Despite the omission of yeast from the recipe, the recipe attests that fermentation did occur, so this recipe, like most *būza* recipes, must have relied on yeast. The most likely entrance point for yeast would have been when the grain was ground up. The

grinding of grain would have allowed the yeast living on the outside of the grain to enter the process. More importantly than when the yeast entered the equation, is the point that this recipe was entirely based upon a permeable process. By “permeable,” I mean that due to the nature of the machinery (earthenware containers, reed pipes, palm-leave filters, etc.) and techniques (hand-crafting, lack of sterilization and refrigeration, etc.) used in pre-industrial beverage production, foreign organisms and materials were bound to enter somewhere in the transition from raw materials to final product, just as materials essential to production were bound to exit. As I will show in the proceeding discussion, the permeability of the *būza*-making process was *the* essential feature of this product, and more broadly, was central to the production of alcoholic beverages in Egypt prior to the 1880s. The above recipe cannot work if it does not allow the penetration of yeast. The permeability of the process not only made the product possible but also put the production into direct conflict with the technoscientific ideals that began to enter Egypt after the arrival of the French in 1798.

While the creation of *būza* depended on permeability, its role was not entirely salubrious. Because permeability was not selective, other organisms and materials could accompany the yeast as it entered the drink. This penetration had two effects: first, the outcome of the brewing process was not assured (certain organisms or materials could make the beverage undrinkable) and second, if the brewing was successful, the product would be maximally local, housing a flavor profile that was particular to the place where it was brewed. Both of these effects were counter to the “technoscientific” ideals of the Western world which, as On Barak details in his monograph *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt*, first entered Egypt in the nineteenth century and quickly

become guiding principals for the colonial project.¹⁰⁷

The first effect of permeability was counter to these Western ideals because it injected an element of uncertainty that was anathema to an ideology that relied on order and predictability.¹⁰⁸ Even if the *būza*-maker followed the directions to the letter, there was still the distinct possibility the drink would not come out the same. The second effect of permeability also ran afoul of these ideals because it militated against the standardization of the product. As Barak notes, the pursuit of standardization, defined as “the perceived necessity of a correspondence between standard and example, and the continued pursuit of better theory” to achieve this result, was a crucial element of this technoscientific mindset.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, as I will later discuss, one of the key steps in the development of any beer industry is companies’ ability to produce a standardized product. Heineken would not be Heineken if it could not produce its distinctive-tasting beer, which is so unlike other brands, consistently for every market. In the case of *būza*, not only did its taste vary depending on the locale, but the very base of the product could change, as the above recipe makes allowance for all types of cereal grains.

Permeability of process was not limited strictly to *būza* production; it was also emblematic of all alcohol production in Egypt prior to the 1880s. Both *araq* (an anise-flavored liquor made from dates) and wine were produced in a similar way. An excellent description of *araq* production comes from the *Description de L’Egypte*, a collection of the work of the savants who accompanied Napoleon on his expedition in Egypt between 1798 and 1801:

The dates are steeped in the water for forty days in winter, and for ten to fifteen in

the summer. They are then mixed with yensoun or anise, and the mixture is boiled for a half day. This mixture is then put into the still where distillation occurs... The liquor is very white and smells strongly of anise. Its quality is less than liquor made from wine.¹¹⁰

This passage is not so much a recipe as it is a description of how the *araq* was made.

Nevertheless, this description does communicate the non-technical nature of the beverage's production. As with the *būza* recipe above, precise quantity measurements and temperatures are not specified. The time measurements are only recommendations, and they vary based on the season. Although the mention of the still may appear to indicate that this process was more technologically advanced than *būza* production, this was not really the case. The savants, taking special notice of the still, described it as follows:

The still is made from earth and is of the greatest simplicity ... it is in the shape of a bell and has a diameter of about eighteen inches by sixteen high. Its top is about fourteen inches, and the total height of the apparatus is between two and two and half feet. There is no furnace rather the still is placed on the ground atop of the fuel for the fire. Its tubes have been crudely fashioned from reed lutes. Instead of a pipe with the coil or condenser commonly used in our workshops, the vessel receiving the liquor is immersed in a bowl full of water. Cooling is thus a rather unscientific process, and loses a great deal of steam in the laboratory, if we can in any way compare the workshops of Cairo with distilleries France. In a country, which is considered the homeland of chemistry and is one of the first places to have written on this science, it is surprising to encounter such imperfect instruments and processes for a scientific art as old as distillation.¹¹¹

Judging by the savants' comments, which are couched heavily in an imperialist

rhetoric, they still appear to be very much in line with the technology used for creating *būza*. The still was an artisanal device fashioned out of materials that were as available to the sixteenth-century Egyptian as they were to nineteenth-century Egyptians. The artisanal nature of this technology made it adaptable across both time and space. As testament to this fact, another late nineteenth-century European visitor to the Sudan, Georg Schweinfurth (1874), observed a similar set of technology: “the apparatus for distilling consisted of a series of covered clay retorts, connected by tubes made of bamboo...”¹¹²

However, the French savants did not see this still as the marriage of technology and environment, but rather as an imperfect rendering of a science that the Egyptians should have known better to avoid. For the French, the most galling aspect of the *būza*-making process was the cooling stage that eschewed the “advanced” methods they used in their own stills. As the French noted, there was a critical loss of steam at this juncture. The key process of distillation is the vaporization and condensation of a primary fermented liquid (in this case the steeped dates mixture) to produce a liquor of great purity and high alcohol content. The loss of steam is significant, then, because it represents the loss of liquor that had yet to condense. So again, the process of *būza*-making is permeable, but in this instance the French viewed the permeability (the loss of steam) as an affront to their scientific sensibilities because it was counter to the ideals of efficiency.

As On Barak so expertly argues in his book on the efficient use of time, efficiency was one of the pillars of the technoscientific enlightenment that the colonial project was supposed to bring to Egypt. Efficiency was believed to assure a more orderly society,

another important ideology of the colonial project in Egypt, as well as to enable the maximizing of profits.¹¹³ As On Barak notes, the efficient use of time was closely associated with the commodification of time, an idea best summarized by the Weberian ideal that “time equals money.”¹¹⁴ In the case of beverage production, an efficient method would be one that produces the maximal amount of end product (*būza*, *araq*, etc.) from the raw materials in a minimal amount of time.

As is obvious from the French savants’ detailed measurements of the still at the beginning of the passage, they were very much influenced by this technoscientific ideal. Given the value they placed on efficiency, it is no wonder that the French were so dismissive of the *araq*-making process. The variable amount of time required to steep the dates, as well as the fact that the process was measured in days rather than hours or minutes, was an affront to the efficient use of time. If the duration of the process could not be measured in distinct time units, then it would very difficult to build a concrete schedule for the sale of the product. Likewise, the leaky distillation system meant that every puff of smoke from the still represented the vaporization of profit.

As with the recipe for *būza*, it is obvious that any colonial power looking for efficiency would not have found it in the production of this *araq* beverage. As noted above, the entire process was framed in terms of a variable time scale that dealt in nonspecific units. At almost every step, the permeability of the process assured that outside organisms and materials would enter the beverage and that some of the beverage would also leave through the same permeable borders. Permeability represented unpredictability and non-standardization, and therefore it was antithetical to modern

Western capitalism, with its efficiency obsession.

While the French savants may have been galled by the backwardness of *araq* production, they surely were even more dispirited by the fact that even production of wine, a beverage near and dear to the French, was characterized by permeability in Egypt, as their description details:

Having trod the grapes for one hour in a jar of cylindrical earth in the shape of a small chest, they are put into a large bag made of a very thick woolen cloth, which is wrung out and the juice of the raisins is placed into another jar that is similar to the first. The liquid is then allowed to ferment for eight to fifteen days. The liquid is then transferred to one of those great amphorae, which are used to transport oils of the Berbers, and this earthenware vase is buried almost to the neck and closed with a wooden plug sealed with plaster. Despite this precaution, the wine will not keep beyond a few months like ordinary vinegar.¹¹⁵

The production was low-tech and inherently small-scale. As the *Description de L'Égypte* also notes, wine production was limited almost exclusively to the Fayyoun, which had a long reputation for producing excellent wine. The timeframe for consumption was also quite limited. Under ideal conditions, when buried underground in a large container and sealed tightly, wine only lasted two months. Its shelf life was no doubt much shorter when transported, as, at the time, there was no method to refrigerate the wine as it travelled.

The beverage's limited timeframe is, again, associated with the permeability of the process. If the intrusion of foreign particles and the loss of the beverage were integral to the Egyptian brewing and distilling process, then it is only natural that spoilage, which

is the result of foreign organisms and materials entering a beverage, would also play into the process. Thus, all of these beverages prior to the introduction of refrigeration and improvements in the infrastructure were inherently ephemeral. This was especially the case with *būza*, which did not enjoy the same benefits of aging that a product like wine did. It was a beverage made to be drunk shortly after it was made. This intended ephemerality is further confirmed by the lack of hops in the *būza* production processes. Besides contributing to beer's distinct flavor, hops are a preservative; its ability to preserve the beer was the reason it was introduced to the recipe in the first place.¹¹⁶

The ephemerality of wine was truly counter to the technoscientific discourse, with its capitalist underpinnings, that came to Egypt in the nineteenth century. How could one sell a product that did not keep? The French savants clearly had these capitalistic notions in mind when they stated later in their assessment of Egyptian wine production that the country had both the high quality grapes and soil to excel in viticulture.¹¹⁷ This ephemerality should also temper any suspicion that the presence of guilds and numerous shops indicates that an alcoholic beverage industry was present in Egypt before 1880.¹¹⁸ Yes, there were a significant number of merchants who made profits from the sale of alcoholic beverages; however, as I will show in subsequent chapters, in order for anything resembling a national industry to develop, a method for transporting the product across long distances must first be devised.

As I have shown, the permeability of the production process was a key feature in the production of alcoholic beverages in Egypt prior to the 1880s. This permeability was, however, antithetical to the technoscientific discourse that the European colonial project

brought to Egypt in the nineteenth century. Whereas this technoscientific discourse privileged standardized products that could be reliably and efficiently produced, stored, and sold on the market, the alcohol products in Egypt prior to 1880 were unpredictable, inefficient, wildly variable, and inherently ephemeral. In the case of *būza*, the permeability of the process was essential to the beverage itself. If everything were sterile and hermetically sealed, that is if all the permeability were removed, the beverage would never come into existence because yeast would not be able to enter and ferment it. *Būza* was not a universal product that could be easily reproduced in all locales of the world, but rather a product that relied on the particularities of the locale in which it was produced.

The method of *būza* production, which can be best termed artisanal, is emblematic of alcoholic beverage production in Egypt from Pharaonic times to the 1880s. The artisanal feature is what most distinguishes pre-1880 alcohol production from that which came after. As I have shown, the production of an artisanal cereal-based beverage connected Egypt to its own past (Pharaonic, Hellenistic/Roman, Islamic, and Ottoman) as well as to an under-studied culture within and beyond its own borders (*Sudani*). Although this continuity of *būza* production could be used as evidence of the unchanging nature of the Global South before the arrival of the West, I rather view it as evidence of the power and adaptability of the artisanal method. As noted above, all one needed were water, grain, and palm leaves in order to produce a drink that was both intoxicating and nutritious. As I will discuss below, the cost of entry for producing a “modern” alcoholic drink was much higher. And while this modern product that was more predictable, standardized, and permanent, it arguably was also less firmly rooted in Egyptian history.

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- ¹ Ralph Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeeshouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1985), 123.
- ² On Barak, *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 2013).
- ³ Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and of the Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2003), 94,335.
- ⁴ Alfred Lucas, *Ancient Egyptian Materials & Industries* (London: E.Arnold, 1948), 20.
- ⁵ Michael Homan, “Beer and Its Drinkers: An Ancient Near Eastern Love Story,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 67 (2004): 85-6.
- ⁶ Ian S Hornsey, *A History of Beer and Brewing* (Cambridge: Royal Society of Chemistry, 2003), 47.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid., 36.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Dorothy J. Crawford, “Food: Tradition and Change in Hellenistic Egypt,” *World Archaeology* 11 (1979): 136.
- ¹² Paulina B. Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes: Aspects of Life in an Islamic Metropolis of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 487
- ¹³ Ibid., 466.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibn Sayyar al-Warraaq, *Kitab al-Tabikh* translated as *Annals of the Caliph’s Kitchen: Ibn Sayyar al-Warraaq’s Tenth-Century Baghdadi Cookbook*, trans. Nawal Nasrallah (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 454.
- ¹⁶ Paulina B. Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes*, 475.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 487-493.
- ¹⁹ Paulina B. Lewicka, “Alcohol and its Consumption in Medieval Cairo. The Story of a Habit,” *Studia Arabistyczne i Islamistyczne* 12 (2004), 58-63.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 62-3.
- ²¹ Lewicka, *Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes*, 942.
- ²² One of the earliest and most well-known is Ahmad Ibn Hanbal’s (780-855 CE) *Kitab al-Ashriba* (The Book of Drinks), see Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *Al-Ashriba* (al-Qāhirah: al-Markaz al-Salafī lil-Kitāb, 1981).
- ²³ Muhammad Ahmad Farag al-Sanhuri, *al-Muskirat* (Cairo: Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiyya, 1978), 46.
- ²⁴ Lewicka, “Alcohol Consumption...”, 62-3 n.28.
- ²⁵ For more on the Tatars see Brian Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora Experience and the Forging of a Nation* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).
- ²⁶ Hatice Aynur and Jan Schmidt, “A Debate between Opium, Berş, Hasish, Boza, Wine and Coffee,” *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 31(2007): 53.

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- ²⁷ Ibid., 78-9.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 79.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 78-9.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 62.
- ³¹ Ibid., 63.
- ³² Ibid., 79; Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname* translated as *An Ottoman Traveler: Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi* trans. Robert Dankoff and Sooyong Kim (London: Eland, 2010), 398.
- ³³ Ibid., 394.
- ³⁴ The confines of this article prevent me from going into great deal about the role of the coffeehouse in the development of Egyptian popular culture, tastes, and even ideas of nationalism. *Idem.* Ralph Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses* and Michel Tuchscherer “Les Cafès dans l’Égypte ottomane (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles)” in *Cafès d’Orient Revisités*, ed. Hélène Desmet- Grégoire and François Georgeon (Paris : CNRS éditions, 1997).
- ³⁵ Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, 123.
- ³⁶ Abdul-Karem Rafeq, “The Socioeconomic and Political Implications of the Introduction of Coffee into Syria, 16th-18th Centuries,” in *Le Commerce du Café avant l’ère des Plantations Coloniales* ed. Michel Tuchscherer (Cairo: Institut Français D’Archéologie Orientale, 2001), 127.
- ³⁷ Evliya Çelebi, *An Ottoman Traveler*, 398.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Fariba Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul 1700-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 103.
- ⁴² Ahmad al-Damurdashi, *al-Durra al-Musana fi Akhbar al-Kinana* translated as *al-Damurdashi’ Chronicle of Egypt* trans. Daniel Crecelius and ‘Abd al-Wahab Bakr (Leiden, Brill, 1991), 117-8.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 118.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 298.
- ⁴⁵ Andre Raymond, *Artisans et commercants au Caire au XVIII^e siècle. 2 vols* (Damascus: Institut Francais de Damas, 1973) vol.2 672, vol.1 149.
- ⁴⁶ Raymond, *Artisans et commercants au Caire au XVIII^e siècle*, vol.1, 22.
- ⁴⁷ Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 94, 335.
- ⁴⁸ Karl Baedeker, ed. *Egypt: Handbook for Travellers, Part First: Lower Egypt with the Fayum and Peninsula of the Sinai* (Leipsic: Baedeker, 1878), 17-18 cited in John T. Chalcraft, *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt 1863-1914* (Albany, NY.: State University of New York Press, 2004), 225 n.59.
- ⁴⁹ Joseph Sadan, “Mashrūbāt,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Brill Online, Reference, University of Pennsylvania, 20 January 2014, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/mashrubat-COM_0698.
- ⁵⁰ ‘Awn al-Sharif Qasim, *Qamus al-Lahja al-‘Ammiyya fi al-Sudan* (Khartoum: al-Dar al-

Sudaniyah lil-kutub, 1972), 737. Translation adapted from Heather Sharkey, "Domestic Slavery in the Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Northern Sudan," (MPhil thesis: University of Durham, 1992), 157 n. 457.

⁵¹ 'Awn al-Sharif Qasim, *Qamus al-Lahja al-'Ammiyya fi al-Sudan*, 69.

⁵² Ibid., 69 The presence of this alternate definition further muddles what is already a cloudy picture of *būza*.

⁵³ Hamid A Dirar, *The Indigenous Foods of the Sudan: A Study in African Food and Nutrition* (Wallingford, Oxon: Cab International, 1993), 260.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 224.

⁵⁵ Wilhelm Junker, *Travels in Africa during the Years 1875-1878*, trans. A.H. Keane (London: Chapman & Hall, 1890), 143.

⁵⁶ Heather Sharkey, "Domestic Slavery in the Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Northern Sudan," 157-172.

⁵⁷ Ahmad Alawad Sikainga, "Slavery and Social Life in Turco-Egyptian Khartoum," in *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* ed. Terence Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2010), 154.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 165.

⁵⁹ Egyptian National Archives (Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmi), Maktabat al-Mustashar al-Mali, 0075-032992, "Waq'a ha qanun al-mashrubat al-baladiyya 1913 wa mudhakira taghyiriyya".

⁶⁰ Eve Troutt-Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2003).

⁶¹ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991).

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Chapter 3: Revolutionary Ferment: Importing the Modern Alcohol Industry into Egypt, 1882–1933

While there was a local culture of alcoholic beverage production and consumption in Egypt prior to 1882, this chapter will show that the alcoholic beverage businesses that appeared in the time period that followed, 1882 to 1933, were entirely different in scale, methods, goals, and technology. Whereas the earlier *būza*, wine, and arak businesses were overwhelmingly local, artisanal, and do-it-yourself operations, the alcoholic beverage businesses that appeared after 1882, aided by the colonial apparatus in Egypt, were industrialized ventures that aimed to use imported and cutting-edge technology to reach a large Egyptian market. To label these businesses as “imports” is not to deem them “foreign” or “unwanted,” but rather to recognize, as I will show, that they grew out of complex motives on the part of Europeans to bring an industrialized alcoholic beverage industry to the country and to spur a growth in demand for the beverage among the Egyptian population.

The European motivation to bring an industrialized alcoholic beverage sector to Egypt, as well the increasing local demand for one, grew out of the knotty concept of “modernity.” For the European brewers and the Egyptian industrialists who partnered with them, modernity was a short-hand term for the scientification and mechanization of the alcoholic beverage industry. Modernity stood in for the Western techno-scientific ideals of standardization, efficiency, order, and cleanliness, which were applied indiscriminately to the industry in Egypt.¹ Likewise, modernity encompassed those methods and machinery that entrepreneurs, both Egyptian and European, insisted should replace the more “traditional” methods of production. In the

cultural realm, Egyptians viewed modernity as the set of behaviors, practices, and ideas that they had to adopt in order to “catch up” with the West. In practice, modernity became a performative act that involved Egyptians using new media, new social spaces, and new consumer goods to make “being modern observable and reproducible.”² Although assumptions of Western superiority underlay these ideas of modernity, the efforts at modernization that Egyptians made—including the application of techno-scientific ideals, the implementation of new methods and machinery, and the adoption of “modern” habits and styles—were not frictionless processes. Rather, they were contested battles that ultimately produced a distinctive Egyptian modernity.

This chapter features a six-part analysis. The first three sections set the context for the arrival of a “modern” beer industry in Egypt by tracing the economic, technological, and cultural changes that preceded it. The first section examines the economic trends that made importing an alcoholic beverage industry into Egypt not only feasible, but also attractive. The second section discusses the technological trends that contributed to this feasibility. The third section looks at the cultural developments that made the alcoholic beverage industry a welcome addition in Egypt rather than a foreign imposition. Following these contextual discussions, the remaining three sections recount the actual arrival of the modern alcoholic beverage industry in Egypt. The fourth section looks at the companies that spearheaded the importation of the alcoholic beverage industry into Egypt and the methods they used to do so. The next section focuses on how two companies, the Pyramid and Crown Breweries, aimed to establish themselves in the country; the section focuses in particular on their technological challenges. The final section details the success of Pyramid and Crown Breweries in creating the foundations of a modern beer industry

in Egypt. As this account shows, the companies that succeeded in the Egyptian alcoholic beverage industry were those that were able to adapt their methods and machinery to the particularities of the country.

Economic Incentives

While it is possible to overstate the impact on Egypt of the British Occupation of 1882, in the case of Egypt's alcoholic beverage industry, the occupation was truly a seminal moment. The massive impact of this invasion can only be understood within the context of the events that led up to it. The British invasion of 1882 grew out of the Khedive Isma'il's (1830–1895) push to transform Egypt into a “modern” state.³ For Isma'il, a modern state was one with greater control of its population. Building on the reforms of his grandfather, Mehmet Ali (1769–1849), Isma'il expanded Egypt's police force, army, and bureaucracy. In addition, believing that a modern state was one that adopted the latest European cultural and technological advances, Isma'il invested in cultural landmarks (the Cairo Opera House, theatres, palaces), infrastructure (railways, telegraphs, etc.), and education, aiming to make Egypt the equal of the countries of Europe, with Cairo as his “Paris along the Nile.”⁴ These programs were funded primarily by loans from British and French banks, which were willing to offer easy credit because of the boom in Egyptian cotton prices in the 1860s.⁵ However, the revenue the government was able to generate could not keep up with its loan payments, so in 1875 Egypt defaulted on its debt. In response to the debt crisis, the foreign creditors forced Isma'il to create the Caisse de la Dette, or the Debt Commission, which, through the heavy taxation of the Egyptian populace, aimed to pay off Egypt's interest payments and amortize its debts.⁶ The harsh measures

provoked Egyptian unrest, which was partially stemmed by the removal of Isma‘il in favor of Tawfiq (1879–1892). Nevertheless, a powerful movement soon coalesced around a charismatic colonel, Ahmed ‘Urabi, who led an open rebellion that engulfed the country between 1881 and 1882. The sustained success of the ‘Urabi revolution, with its anti-foreign message, raised the specter of non-repayment to such a level that in 1882 the British came to occupy Egypt.⁷

The economic pretext of this invasion emboldened Evelyn Baring (later Lord Cromer, 1883–1907), the Controller-General of Egypt and the head of the British Commission there from 1883 to 1907, to enact a set of economic reforms that opened the Egyptian market up to global trends and forces.⁸ Before coming to Egypt, Lord Cromer, who was a member of the famous Baring banking family in England, had worked in British-controlled India and had restructured its economy quite successfully. Lord Cromer brought to Egypt the same policies that had worked in India: the elimination of customs, the substitution of direct taxes for indirect taxes, and the encouragement of private enterprise.⁹ These policies brought some stability to the Egyptian market, and together with Cromer’s courting of foreign investors, brought a boom of foreign investment in Egypt after 1893.¹⁰ Between the years 1897 and 1903, the amount of foreign money invested in Egyptian companies doubled from twelve million LE to twenty-four million LE.¹¹ It is within this boom of foreign investment that the Egyptian alcoholic beverage industry developed.

Yet it was not only Cromer’s economic policies that drew the eye of foreign investors. Around the same time as Cromer was restructuring the Egyptian economy to be more outward-looking, a series of technological developments were taking place both within Egypt and abroad that had made the country an appealing market for investment. Perhaps the most significant internal development was the expansion of

the Egyptian infrastructure. Although the beginnings of Egyptian infrastructural development lay in the regimes of Mehmet Ali (ruled 1805–1848), who, among other things, instituted an Egyptian postal system, and Sa‘id (1822–1863), under whom a 209-kilometer railway line was installed between Cairo and Alexandria, it was under the reign of Khedive Isma‘il (1830–1895) that the great Egyptian infrastructural expansion truly began. In Isma‘il’s quest to place Egypt on par with European countries, he invested heavily in Egypt’s infrastructure. Arthur E. Crouchley estimates that during Isma‘il’s reign, he spent around forty million Egyptian pounds on infrastructure, much of it borrowed on cotton credit.¹² This investment proved fruitful; by 1877, “There were 1,519 kilometers of standard-gauge railways and 13,500 kilometers of irrigation canals, many of them navigable throughout the year.”¹³ Isma‘il was also Egypt’s greatest proponent of telegraphy. Under his rule, Egypt became a telegraphic hub connecting Europe and India through the Malta–Alexandria cable, and connecting the Suez and Karachi through the Red Sea cable.¹⁴ In 1865, Isma‘il even expanded on the work of his grandfather, Mehmet Ali, when he bought the *Poste Européenne*, a postal service established by Europeans that connected Cairo, Alexandria, the Delta, and Upper Egypt.¹⁵

Together with the Suez Canal, which had opened to traffic in 1869, these developments meant that Egypt now had an infrastructure that could not only handle the transport of humans and goods both within and abroad, but could also keep operations in Egypt connected to Europe. When the British arrived in 1882, they continued to work on this infrastructure. This work served a dual purpose: it was both a way to strengthen British control of the country by increasing Egypt’s connectivity to the British Empire, and also a way to implement the techno-scientific ideals that lay at the heart of their conceptions of a “modern” state.¹⁶ An example of this

commitment to building infrastructure is that between the years 1880 and 1907, the amount of cargo transported on the Egyptian rail lines increased from 1.145 million to nearly 4.2 million tons.¹⁷ This infrastructure development meant that established companies like Johnnie Walker (whisky, Scottish), Guinness (beer, Irish), and Otard (cognac, French) could not only bring their products to Egypt but could also distribute them throughout the country.

Scientification of Brewing

While the economically friendly policies of Cromer and the development of an Egyptian infrastructure incentivized investment from foreign beverage companies, technological developments in the alcoholic beverage industry itself also made expanding into foreign markets desirable.¹⁸ This section discusses those technological advances in greater detail, showing how they contributed to making Egypt amenable to the importation of the foreign beer industry. The most important of the technological developments were the advances in microbiology and the study of yeast. European brewers and liquor-makers who came to Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would have deemed the old recipe for *būza* at best “traditional” and at worse “backwards.” The recipe relied on the permeability of process, meaning that due to the nature of the machinery (earthenware containers, reed pipes, palm-leave filters, etc.) and techniques (hand-crafting, lack of sterilization and refrigeration, etc.) used in *būza* production, foreign organisms and materials were bound to enter somewhere in the transition from raw materials to final product, just as materials essential to production were bound to exit. The resulting product was inconsistent and uneven in quality. The permeability of the production process was no

longer inevitable once European scientists of the mid- to late-nineteenth century came to truly understand the process of fermentation and yeast's role in it.¹⁹

The key figure in this discovery was Louis Pasteur (1822–1895), who conducted experiments with beer yeast in the 1860s from which he was able to confirm the essential role of yeast cells in the production of alcohol. Pasteur thus ended the controversy over the origins of fermentation.²⁰ Pasteur's impact on brewing went beyond elucidating the process of fermentation; his work with yeast became even more applicable to the beer industry in 1883, when Emil Christian Hansen (1842–1909), a scientist working at the Carlsberg Laboratory, which was run by the famous Carlsberg Brewery in Copenhagen, was able to grow a pure culture of yeast in the lab. With this innovation, brewers now had full control of the fermentation process and could introduce a specifically chosen strain of yeast at the optimal juncture in the brewing process.²¹

Pasteur's experiments also provided strong support for germ theory, which stated that processes like fermentation and the spoilage of beverages like wine, beer, and milk did not happen spontaneously but rather were the result of micro-organisms entering somewhere in their production and storing processes.²² Based on this information, Pasteur developed a method, pasteurization, that involved heating a beverage to a certain temperature in order to remove the unwanted microorganisms that caused spoilage and illness. Pasteur's research had a massive impact on the scientific community and laid the groundwork for what would become modern microbiology. Most relevant for this study, Pasteur's work with microorganisms transformed the permeability of the brewing process from an unavoidable feature into something that "modern" brewing had to avoid at all costs, and reasonably could avoid. By showing that permeable boundaries would as often lead to spoiled

beverages as to drinkable ones, Pasteur's work put a premium on closed and sterile processes.

These scientific discoveries concerning fermentation and germs as the cause of spoilage changed the production of beer from a process filled with guesswork to one of the century's most significant displays of the human ability to control nature. With this new sense of control, brewers of beer sought to improve other parts of the process, which had for so long relied on ideas passed from master craftsmen to apprentice.²³ Thus discoveries in zymology (the study of fermentation) and microbiology inaugurated the scientification and mechanization of brewing.²⁴

Based on these discoveries, two new devices, the thermometer and the saccharometer (hydrometer), were soon introduced into the brewing process. The thermometer was vitally important because with their improved understanding of yeast, brewers were able to discover the ideal temperatures for fermentation and thus needed a device that could give them an accurate reading. Although devices to measure temperature had existed since the 17th century, it was only in the late 18th century that thermometers achieved an accuracy of 1/10°F, and it was only in the 1880s that there appeared thermometers that used temperature-resistant glass, which assured an accurate reading.²⁵ Not only could these brewers measure temperatures to maximize fermentation, but they also could control the strength (alcohol by volume, or "abv") of their beers using the hydrometer (saccharometer). The latter was a "sealed glass tube weighed down with an amount of lead suitable to allow it to float within the density band of the relevant liquid. The tube ha[d] a narrow neck that protrude[d] from the liquid and allow[ed] a scale to be read at the meniscus of the liquid."²⁶ This hydrometer device enabled the brewer to measure the amount of

fermentable sugar in pre-fermented beer (called wort) and thus to determine, and alter, how strong the beer would be after fermentation.

In addition to these two instruments, another set of improvements that arose from discoveries in zymology and microbiology was the mechanization of certain processes. In the late 1800s, the malting of the grain, which was typically done in an oven, began to be carried out by a pneumatic system called the Saladin box.²⁷ Likewise, wort began to be filtered (also referred to as “lautered” in brewing parlance) by a mechanized sieve and transported between different stages of the brewing process through steam-powered mechanisms. The mechanization of malting and lautering were important, but the new ancillary technology that was most important to brewing and most exemplary of its mechanization was refrigeration. Refrigeration had an unquestioned centrality to the brewing process, as the ability to lower a beverage’s temperature manually and maintain that temperature was crucial to the production and preservation of beer. The ties between the refrigeration industry and the beer industry were indeed very strong. Most beer companies, at least in their early years, specialized in refrigeration as much as in beer. As Mikael Hård has argued, brewing and refrigeration evolved together in the early years, with brewers being one of the main drivers of refrigeration innovation.²⁸

A crucial advance in refrigeration came in the late nineteenth century, when Carl von Linde (1842–1934), an engineer financed by the Spaten brewery in Munich, Germany, invented a vapor-compression refrigeration system. This system used the basic thermodynamic concept that when a vapor is compressed, it releases heat, and when it is decompressed or evaporated, it draws in heat (and thus creates cold). By piping ammonia, with its properties of rapid expansion, through a system that both compressed and expanded it, Linde was able to create a refrigeration system that

became the industry standard and the forerunner to all modern-day refrigeration systems.²⁹ Brewers used Linde's system in two ways. The first application of this system was in the creation of ice. Exemplary of the fact that technological change was evolutionary rather than revolutionary, brewers kept their old methods of refrigerating but relied on ice that they made, rather than harvested. In this process, a block of man-made ice was placed above a cellar and, depending on its size and proximity to the cellar, provided the desired cooling effect. This technique not only required minimal adjustment of methods, but also reduced one of the main carriers of foreign bodies, naturally harvested ice.³⁰ The second technique was direct refrigeration, which is what we have come to consider the standard refrigeration procedure, cooling a space down to a certain temperature through direct contact with piping. However, this refrigeration system took awhile to catch on due to fears of permeability; most brewers feared that coolant, which was usually toxic or foul-tasting, would seep from the pipes into the beer.

The advances in yeast and microbiology not only had a positive effect on beer brewing, but on all liquor production. The key process of liquor production is the distillation of a low-alcohol fermented liquid (wash) into higher-alcohol liquor. For example, whisky is the distillation of a wash strikingly similar to beer. Thus, liquor producers underwent a similar process of scientification and mechanization, featuring the use of new tools (thermometer, hydrometer) and machinery (refrigeration and steel machinery). The best example of the scientification and mechanization of the liquor industry was the introduction of the patent or Coffey still in the mid-nineteenth century.³¹ The Coffey still was a continually operating system that could produce a much greater volume of liquor of a much greater purity in a much shorter time than other stills.

The scientification and mechanization of brewing and distilling allowed for the technological buildup of the industries, and in the process removed the artisan brewer and distiller as the main alcohol producers.³² Previously, in order to make a large amount of beer or liquor, a company required numerous brewers and distillers who had spent their lives learning the craft; now, however, one could produce a great deal of alcohol with just a few people who had mastered the science of beer or liquor making, supported by a host of interchangeable unskilled laborers. Likewise, in order for one to master the processes of brewing or distilling, one no longer had to work his way up the apprentice/artisan chain; instead, one went to schools that taught brewing and distilling sciences, whose curriculum included not only descriptions of how to make a product, but also discussion of the science that underlay it. The deemphasizing of the artisan brewer and distiller encouraged a growth in scale among beer and liquor manufacturers both domestically and abroad. The late-nineteenth century saw the rise of major world alcohol producers like Bass, Guinness, Heineken, and Johnnie Walker.³³ As we will see later in this work, for a company like Heineken to start producing beer abroad, all it needed to do was select a few well-trained representatives who could be sent to a country to implement the processes of the home factory and assure quality control of the product.

The scientification and mechanization of the brewing and distilling industries not only made these two industries more scalable and transferable, but also brought them in line with the techno-scientific ideals, discussed in the previous chapter, that essential to European conceptions of modernity. Both of these developments, scientification and mechanization, instilled order and predictability into the brewing and distilling processes, while making them more efficient and standardizable. The developments also eliminated the permeability of process that was a distinct feature of

būza production, but that was anathema to techno-scientific ideals. Brewers' decision to start pasteurizing their beer was significant: while pasteurization eliminated all possible microorganisms, it could also cause the beer to become stale and flat.³⁴ The sacrifice of flavor for preservation was the ultimate rejection of the permeability of process in favor of order and control.

In essence, the scientification and mechanization of these two industries, beer and distilling, was tantamount to their modernization. Thus, the expansion of both industries into Egypt was heavily tied to their own modernization. The relationship between modernization and expansion was only natural because the sense of control that modernization gave to its brewers and distillers led them to believe they could transfer everything they knew about brewing and distilling to an entirely different geographic and cultural setting and still turn a profit. As I will show in the next section, a different aspect of "modernity" reinforced this thinking by producing a large demand for "modern" beverages among the Egyptian population.

Changing Tastes

While the technological advances described above made possible the importation of an alcoholic beverage industry into Egypt, this importation would have been fruitless were it not for a crucial cultural change in the population: a growing demand for alcoholic beverages. The origins of the sustained and durable growth of the alcoholic beverage industry in Egypt lay in the emergence of a new class, the *effendiya*, during the Mehmet Ali dynasty's (of which Isma'il was a prominent member) quest to create a "modern" Egypt. The *effendiya* were a small group of "new men," set apart from other Egyptians by their education, their Western manners and dress, and their worldviews.³⁵ By the end of the nineteenth century, the *effendiya*

came to represent a “new urban society, new social institutions, and new ways of life,” serving as engineers, doctors, lawyers, journalists, and political activists. The effendiyya included in their ranks the sons of the provincial elite who were on their path to the honorific titles of pasha or bey, as well as to full inclusion in the national hierarchy.³⁶

Members of this new secular elite, which subsumed much of the old elite through “effendification,” associated themselves with “modernity,” which to them was synonymous with their self-identification as secular, Western, and elite, as distinct from both from the non-elite masses and the traditional al-Azhar-trained hierarchy. As Keith Watenpaugh has shown, the effendiyya’s modernity was a performative act that involved the use of new media, new social spaces, and new consumer goods to make “being modern observable and reproducible.”³⁷ Nancy Reynolds concurs, noting that consumer goods were an important way for Egyptians to craft their identity through participation in “commodity communities.”³⁸

In this context, alcohol served as an ideal commodity for the effendi to perform modernity because its consumption achieved a double effect: while linking its Egyptian drinker to the “modern” European, who drank on social occasions, alcohol also separated him from both non-elite and religious Egyptians, who viewed alcohol as socially suspect at best or as religious anathema at worst. As Emmanuel Akyeampong has shown in his study of drink in Ghana, alcohol can serve as an especially powerful tool for the ordering of society and the signaling of power.³⁹ In the case of colonial Egypt, alcohol consumption represented the rejection of the traditionally trained al-Azhar shaykh in favor of the effendi.⁴⁰ As Will Hanley has shown, alcohol continues to maintain this signification in the European-American academy, where its consumption among academics is equivalent to Middle Eastern

cosmopolitanism.⁴¹ In any case, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, effendiyya's consumption of alcohol distanced them from most other Egyptians.

Another group of drinkers whose consumption was shaped by the policies of the Mehmet Ali regime were the urban subalterns. Unlike the effendiyya, they were not the desired end product of a push for modernity but rather were an unforeseen outgrowth of the Mehmet Ali regime's push for Egyptian urbanization. Between 1820 and 1882, the populations of most of the major cities in Egypt saw significant growth due primarily to migration from the rural areas of Egypt.⁴² For example, Alexandria saw a ten percent growth rate from 1820 to 1846, as compared to the .04 percent growth rate of the total population. Mansura and Suez each grew at a rate double the rate of total population growth in the period from 1846 to 1882.⁴³ Urbanization was thus slowly beginning in the period 1840 to 1882, with nearly 1.5 million people living in cities by 1882. While some of these migrants were wealthy landowners, the great majority were fellahin looking to escape a hard rural life. For these new migrants, who had some taste for fermented beverages from their experience with *būza*, the consumption of alcohol did not signal a rejection of tradition, as it did for the effendiyya, but rather was a potent signifier of "modern," elite life.⁴⁴ The best example of the aspirational power of alcohol for this class of Egyptians comes from the movie *al-Suq al-Sawda* ('*The Black Market*, 1945).⁴⁵ In this movie, one of Egyptian cinema's first "realistic films," a group of urban roughs makes a fortune on war profiteering. In their desire to reflect their new wealth, the gang is fitted with new Western dress and starts visiting cabarets to drink all night.⁴⁶

The processes that formed these two groups of drinkers, urbanization and "effendification," only accelerated after the arrival of the British in 1882. As Mohammad A. Chaichian has pointed out, "One of the dominant and common

features of colonial domination is the concentration of commercial, administrative, and political institutions in a few localities for the purpose of reducing the costs of running the colony.”⁴⁷ Egypt was no exception; fourteen cities saw growth greater than the total growth of the population in the first fifteen years of British rule in Egypt. Cairo, the imperial nerve center, saw the greatest growth in the period, with a growth rate of twelve percent compared to the 1.4 percent of the general population.⁴⁸ Overall, between 1882 and 1907, the urban population of Egypt increased by fifty percent. Not only was there a significant population of British soldiers and officers in Cairo, but many local Egyptians also moved to the city to fill service jobs in the new imperial administration.⁴⁹ Thus, thousands left the countryside for cities in the north, with Cairo and Alexandria being the premiere destinations.⁵⁰

Colonial rule aided the process of effendification. Under the British, an influx of foreign-born residents, who had few religious qualms about drinking, flooded the urban spaces of Egypt.⁵¹ As Robert Ilbert and Janet Abu-Lughod have shown, between 1897 and 1917, the foreign population grew at a significant rate, with the largest increase coming from Greeks, Italians, North Africans, Maltese, and Ottoman subjects.⁵² For example, in Cairo, between the years 1897 and 1907, the number of foreign residents nearly doubled, from 31,543 to 62,000.⁵³ Cairo and Alexandria, because of their economic and political importance, proved to be the primary destinations of immigrants from Southern Europe and Greater Syria. By 1907, “11.5% (75,000) of Cairo’s population and 17.6% of Alexandria’s population” were foreign-born.⁵⁴ Demographically, these immigrants were overwhelmingly from the lower-middle classes and became quickly integrated into Egyptian society. These foreign-born residents normalized the consumption of alcohol in the cities and also drove the alcohol business itself.

As a result of the demographic shift, there was a proliferation of spaces in which one could drink. While the exact number of places is unknown, by 1899, the British consul estimated that there were over four thousand establishments in Egypt that sold alcohol.⁵⁵ The alcohol licenses issued in Cairo from 1891 to 1896 give a sense of the dynamics of the business. The records show that foreign protégés, especially Greeks and Italians, played a significant role in the proliferation of drinking spaces. For example, in the year 1893, Greeks and Italians comprised seventy-five percent of those receiving licenses to sell alcohol.⁵⁶ As Alexander Kitroeff has shown, the predominance of Greeks and Italians was typical of the Egyptian economy in this era.⁵⁷ Likewise, Relli Shechter has shown that the tobacco industry was a major employer of Greeks.⁵⁸

With the preponderance of Greeks and Italians in the distribution of alcohol in Egypt, it would be easy to dismiss the burgeoning Egyptian alcohol industry as a foreign imperial imposition. However, on closer inspection, the picture appears to be far more nuanced. When we shift our gaze from the managers of these establishments, who tended to receive the licenses, to their owners, there appears to have been a significant Egyptian contingent among the latter. For example, the British consul reported that of the 4,015 alcohol distributors in 1904, 2,257 were foreign and 1,758 were local subjects.⁵⁹ One of the most prominent owners of bars was the elite Jewish businessman Yusuf Qattawi Bey. The Qattawi family, alongside the Mosseris, led the Jewish community in Egypt from the 1880s to the 1920s.⁶⁰ Yusuf Qattawi Bey played a significant role in the sugar industry, land reclamation, and Bank Misr.⁶¹ In the late 1890s, he also owned eight separate establishments that sold spirits. These places, dispersed primarily in the Muski and Azbakiyya districts of Cairo, included bars (e.g., Crini Bar), cafés, restaurants, and even an ice cream shop.⁶²

Economic involvement in the alcohol industry was not strictly the domain of non-Muslims. The British consul also reported that, in 1904, 385 of the alcohol distributors in Egypt were Muslim-owned.⁶³ The records bear this out, with many of the Cairo licenses featuring Muslim names, some with honorifics like *pasha* and *bey* attached to them. One noteworthy example of a Muslim alcohol distributor was Mahmud Pasha Falaki, who owned three bars in the ‘Abdin district in Cairo. Even more noteworthy were three princes who held alcohol licenses: Prince Ibrahim Pasha, Prince Halim Pasha, and Prince Husayn Pasha. While these princes may not have been personally involved in the sale of alcohol, there is no denying that the properties of each of these royals housed a café or bar. One particularly illustrative example of such an establishment was the bar Bodega Nouvelle Avenue. Established in 1894, it sat on the property of Prince Halim Pasha, on Gamal Street in Azbakiyya, and was run by an Italian, Riccardo Belloni.⁶⁴ As shown elsewhere, the royal family was not shy about profiting from the business of bars and taverns.⁶⁵

Who were the denizens of these drinking establishments? An answer lies in a stinging social critique of turn-of-the-century Egypt, *Hadir al-Misriyyin aw Sirr al-Ta’akhhurihim* (The Present State of the Egyptians, An Explanation of their Backwardness), written by Muhammad ‘Umar, a writer known only by this work and by his employment in the postal service. In this work, ‘Umar divides Egypt into three classes—the rich, the middle, and the poor—and then criticizes each for what he perceives as its failures.⁶⁶ ‘Umar uses alcohol consumption as a key part of his critique. The houses of the rich, he asserts, are filled with “bottles of liquors” and stacks of wine barrels, which are proof of the group’s indolence, profligacy, and self-indulgence.⁶⁷ In the middle group, the youth spend all night drinking in the ever-increasing number of bars, cafés, and dance clubs in Egypt, which represent the

insidious penetration of Western habits throughout the country.⁶⁸ As for the poor, despite their indigence, they drink even more than rich, especially at religious festivals like *mawlids* (saints' birthday celebrations). The poor people's consumption is attributable to their ignorance and their prioritization of enjoyment and pleasure over all other values.⁶⁹

While Muhammad 'Umar crafts a neat taxonomy of Egyptian drinkers, Ibrahim al-Muwaylihi's (1846–1906) turn-of-the-century novel and social critique, *Hadith 'Isa ibn Hisham*, presents a far more nuanced picture.⁷⁰ The sections most pertinent to this study are those in which the two protagonists, 'Isa ibn Hisham and the pasha, visit drinking establishments. His first stop is the "club" (*klūb*), where the grandees of the Egyptian state drink, bet, and gamble in a palatial multiroom house.⁷¹ From there, he travels to four locations (a meeting hall, a restaurant, a tavern, and a dance hall) that fall within close vicinity of 'Ataba Square, or as Ibn Hisham calls it, the "square of drunkenness" (*saḥat al-sukr*).⁷² Here the protagonists shift from Ibn Hisham and the pasha to the *khali* ' (playboy) and the 'umda (village chief), a deliberate indictment of those most susceptible to alcohol. The playboy is a depiction of the new class of tarbush wearers (*mutaṭarbishūn*), the effendiyya, whereas the 'umda, who owns a thousand feddans, represents the uncultured rural elite that was slowly integrating into the urban hierarchy and absorbing its cultural mores.⁷³ In addition, the 'umda stands in for rural migrants to the city, who are ignorant of urban custom and victimized by urban depredations.

The first location to which Muwaylihi travels on his night of drinking and carousing, the meeting hall (*mujtama* '), is rather upscale; it is renowned, located near the Opera House, and frequented by foreigners and tourists. The next stop is a restaurant located within a bar. It, too, is an upstanding location, serving food and

alcohol and notable for its “cleanliness, good service, and the prestige” of its customers.⁷⁴ After stopping at a tavern (*hān*), which is given little description, the final stop on the night of drinking is the dance hall (*marqas*). This hall is a dank subterranean haunt choked by a foul miasma of sewage and sweat, in which degraded women dance and prostitute themselves to besotted men from all walks of life, including a policeman, an adjutant, a drunkard, a notable shaykh, and a provincial governor.

While the first location, the meeting hall or club, is a bastion of the ruling elites and their scions, the other three locations, which vary in cleanliness and respectability, are home to a broader spectrum of Egyptians. This variegated milieu conforms to Reynolds’ depiction of Cairo as an “ever-melting” city, characterized, especially around these bustling squares, by the contiguity and propinquity of the foreign (*ifrangī*) and native (*baladī*).⁷⁵ An ideal example of this “melting” is the prominent shaykh drinking in the filthy dance club. The shaykh’s presence undermines both dichotomies within the culture, the foreign/native and the elite/subaltern. The shaykh is at the same time foreign and native, elite and non-elite. Beer fit nicely into this milieu because of its generic similarity to *būza*, which made it also native and foreign, elite and non-elite.

However, the fluidity of place and culture was strictly a male prerogative. While elite men could traverse societal boundaries and visit both the elite and subaltern drinking establishments, “respectable” women were limited to elite venues. In the only scene of *Hadith ‘Isa ibn Hisham* wherein women make a prolonged appearance, they are portrayed negatively. Ibn Hisham recounts how the most “beautiful” dancer in the club, as she dances, transforms “into the guise of a harpy appearing in a desert mirage, a ghoulish grimacing and leaping around, or a bear

quivering and crawling.”⁷⁶ Similar to the Egyptian social evaluation of female dancers and performers that Karin van Nieuwkerk details, Egyptian intellectuals perceived alcohol-consuming women first in terms of their gender and then as alcohol consumers.⁷⁷ In al-Muwaylihi’s harsh rebuke of women in drinking clubs, we see a redefinition of femininity that helps to constitute a new effendi manhood.⁷⁸ Thus in *Hadith ‘Isa ibn Hisham*, only low-status female dancers and prostitutes frequent drinking clubs.

Despite this exclusion of women, many clubs did list a woman as their manager. For example, an Austrian protégé, Anne Fielder, was in charge of the Steinfeld Bar, founded in 1894 in Darb al-Mahabil in ‘Abdin. Women were not limited to managerial roles; they could also be owners. A good example is Caterina Bakesova, an Austro-Hungarian protégé who opened up the “Anglo-American Bar” in Harat al-Mudarrisin in Azbakiyya. While many of these owners were European protégés, with Austrian subjects featuring most prominently, Egyptian women, both Christian and Muslim, also served as owners. The lists of owners include names like Sayyida bint Muhammad al-Zakiyya, Jawhara bint Haslan, and Marie Bittar.⁷⁹

Arrival

At the turn of the twentieth century, Egypt was fertile territory for the development of an alcoholic beverage industry. It had an indigenous drinking tradition among both the elite and the poor, an emerging class that saw alcohol as an ideal commodity through which to perform their identity, an explosion of urban social spaces where drinking would be acceptable, a centralizing and urbanizing population, and a modern infrastructure that could accommodate the bulk movement of manpower and goods. Unsurprisingly, the period from 1882 to 1923 witnessed the

foundation of a large number of businesses looking to succeed in the alcoholic beverage market.

Generally, these businesses took two forms: agents for established foreign brands and local limited liability companies that sold their own domestic products. Agents (Ar. *wakīl*, pl. *wukalā'*) were a common feature of the Egyptian economy in this period, serving as the primary means through which imported goods penetrated the country.⁸⁰ The agent's business model relied on a relationship with a multi-national company, for which the agent served as the proxy in a market in which the agent had some expertise. The relationship was mutually beneficial; the agent was able to profit off the brand recognition and the backing of a multi-national company, while the company was able to use the agent's local business connections and familiarity with the market to ease the penetration of a product into the market.

Multi-national beverage companies could have multiple agents in the country, but often they opted to make a certain merchant the sole agent (*al-wakīl al-waḥīd*), sometimes even granting the agent exclusive control of a brand's trademark (*ṣāhib al-imtiyāz al-waḥīd*). One of the most prominent examples of this type of business relationship was John Walker and Sons Limited Company, which was the sole agent of Johnnie Walker whisky and had exclusive control of the trademark from 1911 until the 1950s.⁸¹ This trademark control meant that not only was John Walker and Sons in charge of distributing Johnnie Walker in the country, but the agent could also use the brand any way it saw fit. What this usually entailed was the use of the Johnnie Walker brand in a newspaper advertisement for their business.

An excellent example of such an advertisement, from a 1933 edition of the newspaper *al-Ahram*, displays the synergy between agent and multi-national

company.⁸² The top of the advertisement features, in English, the slogan, “Born 1820—Still Going Strong,” which became a part of Johnnie Walker’s branding in 1908. Next to the slogan is the iconic “Striding Man” logo, which was also created in 1908 and became the defining symbol of Johnnie Walker. Below that are two lines of Arabic text that read, “All whiskies look the same, and that is dangerous. For your health and safety, order Johnnie Walker.” Below the Arabic is the Johnnie Walker name in English and another slogan, in English, that is in dialogue with the Arabic above. It states why a patron should choose Johnnie Walker: “Guaranteed same quality all over the world.” The bottom of the advertisement then states in Arabic, “Walker and Vallois in Cairo; sole agents in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria.” Overall, the advertisement has a distinct collage aesthetic. The parts in English and the “Striding Man” appear to have been lifted from another advertisement and then surrounded with Arabic text in dialogue with the English. The bricolage approach, combining Egyptian and foreign elements, tells us something about the imagined consumers of Johnnie Walker in Egypt and about the people advertising the product. The Arabic message—“since all whiskies, both high-quality and inferior, look alike, you must choose the brand that guarantees quality, i.e. Johnnie Walker”—combined with images and slogans lifted from English advertisements signals that the target consumer base valued the foreign but still needed a message grounded in Egyptian culture. For the advertisers, this bricolage was an easy and inexpensive way to trade on the product’s foreign and exotic appeal and tailor their message to the desired audience.



Unlike John Walker and Sons, most registered importers could not afford to limit themselves to one product, and instead had to serve as agent for multiple brands. One notable instance was the company K. Bursa. With branches in Alexandria, Port Said, the Suez, and Khartoum, K. Bursa had a large portfolio of brands primarily from Italy. They had control of the trademark for Fernet Branca (Fernet, Italy), Fusani Chianti (Italy), and Gioconda and Nocera Umbra (mineral water, Italy). Most interestingly, they also had the trademark for Haig whisky (Scotland). K. Bursa's focus on a series of brands from one country, Italy, made a great deal of economic sense because this focus allowed them to provide a diverse set of products while limiting transport costs. This method of diversification was especially popular for companies dealing with alcoholic beverages from France, as an agent could sell wine, champagne, and brandy.

As should be obvious from the names of the companies, these import agencies were a very popular business venture for imperial protégés, that is, local residents

with legal affiliation with one of the imperial powers. In fact, a few of the agents for foreign alcohol companies included the title *al-khawāja* (foreigner) in their names. For example, in an advertisement for McNish's Special scotch whisky, the sole agents of the product are listed as the "foreigners" Joel and Henry Floran.⁸³ It is not surprising that foreign companies making their first entry in a country would choose to work with people who had a linguistic, if not cultural, familiarity with Europe. Likewise, it is not surprising that protégés and foreign entrepreneurs would have an inclination for working with a European-based multi-national. The agent/importing businesses were the lifeblood of the early Egyptian alcohol industry; they dominated the sector from before the British arrived in 1882 into the 1910s. For example, as early as 1839, agents were bringing beer into the country.⁸⁴

The first local alcohol business also preceded the British Occupation, as the Da'ira Saniyya sugar refinery started making alcohol in 1879. They had six Upper Egypt outposts in Biba, Mataya, Maghagha, Minia, Abu Qurqas, and Rawda, which made rum from their excess molasses.⁸⁵ However, the amount of alcohol that Da'ira Saniyya produced was far outpaced by the amount of alcohol imported into the country. One of the biggest reasons for this was that the duty on alcohol coming into Egypt was quite small at the time, especially in comparison with European duties on imported alcohol.⁸⁶ For Da'ira Saniyya, this importation meant that it was only profitable to dedicate a small portion of its molasses to making its own alcohol.

The first large-scale attempt to profit from the sale of alcohol produced in Egypt was headed by the Volanakis family, who established the Bolonachi distillery in Alexandria in 1884. Zottos and Co., founded by Andreas Zottos in 1890, soon joined the Bolonachi distillery in the alcohol market, as did the Cozzika Brothers, who opened their distillery in Tura in 1892. The most noticeable aspect of all of these

ventures is that they were headed by Greeks. This involvement was emblematic of greater trends in the Greek community in Egypt, who served as pioneers in many of the country's early consumer goods industries. For example, Greeks established Egypt's first chocolate factory in 1908.⁸⁷ As evidenced by the discussion of bars above, Greeks were also heavily involved in the distribution of alcohol. It only makes sense, then, that some of these Greeks would attempt to enter the production side of the industry as well.

Most of these Greek alcohol producers started as agents/importers and used the money made from these ventures to invest in the technological infrastructure required to produce alcohol in Egypt. The Cozzikas, for example, continued importing alcohol even as they started producing their own.⁸⁸ The blurred line between importer/producer was quite common in the beverage industry; two of the most famous aerated water companies, Spathis and McDonald, also had their start in importing products from Europe. This blurred line was also necessary because starting out as an alcohol producer in Egypt was fraught with difficulties. The Cozzikas' first year in Egypt was, as they themselves admitted, a "disaster" and almost killed the project before it got off the ground.⁸⁹ However, with the funds from the import and sale of foreign alcohols, the distillery was able to survive and reinvest in its infrastructure. The company replaced its machinery and buildings with those that combined "all of the known improvements of the day."⁹⁰ As a result, they were able to produce, in their state-of-the-art Coffey still, alcohol of 95 to 96% abv, which was an improvement over the previous technology that topped out at 95% abv. The reinvestment in their own infrastructure, coupled with the sugar industry's [increased] production of molasses, allowed the Cozzika distillery to go from producing 350,000 kilograms of alcohol in 1892–3 to producing more than seven million kilograms in

1913. Meanwhile, the amount of imported liquor that Cozzika was selling fell to 700,000 kilograms in 1913.⁹¹

The alcohol produced and sold by Cozzika was mainly rectified alcohol. While it could be used to make alcoholic beverages (especially blended whiskies and brandies), it also was used to make medical tinctures and solvents. Cozzika's primary concern was producing alcohol cheaply and efficiently. That is why they were willing to invest in new infrastructure to produce an alcohol that was only slightly higher in abv than prior versions.

On the other hand, the Bolonachi distillery was a business geared to sell various types of liquor to the public, and thus was maximally concerned with the palatability of their beverages. In the first decades after being founded in 1884 in Alexandria, Bolonachi's prime product was brandy, and its main consumers were abroad, primarily in England. Although Bolonachi was a new brand, it made inroads into the British market because of "its taste and the purity of its materials."⁹² The company eventually penetrated the domestic market by offering a new type of brandy, carrying the designation of V.O. (Very Old), that maintained a certain level of quality but carried a better price than all of its competitors.⁹³ Bolonachi not only produced brandy, but rum and whisky as well. The company made its rum using local sugar cane and the Jamaican system of rum distillation.⁹⁴ The main particularity of Jamaican rum-making was the use of the dunder, the yeast-rich foam left over when sugar cane was fermented, in order to ferment new sugar cane. Regardless of the product sold, Bolonachi had found a winning formula for the alcoholic beverage business in Egypt, using cutting-edge technological practices to exploit the local advantages of the Egyptian market: primarily cheap labor, plentiful water, and a thirsty population. Bolonachi would thus become one of the pillars of the industry, and

their product, Bolonachi Brandy, would sit with Stella Beer as one of Egypt's distinctive alcoholic beverages.

Pyramid and Crown

The Greeks were not the only ones to see opportunity in the alcoholic beverage business in Egypt. On May 15, 1897, a group of Belgian investors, led by Albert Heyndrickx, founded the Crown Brewery of Alexandria in Belgium, with a capitalization of one million francs. They built a factory in the Ibrahimia district of Alexandria, where the company had instant success. After that, the board decided to open another brewery in Cairo to exploit that city's larger market.⁹⁵ In 1898, the board opened *Société Anonyme Brasserie des Pyramides* (Pyramid Brewery), which had a factory on the outskirts of the city and an initial capitalization of 1.5 million francs. These two breweries, the Crown and Pyramid breweries, contrasted with Vottos and Bolonachi in that they were transnational ventures, with all of the capital and some of the leadership coming from abroad, while local protégés and business-minded Egyptians oversaw the daily management and functioning.

The lead investors in the Crown and Pyramid breweries were part of a larger influx of Belgian investors and industrialists into Egypt; no fewer than thirty Belgian companies were founded in Egypt in the period between 1897 and 1907.⁹⁶ This Belgian penetration of the Egyptian economy was emblematic of the massive inflow of foreign capital into Egypt after the arrival of the British, which is discussed above.⁹⁷ These foreign investors chose to establish a brewery because the beer market in Belgium was too fractured to support a new large-scale brewer; this meant that they had to look abroad for hopes of greater growth.⁹⁸ Thus, the two beer

companies were the byproduct of trends in both Belgian brewing and Belgian economics in the late nineteenth century.

Although the Crown and Pyramid breweries were located in Egypt, they were transnational. The directorate of both companies was split between Alexandria and Brussels, where the head offices were located. Two members of the five-person board for Crown brewery and three members of the seven-person board for Pyramid lived in Brussels, while the rest, who were a mix of Egyptian citizens and foreign protégés, maintained operations in Egypt. The transnational character of the directorate was due to the small size of the Belgian community relative to other foreign communities like the French and the British.⁹⁹ In order to maintain a strong business presence in Egypt, much of the financing and direction had to come from the metropole; many Belgian firms were tied closely to large metropolitan banking and holding companies in Brussels.¹⁰⁰

The relatively small size of the Belgian community in Egypt also necessitated that Belgian businessmen rely on the business group model, a model where a group of companies from different sectors and in different countries were under the control of a small, unified directorate. Perhaps the most famous group of companies was the Groupe Empain, which was led by Baron Edouard Empain, the man who built the Paris metro. His group consisted of Andre Bertholet, the French architect and designer of the Paris Metro; Henri Urban, a member of the board of the *Chemin de Fer Économique* and a director of companies that had established trams in Turin, Odessa, Naples, and Russia; and Jean Jadot, an engineer who specialized in light railways. This group acquired the concession for the Cairo tramway and developed an upscale residential neighborhood in Cairo, called Heliopolis. The Lambert-Rolin group, headed by the prominent Belgian glassmaker Florent Lambert, based in Brussels, was

another example of this model. This group included the Pyramid Brewery, as well as the Anglo-Belgian Company Limited of Egypt, the British Tropical Africa Company (which worked in the Congo), a railway company, a tramway company, a cement company, and even a company in charge of maintaining gardens in Cairo.¹⁰¹

Although a large portion of both companies' leadership was located in Belgium, both companies utilized Belgians living in Egypt and powerful members of the Egyptian business elites. One board member of the Crown Brewery, Georges Nungovich, a Belgian national and major hotelier, was on the advisory board and board of directors of two other companies and the owner of the Georges Nungovich Egyptian Hotel Company.¹⁰² Another local Belgian member, A.L. Gorra, was on the board of directors of three other companies. As for local Egyptians, the presidents of both companies were Egyptians from the Pasha class: Khalil Khayyat Pasha (Crown Brewery) and J.G. Chakour (Shakur) Pasha (Pyramid Brewery). Each man had important positions in other joint-stock companies as well. Khalil Khayyat Pasha was a director in the *Société Égyptienne de Tabacs*, the Egyptian Land investment company, the North Egypt Land Company Limited, and the sole director of the limited liability company of Tambeki Monopoly Co.¹⁰³ Shakur Pasha, meanwhile, was the managing director of *Société Anonyme des Ciments d'Égypte* and the Chairman of the Menzaleh Canal and Navigation Company.¹⁰⁴ These two businessmen were early examples of the native oligarchs who would come to dominate the Egyptian economy in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Despite the Greeks not being heavily involved in the financing and leadership of these two companies, they still played a significant role in their operations in Egypt. Two Greeks, M.M. Miltiade and Henri Klonaridis, used their local connections to help the Belgium entrepreneurs found Crown Brewery in 1897. Their role was so

significant that Anthanse Politis incorrectly cited them as the founders of the Crown Brewery, thus crediting them with being the originators of the beer industry in Egypt.¹⁰⁵ As I have shown, it was not the native Greeks but foreign entrepreneurs who, using local intermediaries and transnational business connections, believed they could build modern alcohol industries in Egypt.

Establishment

The men who founded and led the Crown and Pyramid breweries strongly believed in the superiority of the “modern” over the “traditional.” Thus, when they established these breweries, they were insistent on bringing to Egypt the scientification and mechanization that was, as I discussed above, taking place across Europe in the late nineteenth century. What this meant in practical terms was that these breweries charged their brewing operations to men trained in some of the most important beer-brewing countries in Europe. Crown employed a German brewer, Alfred Weber, and Pyramid employed a Czech brewer, Jan Krècek.¹⁰⁶ These brewers aimed to replace the permeability that was so distinctive to the *būza* process with “total control”—the assumption, often misguided and hubristic, that through the assiduous application of the most current technologies, brewers could produce a standardized and sturdy product in a timely and cost-efficient manner. This sense of control was especially important in a market like Egypt, which, in the eyes of these entrepreneurs, had not yet been fully modernized.

So what did completely controlled brewing look like? It started with the malted barley, which was imported to Egypt from Czechoslovakia. Barley was malted by soaking the grain in water about two days; then, the grains were exposed to moist air, at about 15°C (60°F), and allowed to germinate. This germination started to break down the starches and proteins in the barley into fermentable sugars. The barley was

then dried or kilned at 40°C (100°F) to arrest the breakdown of its starches and proteins.¹⁰⁷ Because malting is one of the key processes for establishing a beer's flavor, these breweries only used imported barley from the fields of Moravia that had been malted by the best malt makers in Czechoslovakia.¹⁰⁸

Using the imported malted barley, the Egyptian breweries would start the brewing process proper, which included crushing, mashing, boiling, lautering, cooling, fermenting, and storing. First, crushing the malted barley separated the outside of the barley, the insoluble husk, from the interior of the barley, the germ. Then, mashing broke down the starch in the barley into fermentable sugars. Mashing could take two forms, infusion or decoction. Infusion meant soaking the barley in water at 65°C (150°F) in the same way one soaks tealeaves to make tea. Decoction, on the other hand, involved separating out part of the malted barley and water and bringing it to a boil at 100°C (212°F). This boiled mixture was then returned to the rest of the water and barley and allowed to infuse. Regardless of which method the breweries chose, mashing was subject to total control; it occurred in a mash tun, imported from Belgium, that was made of sterile copper. The mashing stage was when the second raw material, water, was introduced. Unsurprisingly, the breweries were particular about their water. The Pyramid Brewery thought that the water of the Nile was unsuitable for any of their products and drew their water from artesian wells that the company owned.¹⁰⁹

After mashing, lautering removed the husks of the malted barley that had been separated out by crushing. This step represented a vital difference between beer and *būza*, as the husk was what gave *būza* its gruel-like texture. The sugar-filled mixture remaining after lautering, called wort, was then boiled for forty-five to ninety minutes, and hops were then added. The hopping of the wort was another key

difference between beer and *būza*, and it had a significant impact on the beer's taste (adding the distinctive bitterness), consistency (helping to precipitate any remaining proteins), and shelf life (making it more durable).¹¹⁰ The breweries imported the hops from the choicest harvests in Bohemia, a place known for its hop-making, and stored the hops a refrigerated room to preserve their taste and aroma until they were ready for use.¹¹¹

While the beer-making process up to this point may seem quite similar to the *būza*-making process, the next three steps truly differentiated the two beverages. The breweries had to cool the hot and hopped wort to a temperature of either 7°C (40°F) or 15°C (60°F) and then add the yeast, which was a proprietary strain owned and perfected by the brewery. The strain had a significant impact on the beer, and thus a good strain of yeast was a precious commodity. The choice in temperature also had a significant impact on the product. A lower temperature allowed for bottom-fermentation, meaning that the yeast that sank to the bottom of the beer carried out most of the fermentation, while a higher temperature assured top-fermentation, where the yeast at the top did most of the work.¹¹² These two types of fermentation produced different types of beer: bottom-fermentation produced lagers and top-fermentation produced ales.

If the brewery was making a top-fermented beer, it would allow the yeast to ferment the wort for a couple of days (two to seven) at a temperature ranging from 15°C to 24°C (60°F–78°F) and then store it for less than a week at 7°C (45°F). It would then have its final product, an ale.¹¹³ If the brewery was making a lager, on the other hand, the beer had to be stored for eight days at 7° to 13°C (45°–55°F) to allow primary fermentation to occur. After those eight days, bottom fermentation would start, and the brewery would have to store the beer for around three months at 1°C

(34°F). Fittingly, the name “lager” was derived from the German word meaning “to store.”¹¹⁴

This entire process, from mashing to storing, could not have been done without the instruments (thermometer, saccharometer) and technologies (Saladin boxes, mechanized sieves, ice machines, cooling vats, copper piping, etc.) discussed above, which were the tangible results of the scientification and mechanization of the beer industry in late nineteenth-century Europe. The breweries, on their arrival in Cairo, imported the top-of-the-line varieties of all of these materials from Belgium and housed them in factories that were kept in impeccable shape.¹¹⁵

Despite the breweries’ commitment to “modern” brewing, their early days were trying. The Cairo operation, which was still under the control of Crown Brewery, soon ran into financial trouble because of poor management and over-expansion. The company would have dissolved were it not for the intervention of another group of Belgian investors, the Lambert-Rolin group, in 1904, which addressed the brewery’s financial problems through the amortization of debts and the selling of assets and stocks.¹¹⁶ This over-expansion was caused by the fact that beyond the initial successes, the breweries faced a problem: Egyptians who were drinking beer were more likely to choose imported varieties from well-established brewing nations like Germany or Austria, rather than Egyptian brands.¹¹⁷ The fledgling beer industry was also hurt in these early years by the Egyptian government, which did not place significant duties on imported beer and thus eliminated one of the main advantages that local companies might have had.¹¹⁸

Soon after the breweries’ founding, they would face another major hurdle, the stock market crash of 1907. The crash was a direct result of the influx of foreign

capital into the Egyptian stock market between 1898 and 1906. Typical of an economic bubble, a speculative fever overtook Egypt in 1905 and 1906 as, according to Roger Owen, “Land companies sold land for very little deposits, banks lent liberally on shares...second or even third mortgages could be readily obtained.”¹¹⁹ The inevitable “market correction” came when the American market dipped and wreaked havoc in the Egyptian economy. The most visible effect of the crash was that it wiped out many of the firms founded during the boom. The number of cases for bankruptcies in the courts rose from 310 in 1907, to 520 in 1908, and to 546 in 1910.¹²⁰ Egypt did not truly recover from this market correction until after World War I. Despite the general gloom of the economic scene in Egypt, both of the beer companies survived. Their survival was due in part to the profitability of the breweries despite, or perhaps because of, the economic downturn. The fact that another set of Belgians founded a beer company in 1909, *Société Anonyme de Belge Brasserie d’Égypte* (Belgian Brewing Company), is indicative of this counterintuitive profitability.¹²¹

Like the brewery Cozzika, which had to rely on imports, and Bolonachi, which relied on the British market, the Crown and Pyramid breweries were able to survive and thrive amidst the economic downturn by generating revenue streams beyond the sale of domestically produced alcohol. The sale of malt and ice, two products essential to beer but which also had a market on their own in Egypt, proved to be lucrative enough to keep the businesses afloat. Malt could be used to make vinegar and other food products for animals and humans, while ice was the primary way things were refrigerated in this era, so both remained viable products. Through these alternative revenue sources, the breweries were able to weather the storm and maintain profitability until the beer business truly took off during World War I.¹²²

World War I was vital to the establishment of the Egyptian beer industry because it cut Egypt off from the global economy that Lord Cromer had worked so hard to bring the country in line with. Although the temporary isolation of Egypt provided a terrible shock to its economy overall and to those companies that were heavily supported by foreign capital and goods, for local producers the isolation provided the protection from foreign brands that the government would not.¹²³ Those companies that had survived the prewar economic downturn, including the two beer companies, were able to reinvest in their infrastructure to better adapt to the local market. Adaptation was necessary because despite the industrialists' assumption of the superiority of the modern over the traditional, the establishment of a modern beer industry in Egypt was not a frictionless process.

The most obvious example of breweries' adaptation comes from the refrigeration machinery that the companies used after World War I. Recognizing that the Egyptian environment was harsher than they imagined, the companies invested in and expanded their cellars so that they could house a greater amount of beer.¹²⁴ Likewise, they used several methods for cooling or refrigerating their beer: they kept some beer in casks in their cellar, some beer in tanks made of enameled iron also in the cellar, and some in vats armed with a system of internal refrigeration.¹²⁵ The juxtaposition of these three methods represented the reality of technologic change in Egypt. While all of these technologies were imported, each represented a different phase of brewing. Casks were a quintessential feature of pre-mechanized brewing, cooling vats were a feature of the introductory phase of mechanized brewing, and the internally refrigerated vat was a hallmark of the latest innovations in brewing.

As several scholars have shown, despite the typical assumption that the arrival of new technology or ideas would immediately replace the old ideas, the reality was

that technologies tended to agglomerate and exist simultaneously until older technology was slowly phased out, if at all.¹²⁶ This agglomeration occurred in Europe and America because of the long-standing traditions of brewing that made brewers hesitant to abandon older technologies. In Egypt, this agglomeration represented the confluence of the total control tradition with the realities of the Egyptian market. If the ideology of total control had worked, then there would only have been the need for one type of cooling, but the fact that three remained in use indicates that despite the rhetoric of insuperable modernity, Egypt presented numerous challenges to these companies.

We also see this confluence in the case of the raw materials used to make the beer. Although originally the breweries limited themselves to using imported malted barley, locally grown rice eventually became an important part of their beer recipe. Cooked rice was added to the malted barley before mashing and served as a filler to make the breweries' supplies of malted barley last longer.¹²⁷ This transition was only logical, as Egypt was a significant producer of rice; its use in lieu of imported malted barely was an easy way to lower overhead without drastically affecting the beer. A similar process occurred with the water that the breweries used. Originally they deemed Nile water as unsatisfactory for their beer production; however, these companies eventually had to face the reality that Nile water was the only consistent source of water in the country, and to avoid using it was simply poor business. Nevertheless, the idea of total control persisted as the breweries insisted on analyzing the Nile water before every round of brewing, sending samples to major European laboratories so they could deem it fit for making beer.¹²⁸ Thus we see that even after adapting to the realities of selling in the Egyptian market, the foreign entrepreneurs

behind the beer industry did not abandon their commitment to the techno-scientific ideals of “modernization”

Success

World War I marked the full-fledged establishment of the two breweries in Egypt. After this point, Crown and Pyramid would remain profitable until their nationalization by the Nasser-led government in the 1960s. As I will show in this section, it was in this post World War I period that these two breweries would come to find a formula of success for selling beer in the Egyptian market. This formula involved adapting their methods and machinery to the particularities of the country and establishing a partnership based upon the division of the Egyptian market in two autonomous, but linked, sales regions.

Immediately after World War I, the companies’ beer production grew from the prewar level of around 40,000 hectoliters per year to 71,000 hectoliters per year in the period from 1923 to 1929.¹²⁹ These levels of production not only made the breweries economic powerhouses in Egypt, but some of the largest bottled beer producers in Africa.

Although Egypt was a Muslim country, its beer industry was well in advance of most other colonies in Africa due to the regulations imposed by colonial powers. Starting with the Brussels Act of 1890, and strengthened with the League of Nation Treaty Series, colonial powers including Britain, France, Belgium, and Italy had prohibited “the importation, distribution, sale, and possession of trade spirits of every kind” in the continent of Africa.¹³⁰ These ordinances grew out of the infantilizing discourse that was used to justify the colonial presence in Africa.¹³¹ However, Egypt and the rest of North Africa were spared this paternalism.¹³² While this regulation stymied the creation of any large-scale native brewing ventures in other African

countries, Egypt remained unencumbered. Thus it would take until the 1920s (Kenya Brewers Limited) and later (Nigerian Brewing Limited, 1946) for ventures on the scale of Crown and Pyramid to appear in other African countries.¹³³

In Egypt, the beer companies did so well that the capitalization of Pyramid Brewery placed it in the top twelve best-funded companies in Egypt at the time.¹³⁴ As I will show, this sustained postwar success had a great deal to do with the fact that after World War I the breweries came upon a successful strategy for exploiting the major markets of Egypt. This strategy would become the standard practice of Crown and Pyramid from this point forward.

Despite the profitability of the beer industry, it was in flux after World War I. The entrance of two enterprising Swiss brothers, Walter and Curt Bomonti, who had founded the first brewery on the European side of Istanbul in 1890, had significantly altered the beer market in Egypt.¹³⁵ They had become familiar with intricacies of the beer industry in Egypt through their work supplying beer to the Navy and Army Canteen Board of the British occupying forces.¹³⁶ They made their first foray into the Egyptian market with a brewery/rice mill built in Alexandria under the name “Bomonti Brothers.” Their venture was so successful that in 1923 they were able to buy and consolidate Pyramid Brewery, Belgian Brewing, and their own beer company into a new entity named *Société Anonyme Bières Bomonti et Pyramides* (henceforth Bomonti-Pyramid).¹³⁷ Although the brewery came to bear their names, the Bomontis resided in Bern rather than Cairo. Another member of the new board, Jacques Ruch, lived in Zurich. Rudolph Jost, a Swiss citizen who lived in Alexandria, represented the Swiss industrialists at the meetings with the rest of the board, composed of two British protégés, a Greek protégé, and another Swiss citizen living in Alexandria.

While the Bomontis took control of Pyramid, Crown remained locally owned. After its founding in 1897, Crown had gone through several chairmen. After Khalil Khayyat Pasha, a British protégé named Edward Crewe was the head of the company until 1925. After 1925, Charles Cantoni, whose father had been in the retinue of Kaiser Wilhelm II (r.1888–1918) took over and would chair the company until 1932.¹³⁸ Although Cantoni was the chairman of the board and president of the company from 1925 to 1932, it was Max Raybaud who ran the day-to-day operations of the brewery as the managing director. Raybaud would serve in this position until the 1940s.¹³⁹

At first, Crown was a direct competitor to the newly formed Bomonti-Pyramid in the Cairo market. Although Pyramid had broken off from Crown after its establishment in 1898, Crown maintained a presence in Cairo to take advantage of Egypt's largest market. However, the breweries quickly realized that because their headquarters were in different cities, a partnership made more sense than an expensive battle to try to conquer each other's territory.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, in 1921, even before Bomonti-Pyramid had taken on its final shape, the two breweries agreed on a plan to exploit the beer markets of all of Egypt. They both found the agreement to their liking, renewing in it 1923, 1925, and 1931.¹⁴¹ Examining the particularities of this agreement and what it meant in practice for the two brewers enables us to explicate their successful formula for selling beer in Egypt.

The most appropriate place to begin this examination is with Egypt's largest market, Cairo. The nerve center of the joint operation in Cairo was the Central Bureau, located on No. 68 Ibrahim Pasha Street in the heart of the city. The bureau was in charge of delivering all the beer produced in the Bomonti-Pyramid factory to the markets of Cairo, Suez, and Upper Egypt (which was classified by the companies

as anything geographically below Cairo). The head of the bureau was Constantine Mouratiadis, a Greek protégé, a lawyer, and major stockholder in Crown brewery.¹⁴² The choice of a Greek made sense because, as discussed above, Greeks ran the majority of the brewery's clients (bars, cafes, pubs, restaurants).¹⁴³ The choice of Mouratiadis, specifically, made sense on three levels. First, his father Michel Mouratiadis had worked for Crown, so he had a significant familiarity and familial connection with the business. Second, he had all the personal characteristics that companies look for in their leaders; he was outgoing, personable, honest, loyal, and enjoyed a good reputation among what one Heineken employee called "Europeans," of which the Greek community was part.¹⁴⁴ Third, as a major stockholder in Crown—he would eventually become the largest shareholder in the company—he embodied a tangible link between the two companies, who ensured that the operations in Cairo would suit the needs of both breweries.

Mouratiadis had almost complete control of the Cairo operation. He was the director of the company's storage facilities, its customers' accounts, general statistics, general accounting, commercial services (sales), and advertising.¹⁴⁵ He organized the people below him into three departments: bureau employees, salespeople, and stock workers/deliverymen. Inside the bureau, he employed six people: a head account, an accountant, an assistant accountant, a secretary, a cashier, and a debt collector. He paid them between twenty-five Egyptians pounds, the pay of the chief accountant, and sixteen pounds, the pay of the debt collector.¹⁴⁶ Outside of the bureau, he employed two salespeople. His head of sales was a sixty-something Greek man, Mr. Metaxas, who was in charge of all of the markets to which Bomonti-Pyramid sold product. Mouratiadis employed another salesmen whose sole responsibility was Cairo. He had

three men charged with running the stock houses and another four who delivered beer to customers.¹⁴⁷

The sale and delivery of beer in Cairo and Upper Egypt was organized in concentric circles centered on the Central Bureau. The first circle encompassed those retailers, grocers, cafés, bars, and beer halls that were close enough to the Bomonti-Pyramid factory to receive direct deliveries. The next circle out contained those locations that were outside the immediate vicinity of the factory but still within Cairo proper. This circled covered establishments in Azbakiyya, Bulaq, Abdin, and Bab Al-Luq. Instead of delivering directly from the factory, Bomonti-Pyramid used fifteen depots throughout Cairo to deliver their beer. The deliverymen of Bomonti-Pyramid ran these semi-autonomous depots; they received shipments from the factory and then arranged their delivery schedules with the customers. In the next circle were those customers who lived in the suburbs of Cairo, which at this time included Giza, Dokki, Zaytun, Heliopolis, Helwan, and Maadi.¹⁴⁸ Six more depots served these suburbs. Out of the twenty-one depots of Bomonti-Pyramid (fifteen in Cairo and six in the suburbs), sixteen were run by Greeks, two by Muslims, and two by Coptic Christians.¹⁴⁹ Beyond the confines of Cairo and its suburbs, wholesalers, based in Cairo, did most of the work of the brewery in places like Aswan, Minya, and Fayum. The only customer outside of Bomonti-Pyramid's circles was the English Army. They always received direct deliveries of beer, no matter their location.¹⁵⁰

The points of connection between these circles and the center were the brewery's salespeople and the deliverymen. The salesmen were in charge of going out to the establishments in each of these circles to find new business and negotiate the contracts between the purchasing parties and the Central Bureau, which was in charge of all sales.¹⁵¹ Payment could come in the form of cash or credit. While the salesmen

established the terms of the relationships, it was the deliverymen who serviced and maintained them. Deliverymen were charged with delivering beer from the warehouses to both the direct purchasers (bars, cafés etc.) and the depots in Cairo and the suburbs. The technology of transportation that was at the deliverymen's disposal once again shows the agglomeration of new and old technologies rather than new technology eliminating the old. They had four to ten motorized trucks depending on the season, five horse-drawn trucks, eight to ten scooters, and thirty handcarts.¹⁵²

The deliverymen were actually central to Bomonti-Pyramid's business in Cairo, enjoying a level of autonomy not typical of our contemporary conception of deliverymen. Instead of being assigned certain delivery routes and clients, they cultivated their own client bases and had strong relationships with those to whom they delivered. The deliverymen received no salary from the brewery; instead, they made all of their money off of the one-piaster commission they received on every dozen bottles of beer they delivered successfully.¹⁵³ These men determined their own routes for bringing the beer from the warehouses to the clients, and they were also the ones to receive payment and look after unpaid debts. The only accountability these deliverymen had to Bomonti-Pyramid was that their receipts had to match up with the beer they sold. This system only worked because most of the deliverymen were former employees of Mouratiadis from his time at Crown before he took over control of the Cairo office.¹⁵⁴

The system presented some significant advantages. First, it allowed for widespread publicity for the brewery's products. Each of these deliverymen was an evangelist for the company, and he would use his strong relationships with clients to solicit advice on new potential clients. Second, this system allowed the brewery to efficiently supply its customers with beer. Because these deliverymen knew their

clients so well, they could make sure that no one went too long without the proper supply of beer. For example, they would know that a certain beer hall always ran out of beer on a Wednesday and thus would make sure to deliver to them on Thursday. Finally, because the deliverymen had such good relations with the clients, they could keep track of clients' debt situations and help ensure they never owed too much to the brewery.¹⁵⁵

There were downsides to this system as well. First, because the breweries had no real relationship with customers, it was difficult for the brewery to deal with them directly. In addition, accounting could get confusing, as each deliveryman used his own system. There was also the unfortunate reality that some of these deliverymen could either lose or steal some of the money that was intended to reach the company. But perhaps the most significant difficulty this system presented was that these deliverymen were not very easy to replace.¹⁵⁶

In balance, the system functioned well for Mouratiadis. He worked hard to keep the clients within these concentric circles connected to the center, especially those within Cairo proper. For the places that could receive direct deliveries, Mouratiadis made sure that they were visited daily and stocked well. Generally, if an order was placed in the morning, it was ready that afternoon. If it was ordered in the afternoon, it was typically delivered by the next morning. Mouratiadis was also very generous with these clients. For example, in 1934, he gave an advance to sixty-seven of these establishments that equaled roughly 2,700 Egyptian pounds. Most of this money was meant to fund these establishments' retrofitting their bars with the mechanisms to serve Bomonti-Pyramid's beer from a keg on tap. This was an important step, as most of the "high-quality" foreign beers were served on tap. Another advantage to serving beer on tap was that delivering barrels or kegs instead

of bottles reduced costs; the brewery could ship more beer at one time in a sturdier case because barrels and kegs were much less likely to break than bottles.

Mouratiadis was also generous with the depots in Cairo. His generosity came in three forms. First, the lease for eight of the fifteen Cairene depots was in his own name, and he paid the rent for all fifteen. He also paid the phone bill for six of the fifteen. Second, besides paying service fees, he also gave the depots free coolers, scooters, and handcarts to run their businesses, replacing the materials when they wore out. Third, Mouratiadis would give the depots free ice produced by Bomonti-Pyramid. This ice was a significant gift because these depots used ice to refrigerate their beer. Mouratiadis did all of this because depots were concentrated primarily in what were known as the “European” districts of Cairo. There was, thus, a significant growth potential here if he could establish a fleet of loyal depots. This growth was essential because Cairo was Bomonti-Pyramid’s most profitable and successful market. Outside of Cairo and its suburbs, Bomonti-Pyramid did not sell a great deal of beer.

Whereas the Bomonti-Pyramid operation was under the control of a Greek stockholder at Crown, it was an Egyptian citizen, Mr. Gibara, who ran Crown’s operations in Alexandria. While the biographical information about him is scant, we do know that he originally came from Syria, was the director of the board of Crown, and spoke fluent Greek, Italian, English, French, and Arabic.¹⁵⁷ Crown paid him fifty pounds per month in salary and bonuses, and he oversaw a staff of ten employees in the Alexandria bureau. Of the ten workers, five were Greeks (a typist, debt collector, assistant accountant, cashier, and the head of the warehouse), four were “Arabs” (all four served as porters), and one was Syrian (the chief accountant). The highest paid, at nineteen Egyptian pounds per month, was the cashier. The next highest paid was

the Syrian head accountant, who had a salary of eighteen pounds per month. The Greek typist was the only woman employed in the office, and she only made six pounds per month. The only employees of the bureau who made less than her were the four “Arab” porters, who were paid four pounds per month.¹⁵⁸ Mr. Gibarra’s three salespersons were one in charge of Alexandria (Mr. Caritato); one who would travel to the villages, Mr. Sirakis; and one in charge of the brewery’s relations with the beer depots.

Crown organized the Alexandria and Lower Egypt market similarly to the market in Cairo and Upper Egypt. Again, the Central Bureau sat at the center of five concentric circles. The first circle covered those cafés, brasseries, restaurants, and grocers who were located near enough to the factory to receive direct shipments.¹⁵⁹ The circle just outside this one contained those customers outside of the immediate vicinity of the Crown factory, who received beer from the six depots. The third circle covered the customers in the suburbs of Alexandria. The fourth circle encompassed all customers located in the villages and cities above Cairo. The last circle included all the export markets including Syria, Palestine, and the Docadenese.

Although Crown organized its markets similarly to Bomonti-Pyramid, the way it connected these circles differentiated the Alexandrian brewery from its Cairene partner. All beer produced by the Crown factory was delivered to the Central Bureau. From here, the porters employed by the Central Bureau would deliver to all the establishments within the first circle. The three deliverymen who were in the service of Crown would also pick up their beer from here. These three were in charge of the six depots of Alexandria, which operated semi-autonomously like the depots of Pyramid. Crown’s three deliverymen covered all the expenses of transporting the beer

and were paid by commission: they received two milliemes for every bottle sold by them and eight milliemes per dozen bottles they successfully delivered.

However, these deliverymen did not have as much autonomy as those of Bomonti-Pyramid. The salesmen of Crown directly controlled their routes and deliveries, which were all formalized in contracts between clients and the Central Bureau. Moreover, they relied on the largess of the Central Bureau for the continued functioning of their depots. The Central Bureau provided the depots with thousands of blocks of ice to keep the beer stocked in the depots refrigerated. The Central Bureau also provided them with an allowance of two and a half pounds for the maintenance of their depots, and offered them three days of credit if they wanted it.¹⁶⁰

In the suburbs of Alexandria, the two agents of Crown, who operated exclusively in the Ramleh suburb, were tasked with both the sale and delivery of beer to customers. The agents would buy the beer from the Central Bureau at the standard rate and would incur all the costs of transport to one of their four depots. However, the agreement was definitely in favor of the agents. For every dozen bottles they sold, they would receive a commission of five Egyptian pounds, a huge sum. They also received an eight-millieme commission on every successfully delivered dozen, and two thousand blocs of ice from the Central Bureau.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, Crown was more successful than Bomonti-Pyramid at exploiting the suburban market.

This success was built on Crown's sales in the villages outside of the city and its suburbs. For example, in 1934, Crown sold more beer in Port Said and Ismailia, 1477 hectoliters, than Bomonti-Pyramid sold in all of Upper Egypt, roughly 1300 hectoliters.¹⁶² These superior sales probably had something to do with the fact that Crown had a salesman who visited every client outside of Alexandria four to five

times per week.¹⁶³ The strong sales probably also had to do with the fact that Crown had excellent agents in both cities. These peripheral agents were left a great deal of autonomy, so they were the ultimate determinants of the success or failure of the brewery there. Fortunately, the agent in Port Said, Mr. Garangiotis, was active, intelligent, and had the support of his son, who was fully committed to selling beer. On top of these personal characteristics, Garangiotis had lived in Port Said for more than forty years and was embedded in the community as a municipal councilor.¹⁶⁴

In addition to serving villages, Crown also, as part of its agreement with Pyramid, exported to all clients in foreign markets. The two breweries' decision to leave exports solely to Crown had a great deal to do with the "total control brewing" strategy. With Crown running exports, it was easier to ensure that the beer exported was of a good quality. The beer could go straight from the factory onto boats and trucks headed out of Egypt, instead of making the hard journey between Cairo and Alexandria, which added an extra chance of breakage or spoilage. In the 1920s, the three largest export markets were Syria, Palestine, and the Dodecanese, the group of 12 larger and 150 smaller islands in the Aegean. By the 1930s, however, these three markets were in decline; they went from consuming nearly 1500 hectoliters in 1930 to consuming 856 hectoliters in 1934. This decline was the result of three factors: more organized local competitors offering their beer at lower prices; foreign countries raising tariffs and other barriers to the import of beer; and Egypt's overall decreased trade with these countries.¹⁶⁵

The agreement between the two breweries not only allowed them to formulate a coordinated plan to sell to Egypt, but it would also allow them to launch a shared brand, Stella. As Chapter 6 will describe, this shared brand enabled the breweries to sell to a product nationally. Although the two breweries' recipes for Stella ended up

being slightly different from one another, the fact that Crown and Bomonti-Pyramid were both producing and selling Stella beer in their respective markets meant that Egyptians could buy it almost anywhere in Egypt. This ability to sell nationally was a crucial step in the development of the Egyptian beer industry.

The breweries positioned this new beer as an upscale cousin to the blond beers that both breweries were selling under their own names. Stella was also a blond beer, but it had slightly higher alcohol content, 13 percent instead of 12 percent abv, and a higher price tag. In Alexandria, a large bottle of regular Crown beer cost 2.5 piasters at grocery stores, while a large bottle of Stella cost 3.5 piasters. The difference was even starker at bars, where the regular beer could cost from anywhere from 4 to 6 piasters, while Stella could cost 6 to 10 piasters.¹⁶⁶ Along with a higher price and alcohol content, the breweries also were assiduous in their application of their total control brewing methods to produce a high-quality beer, meaning better taste, brightness, and foam stability. As a result, Stella compared favorably to beers imported from Europe.¹⁶⁷

Nevertheless, the two breweries' unification behind Stella did not mean that their offerings were the same. Bomonti-Pyramid supplemented its standard beer and Stella with a "petite" beer and a brown beer. The "petite" beer was a cheaper and lower-abv offering. The brewery achieved these two characteristics by diluting their regular beer, adding thirty-five percent more water to the finished product. The brown or "brune" beer was also the regular brew, but with added coloring. Despite the willingness to create "new" beers by adulterating their product, Bomonti-Pyramid was known to produce better beer than Crown. Both its regular offering and its Stella were superior to Crown's in clarity, durability, and taste.¹⁶⁸

For both of the breweries, the main motive for teaming up was to protect their interests from both local and foreign competitors, who were real threats to the viability of the breweries.¹⁶⁹ On the local level, there were two breweries, Cavafakis and St. Georges, competing with Crown and Pyramid to capitalize on the growing beer market in Egypt. However, these breweries were never really serious challengers to Crown and Pyramid. Both were too small and too poorly established to overcome the fact that they sold a low-quality beer. They quickly fizzled, unable to compete with Crown and Pyramid, which sold affordable and high-quality products. Nor could Cavafakis and St. Georges compete with the host of European beers that were present in the market, which although they were more expensive than Crown's and Bomonti-Pyramid's beers, they were also of a superior quality.¹⁷⁰

Such foreign beers were the true obstacles to the continued growth and success of Crown and Bomonti-Pyramid. After World War I ended, Egypt was reintegrated into the world market and once again filled with imported alcoholic beverages, including beer. Foreign alcohol mainly entered the Egyptian market through the alcohol agents discussed above. These agents aimed to maximize profits through the diversification of the brands they sold. Thus, an internationally known brand of beer was an essential part of their business portfolio. For example, Walker and Vallois, who were the sole agents of Johnnie Walker in Egypt, were also the main importers of Amstel and Allsop's beer.¹⁷¹

These agents ensured that the Egyptian beer market was a truly global one. The beers with which Crown and Pyramid had to battle came from all over the world. There were beers from the major beer-producing countries, including Germany (Dressler, Kupper), England (Allsops, Watneys, Whitbreads), Netherlands (Amstel, Heineken), and Czechoslovakia (Urquell), but also from smaller beer producing

countries like Denmark (Carlsberg), Greece (Fix), Sweden (Falcon), Japan (Asahi), and Scotland (Tennet's).¹⁷² Agents imported beer in two forms, in cases of bottles and in barrels/kegs, the latter being the most effective way to import beer while maintaining the quality. (As I will discuss in the next chapter, kegs were both sturdier and more likely to keep their seal than bottles, which made them valuable because bottle breakage was a significant source of lost revenue.) The beer imported from all of these countries was consumed throughout Egypt; Alexandria and Lower Egypt consumed roughly thirty-five percent of the imported beer, while Cairo and Upper Egypt consumed the rest, sixty-five percent.¹⁷³

Four of the biggest importers of beer into Egypt were Société McEwans, Slavick & Co., Eredi Albertini, and the Fix Brewery of Greece. Société McEwans made a great deal of profit because they were the sole supplier of beer to the British Army stationed in Egypt; this was a huge concession because the army was rather prodigious in its consumption. For example, in 1934, out of the 84,000 hectoliters consumed in Egypt, the British army and their families drank 16,000 hectoliters.¹⁷⁴ McEwans was thus able to afford a bottling plant, where they could bottle the beer that they imported in barrels/kegs. They were also able to afford to market and sell their beer to non-army personnel. The second importer, Slavick, was the main agent for Heineken in Egypt. They had a strong presence in Cairo and a powerful control of the beer market in Port Said. Very little beer was sold in Port Said without Slavick's approval.¹⁷⁵ Of the remaining two major importers, both Albertini (which sold Urquell Beer, Puntigam, and Bavaria Beer), and Fix (which sold its own brand of beer), had local connections in Alexandria that bottled the beer they imported.

These foreign competitors were dangerous to Crown and Pyramid breweries because they not only had a way to provide high-quality beer, but they also had a

loyal market in Egypt. The rich and affluent beer drinkers of Egypt, among whom were both foreign and Egyptian-born elites, consumed foreign beers mainly out of “reasons of snobbery, preference, or nationalism.”¹⁷⁶ Elites, with their financial wherewithal, were an important group to capture, yet the breweries were at a disadvantage with these consumers because their consumption was not tied heavily to price. Rather, they bought and consumed certain beers based on taste and the desire for the social and cultural benefits of beer. Although Stella’s high quality had enabled it to make some inroads in this group, the breweries ultimately decided not to target the group because it would always have members who would not drink Stella because it was made in Egypt.

Instead of pursuing these elites, the breweries decided to focus on those residents of Egypt for whom beer was a luxury, and for whom price was extremely important: the employees (*muwazzafin*), artisans, and workers of Egypt.¹⁷⁷ By employees, they meant both high-level office workers (those whose made twenty-five pounds per month or more), and low-level office workers (those who made between ten and twenty pounds per month). By artisans, the breweries meant those specialized workers who made five to seven pounds per month. And by workers, they were referring to, as they called them, “indigenous” workers who made between two and three pounds per month.¹⁷⁸ This income-based sketch of the breweries’ imagined consumers signals that the breweries had their sights squarely set on the effendi and the urban worker.

Crown and Pyramid breweries targeted these groups by producing a beer that was high quality, yet cheaper than its competitors. For example, whereas a case of large bottles of imported beer would sell at 248 piasters per case, the breweries could sell a case of Stella beer at 128 piasters per case.¹⁷⁹ The prices could be kept low

largely because of their business model, which involved the import of most of the raw materials of beer (malt, hops, and yeast), and the use of cheap and plentiful local resources (labor, rice, and water) to produce a product more affordable than its imported competition.¹⁸⁰

By aiming at this market, the Crown and Pyramid breweries may have been able to circumvent their foreign competitors, but they placed themselves in competition with other, more popular products. Specifically, they had to compete with Turkish coffee and whisky. Turkish coffee offered a better price, none of the religious baggage, and was also typically served with a free glass of water—a strong incentive at the time. Whisky, for its part, offered more alcoholic bang for the buck, as it was only slightly more expensive and offered a much greater alcohol by volume. The breweries saw whisky as a direct competitor to beer and believed that, if the public authorities placed sufficiently high tariffs on whisky and were stricter in their fight against whisky adulteration, the consumption of beer would increase in line with the decrease in whiskey consumption.¹⁸¹ Both Turkish coffee and whisky were difficult opponents, and the breweries would struggle with them until the 1930s, when Heineken bought into both breweries. As I will show in the next several chapters, Heineken figured out a way to tackle these two competitors and make beer a primary leisure-time drink of the effendi. However, even before Heineken took over, the breweries were thinking of how to beat out Turkish coffee and whisky. This fact is evident in one of Heineken's first feasibility reports on the country. The report speaks of two ways that Stella beer could win this battle for the money of the effendi and the worker.

The first strategy identified in the report was to further beer's connection with the Egyptian custom of mezza, which, as it was practiced in Egypt, often consisted of

spicy dishes and hors d'oeuvres: "ham, salami, meats, cheeses, supplemented with Eastern specialties such as crab, shrimp, cucumber." Heineken's plan was to promote the pairing of mezze and beer by promoting a practice whereby mezze would come free with an order of a beer.¹⁸² Although this practice would place a burden on the sellers of mezze, it was great for the sale of beer. Not only did it add value to beer, tying it closely to an indigenous custom, but it also supplied the customer with dishes that would make them thirsty for another beer. By the same logic that many bars in America offer free pretzels or peanuts, the encouragement of mezze in Egypt boosted beer sales.

The second strategy identified in Heineken's report for expanding beer's role in Egypt was that beer could be branded as a key hot-weather alcoholic beverage. In Egypt, the hotter the weather, the more beer people would drink. As evidence of this link, one of the depots in Alexandria was only open for the six months of the year when it was hot enough for people to swim on the beach. As I will show in the following chapters, Heineken would use these associations of beer with mezze and with warm weather, especially the latter, to sell beer to effendis and workers in Egypt.

Conclusion

The creation of an industrialized alcoholic beverage sector in Egypt was spearheaded by Europeans, and yet this industry was not a foreign imposition completely at odds with the culture and people of Egypt. As this chapter has shown, although the pioneers in this industry were European, the arrival and the success of the alcohol industry was not the capitulation of a nation to the demands of its new colonial masters. Rather, it represented the confluence of revolutionary trends in the alcoholic beverage industry that pushed European brewers to expand to untapped

markets, as well as massive social and cultural changes in the Egyptian population that created a demand for these new alcoholic beverages. While it would be naive and false to claim that these alcoholic ventures were not aided by the presence of an imperial power in Egypt, much of what attracted the investors were trends and events that were already taking shape before the British invaded Egypt in 1882. In particular, the consumption of alcoholic beverages was becoming a key marker for many Egyptians of their new “modern” identity.

As I have shown, the importation of the technologies that lay at the heart of industrial alcoholic beverage production was not a frictionless process. The companies that arrived in Egypt, deluded by the perceived superiority of their “modern” methods and machinery, were not immediately profitable, but instead met with early difficulties and had to diversify in order to survive their early days. In addition, the techno-scientific mindset that undergirded these modern methods and machinery, one shaped heavily by the sense of “total control,” was challenged by the particularities of the Egyptian situation. Only by adapting their methods and leadership structure to Egypt, calling on early business elites, and exploiting the advantages of the country, including plentiful water, grains, and population, did these companies establish an industrialized base in the country. Thus these early ventures, which would eventually serve as the base of the modern Egyptian alcoholic beverage industry, survived only through the significant investment, persistence, and commitment of the businessmen who led this industry.

¹ On Barak, *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 2013).

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- ² Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 16.
- ³ P.J. Cain and A.G.Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (New York: Pearson Education, 2002), 313.
- ⁴ Cynthia Myntti, *Paris Along the Nile: Architecture in Cairo from the Belle Epoque* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1999); Juan Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- ⁵ David Landes, *Bankers and Pashas: International Finance and Economic Imperialism in Egypt* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1969).
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 92-97.
- ⁷ Juan Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*.
- ⁸ E.R.J. Owen, "From Liberalism to Liberal Imperialism: Lord Cromer and the First Wave of Globalization in Egypt, in *Histories of the Modern Middle East: New Directions* ed. Israel Gershoni, Hakan Erdem, Ursula Wokock (Boulder, CO.: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 95-112.
- ⁹ Robert Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt 1882-1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 59.
- ¹⁰ E.R.J. Owen, "Liberalism to Liberal Imperialism," 101.
- ¹¹ E.R. J Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian economy: a study in trade and development* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 281.
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- ¹³ Mohammad A. Chaichian, "The Effects of World Capitalist Economy on Urbanization in Egypt, 1800-1970," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20 (1988): 28.
- ¹⁴ On Barak, *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt* (Berkeley, CA.:University of California Press, 2013), 105, 298.
- ¹⁵ Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), 26-7.
- ¹⁶ Barak, *On Time*,153-159.
- ¹⁷ Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*, 25.
- ¹⁸ R.G. Wilson and T.R. Gourvish, "Introduction," in *The Dynamics of the International Brewing Industry since 1800* ed. R.G. Wilson and T.R. Gourvish (New York: Routledge, 1998), 4.
- ¹⁹ Syed Nomanul Haq, *Names, Natures, and Things: The Alchemist Jābir ibn Ḥayyān and His Kitāb al-Aḥjār* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994).
- ²⁰ Louis Pasteur, "Memoir on the alcoholic fermentation," *Milestones in Microbiology* trans. and ed. Thomas D.Brock (Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 31-38. In nineteenth century Europe, those who sought to explain fermentation fell into two camps: vitalists and chemists. Vitalists believed that fermentation was one of those "mysterious forces in the living organism that enabled it to produce all those substances that it needed and which chemists seemed incapable of synthesizing in their test tubes." The chemists, on the other hand, believed that fermentation was a purely chemical process where, in the presence of unknown chemical substance called a ferment, sugar and oxygen would break down in to alcohol and carbon dioxide, see

Ulf Langerkvist, *The Enigma of ferment: From the Philosopher's Stone to the First Biochemical Nobel Prize* (New Jersey: World Scientific Publishing, 2005), 110; Vitalism took the upper hand when scientists in the 1830s, using the newly invented achromatic compound microscope, discovered that brewer's yeast, a substance brewers understood helped make alcohol, was made of living cells. These scientists posited that the yeast cell's growth and reproduction produced alcohol and carbon dioxide as byproducts, see Justis Liebig, "Concerning the phenomena of fermentation, putrefaction, and decay, and their causes." in *Milestones in Microbiology* trans. and ed. Thomas D. Brock (Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 24-27.

²¹ Anders Brinch Kissmeyer, "Emil Christen Hansen," *Oxford Companion to Beer* ed. Garret Oliver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Online Version, 2013) Accessed April 23, 2014.

²² Louis Pasteur, "On the organized bodies which exist in the atmosphere; examination of the doctrine of spontaneous generation," *Milestones in Microbiology* trans. and ed. Thomas D. Brock (Englewood Cliffs (NJ):Prentice-Hall, 1961), 43-38.

²³ Mikael Hård, *Machines are Frozen Spirit: The Scientification of Refrigeration in the 19th Century—A Weberian Interpretation* (Boulder, CO.: Campus Verlag, 1994), 181-192.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 210-220.

²⁵ Theodore S. Feldman, "Thermometer," *The Oxford Companion to the History of Modern Science*, ed. J.L. Heilbron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Online Version, 2003) Accessed April 22, 2014.

²⁶ Keith Thomas, "Hydrometer," *The Oxford Companion to Beer*, ed. Garret Oliver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Online Version, 2013) Accessed April 23, 2014.

²⁷ Colin J. West "Saladin Box," *The Oxford Companion to Beer* ed. Garret Oliver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Online Version, 2013) Accessed April 20, 2014.

²⁸ Hård, *Machines are Frozen Spirit*.

²⁹ Brian Hunt, "Refrigeration" and Horst Dombusch, "Carl von Linde," *The Oxford Companion to Beer* ed. Garret Oliver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Online Version, 2013) Accessed April 23, 2014.

³⁰ Hård, *Machines are Frozen Spirit*.

³¹ Ronald Weir, *The History of the Distillers Company: Diversification and Growth in Whisky and Chemicals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 7-26. The Coffey still drew its name from its inventor Aeneas Coffey, an Irishman and distiller, who patented the still in 1830. Prior to the Coffey still, liquors, like whisky and brandy, were produced in a pot still, which heated a wash until it evaporated, cooled it, and then collected the condensing liquid. Since alcohol's boiling point was lower than the boiling point of water, the new liquid would be of higher alcohol content than the evaporated fermented liquid. For example, wine (9-16 % alcohol by volume, abv) when distilled became brandy (35-60% abv). However the limitation of the pot still was that it could only distill one batch of liquor at a time and only put the wash through one evaporation/condensation cycle. Thus a distiller's production was limited by the size of his pot still, and the alcohol produced still contained impurities that could have a deleterious effect on the product.

³² Mikael Hård, *Machines are Frozen Spirit*, 181-192.

³³ *Ibid.*, 6.

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- ³⁴ George Philliskirk, "Pasteurization," *Oxford Companion to Beer* ed. Garret Oliver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Online Version, 2013) Accessed April 22, 2014.
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- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.
- ³⁷ Watenpauh, *Being Modern in the Middle East*, 16.
- ³⁸ Nancy Y. Reynolds, "Commodity Communities: Interweavings of Market Cultures, Consumption Practices, and Social Power in Egypt, 1907-1961" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2003), 16-28.
- ³⁹ Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times* (Portsmouth, N.H.: James Currey, 1996), 145-48.
- ⁴⁰ Ryzova, "Egyptianizing Modernity," 190, n. 26.
- ⁴¹ Will Hanley, "Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies," *History Compass* 6.5 (2008): 1349-50.
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- ⁴³ Reimer, "Colonial Bridgehead," 533 and Chaichian, "The Effects of World Capitalist Economy on Urbanization," 26.
- ⁴⁴ Richard Pococke, *A Description of the East and Some Other Countries vol. 1: Observations on Egypt* (London: Printed for the Author by W. Bowyer, 1743-45), 182-83.
- ⁴⁵ Kamil al-Tilmissani, *al-Suq al-Sawda` (The Black Market)*, Video Recording (Cairo: Studio Misr, 1945).
- ⁴⁶ Joel Gordon, *Revolutionary Melodrama: Popular Film and Civic Identity in Nasser's Egypt* (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2002), 59.
- ⁴⁷ Mohammad A. Chaichian, "The Effects of World Capitalist Economy on Urbanization," 30.
- ⁴⁸ Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian economy, 1820-1914*, 237.
- ⁴⁹ Mohammad A. Chaichian, *Town and Country in the Middle East: Iran and Egypt in the transition to Globalization, 1800-1970* (United Kingdom: Lexington Books, 2009), 138.
- ⁵⁰ Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*, 28 from Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 60-2; and Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islamism and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 12, 26.
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- ⁵³ Chaichian, "The Effects of World Capitalist Economy on Urbanization," 32.
- ⁵⁴ Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*, 28.
- ⁵⁵ His Majesty's Agent and Consul General, *Report on the Finances, Administration, and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan 1906* (London: Harrison and Sons, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1907), 75.
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- ⁶⁶ Zachary Lockman, "Imagining the Working Class: Culture, Nationalism, and Class Formation in Egypt, 1899-1914," *Poetics Today* 15 (1994): 164-68.
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- ⁷¹ Muwaylihi, *A Period of Time*, 258.
- ⁷² Ibid., 307. For an in-depth discussion of 'Ataba see Reynolds, *A City Consumed*, 31-36.
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- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 362
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- ¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 283-5.
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- ¹²² "Rapport de Monsieur H. Faivre sur l'Égypte," 4 Juin 1935, typed, p.14 NL-SAA-191213, 2.2.9.2.5-Africa, 834-Archives of Heineken NV, Stadsarchief Amsterdam.
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¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 6.
¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 89.
¹⁸⁰ G.H. Selous, "Report on Economic and Commercial Conditions in Egypt"
(London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1935), 42.
¹⁸¹ "Rapport de Monsieur H. Faivre sur l'Égypte," 94.
¹⁸² Ibid., 5.

Chapter 4: Daily Dose or Devil's Drink: The Religio-Medical Battle Over Beer in Egypt 1923–1935

Introducing a modern beer industry in Egypt met with challenges. Beer companies like Pyramid and Crown breweries faced the challenge of brewing in an unfamiliar climate and the competition of numerous other companies trying to sell alcohol in a burgeoning market. Nevertheless, both companies were able to weather the initial storm and establish strong bases within Egypt. This chapter examines how these two beer companies, along with major international brewers like Amstel and Guinness, angled to sell beer to Egyptians who were looking to express their modernity through the consumption of alcohol. By examining beer advertisements from the period from 1923 to 1935, this chapter argues that the companies and advertisers that succeeded in selling beer to Egyptians did so by focusing on the drink's health benefits.

Appropriating rhetoric as old as advertising itself, these beer advertisers cast the beverage as a new patent medicine or nostrum. According to the rhetoric of the advertisements, the benefits of drinking beer included not only the properties typically associated with beverages, such as the powers of refreshment and revivification, but also the added powers of curing illness and relieving the stresses of modern life. These salutary properties were closely associated with the beverage's purity and cleanliness, characteristics that distinguished modern, industrially produced beer from its artisanal cousin *būza*.

Advertisers were not alone in their focus on the curative properties of beer; also interested were Islamic modernists, a growing group in Egypt at the time. These Islamic modernists aimed to use the most current techniques and technologies to return Egypt to its proud Islamic roots. A subset of these Islamic modernists was

extremely concerned with Egyptians' growing alcohol consumption habit and saw it as one of many deleterious effects of the colonial presence on the population. Islamic modernist thinkers like Muhammad Rashid Rida, Ahmad Ahmad Ghalwash, and Muhammad Farag al-Sanhuri were particularly galled by the attribution of medicinal properties to alcoholic beverages like beer. For them, this attribution provided modern justification for the consumption of a beverage that they deemed religiously forbidden. Thus they welded their own Islamic temperance tradition with a larger temperance movement that was percolating internationally at the time. These Islamic modernists linked the Islamic tradition to temperance, which was very much couched in Christian triumphalism, and subverted it so that the West and Christendom were the ones that needed to catch up. As this chapter will argue, although Islamic modernists of the early twentieth century crafted a temperance ideology that was noteworthy for its ability to bridge two traditions, they ultimately lost the battle against beer. The temperance movement in Egypt was too poorly supported to overcome the trend of alcohol's acceptance and consumption among Egyptians.

In making this argument, the chapter looks at the techno-medical battle between advertisers and Islamic modernists over the depiction of beer as well as at the activities of each to try to sell their message to the Egyptian public. The first section details the techno-medico rhetoric of beer advertisers in this period, showing how they try to portray beer as refreshing and healthful in order to sell it to a new middle-class audience. The second section traces the roots of the Islamic modernist movement and the intellectual bases for the temperance of the Islamic modernist movement. The third section examines the Anglo-American Temperance movement, its effects on the Islamic Modernists, and the convergence of Islamic modernists with Anglo-American temperance in the Egyptian Temperance Association. Finally, the

chapter looks at the legislative impact of temperance in Egypt. As this chapter will show, despite the best efforts of Islamic and Christian temperance activists, beer, with the help of advertisers, became the refreshing and healthful drink of the *effendi*.

Commercialization

In 1923, Egypt's alcoholic beverage market was a crowded one, as locally based limited liability companies like Crown and Bomonti-Pyramid Brewery vied with importers and distributors of foreign products for the money of the emerging class of Egyptian drinkers. In this section I analyze the techno-medico rhetoric of the period's beer advertisements in order to show how beer companies attempted to differentiate themselves from the rest of the beverage producers on the market.

Before 1934, Crown and Bomonti-Pyramid breweries, despite operating on a much larger scale than their pre-colonial predecessors, were primarily local ventures. Both the production and sale of beer were focused in the two population centers of Egypt, Alexandria and Cairo, with Crown Brewery laying claim to the Alexandria market and Pyramid controlling Cairo. As I have discussed previously, prior to World War I these companies were primarily concerned with assuring their own survival rather than dominating the Egyptian market. This all changed after World War I, as both companies enjoyed a boom period. With the profits of this boom and the new ability to control and coordinate the Cairo and Alexandria markets, these companies aimed to make beer a national industry. The main avenue through which Crown and Pyramid Breweries sought to pursue this new national scale was through the medium of print, which was concurrently enjoying its own explosion in popularity.

As Relli Shechter has shown, prior to World War I, Egypt had neither a medium with a wide enough circulation nor a population with enough literate members to sustain an effective print advertisement campaign.¹ However, after World War I, an increase in the number and circulation of newspapers and other periodicals enabled the print advertisement business to see sustained growth. By 1928–29, the “circulation of [the] Arabic press was estimated at 180,000 daily.”² This expansion reflected both growth in literacy, especially among the *effendiya*, and decrease in the cost of production.³ Print advertisement was not limited to newspapers; it also encompassed magazines, calendars, menus and drinks lists.⁴

In line with Pyramid’s aggressive business policy, it participated in yearly advertisement campaigns. In 1934, for example, the company spent 200,000 piasters on a campaign in Cairo that included newspapers, magazines, calendars, menus, and drinks lists, as well as cinema advertising. This came after spending nearly half a million piasters on advertising in the three years beforehand. The company erected tents at forty-four of their clients’ sites, including the Anglo-American Bar, and supplied mirrors, flashing signs, and billboards with the company’s name emblazoned on it.⁵ Evidence of this gaudy advertising is found in a 1928 issue of *al-Ahram*, one of



Egypt's oldest and most famous dailies. Titled "Bières Crown Pyramides," the image portrays an old man, a young man, and a woman drinking from an oversized, foamy mug. The three people, attired in Western dress, are ethnically ambiguous. At the bottom of the advertisement, an Arabic line reads: "The Beer of Pyramids and Ibrahimia in Egypt." This bilingual advertisement is designed to accomplish a great deal in a small space. By using a French splice of the two recently linked breweries, the advertisement reinforces the connection between the two companies and capitalizes on any brand loyalty among Francophones. The middle image portrays the beer as both delicious (frothy, overflowing) and "modern" (read: suitable for westernized, secular, and liberal citizens), by having the young and old, male and female, enjoy the delicious beer together. The image trades on the idea that the consumption of a modern product makes the consumer modern. Finally, the script at the bottom appeals to the Egyptian nationalist by using Arabic, and uses the names of the major breweries themselves in order to show that this beer is "Made in Egypt."⁶

Due to the Bomonti-Pyramid's local presence in Egypt, their advertisements could rely primarily on the resonances of images (frothy mugs, men and women drinking together) to sell their beer. People, especially residents of Cairo and Alexandria, could associate the brand with a concrete structure within Egypt. Moreover, with Bomonti's linkage of the companies, these breweries had, for a time, come to dominate the "local" beer market. In 1934, these two breweries sold seventy-seven percent of the beer purchased from local brewers.⁷ The breweries sold a more affordable product than their foreign competitors. Whereas the importers would sell foreign beers anywhere from 170 to 220 piasters per case of forty-eight, the beer sold by the breweries generally stayed between 100 and 150 piasters per case.⁸ Foreign-based brands, by contrast, had to pack more meaning into their advertisements

because they had to counter their lack of a physical presence in Egypt, contend with competition from many others vying for the status of “the” foreign beer, and justify the higher price of their imported beer. However, these companies were up to the task, as their resources allowed them to produce advertisements that were greater in size



and featured more design work than those of local companies.

One excellent example of an information-rich advertisement from a foreign beer company is a 1928 ad for Kupper Beer. Underwritten by Sander & Sanderkuk, the design features the name “Kupper Beer” in English above a picture of its bottle, and a large selection of Arabic text adjacent to the image. This advertisement, like most of the advertisements for foreign brands, has a distinct collage aesthetic. The Arabic text appears to have been superimposed next to the picture of the bottle and the English title. As discussed previously, this bricolage approach was an excellent

way to tailor the message to the Egyptian audience while keeping down advertising expenses.

What is immediately apparent in looking at this advertisement, even to the non-Arabic reader, is the prominent placement of the bottle. It is the icon that defines this advertisement. The primacy of the bottle is no doubt attributable to the fact that at the time, the glass bottle was, in addition to refrigeration, another major technical innovation in the modern beer industry. In mid-nineteenth century Europe and America, the glass bottle became the preferred container for beer as the business transitioned from a cottage industry that relied on serving beer from casks and kegs into a full-fledged industry that aimed to sell products beyond the confines of where they were produced. In a similar process to what occurred in the refrigeration industry, the beer industry provided a strong motive for innovation in the glass-making industry.

Prior to the 1900s, glass bottles were, like all glass products of the time, hand-blown by craftsmen. As the beer industry grew, this artisanal production proved to be a major bottleneck for the industry, as the scarcity in bottles limited the volume and quantity that brewers could sell. The demand for glass bottles pushed entrepreneurs to attempt to automate the glass-blowing process, and it was in 1903 that Michael Owens, working for Edward Libby at the Toledo Glass company, was able to perfect an automated machine that could produce 18,000 pint bottles a day.⁹ This innovation was soon internationalized, so that by the time these advertisements were being created (1923–1940), the beer bottle had become an integral part of the beer industry. The beer bottle was indeed an extension of “total control” brewing described above, an approach that was predicated on the (often misguided) belief that using the most current techniques and technologies would enable brewers to control all variables and

remove all “foreign” bodies from the brewing process, and thus produce a consistent and standardized product. No wonder, then, that the iconography of this advertisement, and of most other advertisements discussed in this chapter, traded in the fetishization of the beer bottle.

In addition to the primacy of the bottle, what is also immediately apparent, almost jarring, about the advertisement is the mass of Arabic text that sits adjacent to the bottle. This advertisement exemplifies the information-rich advertisements that foreign beer companies produced, and the large mass of text indicates the arguments that these foreign companies used to sell their beer to the Egyptian public. As the advertisement notes,

There needs to be a reason for residents of tropic (*al-manātiq al-hārra*) or sub-tropic areas to drink beer. The most important reason to do so is that beer does not upset your natural balance nor cause you to switch from one state to another. Likewise, for one to drink beer it needs to contain the best elements to quench the thirst and refresh its drinker. All of these characteristics come together perfectly in Kupper Beer. As a result it has, for many years, been the choice of beer for the Egyptian people.¹⁰

Immediately noticeable is the classification of Egyptians as residents of tropic or sub-tropic areas. This division of the world into geographical zones based on climate originates with Aristotle, for whom these geographic zones not only determined the flora and fauna that were present in a region, but also the physiognomy and temperament of the people who lived there. This geographic determinism, as with a great deal of Aristotelian thought, was absorbed by classical Arabic thought and then transferred to medieval European thought.¹¹ As an example of this way of thinking, the arguments both for and against the inferiority of blacks in pre-1800 Arabic literature were often grounded in climatic reasoning. By the 1920s, the division of the

world into geographical zones had regained prominence with the work of a Russian climatologist and amateur botanist, Wladimir Kōppen, who published *Die Klimate der Erde* in 1884 and revised it in 1918 and 1936. Kōppen divided the world's climates into five different regions: tropical, dry, temperate, continental, and polar. His classification system was less deterministic than Aristotle's in its evaluations of the people who lived in each region.¹²

In any case, the turn of phrase in the advertisement evokes scientific authority as it situates Egyptians in a separate group from the Europeans and explains why they should drink beer. The Kupper advertisement appears to draw more from Aristotle's ideas of climatological determinism than Kōppen's, as it is followed by a message about upsetting natural balances and temperaments that are inherently different from those of the Europeans. This message clearly appealed to those trying to sell beer to Egyptians, for a similar statement is made in a 1938 advertisement for another German beer, Dressler: "There is nothing better for residents of the tropics like a refreshing (*mun 'ish*) drink."¹³

The idea that beer provides refreshment (the Arabic root *nūn- 'ayn-shīn*) is another shared feature of the two advertisements. In fact, beer as a refreshing beverage, and the corollary that beer quenches thirst (*taṭfī al- 'aṭsh*), is one of the most persistent descriptors of the beverage in these advertisements. Dressler was particularly enamored with this angle. For example, another of their advertisements states, "When the midday sun is at its most intense and the temperature rises, there is no drink that quenches the thirst and refreshes the spirit like the beer with the most beautiful pure color, Dressler beer. It is crafted expertly and without any harmful (*dāra*) chemicals."¹⁴ The portrayal of beer as a refreshing drink is premised on two distinct features of the beverage. The first is the effervescence of the beverage, a

byproduct of the fermentation process. The supposed rejuvenating power of effervescence was widely assumed among Europeans back to the Middle Ages.¹⁵ The drive to produce water that contained effervescence similar to what occurred in nature was the main driving force of beverage technology in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One of the European beverage industry's first major success stories, Schweppes, was built on this research.¹⁶ Brewers went to great pains to maintain beer's effervescence, filling bottles using a counterpressure device that kept the pressure within the bottle high enough to prevent foaming (loss of CO₂) when the beer was poured in.¹⁷ Thus, the glass bottle and its cap were essential in maintaining one of the key components of beer's refreshing nature.

The second distinct feature of beer was its temperature. As discussed above, the linkage between the refrigeration and beer industries was strong, with the beer industry being at once a prime innovator in and consumer of refrigeration technology; beer companies often supplemented their sales of beer with the sale of refrigeration technology. This strong connection meant that if there was any industry that could provide beverages at below room temperature, it was the beer industry. Although the relationship between chilled beverages and refreshment might seem axiomatic, in France and other parts of Europe up to the sixteenth century, such drinks were viewed as deleterious to the health, exemplary of monarchical profligacy, and suitable for hiding poisons in.¹⁸ Still, the Middle East had a strong tradition of consuming chilled beverages and having faith in their salubrious effects. For example, in a Baghdadi cookbook from the second half of the tenth century, Ibn Sayyar al-Warraq writes, "Water chilled with ice, or water which of itself is as cold, will awaken and arouse the drinkers if taken first thing in the morning. It is also good for cooling the liver."¹⁹ The Ottomans and Mamelukes, too, who ruled Egypt before the invasion of the

French, had a predilection for chilled beverages and their restorative properties.²⁰

Surely, the high temperatures in the region contributed to the longstanding cultural preference for chilled beverages.

The ability to control temperature allowed companies to sell beer that was not only cool and refreshing, but also limpid and golden. One of the distinct features of industrially produced lager beer is its clear yellow color, which results from both the bottom brewing (yeast tended to collect at the bottom), and the filtering process used on the beer, which removes all the particulates that could make a beer cloudy.

Dressler also used this quality to great effect:

[b]rilliant yellow, as if it was made of amber (*kahramān*), it beams in its glass and gladdens anyone who gazes on it, drinks it, or tastes it. This power makes Dressler beer perfect for those hot days, as it can refresh and renew your strength.²¹

In this passage, Dressler beer's brilliant yellow color is equated with refreshment, as



the consumer's refreshment begins when he or she looks upon the amber-colored

beverage. Like the others discussed above, this advertisement portrays beer as the ideal drink in Egypt's hot climate.

But the pure yellow color was more than a signal of refreshment; it was also a sign of quality. Another advertisement notes, "Dressler beer is carefully crafted from the finest varieties of barley and is blended oats to improve its taste and to preserve its limpid color permanently."²² The emphasis on quality ingredients and quality production was a way to differentiate this product from beer's cheaper cousin, *būza*. Because the consumption patterns of the lower classes were driven by price concerns, relying on the lower classes was a losing proposition for the beer industry.²³ No matter how efficient production and distribution were, beer could not compete with the price of *būza* produced in cafes and homes. Therefore, the beer companies took the strategy of presenting beer as the drink of the modern Egyptian man (*effendi*).

In the Dressler advertisement, the images that accompany the slogan exemplify the beer companies' target audience of *effendiyya* (sing. *effendi*, English, *effendi*). The *effendiyya*, who have recently received a great deal of scholarly attention, and whom I discussed in previous chapters, were a group of young Egyptians who were distanced from the average Egyptian by their education, their



“culture,” i.e. western manners and dress, and their secular worldview.²⁴ They remained distinct from the Turco-Egyptian elite due to their lesser financial status and humble backgrounds. Although they sat between two worlds, they were not an Egyptian middle class, per se, but rather occupied a liminal place between the lower and upper classes; “the crucial feature of effendi identity was not a desire to create a conceptual middle, but the desire to be upwardly mobile.”²⁵ Due to their western education, they were fully versed in the concept of modernity, which placed them behind Westerners intellectually, culturally, and technologically. It was the *effendiyya* who penned the articles about Egypt’s deficiencies vis-à-vis the West and historicized Egypt’s past to fit into the teleology of progress.²⁶

The image depicts an *effendi* couple (the man dressed in a suit and fez, the women in a hat and a overcoat) enjoying a large bottle of beer that they have just purchased from a uniformed drink seller plying his wares at a mobile drink stand. Beneath that scene are two hands, one holding a glass and the other pouring a bottle of Dressler beer into the glass. Reading together the slogan, “Dressler beer is carefully crafted from the finest varieties of barley and is blended oats to improve its taste and to preserve its limpid color permanently,” and these two images, the story that emerges is one of the imagined Dressler consumer: an *effendi* couple who, after enjoying a day out in the hot sun, perhaps at one of Cairo’s modern parks, are looking for a drink of assured quality and purity that can quench their thirst. The only option for them, at least in the narrative of the advertisement, is Dressler Beer.

The targeting of effendi is fully realized in the advertising campaign of



another foreign beer company, Amstel, whose advertisements feature only Arabic text and images that evoke the luxury of foreign products while maintaining connection with the local culture. One advertisement, for example, shows a pair of dark hands,



between lines of Arabic, pouring an Amstel into a glass—label out, of course.

The use of dark hands implies luxury because, as Eve Troutt-Powell has expertly shown, race and class were strongly linked in Egypt at this time.²⁷ In this instance, the dark hands depict the hands of either a Nubian or Sudanese servant who

would most likely be in the employ of a wealthy Egyptian. This implication is made explicit in two other Amstel advertisements: one portrays a caricatured black servant in traditional dress pouring an oversized bottle of Amstel, which he carries like a heavy piece of furniture, into an oversized glass on which the phrase is inscribed;²⁸ the other depicts a more realistic black servant wearing a table server's (*sufraqī*) outfit, holding a tray with an Amstel on it in one hand.²⁹



These advertisements traded on the social dynamics of Egypt in order to evoke the luxuriousness of their product and appeal to their potential customers' sense of modernity. Drinking beer signified one's identity as a member of a certain class. For example, in the first Amstel advertisement above, the image is framed by the slogan

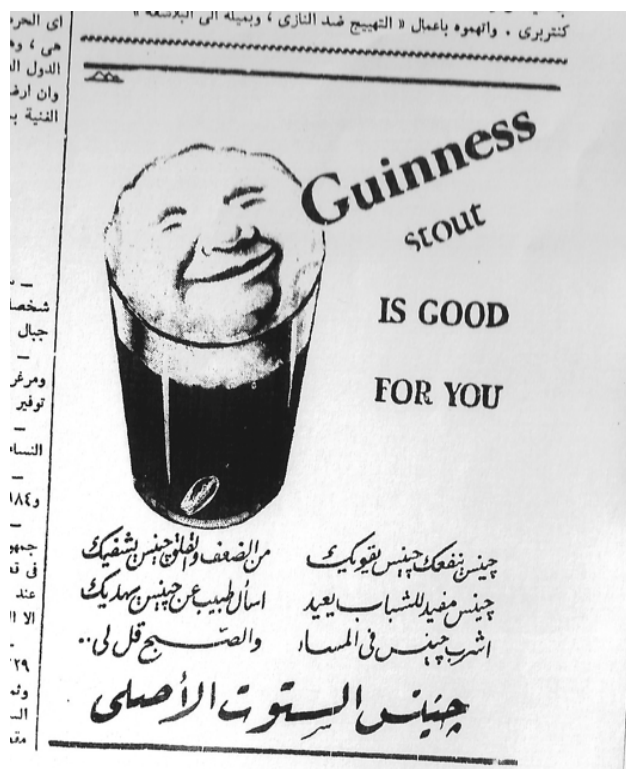
that Amstel is “the beer of those in the know.” The phrase makes beer exclusionary and aspirational. But what was the secret knowledge that encouraged the modern Egyptian to drink it? A line from the first advertisement, the one with the darks hands pouring, gives a hint: “The purity of Amstel beer reflects its choiceness, freshness, and lightness.”³⁰ The slogan invokes the beer’s industrialized and standardized production, which can produce a cool and impurity-free beer, in order to inspire the modern Egyptian to drink it. Brewers took great pains to ensure that their beer was pure, and again, this purity depended upon the technological innovation of the glass beer bottle. Brewers washed the bottles assiduously, sterilizing them to remove any possible contaminants.³¹ Then, after capping the bottles and creating the vital seal, the brewers sent the bottles through a pasteurization process, where the bottles would be heated to 60–65°C to eliminate any microorganisms that may have survived previous stages of the process.

Companies were not content to portray their beer as merely refreshing and unadulterated, however. They also aimed to invest it with curative powers. In the Amstel advertisement that depicts the *sufragi* holding the beer bottle on the tray, the text states, “Amstel Beer: it cures the sick, and removes the cares and worries of a person’s life.”³² A similar allusion to the drink’s curative powers is seen in the advertisement of another foreign beer company, Guinness. An advertisement whose title can be translated “Guinness is Good for You” (Fig. 3) features is an anthropomorphized pint of Guinness smiling, and at the bottom are lines of Arabic arranged in the two-hemstitch line form of a *qasīda* (ode):

Guinness is good for you, Guinness frees you
 From worry and weakness, Guinness cures
 what ails you
 Guinness is good for the celebrating youth
 Ask your doctor about how Guinness can set you right

Drink Guinness in the morning
And the night saying:
Guinness, the original stout.³³

This advertisement is an excellent example of the trend, discussed by Relli Shechter, of foreign companies using translated advertisements to keep down overhead and



maintain their “winning formula.”³⁴ The highly successful “Guinness is Good for You” campaign, started in 1928 in Europe, was based on advice solicited from doctors and emphasized the healthful benefits of Guinness.³⁵ While the translation may have been simply a matter of economic expediency, there was precedent in the Arabo-Islamic tradition for using alcohol as a curative. The prioritization of the medicinal properties of Guinness is, in fact, in line with the juridical opinion of many Hanafi scholars who believed that alcohol could be imbibed if medicinal.³⁶ Indeed, the exhortation to drink beer in the morning echoes a fifteenth-century Cairene

theologian, Shams al-Din al-Nawaji, who compiled an anthology of anecdotes and poetry that praised the *sabūh* (the morning draught of wine).³⁷

The focus on alcohol's curative powers actually originated early in the history of advertisements. A great deal of advertisement prior to the nineteenth century in the West was focused on selling patent medicines and nostrums that were purported to cure all matter of diseases and health problems. It was only in the late nineteenth century that advertising underwent a major shift as allopathic medicine gained unprecedented legitimacy and medical crusaders were able to show that these patent medicines and nostrums were composed of questionable ingredients and had questionable effects.³⁸ With the professionalization of the advertising industry, advertisers tried to distance themselves from these disreputable products, preferring to focus instead on other, less questionable products. Nevertheless, the regenerative rhetoric that was a mainstay of patent medicine advertisement was merely transferred to new, less disreputable products. As Jackson Lears puts it, "Rather than deriving restored vigor from nerve foods, blood purifiers, tonics, and exhilarates, target audiences were urged to turn toward Coca-Cola, Quaker Oats, or Welch's Grape Juice."³⁹

The turn to the medical was aided by the technological innovations in glass bottling. After the bottle received its cap and was pasteurized, it became the impermeable protective barrier upon which the modern beer industry and "total control" brewing relied. If the bottle maintained its seal, brewers across the world could deliver a consistent product that could be irrevocably tied to the company's brand. In the sealed glass bottle, brewers had the physical embodiment of the total control process, and thus had a sense, sometimes incorrect, that they could assure that their product reached the consumer pristine and free of all contaminants. It is an easy

jump from imaging your drink as pure and refreshing, to believing it has curative powers.

Islamic Modernism

Advertisers were not the only ones concerned with beer's medicinal properties, or lack thereof. Among those who opposed beer on religious grounds, one particularly concerned Egyptian, Ahmad Ahmad Ghalwash, argued that "anyone foolish and stupid enough to believe that one can get nourishments from beer would ultimately end up weak and enfeebled."⁴⁰ Ghalwash had a vested interest in arguing against beer, as he was part of a group of Islamic modernists who considered the glorification of this beverage, and of alcohol in general, to be wholly at odds with modernity in Egypt. As this section will discuss, these Islamic modernists tapped into and repurposed the long Islamic temperance tradition to fight against beer and alcohol in general.

In using the term "Islamic modernists," I am referring to those Egyptians who believed that Islam was an inseparable part of Egyptian modernity. As I have discussed previously, modernity at this time period was a performative act that involved the use of new media, new social spaces, and new consumer goods to make "being modern observable and reproducible."⁴¹ Modernity was performed through the consumption of new materials and through the absorption and appropriation of Western techno-scientific ideas and concepts, which reshaped the temporal frame of the country.⁴² Internalizing this new time frame, Egyptian thinkers of this period came to view their country as "delayed" in the linear and inexorable progress of civilizations toward modernity.

Modernity in Egypt in this period was particularly important to a newly forming group of the *effendiyya*. The modernity that the *effendiyya* performed was not

monolithic. For some, modernity was found at the bottom of a bottle of beer as they chatted with their friends and colleagues at the bar or brasserie.⁴³ For others, modernity had a more Islamic bent. The main progenitors of this Islamic modernity were two of the Middle East's most influential thinkers, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897) and Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905). Both men were deeply concerned with the Islamic world's response to the ever-expanding colonial enterprise. Al-Afghani believed that the Muslims' response to colonialism should be primarily political, with an Islamic revival serving as a main force to repel the colonial interlopers.⁴⁴ Abduh, one of al-Afghani's students, took a longer view, believing that the reformation of the Islamic populace through education and legal renewal was the path forward for the Islamic world.⁴⁵

Abduh's renewal project was guided by the principle that Islam was not a static tradition that had to be abandoned on the path to modernity, but that it was, rather, the defining characteristic of a country like Egypt. Abduh declared that the religion had to be renewed (*tajdīd*), through a reformation of both educational practices and legal thinking, in order to make Egypt modern and stave off the morally deficient westernization (*taghrīb*) that threatened Egypt.⁴⁶ As renowned and respected Islamic legal scholar, Abduh's thinking had a massive impact on the country. In the 1890s, he was appointed to the head of a committee charged with reforming al-Azhar. Although he was unable to force all the changes he wanted, the very fact that he received the position attests to his reputation.⁴⁷ Abduh's greatest legacy was to inspire a generation of scholars, including Muhammad Rashid Rida and Mustafa Abdul Raziq, who took up his Islamic modernism while nevertheless interpreting it in very different ways.

For Islamic modernists, one of the clearest examples of the immoral lifestyle that Europeans were importing into Egypt was the increasing consumption of alcohol among Egyptians. These thinkers were inspired by a tradition of Islamic temperance (that is, the abstention from alcohol) to fight this “immorality” that stretched back to Islam’s earliest days. Islamic theologians traced the tradition back to the Quran, which seemed to deem alcohol illicit (*ḥarām*) in verses like Sura 5:90-1 (*Al- Mā’ida*):

Oh you who believe! Wine (*ḥamr*), gambling (*maisir*), idol-worshipping (*anṣāb*), and divination arrows (*azlām*) are an abomination (*rijs*) from the acts of Satan. Keep away from them, so that you may prosper. Satan only wants to create enmity and hatred among you with wine and gambling, and to divert you from the remembrance of God, and from prayer. Will you not abstain?⁴⁸

When read in a certain way, this passage, along with the rest of the Quran, seems only to deem *khamr* (best defined as wine made either from dates or grapes) to be illicit.⁴⁹ The logical jump for all Islamic temperance writing that followed was to show that all intoxicants were equivalent to *khamr*. This differentiation was not merely pedantic. There was, for example, a lively debate among the *fuqahā’* (Islamic legal scholars) over the permissibility of the consumption of *nabīdh*.⁵⁰ *Nabīdh* was a “comprehensive designation for in-toxicating drinks ... such as *mizr* (made from barley), *bit* (from honey or spelt) and *faḍīkh* (from dates).”⁵¹ In fact, several hadith collections mention that *nabīdh* was one of the drinks prepared for Muhammad by his wives.⁵²

A literature nevertheless developed that aimed to use the Quran, Quranic exegeses, hadith, and poetry to expand the definition of *khamr* to cover all intoxicants. *Kitāb al-Ashriba* (*The Book of Drinks*) by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780–855) is one of the earliest and best examples of this temperance literature. Other authors, like Ibn Abi

Dunya (823-894) in his *Dhamm al-Muskir* (Censure of Intoxicants), and later Aqfashi ibn al-‘Imad (1349-1405) in his *Ikrām Man Ya ‘īsh bi-Tahrīm al-Khamr wa-l-Hashīsh* (*The Honor of Those Who Live while Deeming Wine and Hashish Sinful*), built upon the legacy of Ibn Hanbal.

Islamic modernists found these works to be extremely useful in their goal of repurposing classical Islamic legal thought for a modern Egypt. Exemplary of this fact is a 1907 article that Muhammad Rashid Rida published in his Arabic monthly, *al-Manar*, entitled “*Man Harrama al-Khamr* (Those who deem *khamr* illicit).” In this article, Rida reproduces poetry from the three pre-Islamic poets in the *qit‘a* form. This means that rather than more typical poly-thematic *qasīdas*, the poetry consists of either short monothematic poems or excerpts from longer *qasīdahs*. Regardless of the form, all the poems abide by the Classical poetic system, exhibiting specific meters and end-line rhyming.⁵³ These four poetic selections (one author is cited twice) each decry the use of *khamr*. The poet Afif b. Ma’dikirab, for example, deems wine illicit by saying,

And she said to me: come to deception
I have refrained from what you know of us
I have take leaven of diving arrows having seen my self
Wounded and enslaved in endless time (eternity)
I have forbidden myself wines so that
I am buried in a deep trench, buried.⁵⁴

While, as in all good poetry, the meaning of these lines is ambiguous, for Rida the most important fact is that this poet and the other poets mentioned deemed *khamr* illicit. This action was important because, according to Rida, pre-Islamic Arabs were typically “slaves to pleasure and prisoners to delight” and notorious for their addiction to wine.⁵⁵ This habit grew out of the fact that there was no religious condemnation of

alcohol. Thus, those pre-Islamic Arabs who deemed it illicit, like the poets he cites, did so because they “could see the evil of the drink.”⁵⁶ In essence, Rida is arguing throughout these four poetic sections that alcohol is unequivocally evil and that Islam is universally valid. As he mentions, even at time when alcohol was not only permitted, but accepted, intelligent people already understood what Islam would later explicate: that alcohol is an evil substance.

The most interesting feature of Rida’s argument, however, is that it draws from the pre-modern Islamic temperance tradition discussed above. If we compare this article to one of the earliest and most famous treatises, Ibn Abi Dunya’s *Dhamm al-Muskir*, we see that the three poets whom Rida cites are likewise held up by Ibn Abi Dunya in his treatise as pre-Islamic poets who deemed khamr illicit. Ibn Abi Dunya also includes their respective poems, albeit with some slight variations and omissions. Even the presentation of the poetry is similar. Like Ibn Abi Dunya, Rida frames each poem with an *isnad* (the list of those who transmitted the poetry), and with the simple statement: “so and so from the *Jāhiliyyah* forbid/declared unlawful (*ḥarrama*) wine (*khamr*).” This rather sparse passage is atypical; poems in Arabic poetic compilations are usually preceded by a story or explanation of why the poem was composed. The lack of framing signals that this group of poems represented a stock response in the discussion of the pre-Islamic Arabs’ treatment of wine. My view is given credence by the fact that we find this grouping of Jāhilī poetic fragments in other poetic compilations as well. For example, in the most prolific *tasnīf* of wine poetry, entitled *Quṭb al-Surūr fī Awṣāf al-Anbidha wa al-Khamūr* (The Axis [Tent Post] of Joy in the description of Intoxicants), written by a secretary of a 10th-12th century North African dynasty (the Zirids), Abī Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Raḳīq al-Nadīm’s (d.1027-8), we find these poems grouped together in a similar order in a chapter

entitled, “Mention of those who deemed *khamr* illicit in Pre-Islamic Arabia,”⁵⁷ which is strikingly similar to the title of Rida’s article.

Rida’s borrowing of the poetic examples exemplifies how Islamic modernist authors’ arguments against the consumption of alcohol were grounded heavily in the sources that undergirded Islamic legal writing: the Quran, hadith, poetry, and the rulings of previous Islamic jurists. These Islamic modernists were deeply troubled by beer because it was an alcoholic beverage that could slip through this Islamic reasoning. For example, Shaykh Muhammad Farag al-Sanhuri, an Egyptian religious scholar whose opinions of *būza* I have already discussed, recognized the unique threat posed by beer. As he states in 1917 tract, *Al-Muskirāt (Intoxicants)*⁵⁸ in which he documented, described, and ruled on the legality of the alcohol present in Egypt at the time,

Beer (*al-Ji‘a*) contains alcohol, but less than alcohol products, vinegar, perfume extracts, flour, and the bodies of animals and plants. There are varieties of beer that have less than 3 percent alcohol by weight. So one does not need to fear intoxication unless one drinks a great deal.

The concession that beer has a low alcohol content and must be consumed in large quantities in order to cause intoxication is very significant in the context of Islamic discussions of temperance. As I have shown, the Qur’an was not ironclad in its condemnation of all intoxicants. One of the four schools of Islamic legal thought, the Hanafis, took this ambiguity to its logical conclusion, arguing that certain alcoholic beverages were permissible for consumption as long as they did not intoxicate.⁵⁹

This line of thought was obviously troubling for Islamic modernists, and they worked hard to combat it. In his journal *al-Manar*, Muhammad Rashid Rida issued two fatwas declaring beer-drinking illicit (*ḥarām*). The first, published in 1905 and entitled “Drinking *al-Ji‘a* (beer in Arabic) called Beer,” is quite short and simple in its

argumentation. Rida cites a *ḥadīth* that states that even a little bit of something that can intoxicate a great deal is illicit (*ḥarām*), thus establishing the illicitness of beer, which, according to Rida, can intoxicate a great deal.⁶⁰ The second fatwa, entitled “*al-Ji‘a* (beer) is *Khamr* and drinking it is Illicit,” published in 1929, is much longer. In it, Rida explicates how the logic of the *ḥadīth* discussed above applies directly to beer. For Rida, because this *ḥadīth* rests upon the fact that the beverage must be highly intoxicating, one can only call a beverage *khamr*, illicit, when it fulfills this criterion. Because beer can intoxicate a lot, it is thus illicit and can be *khamr* as laid out in the *tafsir* of the Quranic verse, Al-Maida (The Table).⁶¹

Having made this point, Rida goes on to discuss a worrying trend he has seen in Egypt: people making non-alcoholic beer for the purpose of improving urination. Rida believed that the drink in and of itself was acceptable as long as it was like the *nabīdh* that the Prophet and the Companions of the Prophet used to drink, a liquid made from dates and grapes steeped in water but not fermented. However, this non-alcoholic beer could be susceptible to the same issues as *nabīdh*. As Rida states, after the time of the Prophet, there arose licentious kings, princes, and elites who would drink *nabīdh* after it had fermented. Not only did they drink it, but they also encouraged a group of deviant legal scholars from Kufa to affirm that the drinking of the alcoholic beverage was not illicit in itself; the one illicit sip was that which brought the drinker to intoxication. Thus, according to Rida, these scholars deluded themselves that one could drink until intoxication because one could never know which sip would bring on intoxication.⁶²

This anecdote, like the *ḥadīth*-based reasoning that preceded it, is another example of the repurposing of the Islamic tradition for modernist goals. Rida recounts the tale of the profligate elites using the permissibility of *nabīdh* to justify their

drinking, and he uses this tale to decry those of the present who would do the same thing with beer. It is no coincidence that the elites at the time of the Prophet received special rebuke; this is a reflection of Rida's contemporary targets. As has been discussed above, the Egyptian elites were among the primary consumers of beer. My view that this anecdote was meant to strike out at contemporary targets is given further credence by the fact that this is the second fatwa that Rida felt compelled to publish in his fatwa against beer consumption. Clearly his call in 1905 to stop consuming beer met enough resistance that he had to rehash and expand on his arguments against beer over twenty years later.

Further evidence of beer's new cultural role in Egypt is that Muhammad Farag al-Sanhuri also attempted to argue against beer.⁶³ His argumentation in *al-Muskirat*, like early temperance treatises, used precedent to counteract the claims in support of beer:

The Shi'a, the Malikis, the Shafi'is, the Hanbalis, and Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, a disciple of Abu Hanifa deem beer, *būza*, and all other fermented beverages illicit. The Shi'a, the Malikis, and the Hanbalis rule that the *ḥadd* punishments must be enforced for consumption of these beverages, but not the Shafi'is and the Hanafis.⁶⁴

Al-Sanhuri based his condemnation of beer and other cereal beverages like *būza* on the precedents set by three (Maliki, Hanbali, and Shafi'i) out of four Sunni Schools of Jurisprudence, the Shi'a School of jurisprudence, and a student of the Hanafi school.⁶⁵ Al-Sanhuri's citation of the opinions of a student of Abu Hanifa was a way to work around the Hanafi School's treatment of alcohol and fermented cereal beverages, which were problematic for Islamic modernists. He also has to concede in the last line of this passage that two out of the four schools (Shafi'i and Hanafi) do not insist on

the enforcement of the *ḥudūd* penalties for consumers of the beverage. The *hudud* penalties were the penalties for crimes that were regulated by the Qur’ān (i.e. adultery/fornication, wrongful accusation of adultery/fornication, drinking alcohol, theft, and highway robbery).⁶⁶

Temperance Enters Egypt

Islamic modernists not only repurposed the Islamic “tradition” to fight against the growing consumption of beer; they also found new inspiration from the international Anglo-American temperance movement that was occurring during this time period, 1923–1935. In this section, I show how Islamic modernist thinkers co-opted Christian temperance thinkers’ techno-scientific arguments against alcohol consumption. In addition, I demonstrate how they used the success of the world temperance movement in places like the United States as evidence of the transcendental perfection of Islam.⁶⁷ By linking temperance to the Islamic tradition, Islamic modernists took a movement that, as discussed above, was very much couched in Christian triumphalism and subverted it so that the West and Christendom were the ones that needed to catch up.

Perhaps the most significant example of this Islamic modernist trend in temperance thought was an organization dedicated to fighting the spread of intoxicants in Egypt, the Egyptian Temperance Association (*Jam‘īyat Man‘ al-Muskirāt li-l-Quṭr al-Miṣrī*, (ETA). Its headquarters were located in Alexandria, and it had a fourteen-member executive board on which each member served a two-year term. It also had branches outside of Alexandria in Cairo, Damanhur, Qena, Ismailia, and al-Sinta (outside Tanta). Each branch was referred to as a “Temperance club of ____” and had its own executive board.⁶⁸ While membership numbers are not

available, the clubs in Damanhur and Qena were the most active outside the main headquarters.⁶⁹ The ETA's main sources of revenue were membership fees and donations, with fees making up the majority of the funds. Expenses primarily fell into five groups: rents for the meeting places; employee compensation; office supplies, i.e. printings, mailings, writing utensils, and office furniture; telegraphs; and transportation for the Association's workers.⁷⁰

The ETA's most famous member was Prince 'Umar Tusun (1872-1944), Egypt's "[p]rince, scholar, and philanthropic landowner."⁷¹ He was the grandson of Muhammad Sa'id and a member of the Egyptian royal family. Tusun, a fascinating character, showed a strong commitment to Egypt through his numerous scholarly writings on the country, his support for the country's nationalist movement, and his heavy participation in benevolent and social organizations.⁷² Tusun was a bit of a reformist gadfly, serving as president, honorary president, or member of over eighty benevolent and social organizations.⁷³ Tusun's relationship with the ETA began with its founding in 1905 and continued through the 1930s. He even served a term as honorary president in 1922. Prince 'Umar was committed to the cause of temperance. In 1932, he used his position as President of the Royal Agricultural Society to prevent wine growers from showing their product at the Society's yearly exhibition.⁷⁴ He is alleged to have helped close nearly 1700 wine shops.⁷⁵ Tusun's main contribution to the ETA, though, was financial; his twenty-five pound-per-year pledges made him the Association's chief patron. When it came to the actual operation of the organization, however, it was the organization's founder, Ahmad Effendi Ghalwash, who was in charge. Ghalwash was the preeminent figure in the ETA and, after founding it in 1905, he served as the organization's president and chief ideologue until his death in the 1960s.

We can get a sense of the ETA's ideology from a 1924 report that the organization sent to the king of Egypt, Ahmad Fu'ad. The report's discussion of temperance trades heavily in the idiom of Islamic thought: the ETA refers to the fight against the consumption of intoxicants as a jihad, Egypt as an *umma* (community), and, most significantly, the end of the liquor trade in Egypt as the purification (*tathīr*) of the country from the filth (*rijs*) of intoxicants.⁷⁶ This last sentiment, in particular, evokes the Quranic treatment of alcohol with its use of the word *rijs*, which features prominently in the Qur'an verse 5:90-1 (as mentioned earlier).

While the ETA's arguments for temperance may have used Islamic language, it would be incorrect to label them as merely outgrowths of the Islamic temperance tradition. A qualitative difference is evident between the rhetoric of the ETA and that of contemporary works like Shaykh Muhammad Farag al-Sanhuri's treatise, *al-Muskirāt*. The sources that the ETA cited in its report to the king came not from the Islamic tradition, but rather from contemporary Western sources on temperance. For example, the ETA believed that William Tyler's 1895 *The Physiological Side of Temperance: Why and How it Should be taught* and John Arnold Hunter's 1918 *Alcohol and Life: A manual of Scientific Temperance Teaching for Schools* should be included in the Egyptian national curriculum. These textbooks, meant for children, supported calls for temperance by using "science" to demonstrate the deleterious effects of alcohol on the mind and body of the individual. For example:

All cells are really alike and all poisons such as alcohol act on all cells in the same way. If we put this tiny animal [the cell] into four tablespoonfuls of water (that is, nearly 1000 drops) and add one single drop of alcohol we find that it causes it to curl up slowly, that it is poisoned for the time being and stops moving.⁷⁷

The ETA clearly found purchase in the techno-scientific justification for temperance, for, as they stated, temperance would “aid the government in cultivating widespread peace in the country as well as putting at the fore the issues of health and proper etiquette.”⁷⁸

The ETA drew inspiration not only from the latest techno-scientific arguments for temperance, but also from prohibition in the United States. For the ETA, the Eighteenth Amendment and the subsequent Volstead Act were prime examples to other countries of the benefits of temperance. The ETA were so sure of the positive effects of prohibition on the United States that they spent several pages in their 1924 report debunking the anti-temperance rhetoric that was starting to percolate after the enforcement of prohibition. In particular, the report contains the response of Ahmad Ghalwash to an article that claims prohibition led previously sober-minded Americans into drunkenness by limiting their freedoms and thereby stimulating resistance.⁷⁹

Ghalwash explained why this thinking was flawed and why prohibition was an extremely positive development “in the most advanced country in the world.”⁸⁰ Ghalwash argued that drinking alcohol had no relationship with personal freedom. He reasoned that the consumer of alcohol was not entitled to rights, like personal freedom, because alcohol clouds the mind, causes people to act recklessly, and leads them to take the importance of order in life lightly. Thus a drinker cannot perform the duties that are incumbent on a citizen to receive his rights. More importantly, because one of the prime duties of the nation was to protect its citizen from harm, it was within the country’s rights to circumscribe alcohol consumption, on the grounds that it was a harmful activity.⁸¹

As is obvious from his argument, Ghalwash was heavily versed in Western temperance writing, with a special predilection for the pseudo-scientific. This familiarity should come as no surprise considering the relationship he had with temperance advocates like Pussyfoot Johnson and Morton Howell; both reviewed one of his books. Moreover, Ghalwash had lived in Europe for many years and acquired a Ph.D. from the University of Brussels and a Litt.D. from the University of Helsinki.⁸² His commitment to bridging the intellectual gap between the West and Egypt was so strong that he penned a series in the *Majallat al-Azhār* (al-Azhar's Official Magazine) entitled "The Religion of Islam" that attempted "to give to English readers a concise and fair history of the Prophet Mohammad and to present an accurate account of the religion of Islam wrongly called (Mohammedanism [sic])."⁸³ However, the most proximate and prominent sources of Western temperance thought in Egypt at the time was the international wing of an American temperance organization, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).

Christian Temperance

The Anglo-American temperance movement entered Egypt under the direction of Mary Clement Leavitt, "a former Boston schoolteacher and the mother of three," who embarked on a mission of reconnaissance for the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WWCTU), the international wing of the WCTU, in 1884.⁸⁴ Her entry into Egypt, and Christian temperance's entry in general, was not a reflection of a population clamoring for aid from the West in battling the evils of intemperance. Rather, as I will show in this section, Christian temperance came to Egypt because of temperance activists' desire to further validate their movement by internationalizing it. This desire to export the good message of temperance fit neatly with the imperialist

ventures of the West in Egypt, which eased the access of Christian missionaries to the country, protected them from violent responses, and provided them with an audience for their message.

The WCTU's push to internationalize the temperance movement was both an outgrowth of the Protestant millennial vision, in which the world must be made a welcoming place for "the word of the Lord" before the end of days, and the recognition by the WCTU's leader, Frances Willard, who took over in 1879, of the opportunities that internationalism, and specifically an Anglo-American alliance, offered the WCTU.⁸⁵ By tying their cause to the British through appeals to racial and cultural solidarity between Great Britain and America, the WCTU had the opportunity to spread their message in a world that the British Empire was making more connected.⁸⁶ This strategy proved prescient as the increased interference of colonial powers in Egypt and other Ottoman territories, especially those of the British Empire, provided an "armor of imperial power" for Christian evangelicalism in Islamic lands, where it would otherwise have been met with tremendous hostility.⁸⁷

The international work of the WCTU, where the temperance activists attempted to spread "the white ribbon" around the world, generally took two forms: the intrepid temperance fighter sent out to travel the world and spread the message of temperance, and the local union composed of internationally based missionaries who supported the WCTU's mission. Leavitt's work is emblematic of the first form. In the course of her globe-spanning eight-year trip, she spent three months in Egypt, stopping in both Cairo and Alexandria and speaking fifteen times with "all but four meetings being for natives."⁸⁸ Besides being an opportunity to collect useful data on the worldwide temperance movement, these temperance tours were also, ideally, supposed to effect change by preaching about the evils of intoxicants at conferences

and lectures.⁸⁹ However, these speaking tours had limited potential for results, as the majority of the audience members were those already in support of temperance. The WCTU itself was aware of the limited capabilities of these tours, recognizing that they were often “wholly inadequate to accomplish the work which [wa]s so sorely need[ed].”⁹⁰

The formation of a temperance union of locally based missionaries was the primary way the WCTU sought to counter the superficiality of the work of what I call the “temperance tourist.” However, these unions were still linked to the temperance tourist, as it was the tourist who often established the unions. In this regard, Leavitt was also quite active, working with the American Presbyterian Mission to found the first WCTUs in Cairo and Alexandria, under the auspices of the World’s Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WWCTU). It was she who appointed their presidents. The work of Leavitt and the WWCTU was bolstered in 1928 when Agnes Slack, then Secretary of the WWCTU, toured Ottoman Syria and Egypt, founding a WCTU in every city in which she landed but did not find a union: Beirut, Alexandria, Fayoum, Beni Suef (Egypt), Minia, and Assiout. Emblematic of the disconnect between the desires of WCTU members and the populations themselves, this spree continued despite the fact that the Cairo WCTU was struggling with a membership of no more than twenty-five people.⁹¹

In Egypt, the WCTU was intimately tied to the American Mission in Egypt, supported by the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA); most of its members were either missionaries for the UPCNA or Egyptian converts who were trained in one of the Presbyterian schools. This relationship with the Presbyterian denomination did not prevent the WCTU from working closely with members of other congregations in other Ottoman lands. For example, the WCTU in Egypt had a

close relationship with Mildred White, a Quaker and head of the Ramallah WCTU.⁹² The ecumenism of the WWCTU appears to have been an organization-wide principle of the group, especially after 1890, when there was a strong push to use foreign missionaries as temperance organizers.⁹³ Ecumenism was certainly one answer to the problem of low membership numbers.

The issue of low membership sorely affected the WCTU in Egypt, much to the chagrin of its members and the home base in America. For example, in 1930, the membership comprised forty in Cairo; one hundred and fifty in Assiut; thirty-five in Luxor; and twenty in Alexandria. These numbers represented total numbers, not active members, and even included young girls who became members while they were students at missionary schools.⁹⁴ These numbers must be further qualified by the fact that the WCTU records state that only about five to ten women participated in the planning of its activities in Egypt and, in general, operations relied on one missionary for the UPCNA, Anna Young Thompson (1851–1932).

Until recently, the work of Thompson's male counterparts has overshadowed her work in Egypt, largely because, despite keeping immaculate records, Thompson never produced a scholarly work or missionary history.⁹⁵ In recent years, however, the monographs *American Evangelicals in Egypt* and *She Sat Where They Sat: A Memoir of Anna Young Thompson of Egypt*, as well as the dissertation "Anna Young Thompson: American Missionary, Cultural Ambassador and Reluctant Feminist in Egypt 1872–1932," have all done much to establish Thompson's place among the most influential missionaries in Egypt.⁹⁶

Her temperance career began twenty years after she arrived in Egypt as an unmarried missionary for the UPCNA in 1871. It was not long after she started

attending meetings of the WCTU in the 1890s that she was chosen as the recording secretary. In 1895, the WCTU in Egypt sent her as their delegate to the WWCTU Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland. Around the turn of the century, she became president of the National and Cairo WCTU and would serve in these positions until 1931.⁹⁷ Thompson was both a tireless worker and excellent Arabic scholar, picking up Arabic so quickly that she became an Arabic proficiency evaluator for the mission.⁹⁸ The positive effect of her hard work and Arabic skills cannot be overstated, for they provided a recognizable face, who could easily communicate with foreigners and Egyptian alike, for the temperance movement.

During her presidency, Thompson oversaw the meetings of the Cairo WCTU and National WCTU at irregular intervals. As evidenced by the title, the National WCTU was the union with providence over the entire country. It was, however, also located in Cairo, headed by Anna Young Thompson, and its membership had almost a complete overlap with the Cairo WCTU. For example, Mrs. Zwemer, the wife of the controversial and prominent missionary figure Samuel Zwemer, was a member of both organizations.⁹⁹ Thus, for clarity's sake, in the rest of this chapter I will use the term "WCTU of Egypt" to refer to not only to the WCTU in Egypt generally, but also to refer to the specific branch in Cairo.

Despite the efforts of Anna Young Thompson, membership in the WCTU of Egypt was so low that the meeting schedule was entirely reliant on the whims of its members. Meetings were cancelled if one or two members were sick or travelling.¹⁰⁰ Although the WCTU of Egypt was a foreign and poorly supported imposition rather than the organic outgrowth of a population demanding temperance, it had a significant impact on Islamic modernist thinkers like Ghalwash. As this section will show, despite their differing ideologies and membership, the message and activities of the

WCTU of Egypt had profound impact on the ideology and actions of Ahmad Ghalwash and WCTU.

For the WCTU of Egypt, temperance was an essential feature of modernity. The equating of temperance and modernity was supported by pseudoscientific research that showed intoxicants to be a physiological danger to the human body. For the WCTU, this research came together in a curriculum that they referred to as Scientific Temperance Instruction (STI). STI was a curriculum devised by Mary H. Hunt, a schoolteacher from Boston who embraced total abstinence and “temperance physiology,” and who taught about the mental and physical health risks of drugs and alcohol.¹⁰¹ The list of the books on the curriculum show the underpinnings of this mode of thinking: “Evils of Intemperance,” “Alcohol and the Human Body,” “Alcohol in Experience and Experiment,” and “Science and Human Life and the Alcohol Problem.”¹⁰²

The science behind STI may have not been rigorous, but it did not have to be. The message of STI was not aimed at the scientific community, but rather was intended to be part of school curricula. For example, the WCTU of Egypt badgered the Minister of Education in Egypt for many years to incorporate STI into Egypt’s schools.¹⁰³ Likewise, the science itself was not as important as the ancillary benefits of showing any scientific basis for temperance. By establishing the supposed scientific basis for their temperance stance, these Anglo-American temperance crusaders were hitching their ideology to the techno-scientific ideals of progress, cleanliness, and sterility that were important parts of the European discourse of modernity at the time.

As I have shown above, although Ghalwash did not use the exact term “STI,” he did believe strongly in the concepts that it entailed. He also believed in its application by the ETA. Although they did not attach the same name to the group of books they aimed to insert into the Egyptian curriculum, they did support the incorporation of pseudo-scientific temperance into the national curriculum. However, where the WCTU of Egypt was an entirely separate curriculum, the ETA envisioned this temperance instruction as an important addition to the religious teachings that were already part of the Egyptian curriculum.

The transfer of ideas between the two organizations was aided by the Arabic Branch of the WCTU, which was in effect the “Egyptian” WCTU as it was composed entirely of Egyptian Christian women. Two of the group’s most prominent members were Regina Khayyat, who served as the president of the Arabic Branch for several years, and Esther Fahmy Wissa. Both women were from prominent, upper-class Egyptian Christian families, were educated in Presbyterian schools in Upper Egypt, and worked with the YWCA.¹⁰⁴ Wissa was particularly active in philanthropic work in Alexandria, founding in 1924 an organization called the Work for Egypt Society (*Jam ‘īyat al- ‘Amal li-Miṣr*) that did work for the poor in various capacities.¹⁰⁵ While the other members of the Arabic Branch were not as famous as these two philanthropists, they all seemed to share three characteristics with Wissa and Khayyat: all were upper class, Egyptian, and female. The prominence of elite Egyptian Christians in this movement was typical of the Christian reform movement that took place in Egypt during this period (1880s–1930s).¹⁰⁶

The Arabic branch met separately from the WCTU of Egypt, and the meetings were better attended than the meetings of the WCTU of Egypt, with attendance ranging from the low teens to the forties.¹⁰⁷ This WCTU was semi-autonomous,

carrying its own Arabic name, *Jamī‘yat al-Sayyidāt al-Masīḥīya li-Man‘ al-Muskirāt wa-l-Mukhaḍḍarāt bi-l-Qutr al-Miṣrī* (The Union of Christian Women Fighting against Drugs and Intoxicants in the Land of Egypt). The organization also had its own board, on which a member of the “mother” WCTU sat. Most important for this discussion, the Arabic branch of the WCTU put out its own Arabic publications, and sponsored lectures and speeches delivered in Arabic.¹⁰⁸

Despite the differences in rhetoric between these two groups, the WCTU of Egypt and the ETA, the activities of both were quite similar. The groups were so close, in fact, that on two occasions the WCTU of Egypt reached out to the ETA. The first was a token gesture, as the WCTU of Egypt sent letters to Ahmad Ghalwash and ‘Umar Tusun thanking them for their work on temperance.¹⁰⁹ The second was more substantial, as Agnes Slack, a temperance tourist and Secretary of the WWCTU, met with Ghalwash and Prince Tusun and had tea with ‘Umar Tusun’s wife during her weeklong stay in Egypt in 1929.¹¹⁰ The ways in which the WCTU reached out to the ETA, through letter writing and face-to-face meetings, were ways that both of these organizations tried to effect change in Egypt.

Both groups also recognized the new power of advertisements. The ETA asked newspaper publishers, especially those whose worked for Islamic newspapers, not to publish advertisements for alcohol.¹¹¹ This was a legitimate worry, as alcohol companies were one of the primary underwriters of advertisements in newspapers and on billboards.¹¹² This call grew out of an organizational recognition of the power of advertisements, which during the 1920s and 1930s had become more professional and had taken on a greater cultural importance.¹¹³ The ETA even sent a letter to the person in charge of the Egyptian railways to put up anti-alcohol advertisements in train cars and stations.¹¹⁴ The WCTU of Egypt, also cognizant of the newfound power of

advertisements, requested similar restrictions on the publication of alcohol advertisements in newspapers and on government property and asked for the public posting of materials that decried the evils of drink.¹¹⁵

Although there was great unanimity between the ETA and the WCTU, it would be a false dichotomy to place Ghalwash, the ETA's main ideologue, and thinkers like al-Sanhuri at different ends of the temperance spectrum, with Ghalwash as the representative of "Western/secular" temperance and al-Sanhuri as the representative of "Islamic/religious" temperance. For example, in *al-Muskirāt*, al-Sanhuri was not only aware of contemporary temperance activities abroad, but provided details about them. He found great joy and amazement in these activities because Westerners had to overcome their long cultural history with alcohol to arrive at the "work that comes from the True Religion (Islam) and A Purified Shari'a (Islamic Law)."¹¹⁶ In addition to this delight in the West finding the correct path, al-Sanhuri was also willing to supplement standard Islamic sources with the science of the day to argue that all intoxicants were illicit. His treatise, *al-Muskirāt*, had sections dedicated to the physical, mental, and social dangers of alcohol. The physical danger section was further divided into six subsections, with each focusing on alcohol's deleterious effects on certain parts and functions of the body (digestion, liver, eyes, nervous system, respiratory and urinary tracts, and general physical strength). Al-Sanhuri approached these sections with the same rigor with which he approached the sections that dealt with the Quran, hadith, etc., and, when appropriate, he cited sources. For example, in his section on digestion, he stated, "The work of Dr. Claude Bernard has established that the functions of the stomach come to a halt when it contains alcohol."¹¹⁷

Moreover, it would be incorrect to describe Ahmad Ghalwash as a temperance thinker who was wholly disconnected from the Arabic tradition. As shown above, he was a frequent publisher in the official magazine of al-Azhar, a fact that signals at least a familiarity with Islamic thought of the day. Moreover, in an article published in English in the al-Azhar journal *Muslim Ethics and Moralities*, he translated Sura 5:90-1 (*Al- Mā'ida*), mentioned above, as, “Wines (including all intoxicating liquors) and games of chance and idols and divining arrows are but an abomination of Satan’s mischief, avoid them, therefore, that you may prosper.”¹¹⁸ It is clear from this translation, especially the first line, that Ghalwash was very familiar with the logical leap that undergirded all Islamic temperance writing, namely that *khamr* equals all intoxicants. What both these temperance writers represented was not Western or Islamic temperance, but rather “modern” Egyptian Temperance.

We see the articulation of modern Egyptian temperance in the arguments of Ghalwash and Rashid Rida against beer. In Ghalwash’s treatise on alcohol, *Athar al-Khumur fi al-Hayya al-Ijtima’iyya* (The effect of alcohol on a Society), he places beer in a category of beverages that derive from the rotting of intoxicating grains like barley, wheat, and rice, and that can carry the name *būza* or, as the pre-Islamic Arabs referred to it, *mizr*.¹¹⁹ Ghalwash was mainly concerned with debunking the claims that beer could nourish the body and help people to do good work.

Ghalwash argued that the amount of nutrients (sugars and proteins) contained within beer was so small that to get any nutritional value from the beverage, one would have to drink a tremendous amount. This over-consumption would counteract any benefits that beer may have because of the large amount of alcohol, which poisoned the flesh that would come along with it.¹²⁰ This is not to mention the fact that it cost twenty dirhams to pay for the amount of beer that one would have to

consume in order to equal the amount of nourishment contained in one loaf of bread, which only cost one dirham. So, for Ghalwash, a person would be extremely stupid and wasteful to try to subsist on beer.¹²¹ To further show the ridiculousness of this idea, Ghalwash then discusses alcohol's deleterious effects on the digestive tract. He states that "science has declared alcoholic beverages have a negative effect on digestion and absorption" of nutrients like calcium, phosphorous, and nitrogen that are necessary for bone, brain, and muscle growth, because alcohol irritates and disturbs the stomach, causing ulcers and inflammation.¹²² Ghalwash closes with the statement that everything he has said is "the absolute truth and what is beyond this truth is error (*dalāl*)."¹²³

Muhammad Rashid Rida makes a similar argument against the healthful properties of beer by reproducing and commenting on a letter from a fan in his journal *al-Manar*. In the letter, Dr. Nasr Effendi Farid, an ophthalmologist in Mansura, targets Rida's concession in a previous issue that drinking alcohol might aid in regular urination.¹²⁴ For Farid, this is an unacceptable incitation, and he spends the rest of his letter showing the dangers of alcoholic beverages and debunking this myth. For Farid, alcoholic beverages only have medicinal properties in rare cases, and these are outweighed by the innumerable cases where it is insalubrious (*wabīl*). As Farid notes, doctors in Europe had similarly shown how the ills of alcohol (it could cause insanity, general paralysis, and disease of the liver, kidneys, stomach, and heart) outweighed the good.¹²⁵ And it is with this knowledge that European countries of the time pursued temperance. For Farid, the claim that beer could activate (*tahyīj*) and flush out (*al-ih̥tiqān*) the kidneys was truly dangerous because it led doctors to use beer more and more for this purpose. Farid reported that instead of flushing the kidneys, alcohol was actually causing their failure and leading to death.¹²⁶ For Farid, beer was both a moral

issue and a public health issue. Rida closes the piece by thanking the good doctor and warning his readers not to be led astray by doctors commanding them to drink *nabīdh* (read beer) to cure what ails them. This practice would be to blindly ape (*taqlīd*) the ornament (*zukhruf*) of secularism (*madiniyya*). Readers had to be particularly careful because a large number of doctors practiced this deception in order to sell alcoholic beverages (*khumūr*).

What is noticeable about Farid's article is that despite the certainty with which Rida and the Doctor talk, the actual science behind the argument is rather flimsy. Not only did Farid not specialize in nephrology (the study of the kidneys), but also he provides no concrete proof of the dangers of alcohol. Rather, Farid simply states that some people, unnamed, who have used beer to flush out their kidneys, have caused serious damage. Regardless, as I have discussed above, the actual science is not as important in these techno-scientific polemics against alcohol as the attachment of titles (Doctor) and terminology. Rida obviously found no issue in this, as his closing statement is quite strong. His condemnation of doctors prescribing alcoholic beverages as medicine is particularly interesting. He saw this as a result of two problems with Egyptian doctors, their blind and unquestioning adoption of secularism and their willingness to make money from the moral degradation of other Egyptians. As discussed above, it was these two problems, the aping of European (read: un-Egyptian) habits and the moral degradation of the Egyptian, against which the Islamic modernists strongly fought. The techno-scientific temperance of Anglo-American Temperance thus provided the idiom for Islamic modernists to fight against the healthful properties of alcohol.

Legislative Failures

Despite the powerful rhetoric that bridged two traditions, Egyptian Temperance did not really take off in the period from 1925 to 1935. This lack of success can be attributed to the fact that neither the Egyptian nor the Anglo-American temperance movements enjoyed massive popular support. The limits of the WCTU of Egypt's message have been made patently clear, but the ETA suffered from a lack of a popular base as well. In their 1924 report, the ETA conceded that their efforts to establish branches in Mansura and Nag' Hammadi had failed. In Mansura, the venture never got off the ground, and in Nag' Hammadi, the president resigned after he could not sign up enough members. The ETA attributed these failures to "politics," but the most likely cause was a lack of popular support among the Egyptian population.¹²⁷ The popularity of the temperance movement was surely hampered by the long indigenous tradition of alcohol consumption that had its origins in Pharaonic times and stretched into the 1920s and 1930s.¹²⁸ Due to the lack of popular support for temperance, the WCTU of Egypt and the ETA had to turn to the government to pass any temperance legislation. Unfortunately, the government proved unwilling or unable to take on the cause of temperance.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the WCTU of Egypt and the ETA was to get some elements of scientific temperance instruction (STI) included in the state school curriculum. As Alice Goubran reported in 1930, the Minister of Education stated that he would begin including temperance education in the national curriculum;¹²⁹ this was an unqualified success for the temperance movement in Egypt. The Egyptian government also implemented the ETA's request to eliminate new licenses for selling alcohol, although this concession was marked with a massive

caveat. Yes, the Egyptian government would try to limit new licenses for selling liquor, but this legislation did not apply to the European Districts (*al-Akḥṭāt al-Urūbīya*) in five cities—Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, Ismailia, and the Suez, which were hubs of the alcohol trade.¹³⁰ The exceptional nature of these districts was not limited to this one piece of legislation, but was a persistent feature of all Egyptian legislation in this period.¹³¹ The presence of these exceptional districts made the job of the WCTU of Egypt and the ETA even harder, for in addition to not having massive popular support, they had a government that could only enact toothless temperance reform. The ETA was fully aware of this problem. They lobbied the government to end these exceptional districts, and their arguments for temperance always accounted for them.¹³² It is not clear whether the WCTU of Egypt was equally cognizant of this impediment, but they suffered equally from it.

Nevertheless, they were fighting a losing battle. Whereas the temperance movement was supported by the work of hundreds, maybe thousands in Egypt, there was a market of hundreds of thousands who were looking to consume alcohol, especially beer. A 1934 study on the beer market in Egypt reasoned that there were more than three hundred thousand Egyptians and “foreigners” who drank beer.¹³³ These “foreigners” were comprised primarily of *Mutamaṣṣirūn* (Egyptianized Foreigners).¹³⁴ This grouping did not include the seventy-five hundred British soldiers who were stationed throughout Egypt. The analyst separated them from the rest of the foreigners because their consumption was rather prolific. They consumed approximately 17,000 hectoliters per year, which put their per capita consumption at 220 liters per year.¹³⁵

Despite being a minority of the population of roughly fourteen million people living in Egypt, this group of beer drinkers was a profitable market. For example, in

1929, residents of Egypt drank more than 130,000 hectoliters of beer, of which more than 70,000 came from local brewers.¹³⁶ In that same year, the net profit of Crown Brewery and Bomonti-Pyramid Brewery was around 280,000 pounds.¹³⁷ These would be high water marks for nearly a decade, as the Great Depression would hit in that same year. By 1933, total beer consumption had dropped to its lowest level during the decade, at 71,000 hectoliters, with local production making up roughly 42,000 hectoliters.¹³⁸ Despite the continuing poor economic conditions, consumption would only rise from 1933 to the end of the decade.

Of the breweries that were selling their beer in Egypt, it was Crown and Bomonti-Pyramid that supplied the majority of the beer consumed. For example, in 1934, these two breweries sold 59% of the roughly 85,000 hectoliters that were consumed in the country, of which Bomonti-Pyramid sold 33%.¹³⁹ When we look at consumption of non-British Army personnel, the Crown and Bomonti-Pyramid dominance becomes even starker. In 1934, non-British army personnel consumed more than 68,000 hectoliters of beer. Bomonti-Pyramid and Crown of the Egyptian market sold 77% percent of this beer, with Bomonti-Pyramid accounting for 44%.¹⁴⁰

It is hardly surprising, then, that Bomonti-Pyramid did quite well during the Depression. That is not to say that the breweries weathered the Depression unscathed. In order to maintain investment in the company during this time, it had to offer a dividend that paid six percent, which impeded its ability to replenish its reserve capital and made the company financially vulnerable. However, outside of the three-year period from 1930–03, the company maintained a relatively stable rate of profit between 4.5 and 6 percent.¹⁴¹ It is important to remember that while the Bomonti-Pyramid Brewing Company was consistently profitable during this period, it was arguably less profitable than other “core” industries like the Egyptian Salt and Soda

company, which was capitalized at 485,347 Egyptian pounds in 1937 and saw profits at 11.3 percent, as compared to the 192,875 Egyptian pounds of Pyramid Brewing company and its six percent profit margin.¹⁴²

Beer was not only making a strong economic impression in Egypt, but a cultural one as well. A prominent example of the growing cultural presence of beer in Egypt is the appearance of a beer-centered ritual in Egyptian nightclubs. As Karin van Nieuwkerk describes, inside clubs in the 1920s and 1930s, female entertainers were tasked with the *fath* (Arabic Opening), whereby the entertainers would walk from customer to customer and ask if he would like to drink with her. This *fath* would often turn into a competition between men to exhibit their wealth and masculinity, with the beer bottle serving as the ostensible measure of power. A male customer might, for example, order a dozen bottles of beer and have them brought by a train of attendants in order to show off.¹⁴³

However, temperance in Egypt not only faced governmental and cultural issues, but the fading power of the temperance movement internationally, which started to falter almost immediately after the passing of the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act in the United States. This loss of support was deeply troubling to temperance crusaders abroad, so it is not surprising that the ETA weighed in on this very issue.¹⁴⁴ In their 1924 report, Ghalwash specifically addressed the claim that Prohibition was failing in America because it did not reflect the wishes of the people. He countered this argument by pointing out that 1919 was not the origin of American temperance; there had been temperance legislation dating back to 1808, but merely the date in which thirty out of forty-eight states approved the measure. He then quoted Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard at the time, on the positive impact of Prohibition on the spirit, health, morals, and manners of the country. Ghalwash

claimed that American factory workers had become healthier and more productive because they had replaced beer with the more healthful beverage of milk, and that America, in general, had become the healthiest nation in the world. Ghalwash noted that Prohibition had helped the American mind as well as body; cases of insanity dropped three percent in New York after 1920.¹⁴⁵ Despite the protestations of Ghalwash, the international temperance movement went out with a whimper in Egypt after the American temperance movement suffered a fatal blow with the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1933. Although both organizations continued to exist after this date, with the ETA surviving until the present day, their moment of international and domestic relevance had passed.

Conclusion

It appears that over the period 1923 to 1935 in Egypt, supporters of the production and sale of beer within the country claimed victory over those who opposed the modern beer industry. Despite the strongly reasoned arguments by Islamic modernists such as Muhammad Rashid Rida, Ahmad Ahmad Ghalwash, and Muhammad Farag al-Sanhuri, the Egyptian government and the Egyptian people were unwilling to concede that beer was without benefit and that they should abstain from it. Drinking beer, with all its meanings, was highly important to foreign soldiers, Egyptianized foreigners, and a growing group of educated middle class and elite Egyptians. Although advertisers' claims of the healthful properties of beer appear exaggerated when viewed through the lens of our own day, their positioning of beer as an essential part of a "modern" life clearly had some resonance of a kind that endures even today. As we will see with later Stella advertisements, the idea that beer was a modern drink intended to refresh and revive drinkers not only survived, but also

came to shape the consumption patterns of more and more Egyptians who drank it. Nevertheless, this defeat should not be interpreted as an indictment of Islamic modernist thought. As I have shown, when it came to temperance, Islamic modernist thought was able to absorb techno-scientific arguments of an Islamophobic movement, the WCTU, and graft it onto the Islamic tradition to produce a powerful argument against beer. Indicative of how Islamic modernist thought would come to dominate in Egypt, this movement was able to subvert the narrative of Western dominance and position Islam as the way forward.

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² *ibid.*, 49.

³ *ibid.*,

⁴ "Rapport de Monsieur H. Faivre sur l'Égypte," 4 Juin 1935, typed, 24, NL-SAA-191213, 2.2.9.2.5-Africa, 834-Archives of Heineken NV, Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 25

⁶ *al-Ahram* 31 August 1928,4.

⁷ "Rapport de Monsieur H. Faivre sur l'Égypte," 82

⁸ *Ibid.*, 52 and 86-7

⁹ Edward Beatty, "Bottles for Beer: The Business of Technological Innovation in Mexico 1800-1920," *Business History Review* 83 (Summer 2009): 322

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¹² Wladimir Köppen, *Die Klimate Der Erde, Grundriss de Kilakunde* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1923)

¹³ *al-Ahram* 15 July 1938, 7.

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- ¹²⁸ Michael Homan “Beer and Its Drinkers: An Ancient Near Eastern Love Story”, *Near Eastern Archaeology* Vol. 67 (2), June 2004, 85-6; Joseph Sadan “*Mashrūbāt*”; Paulina B. Lewicka, “Alcohol and its Consumption in Medieval Cairo. The Story of a Habit”, *Studia Arabistyczne i Islamistyczne* Vol. 12(1), 2004, 58-97; Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname* translated as *An Ottoman Traveler. Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi*, Robert Dankoff and Sooyong Kim (trans.), (London: Eland, 2010), 394- 398; Omar Foda, “The Pyramid and the Crown...”
- ¹²⁹ Anna Young Thompson “Journal Entry, 23 October 1930”, AYT, PHS, RG 58-1-6.
- ¹³⁰ ETA, “Taqrīr al-Ġam‘īya...”, 10-13.
- ¹³¹ This division of the country between Egyptian and foreign clearly grew out of the history of the capitulations, which gave foreign residents extra-territorial rights in Egypt. The capitulations had a massive effect on the legal history of the country see Nathan J. Brown, “The Precarious Life and Slow Death of the Mixed Courts in Egypt, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 25(1), February 1993, 33-52.
- ¹³² ETA, “Taqrīr al-Ġam‘īya...”, 25-27.
- ¹³³ “Rapport de Monsieur H. Faivre sur l’Égypte,” 3
- ¹³⁴ Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley, Cali.:University of California Press, 1998), 18-22.
- ¹³⁵ Pierre Geisenberger, “Situation Economique de L’Égypte au debut 1936,” typed, produced in Alexandria 1938, 4—NL-SAA-191213, 2.2.9.2.5-Africa, 834-Archives of Heineken NV, Stadsarchief Amsterdam.
- ¹³⁶ Ibid., 48.
- ¹³⁷ DWQ, *Maslahat al-Sharikat* (Department of Companies Archives (henceforth MS), 3019-005503-0009, *Sharikat Birat al-Ahram* 3019- 6808-0009 *Sharikat Karwon Brewery*.
- ¹³⁸ Pierre Geisenberger, “Situation Economique de L’Égypte au debut 1936,” 48.
- ¹³⁹ “Rapport de Monsieur H. Faivre sur l’Égypte,” 82.
- ¹⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁴¹ Robert L. Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise, and Economic Change in Egypt, 1918-1952* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984) Table A.10.
- ¹⁴² Ibid.,
- ¹⁴³ Karin van Nieuwkerk 1960-, “*A Trade Like any Other*” : *Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt*, 1st ed. ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995)43-5.
- ¹⁴⁴ Thomas R. Pegram 1955-, *Battling Demon Rum : The Struggle for a Dry America, 1800-1933* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998), 168.
- ¹⁴⁵ ETA, “Taqrīr al-Ġam‘īya...”, 29-35.

Chapter 5: Crowning the Pyramid: The Egyptian Beer Industry's “Mature” Period (1940–1952)

By the late 1930s, beer had become a significant, though contentious, element of “modern” Egyptian culture. The ascent of beer corresponded to a transformation in Egypt’s beer production from artisanal craft to well-developed industry. This chapter looks at the two companies that came to dominate the beer industry in the 1940s, Crown Brewery and Bomonti-Pyramid Brewery. As they enter what I call their “mature period,” which spanned from 1940 to 1952, these companies took the form that they would maintain until 1963: that is, a partnership with converging executive structures, shareholders, and business practices. This convergence was spearheaded by the Amsterdam-based multinational corporation Heineken Brewing Company (Heineken Bierbrouwerij-Maatschappij), hereafter Heineken. Heineken had targeted the Crown and Pyramid breweries for inclusion in their ever-expanding empire after having seen the developments and profits of these two companies up to 1940. A third feature of the companies’ mature period, in addition to being characterized by partnership and by Heineken’s influence, was their struggle to maintain their hybrid identities as truly trans-national ventures. The companies could not be classified either as strictly Dutch or Egyptian ventures. This hybrid state was crucial to the companies’ success prior to 1940, but it became problematic in the 1940s as the world that was far less accepting of ambiguity in nationality and economics.

The transformation of the companies from relative autonomous entities to Heineken guided ventures stemmed from a single catastrophic event: World War II, the largest war that the world had yet seen. Heineken’s push to consolidate Crown and

Pyramid Breweries represented its unwillingness to continue to suffer the inefficiency, of which it had become acutely aware of during the war, of being a passive shareholder a continent away. After the war, Heineken sought greater control over its assets to maximize profits and ease the exploitation of the Egyptian market. This meant that not only would Crown and Pyramid be more closely tied together, but also that Heineken would play a larger role in the activities of both companies. These actions reflected Heineken's attempt to transform these companies, in the words of Robert L. Tignor, from being loosely administered firms to tightly controlled firms.¹

Heineken was not the only party that was inspired by the extraordinary circumstances of the war to demand greater control of the breweries. The Egyptian government, too, came to interact and control businesses in a way that it had never before. Since the 1920s, there had been growing demand among Egyptian politicians for greater control of their economy, especially vis-à-vis the "foreign" elements present. These two trends, toward greater control and targeting the "foreign" element, converged in 1947 in the Company Law, which granted unprecedented powers to the Egyptian government to deal with joint-stock companies that it classified as "foreign." Whereas in the 1920s and 1930s these companies and their actions had been relatively unsupervised, starting in 1947, they had to reckon with a more invasive and self-assured government that had a very narrow idea of what an Egyptian company was.

As both of these forces, Heineken and the Egyptian government, exerted greater control over Pyramid and Crown breweries, they did not sit passively. Rather, they fought both actively and surreptitiously against outside control. In both companies' interactions with Heineken, they used the geographic distance between them and the Amsterdam headquarters in order to reject or slow down actions that they found distasteful; thus, they were able to negotiate from a position of weakness.

In the breweries' interactions with the Egyptian government, despite the rising political tide of economic nationalism, they were able, with the aid of their Dutch backers, to maintain their hybridity.

The argument of this chapter proceeds in five sections. The first section looks at how cinematic portrayals of beer signaled a new cultural acceptance of the beverage. The following section examines how Heineken entered the Egyptian beer industry. The third and fourth sections look at how the new conglomeration of Heineken, Crown, and Pyramid dealt with external factors. Section three discusses how these three entities managed Egypt's involvement in World War II and its aftermath. The fourth section then looks at how Heineken, Crown, and Pyramid grappled with a more invasive Egyptian government pushing Egyptianization. Finally, this chapter closes by looking at how the demographics of the shareholders of Crown and Pyramid's exemplified their statuses as endangered transnational enterprises in an increasingly "nationalistic" Egypt.

Celluloid Consumption

In tracing the place of beer in Egyptian culture, film is an excellent place to look, as its development in Egypt tracked a parallel path to the development of the nation's beer industry. Film entered Egypt before the beer industry, in 1896.² Both Egypt's beer industry and its film industry adopted technological advances from Europe. The first films, recorded on a cinematograph by the Lumière brothers, Auguste and Louis, had been played for Paris audiences in 1895.³ Less than thirty years later, the first films appeared in Egypt. The first full-length film produced in Egypt, *Fi bilād Tut 'Ankh Amūn (In the Land of Tutankhamen)*, premiered in 1923.⁴

This section traces how cinematic portrayals of beer signal a new cultural acceptance of the beverage in Egypt.

By the 1930s, the film industry, like the beer industry, had become what Europeans would call a modern industry; and by the 1940s, it had become a powerful force in Egyptian culture. Between 1945 and 1952, the film industry produced over four hundred films.⁵ It was in this same period that film became an art form that was crafting a new “middle-class bourgeois nationalist identity.”⁶ It stands to reason that beer would appear in films, as it too was becoming a cultural force in this period. Indeed, from 1940 to 1952, the beer industry experienced sustained success. After 1923, other industries, like hard manufacturing, food production, and textiles would overtake the beer industry, but never the latter lost its profitability. In 1946, for example, Crown Brewery’s net profits totaled the significant sum of 106,000 LE.⁷

The films discussed in this section tend to show that beer drinkers were coming from the old groupings of the *effendiya* and the urban underclass. However, as Lucie Ryzova notes, the boundaries of these groupings had shifted by the 1940s. The *effendiya*, the urban office class, in the period following Egypt’s semi-independence in 1922 came to represent, at least for the liberal nationalists, the perceived middle of Egyptian society. The *effendiya* were the bearers of the national mission, and they were distinct from the *awlād al-balad* (native sons, “the good guys”), the fellahin, and the *awlād al-dhawāt* (Arabic, sons of distinction, the “elite”).⁸ In practice, to be an effendi was to inhabit a liminal place between the lower and upper classes, to be a secular, modern, and liberally educated person who strove for the modern, secular, elite lifestyle, but whose background and financial status kept one separate from that elite.⁹

With this shift from broad to specific characterizations, the *effendiya* became distinct from the classes above and below, at least in the minds of intellectuals. Whereas previously the *effendiya* included both the elite and the Western educated non-elite, the term came more and more to refer to those urban subalterns who had undertaken “effendification,” while the Westernized elite took the name of *awlād al-dhawāt*. Likewise, with most of the new *effendi* transitioning from the urban subaltern, what it meant to be a non-*effendi* resident of a town or a city came to be encapsulated in the concepts of the *awlād al-balad* and *al-futūwwāt* (Arabic, youths). As Wilson Chacko Jacob has shown, despite the term *futūwwa*’s multivalent and complicated history, by the 1930s, the term was divested of much of its positive characteristics and came to resemble the concept of *al-balṭagī* (thug, tough, etc.).¹⁰

Similar to the depiction of cigarettes in films, it was these imagined groups (*awlād al-dhawāt*, *awlād al-balad*, *futūwwāt*, and the *effendiyya*) that shaped depictions of beer consumption in Egypt in the post-independence period.¹¹ For the elite, their consumption of alcohol was assumed and unquestioned. Many movies from the period 1930 to 1950 show upper-crust men and women dressed in fine Western clothing, listening to music and dancing while enjoying alcoholic beverages. While generally the type of alcohol remains obscure, in a few notable exceptions, beer takes center stage. For example, in *al-‘Azima (Determination, 1939)*, as ‘Adli Bey (Anwar Wagdi) talks to Muhammad Hanafi (Hussein Sidky) about their joint business venture, using a phone located in a bar, a Stella advertisement sits prominently in the background.¹² The advertisement is so legible and prominent that it can only have been intentionally placed in the frame.

In an even more prominent example, from the movie ‘*Usta Hasan (Boss Hasan, 1952)*, the rich Svengali, Kawsar (Zuzu Madi), has a refrigerator stocked with

beer bottles bearing the unmistakable star logo of Stella beer.¹³ The bottle is fetishized, with the camera making it one of the most prominent images on the screen. In addition, the bottle is used as a metonymy for beer and alcohol more generally. This ability to have the branded bottle serve as a signifier of alcohol in general is evidence of the effectiveness of the beer advertisements of the 1930s. By the 1940s, these advertisers had achieved what they desired: the bottle, a symbol of what I call total control brewing, had entered Egyptian culture as *the* symbol of beer. Total control brewing was the idea that a company could produce a standardized, sturdy, and sanitary product by assiduously applying the latest in brewing technologies. The scene in '*Usta Hasan* is important in showing the cultural footprint of the beer bottle, and of beer in general. The film again links the consumption of beer to the elite, although it adds a layer of complexity by portraying upper class women's consumption of it as normative. This portrayal was atypical for the time, as alcohol was still generally reserved for men.

Egyptian films also portrayed urban subalterns as drinkers of beer. The two most prominent examples of such characters are Hamida (Shukri Sarhan) in *Ibn al-Nil* (*Nile Boy*, 1951) and Hasan (Farid Shawqi) in '*Usta Hasan*.¹⁴ In *Ibn al-Nil*, whose very title evokes the idea of the *awlād al-balad*, a fellah named Hamida travels to Cairo to escape his life in the village. Fresh off the train, Hamida searches for a place to spend the night and ends up in a dance club. Unsurprisingly, he is enticed by the vices of the club, and in an act that sets off a terrible chain of events, he succumbs to a dancer and to beer, and eventually loses all of his money. In the scene, beer, depicted in an overflowing stein, is closely associated with the dancer (Samiha Tawfiq) through interspersing of images of the frothy mug with her gyrating. In the case of Hasan, Kawsar entices him to abandon his humble lifestyle and become her paramour

with gifts and plentiful food and drink. In one of the film's pivotal scenes, in which the protagonist begins to realize the pleasures possible in this new life, Hasan gorges himself on a whole turkey and drinks three bottles of beer. This plenty appears in stark contrast to the penurious lifestyle he lived in his humble home.

The blatant consumption of beer in the film is not without consequences for the two main characters. A common refrain in these and other pre-1960s Egyptian films is that the *ibn al-balad* who drinks ultimately suffers for doing so. In the case of Hamida, his first night of drinking transforms him from the naïve yet authentic *ibn al-balad* into a cynical and violent *futūwwa*. Eventually, his new lifestyle leads him to jail, although he is later freed and returns home. As for Hasan, beer marks an even more tragic transformation. He leaves his life as hard-working mechanic to become a morally corrupt *bon vivant*. There he has two unhappy relationships (with his wife and Kawsar), and sees his son come to physical harm and Kawsar get murdered. Hasan is only freed to learn from his mistakes and resume his original life because of the surprise confession of Kawsar's invalid husband to the woman's murder. These details from the film *Ibn al-Nil*, which emphasize the dangers of modernity to the uneducated but authentic *awlād al-balad*, the transformative power of beer emerges as a key theme. In each case, alcohol has caused the protagonist to make the incorrect transition. Neither character has moved from authentic native son to hard working and respectable member of the middle class. Instead, they both transition to more profitable but morally bankrupt phases. This narrative of the drinking-led downfall for the *ibn al-balad* is echoed in other media as well. For example, we see this narrative in Bayram al-Tunsi's *zajal* poems, "rhymed strophic poems composed in non-classical Arabic based rhythmically on metrical patterns adapted from the classical

tradition.”¹⁵ In his massive 1924 *zajal* poem *Il Baladi*, “Abd al-Salam, the writer, is brought down by his ever increasing consumption of beer and whiskey.”¹⁶

The idea that the consumption of beer and alcohol is dangerous in general is supported by the depiction of the effendiya in movies, who generally remain teetotalers. For example, the main protagonist (and arch-hero) of *al-‘Azima*, Muhammad Hanafi, avoids drinking even when he visits his good friend, the elite playboy ‘Adli, in a bar. This abstemiousness is seen in other effendi protagonists like Hamid (‘Imad Hamdi) in *al-Suq al-Sawda’* (*Black Market*, 1945) and Taha Effendi (Yusuf Wahbi) in *Ibn al-Haddad* (*Son of the Blacksmith*, 1944).¹⁷ The middle class protagonist is not always strictly abstemious; for example, Munir (Farid al-‘Atrash) in *Ahebbek Inta* (*I Love You Only*, 1949) is a telegraph operator and part-time singer, who in the course of his work consumes alcohol. In this role and many others, Farid al-‘Atrash’s characters are notable for their entirely normative relationships with alcohol.¹⁸

The differences in the films’ treatments of alcohol can be attributed to differences in the films’ respective purposes. The difference between the “commercial/melodramatic” film and the “art/realistic” film in Egypt may not have been as sharp as some critics would imply, as Walter Armbrust and Joel Gordon have argued, but the difference still did exist.¹⁹ In films like *al-Suq al-Sawda’* (*The Black Market*, 1945), *‘Usta Hasan* (*Boss Hasan*, 1952), *al-‘Azima* (*Determination*, 1939), and other realistic films, directors portrayed, with varying degrees of success, Egypt as it existed in everyday life. While the melodramatic films starring Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahab, Farid ‘Atrash, and Abd al-Halim Hafiz, certainly reflected some aspects of the Egyptian reality, the films aimed more to entertain than to faithfully reproduce the social conditions of contemporary Egypt. This meant that these films depicted alcohol

consumption as a part of the aspirational lifestyle that the films glorified. This depiction contrasted to realistic films, in which alcohol consumption was cited along with gambling and sex as a symptom of corruption wrought by mimicking the West. The different depictions of alcohol consumption vis-à-vis the imagined middle class or effendiya reflected Egyptian intellectuals' uncertainty over what the ideal mix of modern and traditional should be, particularly for the group whom they envisioned to be the true bearers of Egypt's future.²⁰

Consolidation

While the depiction of beer and alcohol in film was somewhat ambiguous, there was no ambiguity about who controlled the beer industry in Egypt in this period, it was Heineken. How it came to dominate was a convoluted process emblematic of greater changes in the Egyptian economy. The Bomontis' purchase of Pyramid Brewery marked a distinct break in the history of the beer industry in Egypt. After 1923, the beer industry was subject to two trends particular to the Egyptian economy between 1918 and 1950: consolidation and Egyptianization. The consolidation process began with the Bomontis who combined three companies into Bomonti-Pyramid Brewery in 1923. Before even consolidating all of their holdings, Bomonti-Pyramid had worked out a sales agreement, as detailed in chapter 3, with their main competitor, Crown Brewery in 1921. This sales agreement proved very lucrative for both firms. For example, they sold more than 75,000 hectoliters of beer in Egypt in 1928.²¹

Their success caught the eye of Rene Gaston-Dreyfus, the son of a wealthy French banker, who had established a brewery in Morocco, Brasserie du Maroc, in the 1920s. Thus in 1928 he started overtures to try to enter into the Egyptian beer market.

Gaston-Dreyfus initially went to Charles Cantoni, who was serving as the head of Crown Brewery, with grand plans of buying the entire local industry. However, when Cantoni only offered Gaston-Dreyfus 3,000 shares, a small non-controlling stake, he decided to look for other ways to achieve his goals. Gaston-Dreyfus settled on Bomonti-Pyramid, when one of his business contacts alerted him that Jacques Ruch, who owned 45% of Bomonti-Pyramid stock and was the largest shareholder, was willing to sell. After an initial rebuttal, Gaston-Dreyfus was able not only to buy Ruch's shares in Bomonti-Pyramid, but those in the Istanbul based-brewery Bomonti-Nectar. With these interests now added to his Cairo, and Moroccan interests, Gaston-Dreyfus now had a small multi-national venture, which he incorporated and named Société Financière Brasseries (Sofibra) in 1929.

After buying into Bomonti-Pyramid, Gaston-Dreyfus set out to “purify” the board of the company. Although Bomonti-Pyramid had been successful, it appeared to Gaston-Dreyfus that Curt Bomonti, the son of the eponymous founder Walter, and his cousin Rudolph Yost, had placed the company on a dangerous path. Gaston-Dreyfus saw Curt, who was the chairman of the board, as a dimwitted clod who preferred to spend nights out on the town rather than do any work. The only reason he maintained his position was due to the fact that his family held so many shares. Yost, who was the managing director, in Gaston-Dreyfus' view had enriched himself off the company, but had done very little for it. As a result of their mismanagement, Bomonti-Pyramid was unable to have production meet up with the growing demands of the Egyptian population and thus had to sell inferior beer that would have otherwise been tossed away.²² Thus by 1932, Gaston-Dreyfus, through some clever maneuvering, was able to excise both Bomonti and Yost and replace them with Rene Ismalun and Pierre Geisenberger, respectively. Gaston-Dreyfus was familiar with

Geisenberger and his work at brewery in Dakar, while Ismalun, who was part of the Egyptian Jewish community, was highly recommended by one of Gaston-Dreyfus' associates. Gaston-Dreyfus, showing his imperial chauvinism, did not have a high valuation of Ismalun. He believed that he was lazy and "not a genius," but he was, most importantly, honest.²³

After reorganizing Bomonti-Pyramid, Gaston-Dreyfus set about taking control of Crown. He found his way in with a stockholder named Mr. Rollo. After convincing him to sell his 4,000 shares, he was able to manipulate him and Crown and raise his stock holding to 9,000 shares. He would have been able to take a majority over the company by buying the 3,000 shares from Cantoni, were it not for the intervention of Constantine Mouratiadis. As discussed in chapter 3, he was the tangible link between Crown and Pyramid under the Bomontis, as he ran the sales operations for both breweries in Cairo and was a major stockholder in Crown. Seeing the aggressive maneuvering of Gaston-Dreyfus and fearing for the lucrative life he had carved out for himself, he entrenched himself both within the operations with Cairo and in the Crown Brewery board. Thus before Gaston-Dreyfus could have the chance, he was able to become the Chairman of the Board of Crown and the majority shareholder in Crown.²⁴

Gaston-Dreyfus, sought the advice of his men on the ground, like Geisenberger, on how to proceed to the first real roadblock to his control of the Egyptian beer industry. They advised Gaston-Dreyfus that if Sofibra engaged in open warfare with Mouratiadis, they would be embroiled in a ruinous war that would fracture the excellent working relationship between Crown and Pyramid and cost Bomonti-Pyramid a great deal of money.²⁵ They rather advised Gaston-Dreyfus to come to an agreement with Mouratiadis, which granted his desired autonomy in the

Alexandria, so that he and Sofibra could work together and maintain the profitability of the two breweries. This détente not only avoided a costly conflict, but allowed Bomonti-Pyramid to build up enough reserves that if Mouratiadis proved himself a problem they could engage in open warfare with him. However, it never came to that as after the initial bit of posturing they settled into a workable and profitable partnership. Gaston-Dreyfus cultivated an excellent relationship with their respective administrations. Although he was based abroad, in Paris, he spearheaded close collaborations between the boards and encouraged unanimity in the breweries' goals.²⁶ Gaston-Dreyfus had such a positive influence that when Heineken bought him out, members of the Crown Brewery board asked him to stay on as an executive member.²⁷

The foreign-backed consolidation of the beer industry in Egypt was typical of the Egyptian joint stock companies of the time. As Relli Shechter shows in *Smoking, Culture and Economy in the Middle East*, the Egyptian tobacco industry underwent a similar process of centralization driven by the multi-national British-American Tobacco Company (BAT). In the period that Bomonti-Pyramid was consolidating the beer market, BAT rapidly expanded in Egypt. By 1927, it owned six tobacco factories in Egypt and had become the second biggest tobacco company in the country. In that same year, it merged with the largest tobacco company in Egypt, Matossian, and renamed the conglomeration Eastern. At that point Eastern owned 90 percent of the tobacco market.²⁸ Likewise, Robert L. Tignor describes how a few, "heavily capitalized, vertically integrated, and politically powerful firms" took control of the textile industry in Egypt in the 1920s.²⁹ The push for consolidation in all of these industries was spurred on by the tariff reforms of 1930. Local leading business magnates saw these reforms, which were meant to limit imports, as their opportunity

to dominate their respective sectors. They thus aimed to establish “large and powerful firms in the late 1920s” to make it difficult for new firms to enter.³⁰

After buying into Crown and Pyramid, Gaston-Dreyfus continued to look to expand his international holdings. His main project after Crown and Pyramid was increasing his presence in Indonesia by establishing a brewery in Java.³¹ Since it was a Dutch colony at the time, Gaston-Dreyfus aimed to partner with a Dutch brewery in the venture. He found a willing partner in Heineken Brewing Company, one of the largest brewers in the world, and its representative in the area, Jonkheer Pieter R. Feith. When Sofibra and Heineken went to Java they agreed that the only place suitable for a new brewery was the city of Surabaya. Unfortunately another company, Coloniale Brasserie (Cobra), had purchased land there in hopes of building their own. Although they were initially discouraged, Sofibra and Heineken came upon a solution when, in the 1930s, they came in contact with another multinational brewing interest looking to expand its brand, Société Anonyme Internationale de Brasserie (Interbra). This Belgian company, had interests in Belgium, France, Belgian Congo, and Angola and, incidentally, owned Coloniale Brasserie (Cobra).³²

In line with Heineken’s aggressive international expansion plan of the 1930s, the brewing giant purchased all three of the companies (Sofibra, Intebra, and Cobra). With regard to Egypt, the investment in Sofibra provided an entrance into a market that it coveted; the chairman of Heineken had visited Egypt after the First World War and was impressed by the rapid development that the beer companies had made during that time.³³ Heineken’s entrance into the Egyptian beer industry thus began in 1937 and was spearheaded by the investment company Cobra, re-named N.V. Koloniale Brouwerijen, which relocated to Amsterdam.³⁴ Cobra had become, after the purchase of and incorporation of Sofibra and Interbra, the main vector for Heineken’s

international expansion. It had investments not only in Egypt, but also in Indonesia (Heineken Netherlands-Indonesian Brewing Company in Surabaya), Singapore (Malayan Breweries), and Brussels (Société Internationale de Brasserie). This last brewery even had its own international holdings in France (Metz and Tours) and in Belgian Congo (Leopoldville).³⁵

Instead of purchasing the breweries outright, Cobra bought a large number of shares in Bomonti-Pyramid and Crown Brewery. Although this might sound like a rather straightforward process, the acquisition of the shares was a multi-step venture. Heineken, acting through Cobra, as a Dutch company, bought shares in companies whose main bases of operation were in Egypt, but that were registered as Belgian companies in Brussels. The multinational nature of the new enterprise meant that the movement of information was not a frictionless process and was often held up by language barriers. For example, if Heineken wanted to implement a new policy on the ground in Cairo, it had to go through a multi-step and multi-lingual process. Heineken, located in Rotterdam, would send a directive to Cobra, located in Amsterdam, via a letter written in Dutch. Cobra would then relay this information to the CEOs of Crown and Pyramid Breweries, who were located in Alexandria and Cairo, respectively; this communication would again go by letter, but this time in French. The CEOs would then relay the message to their respective boards in Brussels, through letters or telegrams in French. Finally, after approval by the boards in Brussels, the policy would be implemented through the aid of workers who had been informed of the plan either orally or through written Arabic.

The difficulties in communication in this new setup were exemplified by one of Cobra's first attempts to attend a general meeting of Crown Brewery's shareholders in Brussels. Because the relationship between Cobra and Crown had not yet been

formalized, Cobra put one thousand shares of Crown in the trust of an agency, the Netherlands Trading Society (Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschaap) in Amsterdam, which then sent an agent to represent Cobra at Crown's shareholders' meeting. All the while, Cobra had to communicate these steps to all the parties involved (Heineken, Crown and Pyramid, Netherlands Trading) in French and Dutch.³⁶

Despite the added layer of administrative inefficiency, the involvement of one of the largest brewers in the world was a positive development for the Egyptian beer industry. This relationship provided Pyramid and Crown access to the expertise of Heineken, which was on the cutting edge of brewing. In addition, Heineken was a multinational company with worldwide business interests and thus was well acquainted with the particularities of brewing in all manner of climates and regions. The benefits of this relationship became apparent when, for example, Crown Brewery invested in kegs. Kegs, like bottles, were a beer-delivery method within the total control brewing system. The keg was the physical embodiment of the modern brewer's belief that the application of the most cutting-edge technology would enable him to deliver a standardized and durable product to customers. As such, the keg established two impermeable boundaries; one between the outside world and the beer and one between the beer contained within the keg and the keg itself.

The first impermeable boundary separated the contents of the keg from the outside world. Like glass bottles, kegs had to prevent any microorganisms or other foreign bodies from entering from the environment. After these kegs had been filled they would be pasteurized, in a similar process to that used on bottles, to assure that no foreign bodies were present. Unlike glass bottles, however, kegs had to carry a much larger amount of beer. Whereas bottles contained no more than 750 ml of beer, kegs could house thirty liters or more. This large size meant that the keg was as much

a storage device as it was a delivery device, and that it thus had to have a second impermeable boundary. Besides keeping the outside world away from the beer, they also had to not react with the beer held inside. Any seepage from the kegs into the beer would add flavor. This was not such an issue when the kegs were made of wood (most often referred to as barrels or casks) because they would impart a natural woody flavor that could change the flavor profile, but would not ruin it. However, by the 1930s wooden barrels had been replaced by metal kegs, as metal was sturdier, more easily shipped, and could be reused more often, and seepage became a serious issue. Not only could the metal alter the taste of the beer by adding an unappealing metallic taste, but the beer, due its carbonation, could start corroding the inside of the keg.³⁷ Thus, not only did this seepage ruin the product, but it also required the replacement of the keg, a double loss.

Given the importance of kegs to the overall brewing process, when Crown wanted to purchase kegs in 1938, they turned to their new multinational partner for their expertise. Heineken, speaking through Cobra, offered two recommendations for companies from whom Crown Brewery could purchase their kegs: a Dutch firm, T. Knape, located in Wassenaar, Netherlands, and a German firm, Rosista, located in Dortmund.³⁸

Beyond merely suggesting the two firms from which the brewery could buy its kegs, Heineken also advised them on the potential considerations associated with buying from each. One major issue with T. Knape's kegs was that although they were cheaper, they were made from untreated iron, meaning that the breweries would have to buy lacquer from another company and apply a layer to the keg themselves before the kegs could be used. Heineken was willing to recommend other companies who could provide the lacquer, but advised Crown against this option. From its experience,

the application of the lacquer was a truly labor-intensive and difficult process that required assiduous adherence to instructions as well as absolutely ideal conditions.³⁹ If these strict conditions were not met, the results were always poor. In addition to the lacquering issue, T. Knape's kegs did not come with their own bung, the stopper that closed the opening through which the keg was filled. Thus the company had to buy them separately and, besides the additional cost, this too could cause serious issues. As Heineken noted, when beer was pasteurized in kegs, everything expanded; however, the beer did so faster than the keg. The end result was that if the bung was not fitted perfectly or the keg was overfilled, the bung, already loosened by the expanding metal of the keg, would be placed under tremendous pressure. This would often lead to the failure of the bung and the loss or degradation of the product.

For all of these reasons, Heineken suggested that Crown go with the much more expensive kegs from Rosista in Dortmund. Despite the more significant financial outlay, Rosista's kegs were made from stainless steel, meaning that they did not require any pre-treatment before they could be used. The stainless steel was already treated to prevent any corrosion or metal seepage. Another benefit of the Rosista model was that it came with its own specially designed method of closing the keg.⁴⁰ Although this suggestion came with the implication that Crown was not up to the task of meeting the demanding conditions required for the T. Knape's kegs, Crown Brewery proved very receptive to the advice of Heineken. They reckoned that the T. Knape kegs would be more trouble than they were worth and asked Heineken to inform Rosista that they would examine bids on their services.⁴¹

This interaction between Heineken and Crown illustrates how Heineken's investment in Crown and Pyramid Breweries paid significant dividends for the Egyptian companies. The interaction also illustrates the positive effect that the

presence of multinational companies had on businesses in Egypt. Being a part of a multinational corporation gave the breweries access to the latest in brewing technology and techniques and thus allowed for the smarter importation of technologies. The breweries were able to tailor their imports to the particularities of the country before spending any money, in contrast to previous attempts by entrepreneurs to bring technology into Egypt. Such entrepreneurs often assumed that the import process would be frictionless, only to find difficulties in applying technology. But Crown, instead of going for the “cheaper” keg option and suffering from their false economy, chose the “more expensive” option that was better suited to their needs.

Heineken’s advice to Crown did not arise solely from a desire to build up the Egyptian beer industry; it also came from its desire to preserve the bottom line for an investment that was almost immediately profitable. In 1939, Heineken received a total dividend payment of over 23,000 pounds sterling from the 8968 shares it owned in Crown Brewery.⁴² Admittedly, as with every other aspect of doing business in the early years of this new multinational interest, receiving the money was not straightforward. The impediment in this case was the global conflict that was slowly starting to engulf the world, what would eventually be called World War II. One of the war’s primary combatants was Britain, which still treated Egypt as a de facto colony and was highly concerned that any money flowing out of Egypt did not go to enemy countries. In order to comply with government regulations, companies had to show that any money leaving Egypt was not going to enemy subjects.⁴³ This requirement necessitated the authentication of all money recipients, thus hampering money transfer. This was especially true with a money transfer as large as this dividend payment, which was going to Belgium, a country that had been occupied by

the Germans in 1940. In fact, Cobra—which was, per usual, serving as the intermediary between Heineken and the beer companies—was surprised that the Egyptian government, not knowing who the final recipient of the money would be, had even allowed the transfer process to begin.⁴⁴ Unsurprisingly, even with the help of Pyramid Brewery and a Belgian Bank called the Société Générale à Bruxelles, Crown was unable to transfer the money.⁴⁵ This blockade on dividends remained in effect until 1948.⁴⁶

World War II

The inability to transfer dividends from Crown Brewery to Heineken was one of the numerous difficulties that the new multinational beer conglomerate faced during the war. Another difficulty included the loss of German employees; after the war began, Crown very quickly lost its German brewmaster and its cooper (the man in charge of making wooden barrels or casks for aging the beer), as both abandoned their jobs to return to their homeland.⁴⁷ An even greater difficulty that Crown faced after the outbreak of the war was that all of its activities involving the governments or citizens of any occupied countries (e.g. Belgium, the Netherlands, and France) came under the purview of an Egyptian governmental body created during the war, the Office of Occupied and Controlled Territories (Fr. *Office des Territoires Occupés et Contrôlés*, Ar. *Maktab al-Bilād al-Muḥtala wa al-Khāḍī' li-l-Riqāba*, henceforth, OTOC).⁴⁸ It was this body that Crown had to deal with when, as discussed above, it wanted to disburse its dividends, and it was this body that decided to put a hold on any dividend payments. The OTOC served as a watchdog of any action the breweries took with regard to Belgium or the Netherlands and also had full control of Crown

and Pyramid's transactions with these countries. For example, during the war, the OTOC not only blocked any Crown funds going from Egypt to Holland, but also kept them in their own coffers.⁴⁹ Thus, in 1945, when the OTOC informed Crown that it could start paying out to its stockholders, the money came from the OTOC.⁵⁰ When, in 1948, the OTOC did unblock funds flowing to Holland, an agreement between the Egyptian and Dutch governments enabled the Egyptian government to control the bases through which companies could transfer the money from one country to the other. In total, the OTOC held nearly 48,000 pounds sterling during the war that was meant to be transferred from Crown to Cobra.⁵¹

The OTOC's involvement with Crown was emblematic of how World War II allowed governmental bodies in Egypt to become more involved in private businesses in the name of national interest. An even clearer example of the Egyptian government's new relationship with Crown Brewery was the instance of Crown's moving its headquarters to Egypt. Since its establishment in 1897, Crown Brewery had been a multinational venture. While its main operations—the production, transportation, and sale of beer—took place in Egypt, the company maintained a small headquarters in Brussels. Despite the numerous changes in ownership, including the involvement of the Bomontis, Rene Gaston-Dreyfus, and Heineken, the staff in Brussels remained relatively stable. Emblematic of this stability was a Belgian industrialist, Arthur Roland, who helped lead Crown Brewery in Brussels from its beginnings in 1897 until 1943.⁵² The resiliency of the European headquarters was challenged, however, by the German invasion of Belgium in 1940. According to both Egyptian Martial Law and Belgian law, Crown Brewery was required to move its headquarters to Alexandria upon the arrival of the Germans.⁵³ Also due to martial law, the headquarters had to have all of their expenditures approved by the Egyptian

Ministry of Finance. The headquarters would remain at Alexandria until 1945.

Despite the disruption of having to move its headquarters, Crown Brewery was still able to maintain its financial viability. In an internal memo, one of its administrators noted that during the war Crown used its brewery machinery nonstop.⁵⁴

Although the occupation of Belgium ended in 1944, Crown's problems did not. In fact, the issues that Crown would face after 1945 were linked to those of the larger world, particularly Egypt and Belgium, as it attempted to recover from World War II. In the postwar period of normalization, the Ministry of Finance of both countries aimed to make up for time lost in the war. In this situation, Crown Brewery's multinational nature became a liability. As a Belgian company whose main operations were in Egypt, Crown was expected to pay back taxes on its capital and profits for the period from 1935 to 1940 in both Belgium and Egypt. This reality was a shock to Crown, as this double taxation, at least in their eyes, threatened the very existence of the company.⁵⁵ The total for the Belgium taxes would have totaled seventeen million Belgian francs.⁵⁶ The company did not have the money to pay this enormous fee, as any profits that they had made during the period in question had already been distributed. Crown did not want to dip into its reserves, as that money was needed to bring its machinery up to date. Most of the equipment that it was using in 1945 dated from the early days of the breweries and was at least forty years old.⁵⁷

Facing this intractable tax situation, Crown turned to their Dutch investor, Heineken, in hopes that the large corporation could use its own expertise to solve the problem. Heineken, recognizing that one of its newest assets was distressed, did its best to resolve the issue. It sent Dirk Stikker, the head of Cobra, to Alexandria to evaluate the Crown situation, and it enlisted the service of Paul Bodart, a doctor of law and the head of Interbra (one of the brewing companies it acquired around the

same time it bought into Crown and Pyramid Brewery), and Carlo de Mey, an expert in fiscal law, to consult with the Crown leadership and find a workable solution to the tax issue. All of these parties spent over a year working on the problem, studying Belgian law in hopes of lessening the company's tax burden.

One solution, suggested by Carlo de Mey, that gained a good deal of traction was to abandon the headquarters in Brussels and move all operations to Egypt. In de Mey's estimation, the law that had forced Crown's move to Egypt had not been abrogated; thus, Crown could claim that the company needed to remain there. Because all of Crown's business activities were located in Egypt, this argument was feasible. Making the argument would require eliminating any connection between Crown and Belgium. By making this switch, the company could hope to evade the Belgian tax authorities and only have to reckon with the taxes in Egypt.⁵⁸ Although the company had been founded as a Belgian enterprise and had been connected to the country for more than fifty years, this transition seemed feasible in the extraordinary context of the war. An additional point in Crown's favor was that it had allowed the presidency of the head of the Belgian operation, Arthur Roland, to expire in 1943 without finding a replacement.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, not everyone at Crown was in agreement on this potential solution. Paul Bodart, the other legal expert whom Cobra had charged with the task of finding a solution, was less than sold on the proposal. While Bodart recognized the cleverness of de Mey's thinking, he was extremely worried about how the Belgian government would react to what was a relatively cynical tax-avoidance maneuver. Yes, this move could exempt Crown Brewery from an onerous tax burden, but the Belgian government could also force Crown to pay for the liquidation of the company in Brussels.⁶⁰ Likewise, while it may have been easier to never return to Brussels than

try to argue down the taxes, there may have been other challenges if the Belgian government proved unwilling to negotiate with the Egyptian government.⁶¹

Bodart was not alone in his skepticism of de Mey's scheme. Before de Mey made his suggestion on moving operations, the executive board of Crown was fully committed to returning to Belgium after the war. Even though the company was going against his judgment, he offered some reasonable final suggestions in a memo to Crown. The first was that Crown should affirm that, since the beginning of the war, the administrative seat of the company had been in Egypt and was always meant to stay there. Bodart's second bit of advice was to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting, in Alexandria of course, to confirm that the headquarters of the company would remain in Egypt.⁶² The company did not heed his advice, instead opening up the decision to an Extraordinary General Meeting in Brussels. Fortunately, the executives in attendance recognized that there was "technical or geographical reason for maintaining the place of General Meetings in Alexandria."⁶³

Thus, having made its decision, Crown Brewery officially moved its headquarters to Alexandria in 1946. Notwithstanding the worries of Paul Bodart, Crown does not appear to have had issues with the Belgian government after this point. For example, at meeting of shareholders in 1947, there was no news about the Belgian response to Crown's gambit.⁶⁴ The Belgian government's indifference to the movement of a beer company whose sales and production was limited to a foreign country was only natural, as this country, like the rest of Europe, was at that point primarily concerned with recovering from the war. Still, it is important to note that, despite some token mention by both de Mey and the Crown executives about becoming an Egyptian company, Crown did not proceed with any type of Egyptianization after moving their headquarters. In fact, the company changed remarkably little after the move. For the

executives of both Crown and Cobra, the company continued to function as a “foreign” company within Egypt.

Crown’s break with Brussels was not a completely clean one. Although Arthur Roland had ceased his duties as the head of the Belgian operations of Crown, some Crown employees still remained in Belgium. In particular, Crown had appointed Marcel Cuvelier, a Belgian citizen, as the company representative in Belgium for the transition from being a Belgian company to an Egyptian one. Also, Crown’s legal counsel, De May and Bodart, both operated out of Brussels. The main issue with these remaining employees was that, as residents of Belgium, they sought compensation in Belgian francs. During the war, this currency had become increasingly rare in Egypt, so Crown was not able to acquire enough currency to pay the wages of these three employees.⁶⁵ Crown appealed to Cobra to provide 100,000 Belgian Francs to cover the wages of de Mey and Cuvelier, who were in the employ of Crown Brewery. Crown leadership did not believe they were responsible for Bodart, for, after Heineken’s purchase of Interbra, he had become an employee of Cobra. Crown rightfully pointed out that de Mey had come at the recommendation of the head of Cobra, Mr. Stikker, and had been tremendously helpful in the nationality issue, which could have cost Cobra a great deal of money.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, Cobra was unconvinced by Crown’s arguments as to the necessity of compensating these Belgian employees. Cobra stated vaguely that it was unable to find a solution to the problem of the employees’ pay,⁶⁷ and it provided no reason for why it did not want to help Crown in this matter. The explanation was most likely not money, for while 100,000 Belgian francs could be a significant sum for Crown, it was not a problem for a massive multinational like Heineken. Cobra’s desire to not pay these employees was probably driven by its valuation that these employees were not

worth it. Cobra's estimation of Cuvelier's value, for one, became patently clear when, nearly a year after receiving this request, the company sent a representative to Brussels to inform Cuvelier that his services were no longer needed.⁶⁸

Tightening Control

This anecdote about Cuvelier's termination illustrates that, despite the general tenor of respect that permeated the interactions between Cobra and Crown/Pyramid, the relationship was characterized by a distinct power dynamic of which no party was ignorant. A main point of contention between the Egyptian companies and their multinational overseers involved the placement of Cobra/ Heineken employees on the Crown board. As is clear from the above discussion, the communication chain between Heineken and Crown/Pyramid Brewery was highly inefficient. For example, in the case of deciding on the nationality of Crown, Cobra had to send its head, Mr. Stikker, to Egypt to get a handle on the situation. Likewise, if Cobra wanted to be represented at shareholders meetings, it had to go through significant hurdles. As discussed above, it could deposit their shares with a trading company in Holland who would then send a representative to the meeting. Another method that it started using after the war was to give power of attorney to an employee of Pyramid Brewery to represent Cobra at Crown's shareholder meetings.⁶⁹ This method involved another step as, according to the regulations of Crown, this employee had to be a shareholder in Crown, and thus had to buy shares in Crown before attending a meeting.⁷⁰

After 1947, Cobra aimed to eliminate this inefficiency and worked to have a Cobra employee on the board of Crown. The placement of someone on the board was an attempt to transform Cobra's beer venture from a loosely controlled venture into a tightly controlled venture.⁷¹ In loosely controlled firms, "foreign investors had considerable foreign managerial and technical involvement," but were unable to

translate this involvement into domination.⁷² Tightly controlled firms, on the other hand, were carefully linked to European corporate and individual investors, and oftentimes served as subsidiaries and branches of the firms.⁷³ Before World War II, Crown and Pyramid were undeniably loosely controlled, as the managers and executives on the ground in Egypt exerted the most influence. However, seeing the difficulties that Heineken experienced during the war, Cobra tried to change that practice.

As has been discussed above, Mouratiadis and Crown had fought and secured a large degree of autonomy in their battle with Rene Gaston-Dreyfus. They were thus deeply protective of this autonomy and were not keen on any encroachment from Cobra, especially Cobra's request by Cobra for representation on their board. The only way Crown would even consider the concession was if they were allowed to have a representative on the Bomonti-Pyramid board.⁷⁴ This request illustrates that, despite the external appearance of unanimity between Crown and Pyramid, people within both companies viewed them as autonomous bodies. This point becomes even clearer when we consider the reaction of one H.G. Ivens, an employee of Pyramid who was representing Cobra at this Crown shareholder meeting. Ivens, reporting that Crown's president, Spiro Spiridis, had, in 1947, requested representation on the Pyramid board in exchange for Cobra representation (and for a second time no less), called the request "absurd."⁷⁵

So how did Cobra attempt to circumvent Crown's protestations about Cobra's representation on their board? It appears that Cobra used the other brewery, Pyramid, against Crown. Their basic strategy was to give 4860 shares of Crown Brewery, from among the 8978 it owned, to the Pyramid Brewery. With control of these shares, Pyramid would become the largest shareholder in Crown Brewery. This was a

backdoor for Cobra to acquire local representation in Crown without forcing their hand and souring the relationship. Cobra was the largest stockholder in Pyramid, and because Pyramid had not been as recalcitrant to members of Cobra sitting on their board, it had handpicked representatives on the board of Pyramid Brewery, who were consulted on all major decisions.⁷⁶ In particular, an executive named Oscar Adrian Eduard Egbert Lewe Wittert van Hoogland (who hereafter will be referred to as Wittert van Hoogland) had taken a large leadership role in Pyramid after his appointment, assuming the title of managing director.

With these Cobra employees embedded in the upper executive realm of Pyramid, Pyramid's new stake in Crown meant that Cobra now had an indirect way of influencing Crown. Through the classic imperialist ploy of divide and conquer, Cobra convinced Pyramid Brewery to go along with their plan. Although this plan ended up being an elegant solution to Cobra's problems, Bomonti-Pyramid unsurprisingly looked askance at the dealings of Cobra, which the Dutch company framed as an exchange of nearly five thousand shares of Crown for the fifty thousand shares of Nigerian Brewery Limited in Lagos that Pyramid owned.⁷⁷

The five main parties involved in the negotiations were Ahmed Farghali Pasha, Yusuf Zulficar Pasha, and Rene Ismalun, all of whom were of Egyptian nationality and sat on the board of Bomonti-Pyramid; Wittert Van Hoogland, who also sat on the Pyramid board; and G.A. Martin, a British shareholder. The three Egyptians represented the interests of Pyramid, while Wittert van Hoogland and Martin spoke for Cobra. The exchange of shares was obviously a touchy subject because Wittert van Hoogland was dilatory in proposing the plan to the three Egyptians. When Heineken had asked him to look into it on January 21, 1952, Wittert van Hoogland responded a week later that he had only talked to Farghali, very briefly, and could

provide no conclusion to the matter.⁷⁸ Farghali proved an elusive figure. When Wittert van Hoogland did finally schedule a meeting nearly a month later, only Ismalun and Zulficar attended. Farghali cancelled thirty minutes before the meeting, insisting that he was heavily embroiled in cotton negotiations. (Farghali's main business venture was the cotton company he inherited from his father).⁷⁹ This was not the first time Farghali had proved difficult when it came to meeting with Wittert van Hoogland, for as Wittert van Hoogland noted, *this time* the excuse appeared to be valid; there was a Cotton Fair going on at the same time.⁸⁰

When Wittert van Hoogland met with Ismalun and Zulficar, the two men had different reactions to Heineken's proposal. Ismalun was immediately on board, but Zulficar, despite a long conversation with Wittert van Hoogland, was reluctant, citing the need to hear the opinions of Farghali before making any decisions.⁸¹ Zulficar's hesitation dispirited Wittert van Hoogland because if Zulficar could not be convinced, then convincing Farghali would be an even more difficult task.⁸² Regardless, because Wittert van Hoogland as well as Martin and Ismalun were on board, they could all outvote the dissenters and push through the transaction. However, Wittert van Hoogland thought they should avoid this tactic unless Cobra thought it was absolutely necessary, the better to maintain good relations. Instead, Wittert van Hoogland thought that a note from Cobra and Martin about the importance of the deal could convince the Egyptians to accept it. Wittert van Hoogland was convinced that they, Cobra and Heineken, would need every bit of persuasion to sway Farghali, and he was correct.⁸³

When Wittert van Hoogland was finally able to gather all of the Egyptians together in April at a board meeting, it was Farghali who held up the deal, doing so by raising questions about the deal's fairness. Cobra would exchange the Crown shares

for the Nigerian shares at a price of 120 piasters per share, a sum that covered both Pyramid's original investment in the shares and a three percent yearly interest on them. Although there would be a loss of about 863 Egyptian pounds, this was covered by Cobra's one-sterling discount on the Crown shares that Pyramid was getting.⁸⁴ Farghali was unconvinced, however, and believed that because Pyramid was giving Cobra such a below-market price on the Nigerian stock, that the least Cobra could do was pay a four percent yearly interest instead of three percent.⁸⁵ Wittert van Hoogland eventually conceded to four percent, and this concession, plus the direct contact that Cobra made with the Egyptians at Wittert's request, was instrumental in getting the deal pushed through.⁸⁶ With the deal completed, some question remained about who would represent Pyramid Brewery at the shareholders' meeting for Crown Brewery.⁸⁷ Unsurprisingly, Cobra chose the man who had done so much work for them in this matter, Wittert van Hoogland.⁸⁸ Wittert van Hoogland would have a powerful role to play in both of the companies from 1953 to 1957, serving as Cobra's main man on the ground.⁸⁹

The great difficulty in finishing this deal, which ultimately benefited both parties, evinces a deeper rift between the Egypt-based entrepreneurs and their European counterparts. Wittert van Hoogland remarked on this rift in discussing the particularities of the deal. He stated, "When one proposes something to an Egyptian he generally thinks there is something that he does not see behind the proposal and therefore that he is being had."⁹⁰ From the European side, this statement speaks to the essentialized view that Europeans had of Egyptians. Even a relatively magnanimous European who was willing to accommodate Egyptian wishes for the sake of good relations could view Egyptians as an undifferentiated mass rather than as individuals who had their own distinct characteristics. Nevertheless, the statement and the actions

of Farghali also hint at a sense of distrust among Egyptian business elites vis-à-vis Europeans. This distrust would only be natural considering the legal and economic advantages of European businessmen in Egypt, such as the dual legal system that favored those with foreign citizenship.⁹¹ Of course, Farghali's intuition may have been correct, as Cobra was using this deal to manipulate Egyptians, just not him.

These hard dealings also tell us something more personal about Farghali. As he was arguing with Wittert van Hoogland over the percent interest on the Nigerian shares, he made a statement to Rene Ismalun, his fellow Egyptian on the board and a member of the Egyptian Jewish community: "I think we should be like the jew[sic] and ask Cobra to compensate us on the basis of 4% interest."⁹² This bit of off-the-cuff anti-Semitism was meant as a way to justify Farghali's hard line, but to the modern reader it exemplifies how anti-Semitism, like colonial attitudes among Europeans, pervaded Egyptian culture at the time. In fact, the breeziness with which Farghali mentions "jews" as a joke signals the cultural pervasiveness of anti-Semitism. Ismalun's response to Farghali only affirms the point, as he notes in a quick rejoinder: "[t]hat would not be like the jew[sic] but like Farghaly[sic]."⁹³ This response not only confirms that the anti-Semitism was expressed in jest, but that this was probably not the first instance in which Ismalun had heard such a statement.

What Heineken Controlled

While it is clear from the above discussion that Heineken was willing to go to great lengths to assert its control over Crown and Pyramid Breweries, it is not immediately apparent what this tighter control meant. This section explores what this tighter control entailed because the form and function of the Heineken-Crown-Pyramid partnership took after the deal would characterize the breweries until 1963.

Heineken's main base of operations within Egypt was Pyramid Brewery. As shown in the above discussion, due to Heineken's penetration of the executive branch and the long duration of the relations, Heineken's control of Pyramid was much greater than of Crown.

In the eyes of Heineken, its services to Pyramid came in five forms: advising, control, staff, yeast, and supplies.⁹⁴ As shown by the keg example, Heineken had served the advisory role for as long as it had been involved in the Egyptian beer industry. However, with its push for greater control after World War II, Heineken came to advise on all technical matters ranging from the first step of brewing (raw materials used) to the last (refrigeration). Through this advisory role, Heineken pushed Pyramid Brewery to implement the latest innovations in brewing in the name of maintaining a healthy bottom line and a product befitting the Heineken label. For example, it advised Pyramid not only on what products (the type of malt) and production methods (new malting systems) they should use, but also directed them on how to conduct their own lab-based analysis of the raw materials and the beer produced.⁹⁵ This advice was generally rendered in monthly technical reports exchanged between Pyramid and Heineken. For more complex matters, however, Heineken either sent a representative to Pyramid or requested that Pyramid send one to Holland.⁹⁶

This system of monthly technical reports and visits was at once the means by which Heineken advised Pyramid and provided their second service, control. While the technical reports were an important way for Heineken and Pyramid to discuss best practices, they were also a way for Heineken to keep constant tabs on the company. These reports were usually written by one of the men whom Heineken had placed on the board, which eliminated any chance that the report would paint a rosier picture

than the reality. Likewise, the visits of Heineken employees were meant not only as a way to advise on technical matters, but also a way for Heineken to monitor the operations and workers of the company. A third point of control for Heineken was that it had Pyramid send a monthly sample of beer to be analyzed in one of Heineken's laboratories.⁹⁷ This service was meant to ensure that the beer produced in Egypt matched Heineken's exacting standards.

Heineken not only relied on reports, visits, samples, and members of the executive board to assure that Pyramid put out a product worthy of the Heineken name, but also placed a man highly trained in Heineken's methods of making beer as the brewmaster. While the industrialization of beer-making allowed companies to produce beer with fewer well-trained workers, it did not eliminate the craft in making beer entirely. A person with a large knowledge base, the brewmaster, was still needed to ensure that the product tasted the way the company wanted. The brewmaster was massively important to the direction of the company, and it is for this reason that, as I discuss below, one of the major boons in the nationalization of the beer industry was the expulsion of the foreign-trained brewmasters.

The placement of a Heineken-trained brewmaster at Pyramid was especially important because of another service Heineken rendered, sending their strain of yeast to Pyramid. As discussed above, the greater understanding and subsequent control of the life cycle of yeast inaugurated the scientification and mechanization of brewing. With this new understanding, breweries could optimize the brewing process and even begin to breed proprietary strains of yeast. Thus, the yeast Heineken used to make its beer was unique to the company, a closely guarded secret that differentiated it from other brands. The brewmaster had to be Heineken-trained so that, having learned to brew using Heineken's strain, he could maximize its output in a different setting.

Beyond the brewmaster, Heineken also aimed, when it could, to place people whom it had trained within Pyramid.

In addition to sending part of the workforce, Heineken also served as the broker for the Pyramid's acquisition of new materials. In a similar process as seen above with the kegs, Heineken sent pro-forma invoices to Pyramid for any raw or auxiliary materials and machines and installations that were not present in the local market.⁹⁸ When possible, Heineken's engineers inspected anything before it was sent to Pyramid. For those materials available in the local market, like crown corks (bottle caps), Heineken insisted that Pyramid send them to Holland for inspection.⁹⁹

As noted above, Heineken very often matched these services to Pyramid with a strong amount of surveillance. Even greater surveillance was demanded by the financial and administrative happenings of the company. Pyramid was responsible for sending Heineken monthly reports on the price of beer, Pyramid and Crown sales, share prices, their cash situation, and meetings of the administrative board. Beyond these monthly check-ins, Pyramid also had to send a quarterly budget and feasibility study of that budget, a yearly inventory, the position and cost of any imports, any lawsuits raised against the company, any regulations passed by the government that would affect the company, and, finally, the status of Pyramid's relationship with Crown.¹⁰⁰

As should be obvious from the above description of the more tightly controlled Pyramid Brewery, Heineken was fully committed to instilling "total brewing" in the Egyptian company. It viewed Pyramid as an extension of the company and insisted it measure up to Heineken's high standards. As I will show, these policies often caused a good deal of conflict between the Dutch in the company

on one hand and the Egyptian entrepreneurs, managers, and workers on the other. Still, the policies represented a well-thought out system that was designed to support a cutting edge brewery in Egypt. The depths of Heineken's demands from the company should come as no surprise because Heineken was a multinational brewery experienced with brewing outside of Holland. In fact, the procedures that it enforced in Pyramid were similar to those it implemented everywhere else in its beer empire.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to classify Pyramid and Crown breweries as "tightly controlled" firms according to the metrics of Tignor. Despite all of the pushes for greater control, as we saw with the negotiations with Farghali, the people on the ground still had a massive influence on the direction of the companies. Heineken and its representatives in the companies could map out whatever best practices they wanted; but ultimately, the decision on whether policies were implemented relied on the local leadership. As I discuss later, despite all of Heineken's advantages, it was never able to control Crown like it did Pyramid.

(Partial) Egyptianization

Heineken's lack of complete control over Crown and Pyramid was exactly what the Egyptian government of the time wanted. As Heineken was trying to transition Crown and Pyramid Breweries from being lightly controlled foreign enterprises to tightly controlled ones, the Egyptian government was instituting policies that were pushing private industries toward a singular goal, Egyptianization. This push grew out of a series of concurrent trends. The first trend was the slow erosion of the Capitulations and their main manifestation, the Mixed Courts. The Capitulations were "a set of privileges granted to nationals of certain countries that effectively exempted them from Egyptian law and judicial institutions."¹⁰² The Mixed Courts was the body

that attempted to manage the judicial needs of two antagonistic forces in Egypt, the Egyptian government and the capitulatory powers. What the Courts became in practice was a dual legal system, in which Egyptian and foreign companies were tried separately. With regard to private European companies like Crown and Pyramid, this dual system made them practically inviolate. However, the Mixed Courts had, from their founding, been continually under attack by both the Egyptians and the British.¹⁰³ Opposition reached a critical mass in 1937, when the Montreux Conference established a phasing out of the Capitulations, which was then followed by the abolition of the Mixed Courts in 1949. Without this impediment, the Egyptian government could now deal with foreign businesses that for so long had resided in Egypt as judicial blind spots that were exempt from tariffs and taxes.¹⁰⁴

At the same time, World War II emboldened the Egyptian government to deal with foreign companies in a new, more invasive way. As discussed above with the actions of OTOC (*Office des Territoires Occupés et Contrôles*, Ar. *Maktab al-Bilād al-Muḥtala wa al-Khāḍī' li-l-Riqāba*), the Egyptian government, acting under the auspices of martial law, honed its new methods in regulating businesses and their profits. The tactics that the government used to ensure that no money flowed to British enemies, i.e. requesting lists of shareholders, bank statements, and letters and statements from executives, were some of the same tactics they utilized to encourage the Egyptianization of the economy.

The desire to Egyptianize the economy grew out of a sense of economic nationalism, the belief that Egyptians should run the Egyptian economy. This idea originated in the 1920s with the Sidqi Commission on Commerce and Industry, Bank Misr, and the Egyptian Federation of Industries, all of which formed during the period from 1916 to 1922. Bank Misr (Meaning, “Bank of Egypt” in Arabic), which was

founded and headed by Egyptians, seemed to be the example *par excellence* of Egypt's new economic nationalism. However, as Robert Vitalis shows, these institutions were gradualist and were still intimately tied to non-Egyptian capital. In the 1920s, business nationalism was merely a convenient way to support new ventures and garner public support for the multi-national business groups that were forming around certain enterprising Egyptian individuals.¹⁰⁵

However, beginning in the 1930s and culminating with the Joint Stock Company Law of 1947, the ideals of 1920s Egyptian economic nationalism became more of a reality. In fact, the removal of the Capitulations and the eventual abolishment of the Mixed Courts were framed, on the Egyptian side, by the rhetoric of economic nationalism.¹⁰⁶ The Company Law of 1947, however, represented the first powerful push by the Egyptian government for Egyptianization. It required Egyptian companies (those with major bases in Egypt) “to offer 51 percent of their stock to Egyptians and to place Egyptian nationals on 40 percent of the board seats.”¹⁰⁷ These moves pushed many multinational companies, including the beer companies, to employ more Egyptian citizens. With regard to the beer industry, it is indisputable that the main leadership became more Egyptian. The president, Chief Executive Officer, and primary stockholder of each of the breweries after 1950 were all native-born Egyptian citizens: Muhammad Ahmed Farghali Pasha for Bomonti-Pyramid Brewery and Muhammad ‘Aziz Abaza for Crown Brewery. Both of these men were exemplary business oligarchs who came to dominate the private sector in the 1940s and the 1950s.

As Robert Vitalis has shown, a distinctive feature of the Egyptian private sector from the 1930s through 1950s was the business group fronted by a well-connected business oligarch. Although business groups—individuals and families

organized as coherent coalitions—had been a feature of the Egyptian economy since the late nineteenth century, the Egyptian-led business group came to dominate in the period from 1937 to 1957. Vitalis identifies three distinct characteristics of these business groups: (1) they encompassed “a diversity of firms across different economic sectors; (2) [they had an] ownership-management coalition, though a single individual [was] often identified as the group’s leader; (3) the group’s core leadership [was] bound by personal, family, ethnic or other communal ties that provide[d] the basis for coordinating its operations.”¹⁰⁸

The two Egyptian entrepreneurs, Farghali Pasha and ‘Aziz Abaza, and their business interests were very much in this model. Both were products of what Eric Davis refers to as the Egyptian landowning elites’ familiarization with capitalist enterprise through foreign capital.¹⁰⁹ Farghali’s father was a successful Alexandrian cotton merchant who, with the help of foreign investors, established Farghali Cotton and Investment Company. Using the connections afforded by his father’s business, as well as his own business acumen and a familiarity with European business practices gleaned from his education in England, Farghali Pasha was able to sit on many different executive boards. In 1946, he sat on the boards of twenty-nine different companies.¹¹⁰ ‘Aziz Abaza, a member of one of Egypt’s largest landholding families and the head of Crown Brewery, also sat on numerous boards, including the Land Bank of Egypt, the *Société Anonyme de Misr pour le théâtre et le cinéma* (The corporation for Egyptian theater and cinema), and SEP (a petrol company).¹¹¹

Several other Egyptian citizens joined Farghali and ‘Abaza on these boards. Of the six other members on the Bomonti-Pyramid Brewery board, three were Egyptian citizens.¹¹² Meanwhile, Crown Brewery had a similar percentage of Egyptian citizens on its board.¹¹³ Some of the board members shared a similar

involvement in business groups; the Jewish Egyptian Rene Ismalun of the Pyramid Brewery, discussed above, sat on the boards of seven other companies.¹¹⁴ Moreover, the “foreign” elements were not as foreign as the government led observers to believe. For example, in the cases of Xenon and Katherine Pilavachi and Spiro Spiridis on the Crown Brewery board, these board members not only lived in Egypt, but also spoke Arabic and were integral to the large Greek Egyptian community, which had ancient roots and had grown steadily since the 1860s.¹¹⁵ Thus, the “foreigners” were as invested in a successful and prosperous Egypt as was a man like Farghali; they also had a distinctly different relationship with the country than, for example, the Cobra representatives who sat on the Pyramid board. A useful term for them is the *mutamaşşirūn*, those “people of foreign origin who had become permanent residents” and in their language and habits had become “Egyptianized.”¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, the *mutamaşşirūn* did not have Egyptian citizenship, and thus the government grouped them with men like Wittert van Hoogland, Kettner, and Feith.

The Egyptian government’s grouping the *mutamaşşirūn* with foreign-born industrialists like Wittert van Hoogland and Kettner, was based on two factors: the transnational character of the *mutamaşşirūn* and the citizenship process as it existed from the 1930s to 1950s. As Gudrun Krämer shows, until the late 1930s the prospects of legal and fiscal exemption through the Capitulations and the Mixed Courts made it much more attractive for local minorities to apply for foreign rather than Egyptian nationality.¹¹⁷ As a result, there was a mass of residents in Egypt who had spent their entire lives in the country but were not citizens. This trend was particularly pronounced among the religious minority communities; as Krämer notes “the majority of Jews living in Egypt in the twentieth century did not have Egyptian citizenship.”¹¹⁸ An excellent example of such residents is the Suareses, a prominent Jewish family

who were also Italian citizens.¹¹⁹ The linguistic, cultural, and economic heterogeneity of this mass of residents makes any attempts to place them into the “foreign” or “Egyptian” dichotomy reductive. However, that is exactly what the Egyptian state, with legislation like the Company Law of 1947, attempted to do.

As a result of this legislation, these *mutamaşşirūn* and the companies that employed them were faced with the dilemma that one of their greatest strengths—their cultural dynamism and multi-cultural familiarity—had become a major threat to their employment.¹²⁰ For the individual citizen, in order to save his job he often had to seek Egyptian citizenship. As Simon Shamir shows, the path to Egyptian citizenship for these local minorities before 1947 was very difficult.¹²¹ In particular, despite the 1929 Nationality Law’s Western liberal basis, the burden of proof need to become a citizen and the institutional bias against *mutamaşşirūn* prevented many minorities from gaining Egyptian citizenship even if they wanted it.¹²² Despite pressure from the government, the breweries were able to avoid any traumatic losses of executives or employees. In fact, prior to 1952, the companies had some success with their employees gaining, or rather confirming, their Egyptian citizenship. For example, Crown Brewery’s auditor, Hanna Yusuf Hanna, a Coptic Christian, whose declaration of state-recognized Egyptianness is contained in the Pyramid breweries records, did succeed in gaining citizenship.¹²³ However, citizenship would become less attainable after the ascension of the Free Officers, as they would take what had been laid down in 1947 and build upon it until they had removed all of the “foreign” elements.

Shareholders

The greatest example of the partial Egyptianization of the beer industry was its stockholders. Shares in the companies were an ambiguous entity that, depending on

the number owned, could mean a great deal or very little. The great majority of shareholders were passive investors with a small number of shares, usually less than one hundred, who had little to no say in the day to day management or future planning of the companies. For example, the Bomonti family, who after the Heineken buy-in had no say in the future of Pyramid, was still stockholders until 1960, owning more than nine thousand shares.¹²⁴ Likewise, some of the families of the early Belgian investors had a stake in the companies until full nationalization in 1962.¹²⁵ Generally, a small minority of the shareholders owned the great majority of the shares, which reflected their involvement in the companies.

When the shares of Pyramid and Crown were taken together, which the Egyptian government did before it nationalized both companies, the largest shareholder was Heineken Brewery. By 1963, Heineken owned forty-four percent of the Crown and Pyramid together.¹²⁶ As this chapter has shown, from the time it purchased its first share, Heineken worked, through Cobra, to put Crown and Pyramid under tighter control. Heineken would stay invested in the beer companies till the bitter end refusing to give up its shares until the Nasser government forced them to. Of the remaining sixty-six percent of the stock, those with Egyptian citizenship controlled thirty-five percent. Of this thirty five percent, the majority was in the hands of the Farghalis.¹²⁷ Crown and Pyramid breweries were truly a family business as the largest shareholders besides Muhammad Ahmad Farghali were his wife, his brother, his daughters, his sons, and his cotton company.¹²⁸ The concentration of stock in the hands of certain families, however, was not limited strictly to decision makers like the Farghalis. For example, the Tawfiq family (Hatim, Hazim, Hasan, and Hisham Tawfiq) each owned twenty-five shares.¹²⁹ For small investors this family model often was the result of a father investing in stock for himself and his family, so that

they would have a revenue stream to either supplement their future income or as part of the safety net upon the father's death. For example, there were numerous stockholders listed as *al-armala* (the widow) of Mr. So-and-So.

As for the remaining 31 percent of shareholders, they came from North America, all over Europe (Britain, Italy, Austria, France etc.) and the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Turkey, etc.).¹³⁰ Most of these foreign stockholders, like stockholders generally, were of the small variety owning less than a hundred shares with little to no say in the functioning of the companies. While the nationalist narrative would argue that this was an example of foreign influence, these small shareholders were indistinguishable from the Egyptian shareholders except for where Crown or Pyramid sent their dividend check. Included also among this "foreign" contingent were the *mutamaşşirūn*), who had an entirely different relationship with the companies. Although none of their share numbers could compete with Farghali, shareholders like the Pilavachi's and Mouratiadis' had a significant impact on the direction of the company. They attended shareholder's meetings and were often in the employ of the company. These "foreign" stockholders likewise seemed to follow the family investment plan, with husbands, wives, and children often owning shares together.

What has been noticeable from the above discussion of the inner developments of Crown and Pyramid Breweries has been the complete lack of women. However, in the case of shareholders, the presence of women was striking. In the listing of shareholders of the two companies in 1963, there were eighty Egyptian women listed as stockholders of Crown and Pyramid Breweries, one of whom, Rose Basili, was the only person outside of the Farghalis to own more than a thousand shares.¹³¹ It is not clear if women's ownership of stock was a path to real influence or

merely a way to avoid the appearance of the concentration of stock in a paterfamilias' hands. One significant example of the power shares could provide women was Katharine Pilavachi.

While in 1963 she only owned around 400 shares, in the 1950s she owned more than five thousand shares. This large stockholding meant that between the years 1954 and 1959 Pilavachi sat on the board of Crown Brewery with her husband, Xenon.¹³² She was also an active participant in the shareholders' meetings. One of the particularities of shareholders' meetings is that for ease of function certain people served as representatives for a group of shareholders. This grouping of stocks allowed decisions to be made more quickly because one person could speak for many or represent shareholders who were not in Egypt, while still maintaining a quorum. For example, Wittert van Hoogland would often represent himself, Feith, Kettner, Cobra and Crown depending on the meeting. This grouping of stock also showed who really was in charge of the stock. So, for example, despite a whole family owning stock, it was usually the father who represented everyone at the meeting. All of this makes the fact that Katharine Pilavachi attended the shareholders meeting, in person, exemplary of the active role that she aimed to play in the company.¹³³

An even better example of her active role in the company was her and her husband's recalcitrance to fall in line with the demands of Pyramid. When Eric Karl Kettner, who I will discuss at length in the following chapters, took over for Wittert van Hoogland as the managing director of Pyramid in 1957 one of his first targets was Crown, who, in Kettner's eyes, was putting out an inferior product and was not doing enough to sell that product.¹³⁴ He found the beer that Crown was putting out lacking in its taste, brilliance, and foam stability.¹³⁵ These were cardinal sins because, as discussed above with reference to beer advertisements in Egypt, these were main

selling points of beer in the Egyptian market. This poor maintenance of the brand was coupled with poor sales in Alexandria, which he believed was the fault of Crown not trying hard enough to sell the product. He was so distressed at how this non-standardized beer was affecting the sales of Stella in Egypt that he suggested the replacement of the man in charge of beer production at Crown, Michel Mavroviti.¹³⁶

However, all of this grandstanding was not met with compliance, but a rather impertinent response. Spiro Spridis, the managing director at Crown, boss to Mavroviti, and employee of the Pilavachis, who sat on Crown's board, said to Kettner that the difference in quality was merely a matter of appreciation.¹³⁷ Crown's customers in Alexandria have never ever commented on the beer, which fits perfectly to their taste. Not only that, but these same customers said they preferred beer made in Alexandria to the one made in Cairo.¹³⁸ This intransigency on the part of Crown, grew out of their distance from Cairo and Crown's history of autonomy from Bomonti-Pyramid, which stretched back to the 1920s with Constantine Mouratiadis. Emboldened by these two factors the Pilvachis (Xenon and his wife Katharine), who were both large shareholders and sat on the board of Crown, felt no need to listen to what Pyramid had to say in Cairo, even if they were backed by Heineken.¹³⁹ This discord between the breweries would continue until 1961, when Heineken decided the only way Crown would start selling the same beer was by having Pyramid buy the 4118 shares that Heineken, through the holding company Cobra, was holding in Crown and then send a Heineken approved brewmaster.¹⁴⁰ This plan never came to fruition, as the Egyptian government nationalized the company before they could carry through the plan and as I will show in the next chapters Crown remained a thorn in Pyramid's side.

Conclusion

This chapter has tracked the maturation of the Pyramid and Crown Breweries before, during, and after World War II. This phase was marked by two new sources of power and intrusion, Heineken Brewing Company and the Egyptian government. Heineken's involvement went from investment in an attractive asset to active participation in the beer companies' daily operations. Although Heineken ultimately acted like other imperialist multinationals, prioritizing their interests over those of the local companies, its dealings with Pyramid and Crown Breweries were generally conducted diplomatically and with an eye toward consensus. Heineken was more than willing to volunteer, rather than force, its expertise upon Crown and Pyramid, and these two breweries benefitted from the technical expertise of the multinational. The balanced dynamic is noteworthy considering the significant power differential between the multinational and the Egyptian beer companies. The relative balance of power can be attributed to the Egyptian breweries' control of the situation on the ground, and to the fact that the parties ultimately shared the same goal of profiting from the sale of beer in Egypt.

As for these companies' relationships with the Egyptian government, these were not based on mutual interest; rather, they were characterized by tension that arose from opposing desires. As the government pushed for a more Egyptian economy, the beer companies had a vested interest in maintaining a hybrid and ambiguous national identity. In this case, it was the beer companies that had the advantage: they had a decades-long history of government non-interference as well as multinational connections to deal with the demands of the newly empowered government. Meanwhile, the government was only just starting to escape its colonial/semi-colonial

past, and was only beginning to map out what it could demand from these “foreign” businesses that for so long had remained inviolate.

The remaining chapters will discuss these three actors—the Crown–Pyramid Breweries, Heineken, and the Egyptian government—as their relationships changed between 1953 and 1970. The next chapter will look at how the synergy of the Egyptian breweries and Heineken reached a high point as they consolidated a durable and potent identity, which dominated the Egyptian beer industry until the 1970s. At the same, the Egyptian government, fully emboldened by the Nasserist takeover, asserted itself in a way not previously seen, which had major consequences for the private sector of the Egyptian economy.

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² Roy Armes, *African Filmmaking: North and South of the Sahara* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh, 2006), 22

³ Jacques Aumont, “Lumière Revisited,” *Film History*, 8 (1996): 416-430; Georges Sadoul, *Louis Lumière, 1904-1967* (Paris: Seghers, 1964).

⁴ Viola Shafik, *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class, and Nation* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2007), 18-19.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Nancy Reynolds, *A City Consumed: Urban Commerce, The Cairo Fire, and the Politics of Decolonization in Egypt* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 147.

⁷ “Rapport du Conseil d’Administration,” NL-SAA-192210, 4.1.2.4.2.2- 1948- Ingekomen stukken en minuten van uitgaande stukken van, aan of betreffende de Crown Brewery, 834-Archives of Heineken NV(henceforth, AH), Stadsarchief Amsterdam (henceforth, SAA).

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⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹¹ Relli Shechter, *Smoking, Culture and Economy in the Middle East : The Egyptian Tobacco Market 1850-2000* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 119-120.

¹² Kamal Salim, *al- ‘Azima*, Video Recording (Cairo: Sharika Misriyya lil-Tamthil wa al-Sinima, 1939).

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- ²⁵ "Rapport de Monsieur H. Faivre sur l'Egypte," 4 Juin 1935, 116-120, NL-SAA-191213, 2.2.9.2.5-1053-Africa, 834-AH, SAA.
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- ⁸⁴ "Letter from WvH to P.R.Feith at HBM," 2nd May 1952 NI-SAA-192210, 4.1.2.4.2.2-1949- Ingekomen stukken en minute... ,834- AH, SAA..
- ⁸⁵ Ibid.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ⁸⁷ "Letter from Constantin Qasdagli to Monsieur Administrateur-Delegue of Pyramid," 28 Feb 1953 NL-SAA-192211, 4.1.2.4.2.2-1950- Ingekomen stukken en minute... ,834- AH, SAA.
- ⁸⁸ Cobra, "Declaration of Proxy" 20 April 1953 NL-SAA-192211, 4.1.2.4.2.2-1950- Ingekomen stukken en minute... ,834- AH, SAA.

⁸⁹ Wittert van Hoogland would leave Pyramid Brewery to become the head of Heineken's international holding company, Cobra, in 1957.

⁹⁰ "Letter from WvH to P.R.Feith at HBM," 2nd May 1952 NI-SAA-192210, 1949- Ingekomen stukken en minute... ,834- AH, SAA.

⁹¹ The advantages of those with foreign citizenship clearly grew out of the history of the capitulations, which gave foreign residents extra-territorial rights in Egypt. The capitulations had a massive effect on the legal history of the country see Brown, Nathan J. "The Precarious Life and Slow Death of the Mixed Courts in Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 25(1), February 1993, pp. 33-52.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Societe de Biere "Les Pyramides," "Summary of the Services Rendered by Heineken's Breweries Netherlands to Pyramides Brewery of Cairo," 4 November 1961 NL-SAA-191356, 1977-Verslagen van bezoeken en besprekingen inzake de Société de Bière Les Pyramides S.A.E., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Nathan J. Brown, "The Precarious Life and Slow Death of the Mixed Courts of Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (1993):33.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Nancy Reynolds, *A City Consumed: Urban Commerce, The Cairo Fire, and the Politics of Decolonization in Egypt* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 151

¹⁰⁵ Robert Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide: Business Conflict and the End of Empire in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 49.

¹⁰⁶ Brown, "The Precarious Life and Slow Death..." 45-46.

¹⁰⁷ Robert L. Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise and Economic Change in Egypt, 1918-1952* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 184.

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¹⁰⁹ Eric Davis, *Challenging Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 195.

¹¹⁰ Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise*, 220.

¹¹¹ E.J. Blattner ed., *Who's Who in Egypt and the Middle East* (Cairo: Imprimerie Francaise, 1950), 219.

¹¹² "Kashf bi-a 'da' Idarat al-Sharikat Birat al-Ahram fi 1956," DWQ, MS, 3019-5504-0009, *Sharikat Birat al- Ahram*.

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¹¹⁴ Robert L. Tignor, "The Economic Activities of Foreigners in Egypt, 1920-1950: From Millet to Haute Bourgeoisie," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (1980): 434.

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- ¹¹⁶ Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islamism and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 9.
- ¹¹⁷ Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt 1914–1952* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1989), 31.
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁹ Tignor, “The Economic Activities of Foreigners in Egypt...”, 427.
- ¹²⁰ Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley, Cali.: University of California Press, 1998), 18-22.
- ¹²¹ Simon Shamir, “Nationality of the Jews in the Monarchy Period,” *The Jews of Egypt: A Mediterranean Society in Modern Times*, ed. Simon Shamir (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1987), 48-51.
- ¹²² Ibid., 52-9.
- ¹²³ “*Iqrar Hanna Yusuf Hanna*,” DWQ, MS 3019-006808- 0009, *Sharikat Karwon Brewery*.
- ¹²⁴ “Letter from Eric Kettner (henceforth, EK) to WvH,” 29 September 1958; and “Letter from Eric Kettner to WvH,” 18 June 1960, NL-SAA-191356, 1977-Verslagen van bezoeken en besprekingen inzake de Soci  t   de Bi  re Les Pyramides S.A.E., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.
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¹³⁷ “Letter from Spiro Spiridis to EK,” 23 February 1957, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland... 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ “Letter from WvH to Eric Karl Kettner,” 19 May 1961 NL-SAA-191356, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland... 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Chapter 6: Stella is Always Delicious: Selling Beer in the Time of Nasser, 1952–1958

The period from 1952 to 1958 in Egypt was one of massive change. During this time, the newly installed government of Gamal Abdel Nasser worked to punish the “foreign” capitalists and their Egyptian conspirators, who, in Nasser’s eyes, had stifled the progress of the country. The government also worked to assert Egypt’s place in the world, a pursuit that involved political posturing (the Suez Crisis), economic restructuring (land-reform and nationalization), and grand architectural ventures (the Aswan High Dam). For the two major Egyptian beer companies, Crown and Pyramid Breweries, this was one of their most successful periods as they witnessed banner profits and brand consolidation behind the breweries’ flagship product, Stella Beer. Behind the success, though, the company was troubled by internal conflicts among its Dutch technocrats, who had been sent by Heineken to make sure the company ran “properly,” and the Egyptian managers and executives. These conflicts grew out of the policies of an activist Egyptian government that was overt in its favoritism for Muslim Egyptians and that framed all business interactions as struggles between the “foreign” and the “Egyptian.” During Nasser’s turbulent early years of rule, the beer companies’ external success managed to coexist with internal strife.

This chapter’s analysis proceeds in five parts. The first section examines the beer companies’ initial reaction to the Free Officers Movement. The second section looks at the internal restructuring of Pyramid that followed the Free Officers Movement. The third section examines the interactions and conflicts between Dutch and Egyptian management that framed this restructuring. The fourth section looks at

how Pyramid and Crown formulated their flagship brand, Stella, both technically and through advertisements after this restructuring. Finally, this chapter looks at the beer companies' attempts at brand management, which included squashing an ill-fated competitor to the Pyramid–Crown partnership, Nile Brewery.

Egyptianization

The year 1952 was a traumatic one for Egypt. On January 26, 1952, anti-regime protestors rioted and set fires throughout the city of Cairo, the beating heart of the country. In total, twenty-six were killed, five hundred were wounded, and the cost of the damage was fifteen million Egyptian pounds.¹ These fires meant not just protest, but violent reaction against the perceived pernicious influence of “foreign” elements in Egypt.² Many of these protestors were members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Young Egypt, or at least sympathized with the groups' core belief that the “foreign” presence in Egypt needed to be excised in order for the country to return to greatness. Many protestors directed their attacks at establishments that were symbols of the foreign presence in Egypt, especially British. Not coincidentally, many of these “foreign” places under attack, such as sports clubs, bars, hotels, and dance halls, also sold alcohol. These fires represented the literal and figurative explosion of the jingoistic, nationalistic, Islamic modernist feelings that had been bubbling in Egypt since the 1920s, and they also signified the demise of the monarchical Muhammad ‘Ali regime in Egypt. Later that same year, in July, a small group of young, mid-level military officers seized power. In what would come to be called the Free Officers Movement, this group of ninety to one hundred officers seized control of the country from King Faruq and set out to dismantle the regime and its elite support, which they deemed to have been exploiting the country for too long.³

While Egypt experienced monumental changes in 1952, what is remarkable about Crown and Pyramid Breweries at that time is how little they were affected by these changes at first. One of their first orders of business, in the wake of the Free Officers' ascent to power, had little to do with the new reality in Egypt and much to do with the companies' own convergence. After Pyramid's 1953 investment in Crown, all operations in Cairo came under the auspices of Pyramid Brewery. The breweries were thus left with a superfluous piece of Nile-front property, which Crown brewery planned to use as a spot for a new Cairo-based project.⁴ After a search, they were able to secure a buyer, Egyptian Hotels Limited.

In the course of the fire that burned through Cairo, one of the most iconic hotels in Egypt, the Shepheard, burned down. As a result, the owner, Egyptian Hotels Limited, which also happened to be a part of the Empain Group, was looking for land to rebuild. Crown's parcel happened to be adjacent to Egyptian Hotels' other famous hotel, the Semiramis, and Egyptian Hotels Limited determined that this piece would be the perfect spot for the new Shepheard.⁵ Egyptian Hotels offered Crown forty-two Egyptian pounds per square meter of land, which was nearly ten pounds per square meter more than the bank had valued the land; the bank believed that thirty pounds per square meter was a fair price and that the land was worth, at most, thirty-five pounds per square meter.⁶ The companies were of course thrilled with the deal because they stood to make around 200,000 Egyptian pounds on the sale, nearly 140,000 pounds more than the land's value according to Crown's budget.⁷

Unsurprisingly, Cobra, the Heineken-owned investment company that owned a significant amount of stock in each company, approved the sale of the land and looked forward to the positive effect the sale would have on the yearly dividend. One of the men who brokered this sale was a familiar figure, the president of Pyramid,

Ahmad Ahmad Farghali, who collaborated with Spiro Spiridis, a Greek Egyptian and managing director of Crown, to arrange the sale. The boards of the companies rewarded Farghali and Spiridis six thousand Egyptian pounds for their work selling the land. This sum was recompense for securing a buyer and pushing through the land sale while keeping brokers out of the dealings.⁸

Immediately after the Free Officers Movement, the breweries managed to continue business as usual and even to remain profitable. Crown made a profit of 23,000 Egyptian pounds in 1953.⁹ Most of this profit, 22,000 pounds, came from the sale of beer, which at the time was going at thirty-four Egyptian pounds per hectoliter. This figure puts Crown's sales at about 650 hectoliters in 1953. From this sum, the company was profitable enough to distribute a dividend of 203 piasters, making Cobra's income from Crown in 1953 around 30,000 Egyptian pounds.¹⁰ Still, this profit was less than the company was expecting, a fact that is surely attributable to the country's volatility at the time.

It was not long before Egypt's new reality would have a substantive effect on the breweries. In 1954, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the ruling body formed by the Free Officers movement, passed a new law regarding limited liability companies. In order to comply, Crown had to appoint a new Egyptian member of the board. The person chosen was Sameh Mohamed Moussa, a lawyer who served as a member of the boards of several other limited liability companies. Importantly, he was a friend of Ahmad Farghali.¹¹ While Cobra did not realize it at the time, nor did Oscar Adrian Eduard Egbert Lewé Wittert van Hoogland (hereafter referred to as Wittert van Hoogland)—Cobra and Heineken's representative on both Crown and Pyramid Breweries' board—the placement of a good friend of Farghali on the Crown

board was a signal of the new hiring practices that the breweries would come to adopt under the Nasser-led government.

This new hire, the lawyer Moussa, also signaled a new trend in the post-Free Officers economy, one of which Cobra and Heineken were well aware: Egyptianization. Prior to the Free Officers movement, the breweries had taken the first steps towards Egyptianization due to what they viewed as extremely onerous demands for back taxes from the post-World War II Belgian government. Hoping to avoid these back taxes, the breweries decided in 1947 to sever their ties with Belgium and keep their headquarters in Egypt, where they had relocated during World War II. However, this decision was not accompanied by any other changes that resembled “Egyptianization.”

In 1953, Heineken started to formulate a policy for Egyptianizing both companies. This move did not come out of any sense of nationalism, but from Heineken’s worry that as long as the companies were not officially Egyptian, they might have to pay the 150,000 Egyptian pounds they owed to the Belgian fiscal authorities.¹² Heineken, therefore, reached out to Pyramid, and specifically Wittert van Hoogland, in hopes that he could spearhead an effort to Egyptianize both companies.

What Crown’s Egyptianization meant for Heineken in practical terms was the liquidation of Crown in Belgium (what they called Crown 1897), and the creation of a new Egyptian Crown (called Crown 1954).¹³ Despite the name difference, Crown 1954 would simply be a reconstituted version of Crown 1897 with all of the same assets and liabilities, but with a headquarters in Egypt.¹⁴ The maneuver of reconstituting the company was meant to enable Crown to consolidate its debt with one debtor, the Egyptian government. Heineken imagined that the Egyptian

government would expect a tax payment on both the liquidation and reconstitution of the company, but that the total would be less than what was owed to the Belgian fiscal authorities. By paying this sum to the Egyptian government, Crown would be willing to deflect any attempts by the Belgian authorities to claim the money they were owed. In this instance, Heineken was reading the new reality of post-1952 Egypt. The corporation recognized that the Egyptian government under the RCC was not only a much larger threat than a war-weakened Belgian fiscal authority, but also that this government was steadfastly working to remove the “foreign” elements in the Egyptian economy.¹⁵

While Heineken hoped for the Egyptianization of Crown by 1954, they requested that Pyramid implement a similar plan immediately. Despite Heineken’s insistence, the leadership of Pyramid and Crown had made little progress toward the goal in 1955, when the Egyptian Federation of Industry issued a pronouncement on the Egyptianization of foreign limited liability companies in Egypt. Per this announcement (Law No. 315), all of the following were only authorized to continue operations in Egypt if they became Egyptian limited liability companies: foreign limited companies, companies limited by shares, and limited liability companies, whether foreign or Egyptian. A company’s conversion into an Egyptian limited liability company required the publication of two copies of the company’s financial records, the movement of their headquarters to Egypt, a payment of a fee to the government, and the the Egyptian government’s authorization of the distribution of all shares.¹⁶

The promulgation of this new law very quickly convinced the leadership at Crown that they needed to Egyptianize, so they began the process almost immediately. This Crown-led Egyptianization came as shock to Heineken, however. While Heineken

was not opposed to the decision, the company disliked not being the one to dictate terms. The company wrote to Crown pleading for them to wait and meet with Wittert van Hoogland so that he could carry out the Egyptianization of the company according to Heineken's liquidation and reconstitution plan.¹⁷ Crown, recognizing the nature of their relationship with Heineken and Cobra, did not flatly reject the pleas; they even met with Wittert van Hoogland, but they made clear that they were going through with the conversion without Heineken's help.¹⁸ The lack of communication between Heineken and Crown was evident from the fact that Cobra and Heineken had to ask Wittert van Hoogland to provide them the bylaws of the proposed Egyptianized Crown so that they could weigh in on the process at the next shareholders meeting.¹⁹

When Heineken was finally able to take a look at the new bylaws, the company approved the decision and deputized Wittert van Hoogland as their proxy to vote in favor the Egyptianization.²⁰ However, their authority was not most important in giving approval to the Egyptianization of the company. That authority belonged to the new President of the Republic, Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970). Although the Free Officers Movement was spearheaded by a coterie of discontented army officers, it was the charismatic and clever Nasser who between 1952 and 1954 emerged as the voice of this Egyptian revolution.²¹ His main challenger for political prominence was Muhammad Naguib (1901–1984), who had been installed as the nominal leader of the Free Officers Movement, first as the premier, war and naval minister, commander-in-chief of the army, and governor general, and then later as president in 1953–54. The battle over leadership began when Naguib, having fought with the RCC over the direction of the country, resigned from the government.²² Upon his resignation, there was an outpouring of sentiment among military, paramilitary, and other political forces that Naguib should return to his post. However, Nasser, recognizing the real

threat that Naguib posed to a movement that he largely drove behind the scenes, engineered mass strikes in March 1954, bringing the country to a halt and eventually orchestrating Naguib's removal.²³ Nasser's use of the labor movement as a cudgel no doubt encouraged him to further pursue the government's encroachment on the private sector that had begun in the 1940s.²⁴ It was in 1955 that Nasser began to implement the policies such as the law discussed above, whereby he would break the grip of "monopolists and feudalists" over the Egyptian private sector.²⁵

The most telling sign of the activist bent of the Nasser regime vis-à-vis the private sector was his nationalization of the Suez Canal Company in 1956. Since the hand over of control to the British in 1875, the Canal had served as a constant reminder to Egyptian nationalists of the economic control that foreign interests maintained in Egypt. There was thus broad consensus in Egyptian society at the time of the Free Officers Movement that the Suez Canal Company's control of the Canal must eventually come to an end.²⁶ While the issue of the Canal's nationalization was openly discussed, Nasser's desire to use revenues from the Canal to fund the Aswan High Dam project accelerated the timeline of that nationalization. In particular, the British, American, and World Bank's initial overtures to help fund the project and then quick turnaround may have spurred Gamal Abdel Nasser, who by that time had seized power from the RCC, to nationalize the Suez Canal.

Of course, the British and French did not accept lying down the nationalization of one of their most profitable assets, and the policy response they pursued was one of economic deterrence, employing banking and currency restrictions.²⁷ Their most audacious countermeasure was a failed tripartite (British, French, and Israeli) military excursion that involved the bombing of Port Said and the advancement of troops into the Canal Zone.²⁸ The invasion only emboldened the

Nasser government to expand its nationalization plans. After the failed invasion, the Egyptian government sequestered and then nationalized the companies that had significant British or French capital. This move was accompanied by actions aimed at expelling all British, French, and Jewish residents from Egypt.²⁹ What really marks 1956 as the start of the new era, though, was what Robert L. Tignor called a “rupture,” as the Nasser government extended these policies to the rest of the Egyptian private sector.³⁰ The government, backed by “socialist” laws that gave them unchallenged power in the corporate sector and headed by the Egyptian Economic Organization (*al-Mu‘assa al-Iqtisadiyya*), sequestered and nationalized over 250 million pounds’ worth of assets from the private sector.³¹

In this context, it was more than merely a formality when in 1957 the President of the Republic granted permission to the Crown Brewery to continue to function as an Egyptian limited liability company.³² At this moment, the company faced—and eluded—an existential threat. It is not exactly clear why the government granted Crown this permission to continue existing; perhaps it was the company’s proactive Egyptianization, the government’s hesitancy to assume control of an alcohol company, or simply good luck at avoiding the eye of the Egyptian government. Whatever the reason, even though Cobra and Heineken did not realize it at the time, this moment of forced-through Egyptianization, which aligned with the desires of the Dutch company, would be the last time the Egyptian government and Heineken would operate under shared goals.

Reorganization

From 1957 onward, Cobra, Crown, and Pyramid tried to avoid the fate of nationalization by adhering to all of the regulations put forth by the Egyptian

government. The breweries were so cautious because, as one Dutch board member of the Pyramid brewery said, they did not want the brewery go the way of the Suez Canal.³³ The most pertinent example of the companies' commitment to avoiding the watchful eye of the government was their willingness to comply with the multiple updates and amendments that the Nasser government made to the Company Law of 1947, which required Egyptian companies (those with major bases in Egypt) "to offer 51 percent of their stock to Egyptians and to place Egyptian nationals on 40 percent of the board seats."³⁴

In 1955, the government modified the Company Law by requiring anyone who sat on the board of companies (*administrateur*) to retire at the age of sixty, unless otherwise approved by the government. This law was intended to free the economy from the domination of "predatory" capitalists.³⁵ In 1958, another modification required the boards of companies like Pyramid and Crown to abide by several provisions: a board could only have seven members; no directors (*directeurs*) or employees (*employés*) could sit on the board; and the majority of the board had to be Egyptian. Individuals who sat on any board were subject to various restrictions: they could only be a member of two boards; they could not be the managing director (*administrateur délégué*), which implied a level of control and involvement beyond that of a typical board member, of more than one company; and they had to be under the age of sixty unless approved by the government.³⁶

These new provisions had a powerful impact on Pyramid, because when they appeared in 1958, the company was in violation of nearly every one of them. Their board had eight members, two of whom, Emil Natti and Isma'il Hafez were directors in the company; two members of the board were beyond the age of sixty; and the eight-member board was divided equally between four Egyptians and four non-

Egyptians. On an individual level, Ahmad Farghali, the most important Egyptian figure at Pyramid, was in violation of all the statutes as well. He was not only approaching the age of sixty, but as late as 1946 he sat on the boards of 29 different companies³⁷; in addition, he was managing director of both Pyramid and Farghali Cotton and Investment Company, the company he inherited from his father.

As the head executive of the company, Farghali was the public face of the industry to both the Egyptian government and other bodies that wanted to deal with the beer companies in Egypt. In this role, he travelled in 1957 to Prague, Moscow, Switzerland, France, and Italy doing business in several of these countries.³⁸ These travels were emblematic of Farghali's position as a sort of jet-setter, although private jets would still be years away. In another instance of Farghali's internationalism, he held talks with his friends at the Chinese Embassy in Cairo and with the Chinese trade mission over the possibility of Pyramid importing hops from China.³⁹ This possible agreement was an example of the practical upshot of the Nasser government's push to align with the Communists in the Cold War geopolitical struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union.

It is thus not surprising that in 1958, Pyramid thus needed to make major changes in order to bring itself in line with the government's demands. The task of overseeing the necessary changes primarily fell on the man in charge of the day-to-day operations of the company, the Dutch managing director. From Heineken's first involvement in Pyramid in the late 1930s, Wittert van Hoogland served in this position. However, in 1957, due to his excellent work with the company in Egypt, he was appointed to a better position as head of Cobra.⁴⁰ Although Wittert van Hoogland remained on the executive board of Pyramid, he was able to return to Amsterdam to serve as an adviser for breweries worldwide. He would cede his role as managing

director and representative of Cobra in Egypt to Eric Karl Kettner, another Dutch national who had trained at Heineken in the beer business. He was a true technocrat and was fully committed to what I call “total control” brewing; that is, the application of the most cutting edge techniques and technology to create a standardized and durable product that could be delivered uniformly to all of its consumers.

Emblematic of Kettner’s commitment to the product’s quality was his response when he once spotted imported Heineken beers in an Egyptian market. He bought four and put them through a blind testing to see if they lived up to the standards of Heineken beer. During the test, he discovered that the bottles of Heineken, when turned, would produce a cloud of particulate that whirled around inside the bottle.⁴¹ This occurrence was deeply troubling to Kettner because it violated a major selling point of beer in the Egyptian market, that it be clear, clean, and free of particulates. Although the cloud was benign from a health perspective, modern Egyptian advertisements’ focus on the “purity” of industrially produced beer meant that this cloud was a symbol of “impurity” and a deterrent to purchase. In response to this violation of the “total brewing” ethos, Kettner asked the Heineken representative, who happened to be Wittert van Hoogland, if he should buy back all of the Heineken that was on the market.⁴²

Kettner brought the same single-minded commitment to resolving the issues that arose from the newly bolstered Company Law. He saw the troubles not as setbacks but as opportunities to reorganize the company into better alignment with “modern” practices. In fact, he related to his new superior, Wittert van Hoogland, that he took great pleasure in looking over the new Company Law to devise ways for the company to make the laws work best for them. He believed it was imperative for Pyramid to take full advantage of every possible loophole in the law. As Kettner

envisioned it, in the interim between when the amendment was promulgated in late 1958 and when it went into full effect on January 1, 1959, two of the four Egyptian members of the board would leave. One, Abu al-Enein Salim, who was over sixty, would retire, and the other, Ahmad Farghali, would take a similar position at the National Bank and leave Pyramid.⁴³ Abdel Hamid Sharif, another Muslim Egyptian, would replace Farghali as president. For Kettner, the departure of Farghali was the best way to truly clean house at Pyramid.⁴⁴ If neither left—a possibility which Kettner deemed remote—then Isma‘il Hafez would be removed from the board, as he was the most recent addition.

Surprisingly, both of Kettner’s plans would leave a foreign majority on the Pyramid board. Kettner was well aware of this imbalance and wanted to maintain the foreign majority, which included, along with himself, two Heineken higher-ups (Jonkheer Pieter Rutger Feith and Wittert van Hoogland) and an Italian protégé, Emil Natti, until the end of December. He was, perhaps foolishly, quite comfortable with possibility of having these four being only accompanied on the board by two Egyptians. He even had one of the company lawyers, Alber Tagher, look into the possibility of having Cobra serve as a member of the board of directors.⁴⁵ Farghali had some choice words about Kettner’s plan. When Kettner presented the plan, Farghali slapped himself on the thigh, roared with laughter, and exclaimed in French, "Yes, you have a dog's life, a dog's life, ha ha ha."⁴⁶ In French, the idiom “a dog’s life” means a difficult life, and while Farghali was no doubt jesting, his remark actually proved to be quite prescient when it came to the enforcement of the new plan. Very soon after putting forward the plan, the constituent parts began to fall apart. The first piece to fall was, Farghali himself, as the Egyptian government, emulating the French model of business, made a strong push to make the president of joint-stock

companies the most powerful person in these companies at the expense of the managing director.⁴⁷

With the possibility of the president assuming an even greater role in running the company, both Kettner and Wittert van Hoogland agreed that they could not appoint Abdel Hamid Sharif as president. Wittert van Hoogland went as far to say that they should *never* appoint him president.⁴⁸ Kettner thus had to turn back to Farghali and have him remain as the company president until they could find a suitable replacement or until he took his position at the National Bank. Kettner even entertained the idea that Wittert van Hoogland or Feith could occupy the position after Farghali left.⁴⁹ However, Farghali's proposed move to the National Bank never materialized, as the bank went in another direction.⁵⁰ Farghali was left as president, and he would serve in that position for another two years until the government sequestered him and the company.

Despite these setbacks in Kettner's pursuit of his goal, he remained fully committed to his plan of a board shakeup. Yet the actions of Abu el-Einein Salim soon struck it a decisive blow, in the form of a request from Salim for his bonus as a member of the board of directors.⁵¹ While this request may seem innocuous, it represented Salim's intention to continue his employment on the Pyramid board. The news that Kettner received the next day—that the Department of Companies (*Maṣlahat al-Sharikāt*), the government body in charge of assuring compliance with the Company Law, had approved the continuation of Salim's presence on the Pyramid board—only confirmed what Kettner had been dreading, that Salim had no intention of leaving his position at Crown.⁵² On one level, Salim's intractability made Kettner's job more difficult as it created an inherently volatile position on the board. Because Salim was over sixty, his continuation on the board was wholly contingent on the

continued approval of the government. More significantly for Kettner, though, Salim's actions confirmed his suspicions about the man's untrustworthiness. Salim had long rubbed Kettner the wrong way; he would come to the brewery office and act like a managing director, Kettner's position, giving orders to the under directors instead of deferring to the Dutchman.⁵³ While the occasional over-stepping of bounds may have been forgivable, it became much harder for Kettner to swallow when it was coupled with Salim's mendacity on the issue of his continuing presence on the board.

The Department of Companies' confirmation of Salim came as a shock to Kettner. Salim had confirmed in a letter to Kettner that he would step down, only then to go behind Kettner's back to request a continuation of his tenure. Kettner's dislike for Salim was made even stronger by the "confidential" information he received from Isma'il Hafez that Salim was under investigation by the government for embezzlement.⁵⁴ This information was the last straw for Kettner, and he told Wittert van Hoogland that, "even for Egypt," Salim's malfeasance was beyond the pale.⁵⁵ This statement represents not only Kettner's frustration, but also the reification of the us-versus-them mentality that Kettner had developed during the few short years he worked at Pyramid.

Despite Kettner's utter distaste for Salim, he could not fire the man. The particularities of the Company Law dictated that Kettner could not remove a government-approved member of the board.⁵⁶ Therefore, it was Emil Natti, his closest ally in the company, who had to resign. As of January 31, 1959, the board was composed of Kettner, Feith, Wittert van Hoogland, Farghali, Sharif, Salim, and Hafez, with Farghali as president. The loss of Natti was a blow to Kettner because he believed Natti was the Dutchman's main defense against "intrigues."⁵⁷ Intrigues were also the reason that Kettner was greatly dispirited by the presence of another Egyptian

on the board, Isma‘il Hafez. As I will show in the next section, Salim’s betrayal of Kettner confirmed his belief that Egyptians were undermining him in the workplace.

Us Versus Them

To understand Kettner’s intense reaction to the actions of Salim, it is necessary to look at Kettner’s prior relations with Egyptians in the company. All of these interactions and the power dynamics beneath them were framed by Pyramid’s relatively clear organizational structure. Kettner, as a managing director, served as the direct link between the executive, headed by Farghali, and the management of the company. During his time in charge, from 1957 to 1963, three directors sat below Kettner: Albert Farag, Emilio Natti, and Gerardus Hubertus Ulenberg. Albert Farag, a Coptic Christian, was in charge of the communication department, which contained the secretariat and the accounting section. Emilio Natti was at the head of the engineering division of the company, which included the workshop where all the brewery’s machinery was repaired, the garage housing the cars and trucks that transported the beer, the department where labels were made and affixed to the bottles, and the electrical department. A Dutch national trained at Heineken, Ulenberg, was the head brewmaster and head of the brewing department, which covered malting, fermenting, brewing, refrigeration, storage, and bottling.

Originally, Ulenberg and the rest of the brewing department were under the watch of Natti, but Ulenberg proved so vital to the company that Kettner elevated him to the level of director.⁵⁸ Below the three directors were the heads of each of the separate sub-departments, most of whom had Egyptian citizenship. For example, underneath Ulenberg were Fathi el Malt, the assistant brewmaster; Ahmed Hamdi Abu Khatwa, head of malting; Mohamed Ihab el Chamaa, head of fermenting; Mohamed Ramses Awad, head of the cellars; and Hafez Zaklama, head of bottling.⁵⁹ Below these sub-

department heads were two sets of company employees: salaried employees and workers. The salaried employees, who were paid monthly, were classified by the Department of Companies as *muwazzafin* (employees). The rest of the people working for the company were paid a daily wage and were classified as workers (*'ummāl*). These groups two were differentiated both by their salary structure and by the type of jobs they filled. The *muwazzafin*, who included the chiefs of the sub-departments, were generally white-collar workers: supervisors, company doctors, lawyers, secretarial staff, translators, brewers, accountants, and so on, while the *'ummāl* were the blue-collar types: bottle fillers, bottle cleaners, label attachers, drivers, and assistant drivers. Many daily wageworkers did have longstanding relationships with the company, but their turnover rates were higher than that of the *muwazzafin*.

One notable omission from the above description of the organizational structure of Pyramid is the Egyptian, Isma'il Hafez. The role of Isma'il Hafez is discussed here in particular depth because of its importance to the company. From the very first moment that Kettner arrived in Egypt and assumed his position in 1957, Hafez was an issue for him. One of the first instances of discord between the two occurred when Hafez, with the supposed aim of making Pyramid appear more vital to the Egyptian economy, suggested that the beer company branch out into partnerships with other industries, including making feed for cattle from their spent grain. Kettner rejected his suggestion, citing the proverb, "schoenmaker houd je bij je leest," or "Cobbler, stick to thy last."⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Kettner conceded, in a letter to Wittert van Hoogland, that the company would probably have to do its "patriotic duty" and contribute in some way to the promotion of the "national economy."⁶¹

If Kettner and Hafez had disagreed only over the investments the brewery should make, then the friction would have been resolved quickly. However, Kettner's issues with Hafez stemmed more deeply from Kettner's belief that Hafez was actively sabotaging the company. For Kettner, one notable incident was the feud between Hafez and the head of the garages, Hassan Tawfiq. As Kettner described it, the dispute began when Tawfiq had the temerity to deny Hafez the use of a company car, an act that won Tawfiq the "eternal hatred" of Hafez.⁶² According to Kettner, this act, in addition to the simmering jealousy that Hafez felt toward Hassan Tawfiq for having been elected vice president of the workers' syndicate instead of Hafez, led Hafez to ignore the reasonable requests of Tawfiq and actively sow discord among those who worked below Tawfiq at the garage.⁶³ The situation reached such a level of discord that Kettner had to step in and arbitrate among Hafez, Tawfik, the workers' syndicate, and the other heads of departments. Although a great number of accusations were made, the squabble was settled when Kettner threatened to not pay out any Ramadan bonuses.⁶⁴

Although the actions of Hafez seem to be those of a petty, vindictive man determined to rise in the ranks, it is important to remember that this depiction, coming from Kettner, is biased. Kettner states that he was gratified when the syndicate directed their complaints at Hafez and his supposed co-conspirator Alber Farag.⁶⁵ This bias appears to have extended beyond Hafez to Egyptians in general. This fact becomes patent when we look at Kettner's efforts to replace a Coptic employee, Victor Moreno.

The departure of an employee was a particular common occurrence in this period because of the Nasser-led government's strengthening and expansion of the Company Law of 1947. Although the law had a significant effect on the executive level, it was a

blunt force object when it came to those below the executive. Both the *Mutamashşirūn* (Egyptianized Foreigners, as Joel Beinin refers to those Arabic speaking Greeks, Italians and Jews), and the companies that employed them were faced with the dilemma that one of their greatest strengths—their cultural dynamism and multi-cultural familiarity—had become a major threat to their employment.⁶⁶ As discussed above, some workers applied for citizenship and were able to get it, but many were not. The large companies had two options in dealing with the cases of those who did not get citizenship: either replace them (i.e. fire them), or “move” them through a manipulation of the records produced for the Department of Companies.

In the case of the Egyptian beer industry, we are privileged with a view into the companies’ “creative” accounting practices because they were caught *in flagrante delicto*. As a 1962 report shows, the two beer companies attempted to circumvent the watchful eye of the Ministry of Trade (*Wizārat al-Tijāra*), which housed the Department of Companies, by setting up a distribution office that was shared by both companies, but not formally part of either. Through this distribution office, the companies paid employees like Michel Elias, who would otherwise have raised the percentage of foreigners’ pay to an unacceptable level. Dealings such as this led the Ministry of Trade to look further into the companies’ books, where numerous inconsistencies were discovered, including the gifting of villas and unreported bonuses to foreign employees. All of this malfeasance was evidence of the beer companies’ flaunting of the Company Law of 1947. As punishment, the companies were forced to let go of some of their “foreign” workers.⁶⁷

In the case of one employee, Victor Moreno, he was not only unable to secure citizenship, but the company made no effort to “move” him. Instead, Pyramid removed him from his post, and the government forced him to leave the country.⁶⁸

Moreno's case was a very sad and tricky one because he had worked for Pyramid for over twenty-five years, and his dismissal left him penniless. Heineken offered employment with their brewery in the Belgian Congo, but Moreno refused, not willing to move to such a distant and unfamiliar location.⁶⁹ Despite his long tenure with Pyramid, the company and its mother company, Heineken, showed very little compassion when discussing his exit. Upon Moreno's termination, the Pyramid board agreed to pay 2,000 Egyptian pounds in indemnity to Moreno, while Heineken agreed to pay 9,000 francs.⁷⁰ Moreno found this sum far too low, and he requested, in several seven-page letters to Wittert van Hoogland and Kettner, that Heineken pay him approximately 25,000 francs.⁷¹ This request was not only rejected by Kettner, who sent a letter to Moreno expressing that the calculations behind this claim were simply incorrect, but led Wittert van Hoogland to assert that Moreno's claims were no longer of any importance to Kettner and that he must cut off the correspondence with him, which Kettner did.⁷²

If Kettner was ruthlessly business-minded in his dealings with Moreno, his search for Moreno's replacement was no less informed by shrewd management tactics. Kettner was willing to use any means necessary to find the right fit for the position. Beyond talking to candidates and their references, Kettner also subjected them to handwriting tests. Implementing a theory that was used by the Egyptian army, Kettner had a handwriting specialist named Deen analyze potential employees' handwriting in order to determine their employability.⁷³ Kettner also consulted with Egyptians who could suggest other Egyptians as potential employees, as at this point, Pyramid could only hire Egyptians. One of the Egyptians to whom Kettner talked was Isma'il Hafez. In an unsurprising turn of events, Kettner came out of a five-hour meeting with Hafez convinced more than ever of the man's ill intentions. In particular, Kettner was off-

put by Hafez's suggestion that the position could be used to curry favor with the ever-encroaching Egyptian government. As Kettner notes, while Hafez "on the surface was an extremely dedicated and jovial friend," he was, in reality, very dangerous.⁷⁴ This danger stemmed from Hafez's status as an "untrustworthy, vain, ambitious, and overall a substandard individual."⁷⁵ These characteristics were only to be expected from Hafez because, as Kettner stated bluntly, he was an Egyptian.⁷⁶

These racial generalizations came in a letter to Wittert van Hoogland, where Kettner also details Hafez's high opinion of himself and his desires for career advancement. As Kettner noted, Hafez used the discussion of the replacement of Moreno to assert what he imagined should be his rightful place at the company. Kettner believed that the operations of the company would be much better if he sat on the executive board and that he would be an asset, like he was during the tense days of the nationalization of the Suez Canal when the fate of the beer companies was not apparent in dealing with the government.⁷⁷ In addition to believing that he would be a great asset to the company as a board member, Kettner stated that all decisions of the personnel department, which he headed, should be left solely to him.⁷⁸ In Hafez's eyes, the Moreno issue and others concerning "foreign" workers was the result of previous leaders, like Wittert van Hoogland, listening to opinions that were not Hafez's. While these musings are clearly those of someone with ambition and great self-worth, it is not clear whether they carry the combative power with which Kettner imbued them. According to Kettner, these were the words of an Egyptian who aimed to turn him into a mere ornament and figurehead with no real power in the direction of the company.⁷⁹ Kettner was particularly worried that if ever the day came that Hafez did acquire a leadership position in the company (which as we know he did), and had full say in personnel policies, the Coptic Christians would suffer.⁸⁰ In Kettner's eyes,

how could the Coptic Christian not suffer when a Muslim like Hafez controlled all personnel decisions?

Pyramid's policy with regard to Hafez did very little to assuage Kettner's worries about this Egyptian, which was apparent from another Heineken employee's 1959 report on the company. As the report noted, during his time at the company, Hafez served both as a managing director, a position that was equal to Kettner's, and as a head of two departments, the personnel and public relations departments. Where exactly he sat within the company hierarchy was not particularly clear. In his dual position, he was both underneath and the equal of Kettner. The lack of definition was particularly troubling to the heads of the other departments—Natti, Ulenberg, and Farag—who were unsure whether Hafez was their superior or equal.⁸¹ Hafez used this ambiguity to continually assert his authority.⁸² In particular, he was focused more on being a managing director, like Kettner, and delegated the personnel and public relations work to his subordinates.⁸³ All of these statements seem to at least signal that Kettner was not being paranoid about Hafez's plans for him. This is given further credence by the fact that Hafez claimed that he did not trust one of the subordinates, to whom he was delegating his work, because the subordinate was a spy for the military authorities.⁸⁴

While Kettner may have had an enemy in Hafez, the enmity that he expressed toward Egyptians was not limited to Hafez. Kettner also noted that he did not trust Tawfiq any more than he did Hafez. In Kettner's opinion, Hafez was a dangerous person, who could only be trusted up until the point that he showed himself as an enemy.⁸⁵ Kettner believed that Tawfiq was even more dangerous than Hafez "because he [was] more intelligent."⁸⁶ This general distrust of Egyptians was a reflection of the "us-versus-them" mentality that Kettner harbored. He believed that men like Hafez

and Tawfiq would always be on the ready to use the anti-Western sentiment that permeated Egypt at the time in order to get ahead.⁸⁷ In fact, Kettner referred to this type of ladder-climbing through the use of nationalist sympathies as “Farghalism,” using the name of the man who, in his mind, was the progenitor of this maneuver in the company.⁸⁸

In fact, Kettner’s negative opinion of Egyptians may have reflected a general distrust of Egyptians among European Heineken workers in Egypt. We see another example of this feeling in a letter that Wittert Van Hoogland wrote to Kettner responding to the latter’s complaints about Hafez. Wittert Van Hoogland stated that Hafez’s shortcomings and intrigues were more or less normal in Egypt because the country was filled with two untrustworthy groups, the effendi and the Copt. For Wittert van Hoogland, the effendi were Mohammaden urbanites who were simply untrustworthy and incompetent.⁸⁹ The Copt was equally untrustworthy, but because, as a minority constantly under threat in Egypt, he was so accustomed to intrigue and deceit that such was his default state.⁹⁰ This alleged deceitfulness of the Copts was why Kettner, in the eyes of Wittert van Hoogland, should be glad to be rid of Victor Moreno.⁹¹ This prejudice was not mere idle expressions; it actively affected the Dutch management of the company. For example, when Kettner was assessing the causes of a dispute between Abu al-Einain Salim, a Muslim, and Alber Farag, a Copt, Wittert van Hoogland reminded him not to forget that, as a Copt, Farag was inclined towards intrigue.⁹² Wittert van Hoogland’s inherent distrust of Egyptians was also why, he told Kettner in the same letter, he distanced himself from the Egyptian staff in Cairo when he, Wittert van Hoogland, worked there. He advised the same thing for Kettner so that Kettner would be able to see “the forest from the trees.”⁹³

Wittert van Hoogland's comments are shocking to the modern reader for their frank condemnation of Egyptians, but they should not be surprising considering the power dynamics that underpinned them. Van Hoogland and Kettner came to work for the Egyptian breweries with an inherent sense of superiority. Not only were they acting on behalf the company that ultimately owned the breweries, Heineken, but they were also implementing the policies of one of the preeminent and most powerful brewers in the world. It then must have been a massive shock when these Egyptians did not listen to them and even, in the Dutch brewers' eyes, actively worked against them.

However, this distrust of Egyptians went beyond merely a sense of superiority. There were numerous other reasons that engendered a sense of "us versus them" in both the Dutch and the Egyptians. On the part of the Dutch, some of this mentality derived from the bolstering of the Company Law, which reified the differences between "foreign" and "Egyptian," placing the foreigner in a disadvantaged position. While this turn against "foreign" elements could not compare to a long history of favor that these elements had received in Egypt, the turn certainly engendered a sense of beleaguerment in men like Kettner.

Another factor contributing to anti-Egyptian sentiment was that Hafez, Farhali, Salim, and Sharif were all Muslim Egyptians. As Kettner was all too aware, the imagined citizen of Nasser's Egypt and the one most likely to maintain his status and advance was the Muslim Egyptian. Despite its claims to be secular, Nasser's government still followed policies that marginalized Coptic Christians and Jewish Egyptians. Nasser's secularism was merely lip service and was belied by his actions as the leader of Egypt. When he struck at al-Azhār, it was not to lessen the role of Islam in society, but to co-opt the preeminent Islamic institution in Egypt. Nasser

recognized the importance of Islam to Egyptian society and did not “hesitate to utilize Islamic institutions to legitimize” his policies.⁹⁴ He commissioned government propagandists to laud the government’s goals and their compatibility with Islam in the *khutba* (sermons) in Friday mosques, and he encouraged members of the government-appointed ‘*ulema* to write tracts on the harmony of Islam and Arab socialism.⁹⁵ With regard to social issues, although he passed laws that equalized gender relations somewhat, he was “extremely cautious” in his attitude toward family law and made no attempts to reform the Islamic institutions of polygamy or divorce.⁹⁶ Nasser’s policies were also unfavorable to the minority religious communities. As compared to the Constitutional period, far fewer non-Muslims were able to achieve high levels of power under Nasser. As Kettner notes, in the elections of 1957 “about half of the candidates were not approved by the government until the election (the bulk being Copts).”⁹⁷ In many districts, the government candidates were victorious in unopposed races.⁹⁸ The contrast in the treatment of religious minorities was so stark that many non-Muslims came to regard pre-Nasser Egypt as a golden age for religious tolerance.⁹⁹

On the Egyptian side, Muslim Egyptians realized the advantageous position in which the Company Law and Nasser’s policies put them. Kettner noted that Salim had a sense that any legal decision could be ultimately reversed if he found the right lawyer.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, the Egyptians were encouraged by the Dutch to organize along these lines. For example, Kettner freely admitted that one of the roles of Farghali was to control the other Egyptians on the board.¹⁰¹ That the Dutch did not know the Arabic language enabled the Egyptians, especially Farghali and Hafez, to control all interactions with the government and the Department of Companies. While this was

no doubt easier for Kettner than having to learn Arabic, it also meant that Kettner really could only gather secondhand information on Farghali and Hafez's actions.

The solidarity among Egyptian was not just an outside imposition. Solidarity certainly defined the Egyptian Muslims at Pyramid as well. As noted above, Salim was Farghali and Sharif's "man." Nepotism appeared to be a primary way for new executives and directors to be selected; for example, when Sameh Mohamed Moussa was added to the Crown board, one of his qualifications was that he knew Farghali. Likewise, Isma'il Hafez's brother was a board member of Farghali's Cotton Company, and thus he had deeper ties with Farghali than Kettner would ever have.¹⁰² The numerous times Egyptians, especially Farghali and Hafez, refused to accept the commands of "experts" like Kettner may have been the manifestation of their own sense of "us-versus-them."¹⁰³ For Hafez especially, his refusal to fall in line with Kettner, or with Wittert van Hoogland before him, was partly driven by his sense that management relations were a zero-sum game.

The conflicts between the two groups also arose from causes beyond either of them. People like Kettner and Hafez were coming from very different worlds, and the mandate to work closely together must inevitably have led to instances of culture shock. An example of culture shock comes from another employee, Alber Farag, who was quite convinced that Heineken did not value him because they did not wish him Happy New Years or congratulate him when he first signed onto the company.¹⁰⁴ This perceived slight obviously arose from a misalignment of ideas on what a large multi-national corporation owes to its employees.

The continual misunderstandings among the employees of Pyramid brewer, which engendered an us-versus-them mentality and enflamed nationalist sentiments, may

have been rooted in the fact that these men—Kettner, Hafez, and Farghali—simply did not have the same ideas of what was best for the company. An excellent reflection of this is seen in an account of a snafu over the import of bottles. Kettner recounts the incident as follows:

When I was with Bienert, the export manager of the East German bottle factories, I signed a contract to buy five hundred thousand bottles contingent on the commercial counselor of their embassy receiving the import permit. Hafez came to tell me the next day that we were going to get a permit for Czech bottles. I told him this was no longer necessary, and that he had to withdraw the request, for now, in favor of the East German request for bottles. He apparently really looked into the German bottles, but the relevant letter is nowhere to be found.

A few days later, I get an express letter from Farghali in which he writes that he had received a telegram from Prague, which referred to a bottle order from us and Crown that needed his mediation. I communicated to Farghali that I had just contracted with East Germany, on the basis of the commitment to the import permit aforementioned, and furthermore that the East German bottles, in terms of price and payments for us and the country, were even better. I added that we, therefore, should withdraw our request for import of Czech bottles. The next day we received the import permit (for the Czech bottles)!

As for the East German Bottles, despite the commitments made, there was no message. A few days later Hafez comes to tell me that Farghali had ordered him to get the permit for the East German bottles, but that he would not go after the permit for bottles for Crown.

As this passage shows, an apparently simple matter like choosing bottles could be a source of great contention among management. Kettner, the true technocrat, made an agreement with East Germany to receive a shipment of bottles that would be cheaper and easier than the other options available, but the deal was contingent on the East Germans receiving approval (the import permit) from the Egyptian government. Hafez, on the other hand, knowing the Egyptian bureaucracy and inhabiting a position equal to Kettner, went ahead and acquired an import permit for bottles from the

company's usual supplier, the Czechs. When Hafez brought this news to Kettner, he backed away from the Czech bottles and agreed with Kettner that they should pursue the East German bottles. Whether it was too late to cancel the order or whether Hafez really believed that they should pursue the Czech bottles instead, the end result was that the Czech company received the request. They contacted Farghali, the head of the company, about the matter, so he demanded a quick response from Kettner on this technical issue, which fell under his purview as a managing director. After Kettner communicated why they should use the East German bottles, Kettner received the permit for the Czech bottles and could not help but feel that Hafez had gone behind his back to get approval for the Czech rather than East German bottles, especially because there is no proof (the missing letter) that Hafez actually did what Kettner said. Finally, Kettner saw Hafez pursue the East German bottles, but only after Farghali told him to do so, and without getting bottles for Crown, a situation that could be used as "evidence" of an Egyptian conspiracy. When the misunderstandings present in the above anecdote are framed with the "us vs. them" narrative that the government was championing, they very quickly transform from being the natural frictions present in all companies into a full-on nationalist battle between "foreigners" and "Egyptians."

Crafting a Brand

Although internally the beer companies would struggle with conflicts between the Dutch management and the Egyptian management and workforce, this period also saw Crown and Pyramid breweries become the national beer companies of Egypt. One of the main way they accomplished this was by putting forth a quality product that was masterfully branded to fit to the realities of the Egyptian market.

One of the most significant spurs for the realization of this market control came in 1952 with an important technical innovation, a strain of barley specifically designed to grow in Egypt. Malted barley, which was soaked in water to begin germination and then roasted to arrest this germination, was one of the essential ingredients of modern beer, along with hops and water. Before the innovation of “Egyptian” barley, the Egyptian breweries had to import the malted barley from the Netherlands, where Heineken carefully chose and roasted it. The import of malt from the Netherlands was problematic, as it was inefficient, costly, and exposed the malt to the possibility of spoilage or contamination.

These problems with barley supply were resolved when a Dutch brewmaster who had trained at the Heineken Brewing company, Gerardus Hubertus Ulenberg, became the chief of beer-making at the Pyramid Brewery and created a strain of barley in 1952.¹⁰⁵ This new strain of barley was two-rowed; barley generally comes in two forms, two- and six-rowed depending on how many rows of seeds it has along its flowering head.¹⁰⁶ Although more expensive than six-rowed barley, this two-rowed barley was better suited to growing conditions in Egypt. Ultimately, the breweries came to maximize both quality and price by using a two-rowed/six-rowed mix for making their malt.¹⁰⁷ With this new strain, Pyramid could produce malt that was up to Heineken’s standards and that differentiated their beer from foreign competitors in Egypt. This innovation not only freed Pyramid from the major manufacturing bottleneck of importing large amounts of barley, but it also meant that Pyramid could become a hub of malt production in Egypt and the Middle East. One of the first results of this innovation was that Pyramid could now send malt to Crown Brewery to produce a similar product. These malt deliveries even went beyond the borders of Egypt. One of the main recipients of this new Egyptian malt was a brewery in the

Sudan that had also come under the control of Cobra in the 1950s, Blue Nile Brewery. For example, in 1958, Pyramid sent around 570 metric tons of malted barley to this brewery.¹⁰⁸ The creation of this Egyptian variety of barley was another example of the benefits of Heineken's ownership of Crown and Pyramid. Counter to Nasser's narrative of foreign influences suffocating local industry, the inventiveness of a Dutch brewmaster had actually created a beer, and thus a beer industry, that was more Egyptian than not.

Even as the barley was being standardized, so too was the bottle that contained the beer. Breweries started using standard-size bottles in 1952. These bottles were imported in two standard sizes, small (330 ml) and large (660 ml). The companies had imported bottles since their founding because it was cheaper to import repurposed bottles from Europe than to purchase new bottles in Egypt.¹⁰⁹ However, the breweries only started using standardized bottles in the 1950s when it became cheaper than using non-standard bottles. The government-levied duty on the bottles was based on the metric of "bottles per hectoliter." Thus, for a certain duty paid, a company was able to bring a certain number of bottles. In 1952, the government made the number of bottles per hectoliter greater for standard bottles than nonstandard.¹¹⁰ The shift was not without difficulty, as the breweries had built up a tertiary market of selling the bottles. They thus had to either exchange the non-standard bottles at cost to the breweries (the standard bottles cost 5 milliemes more [20 milliemes] than the non-standard bottles [15 milliemes]), which they did in Cairo and Suez, or they had to deliver the bottles on consignment, which they did in Cairo and Assiout.¹¹¹

In a trend that occurred in food industries around the world, as both the product within the packages as well as the packages themselves became more standardized and homogenous, companies like Pyramid and Crown had to find ways to

differentiate themselves from competitors.¹¹² In the Egyptian case, there were three distinct reasons why after 1952, the breweries were looking for ways to stand out. Prior to 1952, the beers that Crown and Pyramid breweries sold were marked with a label that merely stated the brewery's name. This was not an unusual branding practice for beer companies; Heineken still uses it to this day. Nevertheless, this reliance on the name of the breweries was not the most effective way to sell beers in the dual-brewery model. Selling similar beers under different names in Egypt's two biggest markets created the very real possibility that Heineken would be cannibalizing its market share in both cities. Another motive for creating a brand was that after changing their name from Pyramid to Al-Ahram brewery as part of the Egyptianization process, Pyramid had made their own name less distinctive. One of Egypt's main daily newspapers even shared the name of Al-Ahram. The third reason for creating a recognizable brand is that in the 1950s Crown and Pyramid's first real challenger, Nile Brewery, appeared on the market selling similar beers.

In order for these breweries to differentiate themselves, they turned to a nascent field in the business world, marketing. The breweries contracted an advertising agency, Al-Shark, to produce their advertising materials.¹¹³ The owner, a Mr. Maggyar, was quite excellent in Kettner's eyes, as he had trained at J. Walter Thompson, one of the world's leading advertisers. Al-Shark handled the advertising for almost all major international groups in Egypt, and it even had a department for market research.¹¹⁴ However, this marketing firm could only do so much without a clear brand message from the company.

Therefore, in the 1950s, these two beer companies, with the help of Heineken, developed Stella, the brand of beer that would come to dominate Egypt. They had been selling an industrially produced lager beer under the name Stella since the 1920s,

but in the 1950s they really built a brand around a beer that was golden in color and had a light, crisp taste; that had an alcohol by volume between 4 and 5 percent; and that was brewed from Egyptian-made malt (a proprietary mix of two-rowed, six-rowed barley, and rice), imported hops, and Egyptian water.¹¹⁵

The brand that was featured on bottles and company letterhead was truly a marketing masterpiece. It was simple—a black and white star with the name “Stella Beer” circling around it in both Arabic and French—but packed with numerous layers of meaning that resonated with the Egyptian market. The bilingual nature of the brand clearly evoked the imagined consumer of the beer as the middle- to upper-class Egyptian, but the power of this brand went beyond the use of French and Arabic, which was a very common advertising ploy at the time. Using the Italian word for star, Stella, was a masterful way to craft the product for the Egyptian market. The Italian language, like the culture itself, was perceived as exclusive, as only the truly “educated” Egyptians would know Italian, and yet familiar. Due to the long and prominent presence of Italians in Egypt, the Italian language had seeped into Egyptian colloquialisms, especially vis-à-vis luxury products. For example, *mūbīlīyya* (Arabic colloquial, Furniture) from the Italian *mobilia*, *lūkānda* (Arabic colloquial, Hotel) from the Italian *lokanda*, or even the word for beer itself (*bīra*) had entered from Italian, *birra*. In addition to the name Stella’s evocation of familiar Italian culture, it also fit nicely in an Arabic context. The word was easily transliterated into Arabic (*sīn-ta-lam-alif*) and contained no difficult sounds for the Arabophone speaker. Even the word written in Arabic was flowing and continuous, containing none of the long vowels that usually break up foreign words written in Arabic. As for the actual symbol of the star, while it is not exactly clear where the name came from, it most

likely derived from the red star that had been a part of the Heineken brand from the brewery's outset.

Al-Shark publicized this brand through two avenues: large public signs and newspaper advertisements. One particularly prominent electrical sign for Stella sat atop a building owned by a shareholder of the National Bottling Company, the company in charge of selling carbonated soda, Pepsi, in Egypt.¹¹⁶ While the signage was a public testament to the Stella brand, it was the newspaper advertisements that provided a clear articulation of what the Stella brand was intended to represent.

All of the attributes that advertisements attributed to Stella were actually properties commonly associated with beer in the earliest Egyptian beer advertisements. Advertisements by beer importers like Dressler, Amstel, and Guinness in the 1930s focused on the beverage's refreshing nature, its healthfulness, and its curative properties.¹¹⁷ These advertising directives grew out of advances in both the beer industry and the advertising business. With regard to beer, due to advances in refrigeration technology, yeast biology, and bottling, advertisers could put forth a beer that was limpid, temperature-controlled, and free from "impurities." Likewise, as advertisers sought to distance their products from the quackery of patent medicines, they aimed to imbue industrial produced products like beer with medicinal properties.¹¹⁸ All of this messaging was targeted at the "modern" consumer, who now invested consumer goods with the ability to signal their lifestyle and aid them in their quest for self-improvement.

The Stella advertisements were noticeably more targeted than those that had preceded them. Instead of merely showing "modern" Egyptians in their advertisements, these advertisements illustrated how beer could fit into the everyday

lives of the Egyptians. For example, a set of advertisements that featured “the Stella Fairy” argued that Stella could be a normative part of Egyptian life and even improve upon it. This campaign opened with an advertisement depicting a buxom fairy floating in front of the Stella star and declaring,

I am a healthful fairy, full of magic and happy things
I am Stella, I am Stella, and everyone knows who I am.
My wand refreshes and revives anyone it touches
It fills one’s heart, gives one succor, and quenches one’s thirst.¹¹⁹



In this advertisement, the healthful properties of beer are equated with magic and wonder. The other advertisements in this series built upon the magical premise established in this advertisement. One advertisement depicted four people on a date, two women sitting on a couch and two men in chairs on either side. Rather than enjoying themselves, they are sitting in bored silence. As the text above and below the image states, “When boredom and lack of interest prevail with no hope in sight. We call for the enchanting fairy. Stella, the shining star.” Below this line is another image,

in which, with the help of the fairy sitting atop the panel and touching the scene with her wand, and Stella, which sits in the foreground, one couple is dancing and the other is engaged in enjoyable conversation. The people in the advertisement exclaim, “Stella. Thank You! Thank You! Now we know the secret of how to bring people together.”¹²⁰ At the bottom of the advertisements is a picture of the beer bottle standing next to a foaming glass of beer, with the slogan “Stella is Always Delicious” (*Birrat Stella, al-Bīrra al-Ladhīdha*)



Above that image is a declaration of why Stella beer is the best:

Stella Beer is made from nutritious (*mughadhdhī*) Egyptian barley
 And other choice ingredients. Stella beer is the freshest.
 It’s a cool, refreshing, and healthful drink.

This was not the only advertisement that focused on Stella’s role as a sort of social lubricant. In another advertisement with a similar setup, two young couples sit on the beach in their modern swimsuits, the men in swim trunks and the women in bikinis, all of them looking dreadfully bored. One woman is even reading a book underneath a beach umbrella. This boredom is a shame because the “weather is beautiful as the waves are rolling in and a gentle breeze is blowing.” However, when they say the magic words: “We call for the enchanting fairy. Stella, the shining star,” the dour scene is transformed, with one couple playing with a ball in the sand and the other



snuggled up underneath the beach umbrella.¹²¹ Another advertisement uses a similar format (problem, request for the fairy, solution) to show how Stella could even aid adults at work. In this third advertisement, the fairy, after hearing the magic words, blesses two men arguing over a difference of opinion about a contract, bestowing upon them bottles of Stella that immediately resolve the conflict and allow the two to

sign a contract.¹²² Thus, Stella can even “clear the air and resolve arguments” between feuding businessmen.

Another advertisement in the Fairy Series takes aim again at the youth, showing Stella as a beverage for the tired athlete. The advertisement begins with a picture of men walking off a soccer pitch exhausted by their exertion in the gleaming sun and saying: “Playing has tired us out. We want something refreshing and revitalizing.” When they say the magic words, the fairy blesses them with Stella, and then we see them in the clubhouse celebrating and raising their glasses of cool Stella beer. The players explain their new feeling by saying to the fairy, “A gulp from your health-giving cup is magical and intoxicating. It reactivates the body and fills it with power and health.” This advertisement is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, it portrays beer as the ideal after-sports drink. Although this advertisement pre-dates sports drinks by decades, it trades in the same promises of revitalization after sweaty exertion that advertisements for sports drinks use today. While it may seem odd to the modern viewer to imagine beer as a sports drink, this is really no different than



parading flavored, artificially colored water that is high in both salt and sugar as a “sports drink.” Most interestingly, this advertisement also mentions the intoxicating (*nashwa*) power of beer. Although it is meant in the figurative sense, this is one of



few advertisements that even hinted at the reason many consumers bought and drank beer.¹²³

In two especially striking advertisements from the series, the fairy is not transformative, but merely an observer placed in the corner of a vignette. One depicts a well dressed couple (the man wearing a tuxedo, the women a ball gown) dancing at a club as a band plays in the background. The other depicts a man exhausted from the day at work, lying in his reclining chair with the newspaper on his lap and a Stella in his hand. In addition to the lack of the mini-narrative of transformation, these advertisements are also distinct because the main text is a colloquial poem perfectly suited to the advertisement’s subject matter. Accompanying the couple dancing is a poem with an a-a-b-b rhyme scheme:

Dance and enjoy this happy day
For the day will pass and go away
Stella opens the way for your day of celebration
As the delicious beer that gives you what you want
Oh, how Stella pairs well with songs
And sets the mood for a beautiful evening
For nothing can compare to its quality.¹²⁴

The vignette of the man relaxing is accompanied by a poem with an end-line rhyme of *-ak*.

After the strain and toil of the day
Drink Stella to ease your mind
You will forget all your cares and worries
And the world will always look better
Your normal energy level will return
And it will immediately soothe your nerves
Drink Stella whenever
For it's just what your health needs.¹²⁵

The fairy series thus shows that Stella beer could be an important aspect of the modern Egyptian's lifestyle, and even add an element of magic. This turn to the magical represents a return to the origins of advertising, in which huge claims were made for patent medicines that were generally of dubious quality and effectiveness. The magic in these beer advertisements is more maturely rendered, however. An Egyptian reading these advertisements would not have imagined that Stella beer had magical powers, but the advertisers do show potential consumers that beer did have the ability to revive, refresh, and most importantly, bring people together. This last point was particularly of concern to the newly imagined consumer, the middle- and upper-class youth.

Four out of the six advertisements (the party, the beach party, the sports field, and the dance club) were targeted at youthful audiences. The people depicted in these advertisements appear younger and are rendered in more cartoonish forms. The

magic that the “fairy” brought was generally relevant to the lives of younger people; in two of the advertisements, Stella appears as the ultimate icebreaker between men and women. This line of advertisement also does much to focus on another aspect of beer, its cool refreshment. As discussed above, this was a characteristic of beer that was emphasized even in the first beer advertisements in Egypt. Yet these advertisements transformed beer into a sports-drink, the quintessential refreshing beverage. It is these two aspects—that beer is young and fun and refreshing—that would become the essential characteristics of beer in Egyptian advertisements, movies, and literature in the 1960s and 1970s.

Brand Management

The companies aimed to strengthen the brand Stella not only by clearly laying out what it was, but also by clearly defining the other brands it had in its portfolio. Although Stella would come to dominate the beer market in Egypt, eventually becoming synonymous with beer in the country, it was not the companies’ only brand. One of their most popular brands besides Stella was Märzen. Named after a type of German beer, märzen bier, which translates as March beer, it was a deep amber lager with a full body and moderate bitterness.¹²⁶ Originally offered as a seasonal beer sold between October and March, the breweries decided in 1959 to offer it as a full-year beer because the sales were so strong.¹²⁷ Wittert van Hoogland was particularly worried that because the name was so tied to a season that it did not make sense to sell it all year. Nevertheless, Kettner resolved that since the name did not carry the same associations in Arabic, it did not really matter.¹²⁸

The breweries also sold a beer they labeled as Bayrisch, meaning “Bavarian” in German. Their darkest offering, it was not as successful a brand as Märzen.¹²⁹ The name was not accurate in that it was not brewed in Bavaria, and the Germans protested the use of the name.¹³⁰ Germans, like the French with wine, were very keen to protect their beers’ reputation. So when the breweries looked to expand production of Märzen to the full year, they also looked how to streamline their other non-Stella brands.

After deliberating over eliminating the brand entirely, they decided to rebrand Märzen Beer and indigenize it as Aswan beer, as a nod to the region (Upper Egypt) that they were looking to exploit further. Market growth in the region had driven their excellent sales in the 1950s, as the demand for beer in Upper Egypt increased by 30% and 40% in the years 1957 and 1958.¹³¹ The breweries decided to also place it at a different price point than Stella.¹³² In 1959, they also debated adding two new types of beer to their portfolio, a higher abv (alcohol by volume) beer and *bière de ménage*, which was a beer and wine mix. They did not proceed on either account out of desire to protect their established brands. The high abv beer was nixed because the breweries feared it would eliminate any goodwill that they had left with the government.¹³³ Pyramid executives feared that the higher alcohol volume beer would have upset the government because the excise tax levied on beer was different than other high-abv liquors like wine, and thus this high-abv beer would appear to be an attempt to sneak a high-abv drink on the market without paying the appropriate taxes. Pyramid did not follow through on a *bière de ménage* because there were concerns that people would buy it expecting Stella, and be disappointed when it was not.¹³⁴

The idea of brand maintenance was also why this period marked another concerted push by Pyramid to bring Crown in line. Although Crown was receiving

malt from Pyramid and agreed to sell under the Stella label in 1953, they continued to assert their autonomy by putting out a beer in Alexandria that was different from the one in Cairo. When Kettner did some taste tests, he found Crown's beer was lacking in its taste, brilliance, and foam stability.¹³⁵ To lack these was a cardinal sin because, as discussed above, these were main selling points of beer in the Egyptian market. Kettner was so distressed at how this non-standardized beer was affecting the sales of Stella in Egypt that he suggested this failure to adhere to the principle of standardization warranted the replacement of the man in charge of beer production at Crown, Michel Mavroviti.¹³⁶ However, an impertinent response, rather than compliance, followed all of this grandstanding.

Thus, Spiro Spridis, a managing director at Crown, said to Kettner that the difference in quality was merely a matter of appreciation.¹³⁷ His customers in Alexandria had never commented on the beer, which fit perfectly to their taste. Not only that, but these same customers said they preferred beer made in Alexandria to the one made in Cairo, a stab at Kettner and Pyramid.¹³⁸ Spiro Spiridis noted that they should not dwell on this controversy and that they should have more meetings between the leadership of the two breweries, meetings that had been delayed by the upheaval in the country. These meetings would lead to slight modifications that would eventually bring the beer formulas more in line.¹³⁹ Despite Spiridis' words, the companies were still discussing the issue two years later. In fact, at that point Pyramid had resolved to send a brewmaster trained by Heineken to Crown so that this problem could finally be solved.¹⁴⁰

All of this brand management was important, for, as mentioned above, in June 1947 another business oligarch, Muhammad Sirri Bey, founded a competing beer company, Nile Brewery, that differentiated itself from Pyramid and Crown by touting

its Egyptianness.¹⁴¹ This domestic challenger to the Pyramid-Crown conglomerate not only sought to distance itself from its competitor with its Egyptianness, but also aimed to capitalize on the rising economic nationalism of the period. Besides its Egyptian name, which evoked the image of beer brewed with Nile water, its leadership and workforce comprised mostly Egyptians. Of the original board, five of the seven members were Egyptians. Likewise, of the thirty-two employees listed in the records for 1954, twenty-nine of them were Egyptian, with twenty-one being Muslim.¹⁴²

Despite Nile Brewery's national credentials, it proved no match for the embedded Pyramid-Crown partnership. Not long after Nile's foundation, it began posting losses. Between the 1950 and 1952, still in its early years, the company lost 68,000 Egyptian pounds. As a result, the company had to take drastic measures to stay solvent. The most obvious way of maintaining a flagging business is by taking loans. Nile Brewery did, borrowing twenty-2,000 Egyptian pounds from Barclay's Bank and 12,000 Egyptian pounds from the Belgian Bank.¹⁴³ Beside indebting itself to foreign banks, Nile Brewery was also kept afloat by an advance of over 16,000 Egyptian pounds from the board of the company.

In order to reduce operating expenses, the brewery also shed staff while relying on temporary workers. While some employees were eager to flee a sinking ship, others were, obviously not pleased to be terminated. One worker, Gharib Khater, filed a wrongful termination suit against the company in 1953, claiming in a case before the Petty Court for Worker Affairs (*Maḥkamat Shu'ūn al-'Umāl al-Juz'īyya*) that the company had fired him because he was too old. The court did uphold his termination on the grounds that Nile Brewery had terminated him due to their dire economic circumstances.¹⁴⁴ The volatility of the company was even reflected in the

executive ranks, where over the course of five years, the entire board changed. Unsurprisingly, the company liquidated its assets in 1955, closed shop in 1956, and was quickly purchased by and incorporated into the Crown–Pyramid partnership. Muhammad Sirri Bey did not stay to see the end of the company, so Ahmed Fahmi was left with the unenviable task of liquidating all assets and informing workers that they no longer had jobs.

Why did the Nile Brewery fail? The company, had its own theories on its failure, which we find in the court records of its wrongful termination cases. In these court records, the company offers four separate explanations for their unprofitability. The first was “illegal practices” of Pyramid/Stella Brewery in the local market; while they do not detail what these practices were, they claim that they went to the authorities and “no one did a thing.” The second explanation, again blaming Pyramid, claimed that Pyramid held the exclusive license to sell in the Canal Zone and that Nile Brewery was denied this source of revenue. The third alleged reason for Nile Brewery’s failure was the “very high” excise tax on the sale of beer. The fourth reason offered by Nile Brewery for its demise was the lack of a response to their request to the government to allow them to sell beer in the Sudanese market. This silence prevented them from taking advantage of the market for beer in Egypt’s sister country of Sudan, “where beer sells very well.”¹⁴⁵

Although the Nile Brewery’s narrative of victimization seems plausible, the company’s ultimate failure was largely attributable to its over-expansion and to the embedded position of Pyramid and Crown Breweries in the Egyptian economy. One of the first major moves that the Nile Brewery made after its start-up in 1949 was the purchase of Ghumra Glass Bottling Company, which was in liquidation in 1950. This move for horizontal integration would have been smart except that instead of reviving

Ghumra, it proved a drag on the Nile Brewery; as mentioned above, Nile started posting losses in 1950.¹⁴⁶ This loss was an inauspicious start for a company trying to unseat the powerful Pyramid–Crown partnership, and Nile never really recovered. Whether Pyramid acted illegally in its relations with Nile Brewery is less pertinent than the fact that this start-up, in order to make its way in the beer industry, had to reckon with the two beer companies. It is apparent from this court testimony that despite the intra-brewery rifts, the two beer companies Crown and Pyramid had fully achieved market dominance by 1953. The testimonial also confirms that by the 1950s, despite the two companies' differences, they were on their way to achieving the marketer's dream: having their brand, Stella lager beer, be synonymous with the product, beer. Further evidence of this achievement is that in the late 1950s, Pyramid and Crown were doing spectacularly well. In June 1958 alone, they sold over 10,000 hectoliters, which was half of what they sold yearly in the 1930s.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

The failed attempt by the Nile Brewery to claim a part of the beer market in Egypt is a testament to the power of the Crown–Pyramid partnership. Despite the political volatility of the era from 1952 to 1958, Crown and Pyramid increased profits and cultivated a coherent brand identity that would serve them for the rest of their history. However, as this chapter has shown, this success overlay the internal struggles of a multi-national company that existed within a business environment that was increasingly intolerant of any “foreign” presence.

As a result, the activist government of Egypt, besides forcing the companies to cater to their demands out of fear of nationalization, soured relationships within companies' management through its favoritism towards Muslim Egyptians. Under

legislation like the amendments to the Company Law of 1947, ordinary interoffice friction transformed into pitched nationalist and religious battles. While some may argue that a restructuring of the Egyptian economy to favor the “Egyptian” over the “foreign” was necessary in order to free it from foreign, imperial control, these policies essentially took a hammer to any productive trans-religious and trans-national relationships and recast them all in the rhetoric of “us-versus-them.” The management of companies now became a zero-sum game, with foreign nationals, *Mutamaşşirūn*, and religious minorities seeing every instance of Muslim cooperation as a threat to their endangered status in the company and the country, and Muslim Egyptians seeming to believe that they were able to play by a different set of rules.

As I will show in the next chapter, the Nasser-led government did irreparable damage to management relationships within Crown and Pyramid, and also soured relations between management and the workforce. In this instance, it not only set “foreign” against “Egyptian,” but “productive” worker against “predatory” employer.

¹ Nancy Reynolds, *A City Consumed: Urban Commerce, the Cairo Fire and the Politics of Decolonization in Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 189.

² *Ibid.*, 185-189.

³ Robert L. Tignor, *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire: State and Business in Decolonizing Egypt, Nigeria, and Kenya, 1945-1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 63

⁴ “Letter From O. A. E. E. L. Wittert van Hoogland (Henceforth WvH) to Cobra,” 23 November 1953, NL-SAA-192211, 1950- 1953- July 1960, 4.1.2.4.2.2-Crown Brewery SA Alexandria, 834-Archives of Heineken NV (Henceforth AH), Stadsarchief Amsterdam (henceforth SAA).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ “Letter from WVH to Cobra,” 7 May 1954, NL-SAA-192211, 1950- 1953- July 1960 4.1.2.4.2.2-Crown Brewery SA Alexandria, 834-AH, SAA

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² “Heineken Bierbrouwerij Maatschapij (Henceforth HBM) to Pyramid Brewery,” 30 November 1953, NL-SAA-192211, 1950- 1953- July 1960, 4.1.2.4.2.2-Crown Brewery SA Alexandria, 834-AH, SAA.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Letter from WvH to HBM,” 14 July 1955, 1950- 1953-1960 July NL-SAA-192211, 1950- 1953-1960 July, 4.1.2.4.2.2-Crown Brewery SA Alexandria, 834-AH, SAA.

¹⁷ “Confidential letter to Crown Brewery (henceforth, CB) from Cobra 30 September 1955,” NL-SAA-192211, 1950- 1953- July 1960, 4.1.2.4.2.2-Crown Brewery SA Alexandria, 834-AH, SAA.

¹⁸ “Letter from CB to Cobra,” 13 October 1955, NL-SAA-192211, 1950- 1953-1960 July, 4.1.2.4.2.2-Crown Brewery SA Alexandria, 834-AH, SAA.

¹⁹ “Letter from CB to Pyramid Brewery (Henceforth, PB),” 7 June 1956, NL-SAA-192211, 1950- 1953-July 1960, 4.1.2.4.2.2-Crown Brewery SA Alexandria, 834-AH, SAA.

²⁰ Letter from Cobra to Société Anonyme de Bière “Les Pyramides” S.A.E. entitled “Votre ref.15234 du 7 crt,” 12 June 1956, NL-SAA-192211, 1950- 1953- July 1960, 4.1.2.4.2.2-Crown Brewery SA Alexandria, 834-AH, SAA.

²¹ Leonard Binder, “Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser: Iconology, Ideology, and Demonology,” in *Rethinking Nasserism: Revolution and History Memory in Modern Egypt* ed. Elie Podeh and On Winckler (Gainesville : University Press of Florida, 2004), 46; Robert L.Tignor *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire*, 83.

²² Arthur Goldschmidt, *The Biographical Dictionary of Egypt* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000),150

²³ Robert L.Tignor *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire*, 84-5.

²⁴ Ibid., 85.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Tignor, *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire*, 97.

²⁷ Ibid., 123.

²⁸ Ibid., 127.

²⁹ Tignor, *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire*, 133.

³⁰ Ibid., 144.

³¹ Ibid., 166.

³² “Letter from PB to HBM,” 4 September 1957, NL-SAA-192211, 1950- 1953- July 1960, 4.1.2.4.2.2-Crown Brewery SA Alexandria, 834-AH, SAA.

³³ “Letter from Erick Karl Kettner (Henceforth, EK) to WvH,” 4 Decmeber 1959 NL-SAA-191356, 1977- Reports of visits and discussions on the Société de Bière Les Pyramides SAE, 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.

³⁴ Robert L. Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise and Economic Change in Egypt, 1918–1952* (Princeton,N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 184.

³⁵ Robert L.Tignor *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire*, 91

³⁶ “ Letter from Albert Tagher to EK” 14 September 1958, NL-SAA-191356, 1977- Verslagen van bezoeken en besprekingen inzake de Société de Bière Les Pyramides S.A.E., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.

³⁷ Tignor *State,Private Enterprise*, 220.

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- ³⁸ “Import licenses” 20 August 1957, NL-SAA-191356, 1977- Verslagen van bezoeken..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.
- ³⁹ “Minutes talks in Cairo,” January 28-February 3, 1959, NL-SAA-191356, 1977- Verslagen van bezoeken..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.
- ⁴⁰ “A MM. Les actionnaires de la Société de la Bière «Les Pyramides», S.A.E. bureaux réunis à la réunion de la Société de Gizeh, Le 6 mai 1957,” 3019-5504-0009, *Sharikat Birat al- Ahram*.
- ⁴¹ “Letter from EK to WvH,” 18 Juli 1957, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.
- ⁴² Ibid
- ⁴³ “Letter from EK to WvH,” 29 September 1958, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ “Letter from EK to WvH,” 9 October 1958, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.
- ⁴⁸ “Letter from WvH to EK,” 14 Oct 1958, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.
- ⁴⁹ “Letter from EK to WvH,” 9 October 1958, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.
- ⁵⁰ “Letter from EK to WvH,” 16 Oct 1958, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.
- ⁵¹ “Letter from EK to WvH,” 28 November 1958, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.
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Chapter 7: Toward a Model Company: Competing Visions for the Beer Industry, 1957–1960

“Do you know the difference between the United States and Egypt? The U.S.A have [sic] Eisenhower and Bob Hope, whereas the U.A.R has Gamal Abdel Nasser and no hope.”¹ This joke was making the rounds in Cairo in 1959, according to a letter written by the managing director of Pyramid Brewery at the time, Erick Karl Kettner. While Kettner’s letter did not say any more about the joke, his decision to include it suggests that he did enjoy it. His inclusion of the joke also indicates that he assumed the recipient of his letter, Wittert van Hoogland, the head of Cobra, would enjoy the joke too. The joke probably resonated for the men because their experience with the Nasser government had been uniformly negative. Every one of their interactions with the Egyptian government had resulted in greater difficulties in selling beer in Egypt. This was particularly the case with the government’s legislation on “foreign” employees. That the reaction of most Egyptians to Nasser’s charismatic persona and his populist policies was overwhelmingly positive only amplified Kettner’s discontent and his feelings of hopelessness in managing a beer company under Nasser’s regime.

This chapter examines a set of interactions between Crown and Pyramid Breweries and the Egyptian government in the period from 1957 to 1960. As I show, this period of the breweries’ history was dominated by a battle between the management and the Nasser government over what constituted a “model company.” For the management of the breweries, a model company was a profitable one that had the autonomy and the efficient, disciplined, and obedient workforce to implement

Heineken's methods of brewing. For the Nasser-led government, a model company was one that would make large profits autonomously, but that was willing and able to mobilize in support of Nasser's grand projects, like the United Arab Republic, and his vision for the Egyptian economy. In addition, this company should house an empowered and unambiguously Egyptian workforce that was unquestionably loyal to the Egyptian government. The battle over visions of a model company was fought through both letters and legislation. In the one area where the differing visions overlapped—namely, in the desire to make profits—the breweries were successful. In the period from 1957 to 1960, they witnessed unprecedented profits and deep cultural penetration. However, in every other avenue, it was the Nasser-led government and its conception of a “model” company that won out.

In an eight-part analysis, this chapter shows the competing visions of the beer industry in Egypt from 1957 to 1960. The first two sections of the chapter set the context by discussing the unprecedented cultural penetration of beer in this period, and by examining the profit and growth that ensued. The third section then recounts a direct interaction between the beer companies and President Nasser in order to show the close attention Nasser paid to the beer industry, as well as his capability and willingness to effect sudden and dramatic changes in that industry. The fourth section examines the complicated interactions of the beer companies in the three-year period (1958–61) by showing how they dealt with exports as Egypt and Syria formed a union, the United Arab Republic, a venture that Nasser strongly supported. The fifth section discusses the vision that the Dutch management had for a “model” company workforce—a vision that would be challenged from below by the workers and from above by Nasser's interference. Following this, the sixth section looks at the demographics of the workforce that the Dutch management was trying to shape. In the

seventh section, we see how this workforce, inspired by the legislation of the Nasser government, rebelled against the Dutch model. The final section describes the *détente* that was reached by the workforce and the management at the end of this period, on the eve of the beer industry's nationalization.

Young and Fun

During the late 1950s, as beer achieved an unprecedented cultural penetration, Pyramid and Crown were well on their way to reaching their goal of making beer a chief distraction for Egyptians in their social lives. The writings of one of the most popular Arabic authors of the time, Ihsan abd el-Quddus (1919–1991), reflected beer's progress in this regard.² Abd el-Quddus began his career at one of Egypt's best-known political and cultural magazines, *Ruz al-Yusuf*. The magazine was the brainchild of Abd el-Quddus's mother, the retired theater actress Ruz al-Yusuf (Rose el-Yousef). At *Ruz al-Yusuf*, Abd el-Quddus became a leading voice of liberal discontentment with the monarchal regime in 1940s Egypt. Indeed, as a result of his criticism, he spent a short time in prison. While Abd el-Quddus initially welcomed the king's ouster, he soon ran afoul of the Free Officers Movement as well, and he served prison time again in 1954.³

After 1955, Abd el-Quddus turned to writing fiction. While his prose never did approach the quality and depth of literary giants like Naguib Mahfouz and Yusuf Idris, his circulation was unparalleled.⁴ The relative simplicity of his literary style and lexicon gave his works a mass appeal among the “youth of a modernizing middle class who struggled to free themselves of social and parental constraints, to adapt and adopt changing social and gender roles, and above all to experience and understand the notion of romantic love.”⁵ It would not be an exaggeration to state that Abd el-

Quddus gave voice to a generation of young Egyptians growing up in the heady times of post-1952 Egypt. This voice was not one of stolen kisses and furtive rendezvous, but one of “pett[ing] brazenly in the back seat of convertibles, arrang[ing] trysts in plushly furnished bachelor pads, and danc[ing] the night away—with a variety of partners—to the sounds of flowing whiskey and rhythm and blues.”⁶

This passage from his collection of short stories *al-Banat wa al-Sayf* (*Girls of the Summer*) exemplifies this frank modernity:

...And she sat at table that sat next to a window looking out on the sea... Sayyid sat in front of her saying:

What would you like to drink?

Whiskey. Whiskey really wakes me up and I am dead tired, she said.

I have been on my feet all day.

Sayyid got up and ordered a bottle of whiskey from the bar and two glasses. The waiter soon came with two bottles of soda water and a bucket of ice.

Don't give me any soda, just ice, Sharifa said.

I know, said Sayyid.

And then Sharifa drank. She drank three glasses in less than a quarter of an hour and she felt as if her energy had been replenished to such a point that she was going to explode. She couldn't bear to sit down silently. She wanted to jump, scream, fight and hit someone.⁷

Ihsan Abd el-Quddus's portrayal of this strong female character is particularly noteworthy. According to Joel Gordon, “Ihsan's primary female characters, in one respect or another, are rebels. They may suffer from it, and they may even wind up in seemingly subservient positions they swore they would never occupy,” but what they stand against is always wrong.⁸ While el-Quddus's female characters were the product of a “male pen,” they were some of the most complex of the time.⁹ They were

neither virginal ingénues nor fallen Svengalis, but three-dimensional people.

Arguably, the prominence of alcohol in this passage and his work in general reflected the reality of this generation, rather than merely serving to make his book more exciting.

From Abd el-Quddus's writing, we can sense beer's social role among a particular class of Egyptians. His collection of stories, *al-Banat wa al-Sayf*, offers further insights into this role. The collection tells the story of five different women's experiences during a summer in Alexandria. This seasonal setting is significant as it establishes a world frame entirely different than the urban setting of Cairo. In summer, many members of a certain Egyptian social class moved out of their houses or apartments and into beach cabins (*al-Kābīn*). One's days were not filled with work and the buzz of everyday life, but rather with the relaxation of swimming in the sea (*al-baḥr*) and eating on the beach (*al-bilāj*). Finally, those who summered in cabins would make the pilgrimage from various parts of Egypt to Alexandria, where they could meet with people outside of their typical social circle, although their interactions were still among people of a comparable class.

In this setting, beer was well adapted. One mention of beer comes in a story by Abd el-Quddus entitled "al-Bint al-Thalith" ("The Third Woman"). One character, Isma'il, comments to his friend 'Umar, as he is going out to get food: "When you return your beer will be nice and cold for you..."¹⁰ This statement takes on greater significance when we discover that Isma'il is in a romantic relationship with Wafiyya, 'Umar's wife, who is occupying the cabin along with Isma'il and 'Umar. Sending 'Umar out of the cabin is a pretext for Isma'il to spend time with 'Umar's wife. This passage, beyond indicating Isma'il's dastardly behavior, also indicates that the advertising of the beer companies was paying off. The key attribute of the beer here is

not its alcoholic content, but the fact that it will be a refreshing drink for ‘Umar upon his return from running errands. Abd al-Quddus’ disassociation of drunkenness from beer becomes starker when we examine the way he describes the effects of whiskey in the same story. One powerful description comes when Wafiyya is racked with guilt that her illicit affair is coming to light: “But she drank a cup [of whiskey] and then another and remembered her pain. The alcohol sent a warm feeling through her veins and encouraged her to reformulate her plan.”¹¹ In this instance, whiskey is a useful beverage because of its alcohol content, which can warm one and impart courage.

An even better example of the normalization of beer in Egyptian culture comes from another story in *al-Banat wa al-Sayf*, entitled “al-Bint al-Ula” (“The First Woman”). The first mention of beer comes during a party scene:

The party was at one of the cabins that sat on the rock of Bir Mas‘aud and was attended by young men and women between eighteen and twenty-five. Most of the women wore pants...and the men wore opened shirts revealing sunburned brown-skin and necks with gold chains that said “Ma Sha Allah [What God Wants]!” They each had a tuft of hair hanging over their foreheads, which would flap like a black flag when the sea breeze blew. The gramophone sat in the middle of the cabin... There were a lot of bottles of beer and Coca-Cola, Limongo [a local brand of soda], and sandwiches.¹²

This passage attributes three appealing characteristics to beer. First, it presents beer as a drink of the young and the happening, an ideal party beverage that was made for socialization. Second, the passage depicts beer as being, like Coca-Cola and Limongo, a refreshing drink that was ideal for the warm days and nights at the beach. Finally, the passage presents beer as a socially acceptable beverage on par with soft drinks.

The next reference to beer in “Bint al-Ula,” which comes when the story’s protagonist, Maysa, arrives at the party, again speaks to beer’s role as a sociable drink.

Then she entered the cabin and found herself next to Magid. She sat down and crossed her legs. Then Midhat shouted: One rock and roll song on account of Maysa. “Cheers to you,” shouted Nabil lifting the glass of beer from his lips.¹³

This passage is followed by the most significant reference to beer in the story. Maysa, dispirited by the fact that she has partied on the beach so many times before, and presumably has drunk enough beer that it has lost all of its fun, bemoans the lack of anything “new” at the party. She is on the lookout for something different, which comes in the form of a mysterious man, Abu Bakr. When Maysa sees him, she wants to talk, but Nabil takes her to dance instead:

She had to dance with Nabil and when she was done, Abu Bakr was busy talking. He didn’t do anything but talk and his beer remained unfinished in his hand...The bottles of beer, Coca-Cola, and Lemongo eventually ran out. The sandwiches were eaten, the gramophone ran out of juice, and everyone went home. However, she remained waiting for something new to happen and Abu Bakr was still there, unfinished beer in his hand.¹⁴

In this instance, the beer and beer bottle represent the potential for sociability. When the beer runs out, it is a signal, like the gramophone running out of power, that the party is over. The beer bottle, specifically the beer bottle of Abu Bakr, also represents Maysa’s chances at experiencing something new and exciting. As long as beer remained in the bottle of Abu Bakr, there was a chance that he would remain and thus fulfill Maysa’s desire to find something new. Although Abu Bakr would prove to be a

troubling character, eventually involving her in a love triangle, the point here is that Maysa is able to meet this appealing character because his beer remains unfinished.

As Ihsan Abd el-Quddus was the son of two actors (his father Muhammad had left his engineering career for the stage), it was perhaps natural that he would also find work as a film writer.¹⁵ Even before he wrote specifically for film and television, his prose style made his novels and short stories well suited for adaption to film. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a theme in his films is beer's role as a key to youthful sociability. One excellent example of this theme is in the 1960 film version of *al-Banat wa al-Sayf*, directed by Izz al-Din Zuficar, Salah Abu Sayf, and Fatin Abd al-Wahab. In one of the movie's first scenes, we discover the secret relationship of Isma'il and Wafiyya, which the film portrays as a predatory one, with Isma'il sexually assaulting Wafiyya as he sends 'Umar out on errands. After assaulting Wafiyya and telling her how much he loves her, Isma'il ends the conversation by saying that he is going to get his beer, which has been chilling. Then, as he sits outside the bedroom where he assaulted Wafiyya, he asks her, "Would you like a glass of beer? It's really hot out, and the beer is so cold." Hearing no answer, he shakes his head and takes a big sip of the foamy glass. As Wafiyya silently refuses her assaulter, 'Umar returns from getting food. When Wafiyya refuses to eat, Isma'il assures 'Umar that Wafiyya's mood is the result of her time out in the sun. He then hands 'Umar a glass of beer and toasts him, as if nothing has happened.¹⁶

Although the circumstances of this scene are quite gruesome, this adaption of the Abd el-Quddus story again emphasizes two important characteristics of beer in Egyptian middle- and upper-class society: first, beer is a refreshing beverage perfectly suited for the warm weather of the beach; second, it is a drink of youthful sociability, a drink for young people looking to party and have fun. There is also a dark

undercurrent that links beer to sinful behavior like fornication; nevertheless, as I show in Chapter 8, this dark side of beer would only come out in later filmic depictions.

Films of this era like *Ana Hurra (I'm Free)*, another adaptation of an early Ihsan Abd el-Quddus novel, preferred to focus on beer's role as a social lubricant for the youth.

This 1959 adaption presents one scene in which beer's essential role in youth sociability is paramount. The scene begins with the party hostess pouring bottles of beer into glasses. As she passes them out to party patrons, the camera focuses on a couple dancing to some western music. It follows them until they finish and everyone claps for them.¹⁷ Again, beer is the drink of the young and the fun.

This cultural penetration of beer as the summer drink of the young and fun was also seen in the sales of Pyramid and Crown. In 1960, Pyramid sold more than 100,000 hectoliters of beer.¹⁸ Of that, the majority of it was sold during the summer months of May to August. In these months, the brewery managed to sell more than 13,000 hectoliters per month. Even in the months around these summer months, April, September, October, they sold roughly 10,000 hectoliters per month. However, outside of those months, Pyramid struggled to sell the same volume. Their lowest month that year was January, Egypt's coolest month, when they sold less than 2,000 hectoliters. This was in stark contrast to May, when they sold more than 14,000 hectoliters.¹⁹ The strong correlation between the cultural and economic had a great deal to do with the fact that Crown and Pyramid breweries were the predominant sellers of beer in Egypt in the 1960s. What was good for beer was good for Crown and Pyramid. In addition, it appears that the advertising work that the two breweries had done in the 1950s to portray beer as the drink of the summer and of youth was definitely paying off.

Growth

In this period of rapidly rising popularity, the two beer companies were doing so well that Pyramid, with the help of Heineken, began work in 1958 and 1959 on a multi-year plant-expansion plan, which would further spur growth and profitability.²⁰ Emblematic of the companies' continued strong relationship, Heineken was heavily involved in every step of the process. The Dutch brewer took this opportunity to create a factory optimized for cutting-edge beer-making. Heineken not only conducted the feasibility study for the expansion, but also drew up the plans of the factory to best accommodate all of the machinery necessary for "modern" brewing.²¹ In this modern setup, there were six areas where machinery would be updated or replaced: the malting system, cooling system, brew house, filtering system, bottling system, and lager cellar. The official in charge of providing estimates for the price of these improvements at Pyramid was Emil Natti.

In Natti's estimate, the expansion of malting would involve the erection of a new malthouse and forty new silos so that a greater amount of barley could be stored; this expansion would cost 64,000 Egyptian pounds. The updates to the cooling system, which involved the replacement of two condensers, would cost around 14,000 Egyptian pounds.²² For the brew house, extensive updates were required. The updated machinery would include a kettle, a hop filter, and a transporter of spent grain. The copper kettle was central to the brewing process because it was where wort (malted barley that had been infused or decocted in water) would be combined and boiled with the hops. This boiling achieved "sterilization of the wort, denaturing of enzymes, extraction of hop components, coagulation of proteins and polyphenols, wort concentration, color development, and the driving off of unwanted volatiles."²³ The kettle's heating system allowed the wort to boil continuously and consistently,²⁴

before running through another piece of machinery that also had to be updated, the hop filter, or hop back, a false-bottomed straining vessel with small slots that allowed boiled wort to slowly filter through as it removed the particulates still contained in the wort. Fresh, unboiled hops covered the hop back's false bottom. Besides serving as an excellent natural filter, these fresh hops imparted more flavor to the beer.²⁵ The final new machine that Pyramid needed for its brew house was the spent grain transporter, which did exactly what it said, transport grain used during the manufacturing process. This remnant, composed mostly of barley husks, was one of the main byproducts of the brewing process. Although it had very little use to the brewery, it had a great deal of nutrient value and thus could have great value to farmers as a form of animal feed.²⁶ Despite the importance of all of this machinery, the update would only cost 16,000 Egyptian pounds.

In addition to Natti's estimates for updating the malting system, cooling system, and brew house, he also provided estimates for updates to the filtering system, bottling system, and lager cellar. For the filter cellar, an expenditure of 10,000 Egyptian pounds was needed in order to fund two improvements, beer pumps and beer filters. Hydraulic pumps were a necessity in a brewery, as they were the main way that liquid was transferred from one step to the other. For example, pumps were absolutely essential to transport fermented beer from where the beer was aging to the filter cellar, where the beer was purified of any particulates or organisms. The filtration step was a key point of difference between industrially produced lager beer and other, more artisanal brews like *būza*. By filtering the beer, a brewery was both able to improve the aesthetics of the beer (it gives beer a polished and clear appearance) and taste (it removed the dead yeast, which can alter the taste and give the beer turbidity).²⁷

Much greater expenditures were needed for improvements in bottling (100,000 Egyptian pounds) and the lager cellar (105,000 Egyptian pounds). The expansion to the bottling system included increasing the amount of bottles in stock as well as the machinery used to fill the bottles. Bottles were one of the most cost-intensive features of the beer industry, and thus any improvement in bottling could help the bottom line.²⁸ As for the lager cellar, it was also an important part of the brewing process, as that is where Stella Lager would complete its secondary fermentation.²⁹ Secondary fermentation, or bottom fermentation, occurred after the beer had been stored for eight days at 7 to 13C (45-55F) and primary fermentation took place. After those eight days, bottom fermentation would start, and the brewery would store the beer for around three months at 1C (34F).

When Natti provided these estimates for the cost of Pyramid's expansion, Heineken was quite shocked, but the high price of the expansion could be explained by three factors. First, instead of using inexpensive aluminum tanks, Pyramid had to buy more expensive enameled tanks from East Germany because the 1950s brought Egypt into new geopolitical alignment with Soviet-bloc countries. These new tanks also had to be outfitted with a carbon dioxide (CO²) cleaning system, which raised the price even more. This self-cleaning mechanism was the result of a new practice in brewing, known as "Cleaning in Place" (CIP), which appeared in the 1950s. CIP was the idea that machinery should be outfitted with self-cleaning mechanisms so that they could remain closed systems and thus eliminate a vector of microbial infection.³⁰ CIP was another manifestation of modern brewers' demand for what I call total control brewing. This approach involved the application of the most cutting-edge techniques and technology to create a standardized, sturdy, and sterile product that could be delivered to consumers. On top of the need for more expensive tanks, the building

code insisted that ceilings of the cellar basement be raised because it was being used as a canteen for employees.³¹ Finally, Natti's estimates also incorporated the duties that the government would put on the equipment as well as the fluctuating exchange rate of the Egyptian pound. Even with the high price quotes, Heineken still approved the work.³² However, Heineken was insistent on following up with explicit technical advice on all of these features.

For all the machines being built in Egypt, Heineken provided detailed diagrams in order to ensure their proper construction and installation. For the machinery that needed to be brought from abroad, they provided the pro-forma invoices to aid the purchase and transport. They also did their best to examine all of the machinery before it arrived in Cairo.³³ They even took their help another step further by sending engineers to Egypt to make sure the work was progressing according to plan.³⁴ Finally, Heineken also offered fully subsidized internships in Holland for engineers and managers from Pyramid who wanted to learn Heineken's best practices. For example, in 1961, Heineken hosted two agricultural and beer technicians, Mohammad Awad Ramses and Ihab el Chamaa, the chief accountant, Mounir Tadros, and Pyramid's commercial director, Alber Farag.³⁵ Heineken took all of these measures in order to support the growth and expansion of Crown and Pyramid. Nevertheless, growing the beer sector was not Heineken's only concern in the Egyptian market, as I will show they also had to be cognizant of the demands of an increasingly activist Egyptian government.

The President Speaks

No matter how successful the breweries were in this period or how much input Heineken sought to have, they ultimately existed at the whim of the Egyptian

government led by Gamal Abdel Nasser. This section illustrates the point by recounting a direct interaction between the beer companies and the President. To be sure, the breweries' continued operation in Egypt was contingent upon the authorities receiving and approving a yearly application for their continued functioning in Egypt.³⁶ An even clearer example of the government's role as the ultimate arbiter of the companies' fate was their "arrêté" on the "professions scientifiques." According to this legislation, the beer companies' classification as "indirect chemical industries" meant that all chemical work had to be performed by someone with a bachelor's of science degree. The problem with this rule was that the brewmaster Gerardus Ulenberg, who was in charge of everything that would be classified as chemical work (analysis of water, malt, and yeast), did not have this degree. Rather than simply ignore this legislation, though, the companies worked hard to comply. They both contracted with a laboratory to do their chemical work and placed someone on the payroll with the necessary degree.³⁷

By 1958, the interests of the Egyptian government had become inextricably tied to the interests of its unquestioned leader, Nasser. As the state's ultimate powerbroker, he had the ability to determine the fate of any company, organization, or person in the country with just a few words. Unfortunately for the beer companies and the rest of the private sector, Nasser and his government had not mapped out a clear ideological platform to provide an overarching rationale for his policies. It was unclear, therefore, whether the Nasser-led government's activist policies with regard to the economy, as discussed in Chapter 6, were intended as a temporary palliative or were the beginning of a full-scale takeover of the private sector.

Ideological pragmatism was a key feature of Nasser's ruling style, which can rightly be called self-styled populism; that is, "a predominately middle-class

movement that mobilize[d] the lower classes, especially the urban poor, with radical rhetoric against imperialism, foreign capitalism and the political establishment.”³⁸

Nasser placed himself and his charismatic persona, the native-born father (*baba*) and president to the people (*al-sha‘b*) of Egypt, at the center of this populism.³⁹ While the businessmen of the private sector could not peg his motives, they recognized that whatever action he took, it would be popularly supported. With his populist policies, like land reform, and his anti-imperialism, Nasser had won massive popularity and legitimacy with the working class, the fellahin, and the *effendiya*—that group of students, professionals, teachers, civil servants, and small businessmen who were differentiated from the lower classes by their education and worldview and differentiated from the elite by their socio-economic status.⁴⁰

However, even without an explicit agenda from Nasser, the breweries were not left completely in the dark. Nasser himself shed some light on his plans for the breweries in a 1960 conversation he had with Isma‘il Hafez, a director of Pyramid and the *bête noir* of Pyramid’s managing director, Erick Kettner. This conversation occurred within the framework of an Agricultural and Industrial Production Fair on January 3, 1960.⁴¹ The beer companies, like the rest of the agricultural and industrial firms in the country, had assigned their senior staff to man a stand at the convention. The breweries chose to represent themselves together at the Stella stand.⁴² As discussed above, this unanimity exemplifies how powerful a brand Stella had become by this time.

At the Agricultural and Industrial Production Fair, government officials walked around, gathering information on the current status of the various companies. Around noon on that day, the President, together with his Minister of Finance, Dr. Abdel Mon‘im al-Qaysuni, and his Minister of Industry, Dr Aziz Sidki, stopped at the

Stella stand for a twenty-minute conversation. Nasser opened the conversation by asking about the general operations of the company. Hafez responded that business was good, but that the companies paid nearly 400,000 Egyptian pounds in excise taxes.⁴³ Nasser was quick to remind Hafez that the excise taxes on exported beer were refunded, and then he turned to Qaysuni to confirm this statement. The discussion of excise taxes enabled Nasser to shift the conversation to the topic that interested him, namely, the export of beer.

Nasser posed the question, “How are exports?” Hafez could only answer that, besides the malt that the companies sent to the Sudan, exports were rather limited. Troubled by this answer, Nasser called over Aziz Sidqi and had Hafez repeat the same information to the Minister of Industry.⁴⁴ Sidqi’s response was that the Egyptian government had limited the production of the company by withholding export licenses. Sidqi pointed out that recently a new export license had been issued to allow Stella to bolster its exports. Hafez agreed and noted that the companies had been doing all they could to increase exports. As Nasser perused photographs of the factories and their latest installments, Hafez stated that the larger issue was that the empty bottles necessary for bottling the beer were not produced locally. Although a local company, Yasin Glass, had attempted to do so, they had proved incapable of the task. Nasser pointed out, quite astutely, that Yasin Glass’s failure was due in part to their inability to produce colored glass.⁴⁵

Colored glass was a vital innovation in beer-bottling because hops, one of the main ingredients of beer, is light-sensitive. When hops is exposed to light, a process of photo-oxidation occurs, and a compound known as 3-methyl-2-butene-thiol (MBT) is produced. MBT is a powerful substance that can provide both a pungent odor and an off-flavor to beer.⁴⁶ Thus, while glass bottles proved to be an excellent and

reproducible container that created an impermeable boundary between beer and most outside forces, unless colored, they provided no protection against the damaging sun. Moreover, not all colored bottles were created equal. Brown glass bottles provided the optimal amount of protection against the sun,⁴⁷ although Pyramid and Crown chose green bottles for Stella Beer. Green bottles were in fact quite poor at keeping the light out, but the choice was driven by marketing: green bottles gave a better sense of the crisp and clear beer contained within.

Back at the Stella stand, Hafez noted the President's correct assessment of the bottle situation, but added that part of the issue was also that these local factories preferred to make bottles manually rather than automatically. The fact that this choice was an issue for Pyramid and Crown communicates how mechanized the bottle-making process had become. Not only was Stella beer made through the use of automated machinery, but the filling of the bottles occurred through a mechanized process as well. Thus, a factory that was hand-making glass bottles was unable to fill the needs of Crown and Pyramid; handmade bottles, even those made by the best craftsmen, were never exactly the same size. The bottling machines were calibrated to a specific bottle size and thus could not accommodate bottles of varying sizes. "Of course that is correct," Nasser noted to Hafez, and then turned to Sidqi and repeated the same phrase.⁴⁸

Next, Nasser wondered from where and for how much the breweries were getting the bottles. Hafez responded that they were imported from East Germany and Czechoslovakia at the price of eighteen to twenty millimes for the 630 ml bottles and twelve to fifteen millimes for the 330 ml bottles. Hafez added that the breweries had faced difficulties in importing these bottles due to the Ministry of Industry refusing their import requests.⁴⁹ What happened next was an illustration of how fully power

was concentrated in Nasser's hands, and of how intensely personal—and one might say micro-managerial—his rule truly was. The President turned to the Minister of Industry and said, “Give them the license agreement.” Speaking then to Hafez, he said, “Send the request off tomorrow and it will be immediately approved.”⁵⁰

Why was Nasser so quick to offer to fix this bottle-import problem? The answer must surely be that he believed sincerely that exports were an essential part of Egypt's economic restructuring—and because he was amenable to beer production. In particular, exporting products like Stella beer abroad was a way to achieve a favorable trade balance and restore the currency reserves that had been completely depleted by the Nasser government's spending.⁵¹ The year that this fair took place was the same year that Egypt's Ministry of Planning issued its first comprehensive five-year plan, which “intended to raise national income from £E 100 million to £E 184 million.”⁵² Key goals of this five-year plan included the restoration of a favorable trade balance, the balancing of economic growth, the expansion of employment, and the ensuring of greater social justice.⁵³ Also, in the same month that this fair was taking place, January 1960, the Nasser regime began its work on the Aswan High Dam, an edifice that represented Egypt's new, empowered economic direction. It was funded in part by revenues from the nationalized Suez Canal.

There at the Stella stand at the Agricultural and Industrial Production Fair, Nasser's sincere belief in the power of exports led him to begin lecturing Hafez on the matter. He believed that Stella could be a part of his effort because it had a good reputation at home, especially among tourists, and abroad. After pontificating for several minutes, he made a suggestion that again showed his awareness of the positive aspects of the beer industry: that the breweries should look further into their exports in Ghana and the other countries of southeast Africa, where there was a good market for

their products. He closed his speech to Hafez by saying that because Stella produced good beer and had a good reputation in the market, there was no reason for the government to interfere with its processes.⁵⁴

This interaction between Nasser and the upper management of Crown and Pyramid, while short, is packed with significance for the story of the beer industry in Egypt. The most noteworthy facet of the conversation was Nasser's awareness of the particularities of beer-making in Egypt and of the strength of the Stella brand in both domestic and foreign markets. Nasser's frank and knowledgeable discussion of beer shows openness to the product and a desire to support its growth, a stance that would become unthinkable for an Egyptian president after the 1970s. The conversation also shows that like the industrialists working at the breweries, Nasser was just as committed, if not more so, to making the Egyptian economy, including the beer industry, strong and expansive. He saw Stella, and specifically its export to other countries in the Third World, as a way to collect currency and even out Egypt's trade balance. Even if we view Nasser's words as idle promises, they still are evidence of the charisma and political acumen that allowed Nasser to reach the highest echelons of the Egyptian government.

Export

This section examines how Crown and Pyramid dealt with exports in the three years (1958–61) prior to nationalization, at a time when Egypt and Syria, supported by Nasser, formed the United Arab Republic. In that period, the beer companies' exports were divided into three sales zones: exclusive Pyramid zones, exclusive Crown zones, and shared zones. The exclusive Pyramid zone was limited to the Sudan, a region to which exporting full bottles of beer always proved difficult. This difficulty was due in large part to the fact that the Egyptian government's treatment

of Egyptian beer in Sudan was paradoxical. Although Egypt had claimed Sudan during the era of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in that country (1898–1956), the Egyptian government charged much higher excise fees and taxes on imported Egyptian beer than foreign beer.⁵⁵ After 1956, the beer companies also had to deal with an independent Sudanese government that restricted the import of foreign beer as part of their general protections to encourage local industry.⁵⁶ However, Pyramid was still able to profit from the Sudanese market because of their six percent ownership stake in a Sudanese brewery, Blue Nile.⁵⁷ While Pyramid may not have been able to sell Stella beer directly in Sudan, Blue Nile was a venture that could still make them money. This was due to Pyramid’s role as a “colonized colonizer.” The term, borrowed from the work of Eve Troutt-Powell, refers to the idea that Egypt carried out an imperial project in Sudan as the Ottomans, French, and British pursued their own project in Egypt. As a result of Egypt’s dual position, its colonial actions in the Sudan were tied intimately to its efforts to shrug off its own colonial yoke.⁵⁸

This term “colonized colonizer” seems appropriate for Pyramid’s venture in the Sudan, too, because Pyramid’s relationship with Blue Nile was eerily similar to Heineken’s relationship to Pyramid. Blue Nile was able to produce its own beer, Camel Beer, but all the raw materials came from abroad. Heineken provided the hops and the yeast, and Pyramid provided the malt, about six hundred metric tons of malt exported to the company in 1958 alone.⁵⁹ The malt was a blend of two- and six-rowed barley that Pyramid itself used when making Stella beer.⁶⁰ The brewmaster of Blue Nile, like the brewmaster at Pyramid, was trained outside of the company; specifically, he was trained at Pyramid Brewery rather than Heineken proper. As a “colonized” brewery, Blue Nile was under double surveillance. Erick Karl Kettner, Heineken’s representative at Pyramid Brewery, not only monitored the internal

happenings of the company, but also required that Blue Nile send Camel beer to Cairo to be tested in their laboratories. Wittert van Hoogland, Kettner's boss, monitored Kettner's work with Blue Nile and the brewery itself.⁶¹

As for the exclusive Crown zones, they were limited to countries on the Mediterranean basin, including Cyprus, Libya, Syria, and Lebanon. By 1960, Syria had proved to be the largest market outside of these countries. This prominence had a great deal to do with political developments. In February 1958, under the guidance of Nasser, the governments of Egypt and Syria joined together to form the United Arab Republic. In addition to the political motives for joining the two countries, there were also economic factors. For the Syrians, the union shielded them from communism and gave them access to the much larger Egyptian market.⁶² For Egypt and Nasser, Syria was a welcome market for Egypt's industrial products and was the main wheat supplier to Egypt.⁶³ Nevertheless, the two countries' economies had significant differences, and the work of integrating them became one of the main struggles of this new union.

After September 1958, Nasser's government worked in earnest to create a united Egyptian–Syrian economy. The government created a ten-year economic plan, which calculated expenditures of around 2 billion Syrian pounds. Most of these funds were allocated to the improvement of irrigation and hydroelectric power in the country. The Nasser government also sent a tripartite commission to Syria; called the Higher Ministerial Committee, it was composed of an Egyptian Vice-President, a Syrian Vice-President, and the Minister of the Interior. The Committee aimed to “study the obstacles to implementation of projects; to stimulate economic activity; to study the public services program; and to expedite the formation of the National Union.”⁶⁴ For

Pyramid and Crown, the government's most significant step was the elimination of all custom duties, except nine competitive products, between the two countries.⁶⁵

This new free path of trade wedded a market to Egypt that Pyramid and Crown were already looking to tap. In 1957, Kettner and Wittert van Hoogland of Pyramid's Dutch management privately discussed opening a Heineken interest in Syria,⁶⁶ with the idea of placing their Dutch brewmaster, Gerardus Hubertus Ulenberg, in charge of it.⁶⁷ They chose Ulenberg because of their assumption that Syrians would be more comfortable dealing with a Dutchman than a fellow Middle Easterner.⁶⁸ That is, they assumed that the Syrians would rather listen to and follow a foreign, non-Arab expert than an Egyptian, whom they would see as an equal, not a superior.

However, the unification of Egypt and Syria preempted these plans. On the announcement of the union, there was an almost immediate disagreement between the two companies over who should be free to exploit the Syrian market. Although Crown's leaders were amenable to drawing up a new agreement between the two companies, they still argued for their right to be the main exporter to Syria as before. Pyramid, on the other hand, believed that the situation had changed to such a degree that any prior agreements did not apply.⁶⁹

Pyramid believed it should be exporting the majority of the beer there because it could produce beer a hectoliter cheaper than Crown could.⁷⁰ The two companies eventually reached an agreement on the sale of beer in Syria. Crown allowed Pyramid to export to Syria, which was called the Northern Province (Egypt was the Southern Province), if Pyramid agreed to pay a fifty-pound fee on every hectoliter they exported.⁷¹ Crown only negotiated after having difficulty selling its own beer in Syria. Regardless, Pyramid was quite pleased to replace Crown beer, and its beer received a

better reception in the market, because it was believed to be superior to the Crown-produced Stella in its taste, brilliance, and foam stability.⁷²

Nevertheless, the market for Stella beer was not huge. For example, in 1959, Pyramid sold 1,200 cartons of large bottles (660 ml) and 1,800 cartons of small bottles (330 ml), which put sales at around 1000 hl.⁷³ The people at Pyramid attributed the lack of demand to the fact that, despite Syrians having greater purchasing power, there were simply fewer of them: Egypt's population was nearly five times larger than Syria's. In addition, Kettner noted that, as compared to Egyptians, Syrian "Muslims were more strict in the interpretation of the Koran [sic]."⁷⁴ Although this statement comes from a non-expert on the matter, it still is interesting to note that foreigners perceived Syrians to be somehow more observant than Egyptians in avoiding alcohol. Beyond a smaller population and perhaps a greater religiosity, another reason for the less than stellar sales could have been the presence of a rival beer in Syria, called Al-Chark. Founded in 1954, this beer came from Aleppo and had already made inroads into the market when Stella arrived in the late 1950s.

The Syrian beer market was small enough that Kettner seriously doubted the utility of exporting there. Unlike Nasser, Kettner was skeptical about possibilities for exports in general. Beyond the risks of shipping beer (bottle breakage, spoilage, etc.), there were significant bureaucratic hurdles, including heavy paperwork, that reduced Pyramid's prospects of a profitable export market. Indeed, exporting to Syria raised a few challenges about doing business in foreign markets. While the gain in visible costs was not huge, the gains in invisible costs (contributions to fixed costs and wages and salaries) were significant.⁷⁵ Moreover, the reality of conjoining Egypt with Syria raised practical problems for the breweries. For example, the breweries were unsure

whether the UAR's decision to cancel certain import customs meant that those selling Syrian beer in Egypt would have to pay the Egyptian duty of LE 4.5 or if the breweries would have to pay the significantly lower Syrian duty.⁷⁶ Besides the raised costs of the government's push for exports, the new free trade agreement also inaugurated another possible development, the entrance of another beer into the Egyptian market. For just as Egyptians could export Stella to Syria, Syrians could now presumably export Al-Chark to Egypt.

From the moment the U.A.R formed in February 1958, Al-Chark had its eye on the Egyptian market. In September 1958, the general director of Al-Chark, an Al-Chark company administrator, and an official from the UAR's Ministry of Agriculture visited Pyramid, where Kettner and Alber Farag received them. Kettner learned that, unlike the brewery in the Sudan, the Syrian brewery was well stocked with malt. One of their administrators was a large landowner who grew barley. The Syrian brewery also put out feelers during the meeting to see whether they could reach an accord with Pyramid.⁷⁷ Kettner was willing to listen because the sample of beer they gave him was good, and he was wary of their intentions for the Egyptian market. He was right to be cautious, for, in 1959, this brewery used the port of Alexandria to ship a small amount of beer, 450 cases of large bottles and 150 cases of small bottles, to Egypt.⁷⁸ This beer was the first local competition in the Egyptian market since the collapse and buy-out of Nile Brewery. Still, the management of Pyramid ultimately did not worry much about this would-be competitor.

There were two ways to deal with this new entrant, cooperation or competition. Crown and Pyramid could take the Syrian brewer up on its unofficial offer for partnership in beer distribution, and thus profit from Al-Chark's sale while limiting its market penetration. However, Kettner decided against this course for two

reasons. First, Kettner was confident that Stella would win out based on quality. While the beer he tasted from Al-Chark was good, he felt that it was lacking the brightness and clarity of Stella.⁷⁹ More importantly, Pyramid thought that competition from Al-Chark in Egypt would help to make Crown and Pyramid appear not to be a monopoly. This designation was important because at the time the Egyptian government was targeting monopolistic firms in order to reduce prices.⁸⁰ Heineken executives in Amsterdam agreed with Kettner that having an inferior beer on the market would not hurt Stella and would at least give the appearance of a competitive market.⁸¹

The developments in the Syrian market encouraged Pyramid to reevaluate its entire policy of foreign sales vis-à-vis Crown Brewery. Besides the agreed-upon markets, all other foreign markets, such as Jordan and Aden, remained common markets. This shared responsibility was an issue for Pyramid Brewery. It meant that two varieties of Stella with two different recipes, Crown's version (tailored for the Alexandria market) and Pyramid's version, were entering the same markets. This redundancy was problematic on two counts. First, the two Stellas were competing against each other. For example, in Jordan both Crown and Pyramid had granted concessions to Jordanian traders to sell Stella beer.⁸² Second, the different recipes of the beers were confusing consumers on what Stella beer actually was, as Crown's Stella was believed to be lacking in its taste, brilliance, and foam stability.⁸³ In the eyes of Pyramid, this was problematic because they believed strongly that Crown's Stella was inferior and thus was prejudicing consumers from buying the "true" Stella produced by Pyramid.⁸⁴

Pyramid thus laid out both short- and long-term plans to remedy the situation. In the short term, they resolved that Crown and Pyramid would decide, prior to entry,

on which company would be the prime distributor all in new markets. As for the markets that Crown controlled, it would keep those that it wanted and would immediately offer the others to Pyramid, which would have to pay a fee to sell there. In the long term, this unnecessary competition was another signal that Heineken and Pyramid needed to unify the production of both companies and eliminate any competition in foreign markets. Instead of each running its own operations, both breweries would contribute to a foreign trade fund, in proportion to its profits, and this fund would then be used for everything associated with the exploitation of foreign markets, including exploration, travel, and marketing.⁸⁵ As I will show in the next chapter, Pyramid would take another shot at unifying the companies in 1961 before the government did it for them later that same year.

The Ten Commandments

Pyramid's desire for greater control in the export market paralleled Erick Karl Kettner's battle for total control within the brewery. As I will show in this section, prior to the Nasser government's institution of pro-labor policies, Kettner was determined to make Pyramid a "model company" by having a docile, efficient, and disciplined Egyptian workforce. As the production manager, Kettner dictated labor relations at the breweries. Kettner was particularly concerned about instilling the ethos of what I call total control brewing, which entailed applying cutting-edge techniques and technologies to create a standardized and sturdy product for all consumers. Following through on this ethos required not only the best machinery and materials, but also an efficient and obedient workforce.

One way that Kettner attempted to bring workers in line with his thinking was through the installation of a system he referred to as the Ten Commandments. These

were ten key practices that Kettner believed would produce a better company.⁸⁶ There were as follows:

1. Efficiency
2. Organization
3. Training
4. Communication
5. Supervision
6. Discipline
7. Safety
8. Cleanliness, Order, and Maintenance
9. Human Relations
10. Character

Kettner learned these Ten Commandments at lectures he attended at the Central Social Employers Association (Centraal Sociaal Werkgevers Verbond, CSWV) in the Netherlands. Founded in 1919, this was an organization of employers, among which Heineken was a prominent member—Heineken CEO Dirk Stikker served as its head in 1939—that looked to establish standards and practices in the relationship between employers and their employees.⁸⁷ Ensuring uniformity in management tactics may have been one of Heineken’s secrets to running a successful company. We know that the company had a blue book of guidelines that it distributed to its employees; this book probably contained the Ten Commandments or similar information.⁸⁸

Although the commandments were ten in number, they could be grouped under two headings, “efficiency” and “discipline,” which happened to correspond to commandments 1 and 6, respectively. Commandments one through five fit under the rubric of efficiency, and six through ten fit under discipline. The emphasis on efficiency and discipline clearly echoes Egypt’s colonial past. As On Barak has discussed in his monograph *On Time*, which focuses on the efficient use of time, efficiency was a pillar of the technoscientific enlightenment that the colonial project

was supposed to bring to Egypt. Proponents of its ethos believed that efficiency assured a more orderly society while maximizing profits.⁸⁹ Barak also noted that the efficient use of time was tied heavily to the commodification of time, an idea best summarized by the Weberian ideal that “time equals money.”⁹⁰

Kettner used this exact phrase, “time is money,” when discussing the first commandment of efficiency. As for *discipline*, this word echoed Egypt’s earlier colonial past. As noted by Timothy Mitchell, inspired by the writings of Foucault, order and discipline were essential elements of the European colonial project in Egypt, started by the French in 1798 and continued by the British in 1882.⁹¹ In domains ranging from urban planning, to military organization, to schooling, and even the Arabic language, the colonial powers aimed to discipline what they deemed to be the unruly Egyptian. This all-encompassing need for discipline was echoed by the mantra that Kettner attached to sixth commandment of discipline: “discipline is the yardstick of life.”⁹²

Kettner believed that in order for the beer company to be “efficient,” it had to be cognizant of three Ms: manpower, machines, and materials. In regard to manpower, an efficient company was one that designated the right number of workers for the right amount of time for a particular job. Machines in an efficient company ran for the correct amount of time, at the correct intensity or speed, and were maintained adequately. Finally, with regard to materials, efficiency came in the form of precision when using resources (especially in the case of beer production, water, electricity, and malt), care in the storage of vital materials (hops and malt), and accuracy when making the labels that would mark each bottle.⁹³

The company could achieve the three Ms of efficiency by following the precepts of four of the commandments (organization, training, communication, and supervision). Each of these precepts had its own mnemonic. The company and its employees could achieve maximal efficiency by following the 3 Ds of organization (distribution of work, delegation of authority, and decentralization); the 3 Cs of communication (clear orders, chain of command, and contact with the other brewery); and the 3 Ss of supervision (stay in your section, see [where there were inefficiencies and then address them], and study).⁹⁴ The only commandment that did not have a mnemonic was “training” because this was relatively self-explanatory; that is, more training makes an employee better. This first group of five commandments, as should be obvious from the sheer number of mnemonics, was meant as an “easy” road map for managers to follow in order to eliminate inefficiency. Emblematic of the underlying logic of “total brewing” and “modernity” was this one-size-fit-all guide that could be implemented in all situations and locales. The unquestioned ease of transferability was no doubt a reason that Kettner felt that he could implement in Egypt the principles that he had learned in the Netherlands.

The second division of commandments (six through ten) was less a universal guide than an exhortation to abandon “undisciplined” habits in order to become a better employee. The guiding commandment was number six, discipline. For Kettner, discipline was synonymous with adherence to regulations set by authority. It was an essential aspect of a modern life, and it featured in every sphere of society, including family, religion, the army, the legal system, and even the international community. A disciplined worker was one who accepted the authority of those above him, even if the regulations did not make sense. Kettner also believed that undisciplined behavior was contagious. If the department heads were not disciplined, they could not expect

those under them to be either.⁹⁵ This fit with another facet of Kettner's definition of discipline, which was self-discipline or self-denial. Kettner argued that self-discipline was true wisdom and that the Egyptian should practice moderation when it came to food, drink, expressions of authority, and spending money.⁹⁶

In addition to these other qualities, a disciplined workplace was also safe (commandment number seven, safety) and clean (commandment number eight, cleanliness). Kettner noted that cleanliness was particularly important for the beer industry, as one could "not work in a mess."⁹⁷ The belief in cleanliness offers another example of how "total brewing" aimed to remove permeability from the process of beverage-making. By calling the process permeable, I am referencing the fact that due to the nature of the machinery (earthenware containers, reed pipes, palm-leave filters, etc.) and techniques (hand-crafting, lack of sterilization and refrigeration, etc.) used in pre-industrial beverage production, foreign organisms and materials were bound to enter somewhere in the transition from raw materials to final product, just as materials essential to production were bound to exit.

Another characteristic of the disciplined workplace was that all relations within the factory (commandment number nine, human relations) were guided by the principle that those below followed the rules set by their superiors. At the same time, superiors were disciplined enough to not inflict unfair or extremely harsh rules upon those below them. The whole system relied upon employees who had proper character (commandment 10). This word *character* stood in for the idea that employees should be motivated by what was best for the company, not by their private interests. Most importantly, employees should not plot against fellow employees or dissemble in their interpersonal dealings. Although Kettner would work hard to implement of all these commandments in the Pyramid workplace, it was the commandments associated with

discipline, especially commandments nine and ten—human relations and proper character—that would obsess him during his tenure with the company. He was wholly inimical to “intrigues,” to which he believed Egyptians were unduly susceptible.

Kettner was very committed to instilling the Ten Commandments among the management and aimed to do so in ways beyond the standard lecture, of which there were many. One particularly interesting method he used was staging a contest among the department heads to see who had the best knowledge of the Ten Commandments. The Awad brothers (Ramses and Antoine) ended up winning the contest, and the results were announced at the company cafeteria.⁹⁸ While Kettner noted that this contest was “very well received” and that it gave him “an invaluable perspective” on members of the management, one has to wonder how well it actually did go over. For example, there were two members of management who chose not to participate.⁹⁹

Kettner’s implementation of these commandments went beyond testing the management on them; the commandments framed his very treatment of the workers. As his letters show, he was obsessed with exploiting their working capabilities effectively and efficiently. This desire for exploitation was most obvious in Kettner’s treatment of those involved in the most labor-intensive step of beer making, the bottling line. Within Pyramid’s bottling plant, there were two bottling lines, the G.B.G.B line and the Benghazi line. Kettner was keenly aware of the productive capacity of these lines and was constantly looking to improve their output. It is illustrative to look at his conceptualization and quantification of this production to fully understand the effect of the Ten Commandments and the total brewing method on his mindset.

He instituted a two-shift system on the G.B.G.B. line at the Pyramid, despite the fact that it had caused issues with workers in the past.¹⁰⁰ The two shifts on the G.B.G.B. line covered twelve net working hours. During those twelve hours, the brewery could bottle, at maximum efficiency, 45 hectoliters an hour (.75 hl a minute) in large bottles or 24 hectoliters per hour (.40 hl a minute) using small bottles.¹⁰¹ Bottling took place on five and half days each week. The remaining half-day of the six-day workweek was dedicated to cleaning the bottles. Bottlers worked roughly twenty-five days per month. With that time frame and the fact that small bottles made up twenty percent of sales, Kettner figured that the G.B.G.B. could bottle roughly 11,500 hectoliters per month.¹⁰² The Benghazi line, on the other hand, could only produce 30 hectoliters per hour in large bottles and 16 hectoliters per hour in small bottles; the line was most efficient when it specialized in large bottles only. The schedule of the line was one six-hour shift per day, and the workers would generally work six days per week for about twenty-five days per month. Thus, the line could produce roughly 4,300 hectoliters a month, and the bottling plant as a whole could produce 15,800 hl per month.¹⁰³

Significantly, Kettner could, and did, alter both of these schedules to extract even more work from the bottlers. If the company received a permit, workers from both lines could clean on Fridays so that they could have more time to bottle. In addition, the breweries could get permits to tack another hour of overtime onto the shifts. With both of those additions, the bottling plant could produce almost 19,000 hectoliters of beer each month.¹⁰⁴ While we cannot be sure how close the factory got to these numbers, it is more important to realize how Kettner, and Heineken more broadly, conceptualized of its workers in their pursuit of total brewing. Thus, Kettner was determined to make Pyramid a “model company” using the buzzwords and

pabulum of the Ten Commandments to craft a docile, efficient, and disciplined Egyptian workforce.

The Workforce

Having discussed Kettner's ideal vision for the Pyramid workforce and the ways in which he constantly pushed the workforce in his pursuit of greater efficiency, this section examines the demographics of the workforce that Kettner and the rest of the Dutch management was trying to shape, and shows how the workers and employees suffered under a pay structure that was stacked against them. This pay structure was actually quite common throughout the beer industry, and included Pyramid, Crown, and even Nile Brewery. At the very top of the pay structure was the board of directors. They each received a base salary for their membership on the board, which was usually around five hundred Egyptian pounds. This base pay was supplemented by various sums of money that could come under numerous titles. For example, they could receive additional funds that were called any of the following: a share (*hiṣṣa*) of the yearly profits, or a bonus (*'ilawa*), compensation from the profits entitled to the board (*mukāfa'*), travel expenses, or remuneration (*minḥa*). Although there were a bevy of names for this extra pay, they all resulted in a final salary that was closer to 2,000 pounds. This salary was supplemented even more for a managing director, who would accrue numerous business expenses that the company would subsidize. For example, in 1959, Erick Kettner received a base salary of 365 pounds, but made a total of 1,945 pounds plus nearly eight hundred pounds in travel expenses.¹⁰⁵

Below the directors, there were two sets of company employees: salaried employees and workers. The salaried employees, who were paid monthly, were classified by the Department of Companies (*Maṣlahat al-Sharikāt*), as *muwazzafīn*

(employees). The rest of the people working for the company were paid a daily wage and were classified as workers (*'ummāl*). These groups were differentiated not only by salary structure, but also by the type of jobs they filled. The *muwazzafīn*, who included the chiefs of the sub-departments, were generally white-collar workers, supervisors, company doctors, lawyers, secretarial staff, translators, brewers, and accountants, while the *'ummāl* were the blue-collar types, including bottle fillers, bottle cleaners, label attachers, drivers, and assistant drivers. The daily-wage earners could often have long relationships with the company, but in general had much greater turnover than the *muwazzafīn*. Everyone was paid a base salary that was dependent on his or her position, and that was subject to some gradual increases over time. In addition to the base salary, workers received a sum for living expenses, which was regulated by government and thus could not be lower than a certain amount. Pyramid generally did not pay any more than required,¹⁰⁶ and the sum hardly ever kept up with the skyrocketing cost of living.¹⁰⁷ Yearly bonuses also supplemented the pay of salaried employees and workers.¹⁰⁸

Although the company generally used the same pay system for salaried employees and workers who had been with the company longer than twenty years, there were significant differences in the amount of pay. For example, in 1957, the Egyptian employees with the highest salaries were Alber Farag and Isma'īl Hafez, Kettner's archrival. This position made sense as they served in important positions in the company. Farag was the head of the communications department, which encompassed both the company's secretariat and its accounting department. Hafez, as discussed above, sat in an amorphous position, serving both as a head of a department (personnel and public relations) and a near equal to Kettner. Due to their high position with the company, Pyramid paid them a large base salary of 101.5 pounds.

As further proof that the details are important when considering corporate pay in Egypt in this period, Isma‘il Hafez ended up making over forty pounds more than Farag thanks to bonuses and the like.¹⁰⁹

The two lowest-paid Egyptian employees were Haggag Mahmud Abu ‘Ala and Muhammad Ahmed Hamdi Abu Khatwa. While there is no indication of what positions they held, their total monthly salaries were 18 and 23 pounds, respectively.¹¹⁰ This put their salaries around 150 pounds less than the top employee earners. From the low salary numbers, we can assume that they held positions just slightly above the blue-collar level. They might have been assistant mechanics, the head of the guards, or drivers. We do know that Khatwa had a degree from an agricultural college, which implies a more elevated status.¹¹¹ Their salaries were likely similar to workers who had been with the company for a long time.

A discrepancy divided not only the top- and bottom-earning Egyptian employees, but also those whom the government classified as Egyptian and non-Egyptian employees. For example, in 1957, the highest-paid non-Egyptian employee, Emil Natti, an Italian protégé, made 278 pounds total, more than 70 Egyptian pounds more than Hafez. A great deal of this difference came from the different base salaries, as Natti made 166 pounds to Hafez’s 105. The rest of the difference came from remuneration from the company’s profits, which was double for Natti (83 versus 46.5).¹¹² Surprisingly, the discrepancy between the lowest paid non-Egyptian employee and his Egyptian counterpart is far smaller. John Naguib Anton made 28 pounds total, compared to the 18 of Abu ‘Ala. Perhaps this had something to do with the fact that Anton was a Palestinian. Every other non-Egyptian employee made over sixty pounds.¹¹³ In total, the forty-one white-collar Egyptians together made in salary, bonuses, and incentives 2,120 Egyptian pounds, while eight non-Egyptian

employees made 1,042 Egyptian pounds. There was a similar wage discrepancy in British American Tobacco between foreign and Egyptian workers. For example, “In 1947, 18 of the 25 best-paid employee positions went to Britons and seven were occupied by other foreign nationals.”¹¹⁴ These discrepancies, rather than simply reflecting preferential treatment for foreign nationals, also resulted from the foreign nationals sometimes being more skilled and accustomed to higher wages.¹¹⁵

As for the weekly workers at Pyramid and Crown, we have very little information. What we do know is that weekly workers who had not accrued twenty-years of service were generally awarded, in bonuses, one month’s salary plus living expenses for the two major Muslim holidays (Eid al-Adha, the big Eid or Bairam, and Eid al-Fitr, the small Eid or Bairam).¹¹⁶ In 1948, these workers also received a bonus equivalent to one month’s pay on account of Mr. Martin’s departure and replacement by Wittert van Hoogland. Emblematic of the power of the workers, Wittert was stymied in his desire to eliminate what in his eyes should have been a one-time bonus. This dispute came within the larger framework of the resistance of employees and workers to the hard line that Wittert took vis-à-vis pay. For example, he also wanted to limit the Eid bonuses to just one month’s salary.¹¹⁷

To get a better understanding of what workers in these two companies were earning, we can look at information contained in the file of a short-lived competitor to Pyramid and Crown, Nile Brewery. In 1954, Nile had a five-member board of directors. Like Pyramid and Crown, the president of the board was a Muslim Egyptian named Ahmad Fahmy.¹¹⁸ The rest of the board was divided evenly between Egyptians and non-Egyptians. Below the board, there were sixteen salaried employees (*muwazzafin*), of whom twelve were Egyptian. Although they made up seventy-five percent of the workforce, the Egyptian employees were paid eighty-five percent of the

salaries. Among the twelve Egyptians, one, Elia Zakri, was a woman. She served as the secretary.¹¹⁹ Besides Zakri, among the Egyptian employees there were three accountants, three market agents (*mu'tamad al-sūq*), one head of mechanics, one debt collector (*muḥaṣṣil*), one head of warehouses, and one chemist.¹²⁰ The two most important positions, the director (*mudīr*) and the brewmaster, were both non-Egyptian. The director was a Greek, George Athanasopulu, and the brewmaster was an Italian, Limongelli Angelo. Again, we see that beer companies in Egypt relied on the technical skill of non-Egyptians for making beer. The importance of Angelo to the entire operation is confirmed by the fact that he was the highest-paid employee, making thirty-eight pounds.¹²¹ Further proof of the fluidity between Egyptian and “non-Egyptian” in pre-1960s Egypt is that two of the “Egyptian” employees, Paniyoti Kufasi and Brotini Miravadimilo, acquired Egyptian citizenship in 1952.¹²²

Below the salaried employees, there were forty workers (*'ummāl*), thirty-nine of whom were Egyptian. They were divided among five different areas essential to the operation of the company: the beer factory, the delivery cars, the workshop, the warehouse, and security. The factory was where all of the operations associated with making the beer took place, including malting, fermenting, brewing, and bottling. Due to its importance, it is not surprising that the factory employed the greatest number of workers. Within the factory, the workers were divided between general workers and the majority, who worked at the *minbar al-ta'biyya* (the bottling line). This preponderance of workers on the line made sense, as it was the production of clean, well-sealed, and clearly labeled bottles that assured that a sellable product hit the market. The privileging of the bottling department was also due to the value of glass bottles in Egypt. Because bottles generally had to be imported or bought at a significant expense domestically, the reuse of bottles was an essential aspect of selling

beer in Egypt. Thus workers in the bottling sector of the factory not only filled bottles and sealed them, but also washed and refurbished them.¹²³

As discussed above, a vital process in beer-making was the storage of beer so that the beer could “finish,” that is, complete its fermentation process, and remain chilled and preserved before it went out on the market. Nile’s storage operation was left completely in the hands of one Egyptian employee, Shehata Ahmad Misbah.¹²⁴ The dearth of workers was attributable to the fact that as long as the refrigeration systems were running properly, there was very little work to be done within the storehouse. There was also one worker employed in the brewery’s office, who would most likely have been a *farrāsh*, that is, a blue-collar worker who kept the office tidy and brought beverages and food to employees within the office.

The department where beer went after it was bottled, the delivery department, had the largest staff after the factory because it was in charge of delivering product throughout Egypt. This was done via cars that brought cases of beer out to market and picked up empty bottles for cleaning and re-using. The delivery department included both drivers and assistant drivers. The presence of an assistant driver indicates that this job entailed not only the successful transport of beer to market and empty bottles back, but also the lifting and carrying that was an essential feature of the beer-selling operation.¹²⁵

Another vital department in the beer company was the workshop, which was in charge of keeping all machinery working. For example, if there was an issue with a car, refrigerator, or bottling machine, the workers in the workshop would do their best to fix it. Like the workshop, the security department was essential. There, guards

protected the machinery and the stored beer. The one non-Egyptian worker for Nile, Yerodot Yoanidis, worked in security and was that department's best-paid employee.

All of these workers, including Yoanidis, were paid daily and made no more than five hundred milliemes a day. The best-paid worker was Muhammad al-Jalil Baraka, who worked in the beer factory and made five hundred and twenty milliemes a day. The three lowest-paid employees, Farouk Abd al-Aziz Yusuf, who worked in the bottling section of the beer factory; Mabruk Ali Qutb, who worked in the office as a *farrāsh*; and Shehata Ahmad Misbah, who worked at the warehouse; all made one hundred and forty milliemes a day.¹²⁶ Thus, there was nearly a five-fold difference between the pay of the highest- and lowest-paid workers. This disparity did not arise from differences in seniority because all four of the highest- and lowest-paid Egyptian workers had joined the company in the same year. It was rather a matter of respect.¹²⁷ In total, Nile paid its Egyptian workers more than 7,000 milliemes (around seven pounds) per day. That sum was roughly half of what one employee would earn in a year. These salary discrepancies become even starker when one compares the pay of a worker to that of a board member. As this section has shown, the workforce of Pyramid was subject to a pay structure that was bound to sew discontent. That discontent is the subject of the next section.

Turning the Workforce

Despite Kettner's commandments that stressed supervision and discipline, the workers in the Egyptian beer industry were not helpless. The Pyramid workers had been unionized since at least the 1940s and now, in the 1950s, had the inspiration of Nasser's legislation on their side. The workers' organization into a Workers Syndicate (The Union of Employees and Workers for the Beer Company) included both employees and workers. In a 1949 report by Pieter R. Fieth, a Heineken

representative sent to report on the beer industry in Egypt, he noted that the workers at what he still called Bomonti were better paid than workers in similar positions at other companies,¹²⁸ and that their union was well-organized and accustomed to striking for better treatment. In one strike, Mr. Martin, the man who preceded Wittert van Hoogland as managing director of the brewery, had no choice but to give into the union's demands for pay increases and bonuses. As a holder of British citizenship, Martin had feared that the union would be able to use the anti-British sentiment that was pervasive in the country during the 1940s in order to inspire a publicly supported strike.¹²⁹ The union was able to achieve tangible goals before the RCC coup because it was well organized and because the company was doing so well. The management of the company considered the seven years between 1942 and 1949 to be fat years and was unable to limit workers' bonuses because the workers, too, were aware of the company's profitability.¹³⁰

The union would be further emboldened by the legislation of the RCC and later the Nasser-led government. Before the 1960s, the government was only partially successful in Egyptianizing the workforce to their liking. Although private companies like Pyramid and Crown were forced to reckon with new legislation and make changes to their employment structure, they still had methods to prevent the complete "Egyptianization" of their workforce. Nevertheless, that was not the only legislation that was working to change the status of workers within the Egyptian economy in general and the beer companies specifically. As part of Nasser's populist program, he aimed to motivate the working class by greatly increasing their standard of living.¹³¹ In December 1952, the government enacted new labor legislation, which it strengthened in April 1953. In sum, this legislation granted workers "significantly improved material benefits—increased severance compensation, longer annual

vacations, free transportation to factories in remote areas, and free medical care.”¹³² It also gave the workers unprecedented job security by making the dismissal of a worker without cause a “very expensive and bureaucratically cumbersome undertaking.”¹³³

This new legislation won Nasser and the RCC the immediate support of the many workers, although the regime’s measures effectively served to thwart the development of a free and powerful labor movement. One reason was that this new legislation was coupled with a ban on labor strikes; in addition, the government passed laws that stifled the activities of trade unions. For example, the government allowed white-collar and blue-collar workers to form separate unions within a single venture and also confirmed the practice of having unions form within each company rather than across the industry.¹³⁴ Both maneuvers did much to limit the formation of broad-based labor movements. Yet Nasser positioned himself as a populist who sought to mobilize the working class through legislation and through a charged rhetoric attacking “foreign economic imperialists.” Nasser and his government portrayed the foreign capitalists as being among the main perpetrators of the exploitation (*istighlāl*) of the Egyptian people and their economy.¹³⁵ He argued that their elimination, coupled with the elevation of the beleaguered Egyptian working class, would set Egypt on a new and prosperous path. Nasser’s turn to conspiratorial rhetoric that vilified a single group as the agents of subjugation was yet another example of Nasser’s combative populism.¹³⁶

All of these actions on the part of Nasser mobilized and empowered the workers at Pyramid and Crown. The clearest indication of this empowerment was the removal of a Swiss employee and the chief of the engineers, Mr. Eigenheer, in 1957. This event arose out of a disagreement between Eigenheer and his subordinate, Anton Awad, which in Awad’s eyes, arose out of Eigenheer’s lack of respect for him. This

perceived lack of respect boiled over one day when Eigenheer sat in Awad's chair and refused to vacate it when Awad asked him to do so. For Awad, this behavior was all the more galling because Eigenheer did so in front of all of the workers.¹³⁷ As a result of this incident, Awad filed a complaint to the board through the union stating that he could not "stomach" Eigenheer's behavior, which was a clear example of his lack of "class."¹³⁸ The union pushed for Eigenheer's removal from his position. Although the union's response may seem extreme, it reflects the cultural differences between those who had been raised in Egypt and new arrivals like Eigenheer. While sitting in Awad's chair may have seemed to be only a minor transgression, Awad understood Eigenheer's refusal to move in plain sight of the workers as a violation of the social hierarchy within the workplace and therefore as a significant affront.

Eigenheer's disrespect to Awad was all the more embarrassing because Eigenheer was a foreign worker. The Nasser-led government's policies fostered an atmosphere of distrust between Egyptians and the "foreign" elements in the country, portraying the latter as exploitative parasites preventing the advancement of the Egyptian economy. Thus, every interaction between "foreign" and "native" workers was framed with the idea that the two sides were taking part in a zero-sum game. Awad interpreted Eigenheer's refusal to move as proof of Nasser's depiction of foreigners. Kettner, for his part, was increasingly aware of the precarious position of foreigners in Egypt. He attributed the union's push for the removal of Eigenheer to the rising tide of "Arab Nationalism" in Egypt.¹³⁹ The idea of Arab Nationalism was at a particular high point at this time, 1957, in Egypt. Only a year earlier, Nasser had asserted Egyptian sovereignty by nationalizing the Suez Canal. About a year after, Nasser would form the United Arab Republic, the most significant articulation of Arab nationalism at the time, which entailed a union with Syria.

As Kettner noted, this agitation against Eigenheer was inspired by the Egyptian authorities' smear campaign against the "advantages" of foreigners in the country.¹⁴⁰ While we can never know for sure whether that was the case, we do know that the policies of the Nasser-led government emboldened the union to act more assertively than it otherwise may have. Their case for the removal of Eigenheer was based primarily on the fact that he was over sixty years old and was in violation of the 1955 modification that the government had made to the Company Law of 1947, which required that the government approve the employment of all members of the board over the age of sixty. The law did not impose the same restrictions on employees and workers, but that did not stop the union from leveraging this law for their purposes.

Kettner attempted to mediate the situation by charging Hassan Tawfik, another Egyptian engineer, with settling the issue. However, Tawfik's response "sickened" Kettner. When Kettner broached the subject to Tawfik, he looked at Kettner like "a farmer with a toothache," a Dutch saying meaning that while he listened, he was not that interested in what Kettner had to say. Kettner posited that this reaction was due to the fact that "the whole affair had been instigated, if not by himself, then by his fellow engineers Awad and Nossier."¹⁴¹ Seeing Tawfik's response, Kettner believed that Eigenheer's removal was a *fait accompli*. When he mentioned the events to Wittert, he suggested that Eigenheer was "finished" because he was not a member of the union,¹⁴² and that the path of least resistance was to remove Eigenheer by getting him to retire.¹⁴³ Kettner hoped that he could keep Eigenheer on for a year or two, until he turned 64 and could, with repatriation, qualify for a legal base pension in Switzerland.¹⁴⁴ In the end, Eigenheer asked for his own dismissal and left the company in the spring of 1958. Eigenheer's resignation reflected the advantages that

some of foreign nationals did have. His departure was tied to the very favorable transfer agreements that became available to repatriated Swiss citizens at the time.¹⁴⁵

Back at Pyramid, Kettner wanted to replace Eigenheer with an Egyptian, Nasser Nusayr, but Emil Natti, his consultant in the workforce, demurred and mentioned that Nusayr had language troubles when he visited Holland because he did not speak enough of any European language to communicate.¹⁴⁶ Kettner thus resolved to leave the issue of a replacement to Natti, Hassan Tawfik, and Isma‘il Hafez.¹⁴⁷ However, this resolution would not be the end of nationality-based conflicts. In Kettner’s eyes, the successful move against Eigenheer marked open season on one of the only remaining foreign workers, the head brewmaster, Gerardus Hubertus Ulenberg.¹⁴⁸ As discussed in Chapter 6, Ulenberg was vital to the operations of Pyramid in Egypt, having created a strain of barley that was well suited to Egyptian growing conditions and that enabled the company to drastically reduce the amount of malt that it imported. Kettner reasoned that the host of complaints against Ulenberg in 1957 was part of a carefully timed plot aimed at removing another foreigner from the company.¹⁴⁹ Kettner resented Egyptians for what he saw as their power plays. As he observed to Wittert, “It’s like you said to me at the time, you cannot hate these people because hatred has something noble in itself; you can only have the deepest contempt.¹⁵⁰” This remark highlights the deep animus that Kettner and Wittert felt for some Egyptians. Nevertheless, the complaints against Ulenberg went unheeded, and he remained with the company until its full nationalization in 1963.

Another power struggle between management and workers would soon arise, for workers had the power not only to agitate against “foreign” employees whom they found distasteful, but also to demand a greater share of company profits. In June 1957, the union sent a letter to Kettner requesting that he grant them an additional

bonus in recognition of their “efforts and sacrifices” in the workplace.¹⁵¹ Kettner met their demands with a noncommittal response, stating that the management of the company would be delighted to give bonuses to the employees and workers, but that before he could guarantee anything, he had to see the sales results for the year, which would become clear in October.¹⁵² Kettner echoed the sentiment in his meeting with the company management, whose minutes the syndicate could access, adding that his policy on bonuses was “wait and see.”

When October came and no further bonuses were forthcoming, the union responded in a strongly worded letter to Kettner:

Mr. Director, we waited and we saw ... We have seen how the Company rewards its workers and its employees for the efforts of a whole season ... We have seen how the Company appreciates the considerable effort all provided ... We have seen how the Company forgets all the sacrifices made by the workers and employees at a price of their nerves and their blood ... We have seen how the Company has increased sales but has decreased bonuses.¹⁵³

This infuriated response from the union grew out of the fact that the brewery, under Kettner’s leadership, had had a banner year during the first three quarters of 1957, yet decreased bonuses to employees and workers. Sales for the company grew from 51,000 hectoliters between January and September to more than 56,000 hectoliters.¹⁵⁴ This marked nearly a nine percent increase, and the workers reckoned that by the end of the year it would be nearly ten percent.¹⁵⁵ In the eyes of the union, these banner profits made an increased bonus a foregone conclusion. They expected to receive a bonus that was more than double what they were paid the year before. However, the bonus in fact represented a 25% decrease for employees and salaried workers and a 30% decrease for non-salaried workers from the bonus paid out in October 1956.¹⁵⁶

The union was obviously not pleased with the bonus and saw this action as another step toward a policy of restricting workers' and employees' payments to only wages and salaries. That year, the company did indeed actively try to institute such a policy. The decrease in bonuses followed Kettner's removal of all "special bonuses" to employees and workers, on the pretext that bonuses would cause jealousy among the company's employees and workers.¹⁵⁷ The union believed that the claims of jealousy were ridiculous, and they saw the elimination of bonuses as proof that their hopes for improvements were misguided.¹⁵⁸ There was a great deal of bluster in the union's interaction with Kettner, which was emblematic of how disrespected they felt by his actions in general. Emil Natti, Kettner's trusted ally in the fight against "intrigue" in the company, worked hard to calm the tempers on all sides. However, the ultimate solution to the kerfuffle was Kettner's announcement of salary and wage increases for the employees and workers at Pyramid, which, on average, were around five to six percent.¹⁵⁹ This settlement was a compromise because the money would not come in the form of a bonus, a practice that the management was seeking to curtail, and yet it would still allow the employees and workers to enjoy the fruits of Pyramid's excellent profits in 1957.

Having examined Kettner's volatile relations with his Egyptian coworkers, the question remains as to how much of Kettner's distaste for Egyptians grew out of their striving against him and how much was imagined. As Robert Vitalis has observed, management's cries about the dangers of nationalism, communism, careerism, and so forth often have roots in anti-labor attitudes.¹⁶⁰ Worker solidarity was not one of Kettner's Ten Commandments; indeed, it was completely at odds with the ideal workforce of his imagination. For Kettner, an employee or worker was an independent entity who should follow the Ten Commandments faithfully and ensure

that others did as well. The fact that despite Kettner's very low opinion of him, Nasser and his policies seemed only to grow more popular with the majority of Egyptians, especially his workers, surely amplified Kettner's negative feelings towards those Egyptian workers. Kettner's contempt for Egyptian people also throws his Ten Commandments into a new light. When we consider Kettner's underlying contempt for Egyptians, these commandments become not merely the best way to run a brewery, but the best way to protect Kettner against the imagined hatred and deceit of a herd of rapacious Egyptians. Yet as the next section will show, Kettner's animosity for the Egyptian workers and employees was not absolute.

A Worker–Management Détente

It would be simplistic to portray working relations between the management and labor at Pyramid as an unceasing battle. After the rough period of 1957 to 1958, relations improved a great deal. The clearest example of this improvement was the three-part plan that Kettner and the management instituted in 1959. The first part involved an end-of-the-year bonus of three and a half months of base salary for employees and ninety days of base salary for workers.¹⁶¹ A third of this bonus was withheld and placed in the investment portfolio of Pyramid, with a promised interest rate of three percent per year, to be redeemed when the workers and employees retired from the company.¹⁶² In essence, this was a pension plan that relied on company investment.

The second part of the plan was the codification of working hours and vacation time. For those who worked in the factory, hours were set from 7 am to 4 pm, with a one-hour lunch break for eleven months out of the year. For the month of Ramadan, factory workers were expected to work from 7am to 2 pm.¹⁶³ Those who worked in an administrative office were expected to work from Monday through

Wednesday between January 2 and May 15, from the hours of 8 am to 5 pm with a one-hour lunch break. On Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday, they were expected to work from 8 am to 2 pm, with Fridays off. Between May 16 and the end of December, they were expected in the office between 7:30 am and 2 pm. Finally, their working hours during Ramadan were 7:30 am to 1:30 pm.¹⁶⁴

Because workers set their own schedules, the companies made no special allowances for their time off. Needless to say, given the worker's disadvantaged position, the company had no legal commitment to them beyond the pay for a day's work, which prevented these workers from indulging in any long absences. For the administrative staff, on the other hand, Kettner and the rest of the management established a set of vacation time regulations. For those with power of attorney with the company, like Kettner and Hafez, they had up to twenty-six business days of vacation. For heads of departments like Alber Farag and Hassan Tawfiq, vacation time depended upon seniority. Those who had been with the company for more than ten years received twenty-two days, while those who had not yet reached ten years received eighteen days. For all the other employees, vacation time was also tied to seniority. Those who had worked for the company for ten years could take up to eighteen days off. Those who had worked more than five years could receive up to fifteen, and everyone else could take up to thirteen days.¹⁶⁵ These vacations days were of course subject to limitations, the most significant being that the management of the company had to approve all days off beforehand in accordance with the company's needs. In addition, an employee could not take more than twenty-one days off consecutively. An employee could not roll over vacation days to another year, nor convert any of the vacation days to sick days. In very rare cases, the management granted exemptions to these rules.¹⁶⁶

The third part of Kettner's plan entailed establishing a fixed age of retirement. Everyone associated with the company was required to retire on the last day of the month in which he turned sixty years old. The company had the option to extend a person's tenure beyond this date, for a period of no more than twenty-four months. However, no one could remain with the company once he had passed the age of sixty-two.¹⁶⁷ This ruling only applied to men, as women who worked with the company in any capacity were required to retire at age fifty, extendable to fifty-two.¹⁶⁸ Although this part of the plan appears to have aligned the companies' policies with those of the government, which in its 1955 modification of the Company law required retirement at sixty, the enforcement of this policy was not immediate. According to this plan, those working who were already sixty-one and over would have until January 1961 to retire. Those who were fifty-nine and over would have until January 1962. In addition, for everyone fifty-eight and younger, the plan would not be enforced until January 1963.¹⁶⁹

The response of the union to Kettner's plan was overwhelmingly positive. The union sent two letters, one to Kettner and one to Hafez, thanking them for these measures. In the letter that the union sent to Hafez, they remarked that these actions engendered "a great hope" and "complete confidence" in Hafez.¹⁷⁰ As for their letter to Kettner, they noted that these moves represented a good spirit, a desire for internal stability and peace, and a sincere paternal feeling.¹⁷¹ In each letter, the union leaders noted that they were fully committed to the company and to its new motto: "for a model company."¹⁷² Besides the letters, the union also sent Kettner flowers for Christmas, and, to Kettner at least, there appeared to be a greater sense of cooperation and a happier demeanor among the union members.¹⁷³

Kettner was deeply touched and indeed shocked by the overwhelmingly positive response from the union.¹⁷⁴ In particular, he was surprised with how well workers had received news of the termination of some bonuses. He attributed the plan's warm reception to the fact that it showed him to be "a good family man," who, in the interest of the welfare of the union members' wives and children, would withhold money for savings instead of allowing the men to spend it.¹⁷⁵ Although Kettner's reasoning has shades of paternalism, the overwhelmingly positive response to the plan indicates that perhaps there were some earnest feelings of appreciation for it. Regardless, this was a rare high point in union-management relations in the history of Pyramid Brewery. As shown above, relations between the two groups had only become more complicated with the Nasser government's legislation that pitted ostensible foreigners against natives, and set workers against exploiters. We cannot know whether cordial labor-management relations would have continued, for beer industry affairs entered a completely different phase when the government sequestered Pyramid Brewery in 1961.

Conclusion

The policies of the Nasser government exerted a dramatic impact on Pyramid and Crown Breweries in the pre-nationalization period from 1957 to 1960. While earlier chapters in this study discussed how the Nasser-led government defined and favored the "Egyptian" over the "foreign," this chapter examined how the government, as well as the beer industry itself, defined a "model company" in the private sector in the period from 1957 to 1960. The government wanted a company that was autonomous but ultimately subservient, a company whose growth would support Nasser's grand projects, including the United Arab Republic. In terms of internal structure, the government wanted a company in which the wage and power

gap between Egyptians workers and the management was smaller than it had been previously, but in which the workers were still too weak to pose a threat to the political order. Just as the beer companies had resisted Nasser's policies regarding "foreigners," so too they did not meet with passivity the legislation aimed at making them "model companies." The companies' resistance was especially important as their leadership had their own ideas about what a model company should be. Kettner in particular wanted a company in which Heineken's executives would prevail over a docile, loyal, and exploitable workforce. Despite this strong vision, the beer companies in this period would ultimately recognize their tenuous position. They would work to keep the government happy, doing mostly as they were asked and dutifully maintaining profitability. Although the "Egyptian" workers bitterly fought the "foreign" management over a host of issues, the two sides ultimately reached a brief *détente* following the management's devising of a mandatory retirement savings plan. Meanwhile, throughout the period from 1957 to 1960, profits and sales were rising, and beer was enjoying a firm place in Egyptian culture.

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² Trevor Le Gassick "Ihsan abd el-Qoddous", Ihsan abd el-Qoddous *I am Free and other Stories* Cairo; The General Egyptian Book Organization, 1978), 9.

³ Joel Gordon, *Revolutionary Melodrama: Popular Film and Civic Identity in Nasser's Egypt* (Chicago: Middle East Document Center, 2002), 134

⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Ihsan abd al-Quddus, *Banat al-Sayf* (Mansurat Maktabat al-Ma'arif fi Bayrut, 1959), 97

⁸ Joel Gordon, *Revolutionary Melodrama...*, 135.

⁹ Joel Gordon, *Revolutionary Melodrama...*, 135

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Chapter 8: Dutchmen and Compradors: How Stella Became the Beer of the Egyptian Regime, 1960–1970

From 1956 onward, the fear of nationalization was a persistent reality for Crown and Pyramid Breweries. This fear drove the companies to be ever mindful of the government's demands even as they worked to pursue the paths that would be most profitable. This balancing act shaped not only the interactions between the companies and the government, but also the relationships between the companies' executives and management, and between their management and workforce. Until 1960, the beer companies managed to negotiate this path successfully, remaining relatively stable and extremely profitable despite the massive changes that the government instituted. In 1960, the government pursued a new round of nationalizations that shattered any hope that the beer companies could remain independent. This chapter focuses on the period from 1960 to 1970, when the beer companies faced the reality of their impending nationalization (or "Egyptianization") and then underwent the traumatic process itself.

As members of the Egyptian government used their power to grab incremental control of the beer industry, the actual experience of nationalization proved to be a deeply personal one for the executives and workers of the companies involved. To be sure, the Dutch, Greek, and Egyptian people involved in the beer industry had been expecting the takeover for some time; nevertheless, they responded to the government's measures not with resignation, but rather by struggling to hold onto what they believed to be theirs. Some individuals fought against the regime, while

others collaborated. However, as shown by the case of the Egyptian who came to head both companies, Dr. Isma‘il Omar Foda, the only thing that mattered to the government was how useful any given person or entity could be to them. The business of commandeering a private sector enterprise was a messy one, and very few in the beer industry were left unscathed.

The nationalization or Egyptianization of the beer industry went beyond ensuring that everyone who worked in the companies had Egyptian citizenship. It also entailed excising all elements of the industry that the government deemed “foreign,” including all foreign nationals, some indigenous Coptic Christians, and *mutamaşşirūn*, those “people of foreign origin who had become permanent residents” and whose language and habits had become “Egyptianized.”¹ Nationalization also meant the removal of some Muslim Egyptians, who, in the eyes of the government, had used their financial position to exploit the country and stifle its growth. Although these people had the key feature of true Egyptianess—adherence to Islam—they could never be “authentic” Egyptians in the eyes of the government because they had come from the elite classes. Beyond that, Egyptianizing meant closing the power and wealth gaps among the executives, the management, and the workforce. Most importantly, it meant placing the entire industry under the government’s control.

The beer itself, as previous chapters have shown, needed no Egyptianizing. Thanks to the work of influential Dutchmen and of the Egyptian entrepreneurs against whom the Nasser-led regime would rally, beer had become the beverage of choice for young Egyptians looking for fun. Recall that by the 1950s, Egyptians had unprecedented access to Stella beer (see Chapter 7). As Stella had become *the* beer of Egypt, it had lost some of its “foreign” allure and veneer. Along the way, many Egyptians had come to regard beer as not merely an “evil” drink or a “fun” drink, but

as something in between: part of an everyday culture of leisure. Nevertheless, following Egyptianization, Stella's new role as a state-owned and -produced beverage arguably cast a shadow over its sunny disposition—particularly as the authoritarian limits of the regime became clearer.

This chapter tracks the Egyptianization of the beer industry in eight sections. The first section shows how Nasser's new round of nationalizations engendered deep fear within the beer companies. The next section examines how the companies forged ahead under the strain of waiting for their nationalizations. The third section discusses how the companies reacted as the private sector collapsed around them. The fourth describes the new reality for the companies after the sequestration of Pyramid and the eventual sequestration of Crown. The fifth turns to the workforce and their new role in the sequestered and conglomerated companies. The sixth looks at the removal of the Dutch from the Egyptian beer industry. The final section looks at the cultural legacy of the Dutch role in the Egyptian beer industry.

Nationalizations

In 1960, the government shook the Egyptian business world with a new round of nationalizations, inspiring deep fear among the beer companies that they could be next. Nasser's government struck the first blow against Egypt's national banks, Bank Misr and the National Bank of Egypt, in February. The government followed by nationalizing major daily newspapers, such as *al-Ahram*, *Akhbar al-Youm*, and *Ruz al-Yusuf*. Next, it took over the bus companies.² Although the specter of government involvement had hung over Eric Karl Kettner's head for nearly five years, as the managing director of Pyramid Brewery (see Chapter 7), he was still shocked by these events. When Kettner reported the events to Wittert van Hoogland, he could barely contain his disdain: "These [nationalizations] are justified by the claim that they are

done to ensure the freedom of the press (seriously).”³ For Kettner, this reasoning was farcical, as he believed these nationalizations had both economic and political motives, including the suppression of free speech. He noted that it was a poorly kept secret that the nationalized newspapers were going to have no say in what was printed.⁴

Kettner’s negative reaction to these nationalizations grew out his distaste for Nasser and his government. As I discussed in Chapter 7, Kettner had little faith in the populism of Nasser and only saw it as trouble for the Egyptian economy. Kettner’s feelings were only exacerbated by the fact that with each passing month the star of Nasser only shined brighter for the majority of Egyptians. Nasser’s populist policies—land reforms, support for workers and peasants rights, and the push for greater social equality, all infused by a strong anti-imperialism and jingoism—had won him massive support among the *effendiya* (the liminal class composed of students, professionals, teachers, civil servants, and small businessmen), workers, and peasants.⁵ The nationalization of the newspapers, which turned a relatively free press into one aimed solely to “justify, support and flatter” the increasingly authoritarian Nasser regime, only confirmed to Kettner that his skepticism of the regime was justified.⁶

However, it was not only what the newspapers printed that came under the purview of the government. Everything that the newspapers owned—the buildings, the presses, even the paper—became government property, too. The government appointed a committee of three, including a representative of the Government, the owner of the newspaper, and chairman of the government court, to run the publication. As Kettner put it, the owner of the company was outnumbered “two to one” by government officials.⁷ In exchange for the confiscation of property, the

former owners of the newspapers were rewarded indemnified government bonds with a three percent interest and which were redeemable after twenty years.⁸

The nationalization of three vital sectors in quick succession—banks, transport, and newspapers—set the entire private sector on alert. The businessmen of the private sector assumed that the that cotton firms would be the next target and that their nationalization would be accompanied by a potential modification of the Agrarian Land Reform of 1952, reducing the number of *feddans* one could own from two-hundred to fifty.⁹ After that, perhaps even a larger round of nationalizations would follow. Businessmen were worried that even if they managed to avoid nationalization, the government would still destroy their profits with the restrictive policies that accompanied these nationalizations.¹⁰

For Kettner, these nationalizations not only signaled a renewal of activist government policy, but also coincided with the departure of his main ally in Pyramid Brewery, Emil Natti, who had turned sixty. As discussed previously, one way that the Nasser government slowly eliminated “foreign” elements was by making retirement obligatory once a person turned sixty. As an Italian national, Natti was allowed to repatriate up to 20,000 Egyptian pounds after his forced retirement. Although the Egyptian government later proved recalcitrant about transferring the money, it did have an agreement with the Italian government that allowed for this transfer of funds.¹¹ Natti’s departure was another blow for Kettner, as he said, “It was strange to be without this trusty figure.” Kettner believed that Natti, an Egyptianized foreigner (*mutamassir*), protected him from the “intrigues” that, in Kettner’s mind, were endemic to Egyptians.¹² Although Natti had Italian citizenship, he had been in Egypt long enough to speak the necessary languages, French and Arabic, and understand the culture to serve as an intermediary between Kettner and the brewery’s workforce. It is

hardly a coincidence that the first sentence Kettner wrote after discussing Natti's departure was, "Hafez intrigues more than ever, but so far with little success."¹³

The businessmen of the private sector proved prescient in their worries over the renewed activist streak of the government. In the summer of 1960, the government nationalized "import houses and wholesalers of pharmaceutical products simultaneously with the tea packers."¹⁴ In the winter, the government nationalized all institutions that had significant investments of Belgian capital. This included the Tramways du Caire, the Rolin Group (to which Pyramid used to belong), and the Banque Belge. This last bit of government business was quite troubling to Pyramid because Banque Belge was their primary bank. Kettner had a trusted contact in the bank, Mr. Ashkar, who had aided the brewery in the numerous transfer issues it faced as a multi-national functioning in Nasser's Egypt.¹⁵ Kettner trusted this man to such an extent that, even after the bank had been nationalized, he wanted to maintain the relationship.

This round of nationalizations reverberated beyond Pyramid's relations with the Banque Belge. The Egyptian stock market took a significant hit as economic volatility deleteriously affected domestic and foreign sales of one of Egypt's biggest products, cotton. Prices dropped, and in the first quarter of 1960, cotton sellers were only able to sell three-fifths of what they had sold the previous year.¹⁶ The dip in the stock market would not have been so bad if it had been met by new capital from foreign investors looking to profit by "buying low." However, the Egyptian government severely limited foreign investment, claiming to fear "predatory" foreign capitalists. The government, in fact, promulgated a law that required President Nasser to approve all foreign investment in the country.¹⁷ The limiting of foreign capital coupled with the government's nationalizations of companies supported by large

amounts of foreign capital, struck fear in the hearts of those working at the Heineken backed Crown and Pyramid breweries. They could not help but dread, what the future held for them.

Forging Ahead

Despite this turbulence, Kettner was convinced that Pyramid could continue to make money. He based his assumption on the fact that the breweries had witnessed sustained growth. In May 1959, for example, Pyramid sold 14,000 hectoliters of beer, as compared to 9,000 the previous year.¹⁸ To put this into perspective, the total amount of beer sold in 1923 was 40,000 hectoliters.¹⁹ He proved prescient. For example in 1960, Pyramid sold nearly 110,000 hectoliters of beer, meeting Kettner's high expectations for that year.²⁰ Meanwhile, These banner sales were the result of the fact that as the economy shook, Crown and Pyramid forged ahead, constantly adjusting to the rapidly changing world around them. As I will show in this section, Pyramid's factory expansion project in the 1960s was a significant example of this policy of "forging ahead" even as they bore the strain of waiting for their nationalizations.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Heineken had approved Pyramid's proposed expansion in 1958–59 to cover the ever-increasing demand for beer and the obsolescence of some of the breweries' machinery. Heineken wanted the expansion to be supervised by a Dutch consultant-engineer, whose job would encompass six tasks: preparing all drawings, designs, and plans for the offices, ablution canteens, and the ancillary buildings; preparing plans for the drainage and sewage systems; preparing facility drawings and plans; preparing the specifications of the whole project that would be submitted to the contractors; giving all necessary advice concerning government building permits; evaluating the tendered offers from contractors; and

supervising the work of the contractors until the job was finished.²¹ Heineken was especially insistent on the consultant-engineer, believing that the brewery was “one of the most remarkable buildings in our concern” and strongly desired to keep the “majestic façade” intact.²²

However, despite Heineken’s preference, Kettner was not keen on the involvement of Heineken-approved Dutch engineers. He noted that a disadvantage of using these engineers was that Kettner was not familiar with the building regulations in Egypt and thus could not direct the engineers properly. More importantly, as Kettner noted, the engineers’ involvement had the potential to run afoul of the government. The ever-increasing level of state interference meant that private companies had to take the utmost care in their administration to avoid drawing attention to themselves. Attention would only lead to nationalization.²³ Instead of a Dutch consultant-engineer, therefore, Kettner insisted that they had to hire an Egyptian. At this stage, Heineken listened.

Kettner’s search came down to three candidates: Dr. William Selim Hanna, former professor of reinforced concrete in the engineering department at Cairo University and the ex-Minister of Municipalities; Mr. Faiz Wassef, who had a rather scant resumé, having only supervised the building of the factory for the Cairo Metal Company; and Dr. Ahmed Moharrem, then professor of reinforced concrete at Cairo University.²⁴ Kettner ended up choosing Dr. Moharrem for several reasons. First, he was “a very prominent engineer and ha[d] a good architect as an associate.”²⁵ Second, he came highly recommended from the Dutch company, International Products, which employed him in a similar capacity.²⁶ The third and most important factor in Kettner’s decision was that Dr. Moharrem was Muslim. The recent bout of nationalizations

convinced Kettner that the government was waging open war not only against the private sector, but in his estimation, against Christians as well.

Kettner noted that the “secret” battle against Christians had picked up during the previous year. As he remarked, any “intelligent” Christian understood that after the elimination of what he called “aliens,” those the government deemed foreign, the *Control des Sociétés (Maslahat al-Sharikat)* was going to target Christians at a “very accelerated pace.”²⁷ He also claimed that intelligent Christians realized that there was “absolutely no future for their children” in the country.²⁸ It was for this reason he made no effort to keep one of Pyramid’s female employees, Marie Sabbag, after she requested a move to Lebanon to be with her future husband. Rather, he let her leave and take a job as secretary to the Director of television.²⁹ This prejudicial policy against Christians also had an effect beyond the choice of consultant-engineer.

Before the nationalizations of 1960, Pyramid had chosen Mr. Adly at SPECO, a construction company in Egypt, as the main contractor for the building of a new malting plant. After the nationalizations, Pyramid had to tender new offers on all construction projects in order to show that they were not favoring or colluding with a particular vendor or contractor. This obviously upset Adly as it made a job that he thought he had secured an open competition. He was particularly worried about low bidders undercutting him, as he charged a high fee for his high-quality work.³⁰ Pyramid’s board was not obligated to pick the lowest bidder, but the relationship between Pyramid and SPECO did not continue because Adly, as Kettner phrased it, was not a “follower of the Prophet.”³¹

A much happier problem for Pyramid in 1960 was that the demand for their beer was so great that they were running into production bottlenecks. As noted above,

1960 was a banner year for Pyramid. The excellent sales were due in large part to the heat wave that hit Egypt in the summer of 1960. The consumption of beer in Egypt fluctuated with the weather; demand grew when it was hot. In the 1960s, beer in Egypt became the alcoholic drink of the summer and the beach, and this was especially true in 1960. In that year, the breweries sold more beer between the months of April and September (roughly 75,000 hectoliters) than in all of 1958 (70,000 hectoliters).³²

The hot spell was not the only contributor to increased consumption. Another significant factor was the significant growth and urbanization of the Egyptian population since the 1950s. Between the years 1947 and 1960, the population grew from 19 million to 26 million.³³ In those same years, 1947 and 1960, more than 1 million migrants arrived in Cairo.³⁴ The majority of those migrating were from the rural parts of Egypt, and by 1960, there were nearly 7 million rural migrants living in Alexandria and Cairo.³⁵ However, this growth and urbanization would not have meant as much to the fortunes of the beer industry if not for the policies of Nasser. The social welfare policies that the Nasser government was instituting in the country, i.e., minimum wages, overtime bans to encourage new hires, and forced price cuts, all meant more disposable income for average workers to buy beer.³⁶ On a cultural level, Nasser's ascendance made the culture of the effendi, which, as I have shown in previous chapters, was receptive to beer consumption, the hegemonic cultural discourse in the country.³⁷

Kettner was fully aware that the policies of the President he disliked so much had made the beer business more profitable. Thus, he communicated to Heineken that with Nasser's continued reign, beer sales were likely to continue increasing. Although Pyramid was able to meet the demand in Cairo, Kettner believed that the brewery was

“outgrowing its coat.” If beer sales in the summer months continued to grow by thirty percent for the next five years, the company would need to produce at least 75,000 hectoliters per month during the summer—a number that was beyond their current capacity.³⁸ Heineken saw the record sales of Pyramid in 1960, which Kettner admitted were conservative numbers, and resolved to expand Pyramid factory production.³⁹

Heineken created a five-year plan that added even more construction to the already planned expansion. This new construction revolved around three measures. The first was to create a new brewhouse or new brewhouses that could put out four hundred hectoliters per brewing cycle of cold wort, which is pre-fermented beer, as opposed to the typical two hundred hectoliters. The second step was the completion of a new cellar with eighteen fermentation tanks that could house the increased production of wort. Finally, because wort must be cooled to 20–26 Celsius before yeast can be added and fermentation can begin, the plan also called for a new wort cooler that could process one hundred and fifty to one hundred and eighty hectoliters per hour.⁴⁰ With each of these changes in place, Heineken believed that the maximum monthly capacity of the brewery could be raised from around 17,000 hectoliters to 62,000 hectoliters.⁴¹

While the ongoing expansions of the Pyramid factory would address some of the increasing demand for beer, an easier way to address the issue was by enabling Crown to produce at its full capabilities. Kettner noted that during the heat wave, Crown was only able to produce 36,000 bottles of beer per day. This insufficient number was not due to any problems with the bottling machinery or the brewhouse; rather, the problem was staffing. Crown only employed one team in the brewery, in contrast to the multiple teams working at Pyramid.⁴² The excess at Pyramid was the result of the government’s restriction on dividend payouts to stockholders. Although

Pyramid was making banner profits, it could not send them out to stockholders, as was typical, in the form of larger dividends. Instead they were left with a mass of money they could only use to re-invest.⁴³ Pyramid determined that the money was best spent on Crown, infusing it with funds so that they could expand production. With this extra money, Pyramid could help Crown hire new workers and even offer to pay for full control over all exports. Pyramid's takeover of exports would be a significant help to Crown, as they had burnt through their entire reserves in both 1959 and 1960 trying to export.⁴⁴

However, the Pilavachis, who still controlled Crown, proved unwilling to forfeit control of a company they had run autonomously for decades. So much was this the case that when Wittert van Hoogland visited Pyramid in March 1961, he decided that instead of investing any more that he should, once again, try to fully incorporate Crown into Pyramid. The plan that Wittert van Hoogland put forth was quite similar to their first deal, discussed above, that aimed to broker better relations between Crown and Pyramid. In both instances, Heineken, acting through Cobra, encouraged Pyramid to exchange shares they had in an African brewery for shares in Crown. In the 1961 plan, Pyramid was to exchange its 50,000 shares in Blue Nile Brewery in Khartoum for 4,118 shares in Crown. These new Crown shares would bring Pyramid's total to 8,978 and its control in the company to around thirty percent.⁴⁵ Pyramid had three reasons for wanting to trade shares with Crown instead of purchasing the shares with cash outright. First, the Egyptian Exchange Control Authorities, the government body that regulated these types of transactions, would most likely object to such a large transfer of cash. Second, Pyramid needed to remain liquid with the cash to pay for its planned expansion. Third, by using shares, this

change in control of Blue Nile would have no effect on the export agreement that Pyramid and Blue Nile had vis-à-vis malt.⁴⁶

Although both the factory expansion and the consolidation with Crown were well thought out and strongly desired by Heineken and Pyramid, they ultimately did not come to pass. These failures were attributable to the tenuous situation of every Egyptian private company in a rapidly changing country. As one illustration, Farghaly never got behind the plan to exchange shares because he believed that if the Exchange Control noticed any irregularities in their accounting, this would lead to immediate nationalization.⁴⁷ This hesitation was emblematic of the great trepidation that every Pyramid executive felt about the future of the company. The near-constant threat that the situation was about to radically change, coupled with the continued intransigence of the Egyptians working underneath him, led Kettner to request that Wittert line up a transfer from Pyramid. In a response letter, Wittert dismissed Kettner's request and went on to explain why it was so important for Kettner to remain in Egypt.

For Cobra, and for Heineken more broadly, Egypt was a prized source of income from Africa. This was especially the case because, concurrently, Cobra was losing a great deal of income from another of its major interests in Africa, Bralima Brewery in Brazzaville, in the French territory of Congo.⁴⁸ The centrality of the Egyptian beer industry to their African portfolio meant that Cobra and Heineken were adamant about maintaining their control of the two breweries despite everything that was happening with Nasser's regime. They also believed strongly that Kettner, with his years of experience in Egypt, would be the one best able to negotiate for the companies amidst this difficult situation.⁴⁹

Against this context of uncertainty, Wittert urged Kettner to simply press on.⁵⁰ Kettner was in a beautiful country with a pleasant climate and, as Wittert pointed out, was running a company in solid financial condition.⁵¹ Wittert's letter had the desired effect on Kettner, who decided to soldier on in his position, reasoning that he could not leave and "let the Egyptians fix it themselves." If he were to do so, two powerful men—Ahmad Farghaly, the biggest stockholder and President and CEO of Pyramid, and Isma'il Hafez, the most powerful man in Pyramid besides Kettner and Farghaly—would demoralize the "valuable" employees, such as Alber Farag, Hassan Tawfiq, and Munir Tadros, by constantly exposing them to intrigues and backdoor dealings.⁵² Kettner thus resolved to try to make the best of the situation in which he found himself.

The First Salvo

Only a month after Kettner confirmed his willingness to stay on at Pyramid, in July 1961, the political mood in Egypt quickly changed. Nasser's distaste for the private sector had become clear to journalists and industrialists alike by 1960, but the decrees he issued in July 1961 went beyond what either group had imagined.⁵³ Nasser's moves sent a clear signal that he no longer believed the private sector could lead Egypt to the economic resurgence that he desired.⁵⁴ Not coincidentally, these decrees occurred on the ninth anniversary of the Free Officers movement. The regime portrayed the decrees as a revolution against "the dictatorship of capital."⁵⁵ Although the regime did not express it in these exact terms, these actions were an open declaration of war on those "compradorial" elements within Egypt that had stifled the development of the country.⁵⁶ A comprador as defined in the traditional study of political economy as the "native agents or partners of foreign investors who operate[d] in some form in the local economy."⁵⁷ While Robert Vitalis has shown that

this term was ill-suited to Egyptian businessmen, like ‘Abbud Pasha, who would come under attack of the Nasser regime, the term does reasonably encapsulate the Egyptian government’s view of capitalists like Ahmad Farghali Pasha, the President and CEO of Pyramid Brewery.⁵⁸ For the government, these compradors were part of the group of “exploiters” (“only five percent”) who need to be vanquished in order to free the exploited (“ninety-five percent”).⁵⁹

What this fight against the exploiters meant in practice was the modification of the land law, which limited property owners to one hundred feddans per person, as well as the enactment of a series of laws that nationalized the great majority of the corporate sector.⁶⁰ These laws allowed the government to take full control of 149 companies, which included all banks, insurance companies, and cement factories, all of which were central to the Nasser-led government’s plans for a rapid industrialization of Egypt.⁶¹ The laws also allowed Nasser’s government to take fifty percent of the shares of ninety-one other companies, in exchange for government bonds with 4% interest. The laws limited the holdings of one person in one of 159 more companies to 10,000 pounds worth of shares. A purported goal of these laws was to improve the working conditions of Egyptians. They legislated that workers must be represented on every corporate board in the country, and that boards could only have seven members. All corporate dividends were abolished, and the government legislated that companies had to allocate ten percent of net profits to workers, another ten to a central service fund, and five percent to social services. The laws limited working hours to seven hours per day and restricted every person to working just one job. They also limited remuneration to 5,000 pounds. Finally, the laws increased tax revenues and closed the stock exchange for two months.⁶²

Despite the passage of all of this legislation, both Pyramid and Crown were initially able to avoid the fate of nationalization. Incidentally, Gianaclis wine and Societe Nationale de Levure (yeast) were left out of the purview of the nationalization legislation as well. Farghaly saw this as more than a coincidence, believing it “inconceivable” that the state would get involved in the alcohol business because of the traditional Islamic disapproval of wine.⁶³ He was so sure of it that he assured Kettner to ignore Isma‘il Hafez, who was claiming that the day of reckoning was coming for the breweries.⁶⁴ Kettner needed no convincing, as he believed Farghaly’s claims were merely wishful thinking. Kettner could not imagine that the government would leave only the alcohol producers unaffected by the nationalization, that they would give special treatment to a “forbidden” product.⁶⁵ Kettner figured that the delay was only due to the fact that it would take some time to persuade the “preachers of the Quran,” probably meaning the sheikhs of Al-Azhar, that it was lawful for the government to nationalize the companies.⁶⁶ When Farghaly was insistent that the breweries would be spared, citing the fact that only four hundred of the seven hundred private companies were nationalized, Kettner asked Farghaly to name one company that had not fallen under the control of the government. Farghaly was unable to do so.⁶⁷ In short, Kettner was preparing for the eventuality that Pyramid and Crown would be nationalized; his primary concern was not whether this would happen, but which type of nationalization the company would fall under. Would the government fully nationalize them, take fifty percent of their shares, or limit stockholders to \$10,000 worth of shares?

Kettner did not have to wait long to find out. On August 7, 1961, the process of nationalization began, innocuously enough, with an article published in *Journal Officiel*, in the French-language government gazette, stating that the government had

sequestered Pyramid, which entailed freezing all of the companies assets and placing them under the control of a sequestrator. When Kettner told Farghaly the news, he was shocked. So was Isma‘il Hafez, although he was more upset that the government did not appoint him as the chief sequestrator of the company.⁶⁸ Hafez, utterly bewildered by the decision, took a trip to Alexandria to save face. Kettner was not surprised by the move, but he was confused and a bit suspicious about the circumstances that surrounded it. He was not sure why they were sequestered rather than nationalized. He imagined that this maneuver was a way for the government to gather information on the company and its finances before it decided to which of the three nationalization operations it would subject the company.⁶⁹

While Kettner was unsure about the reasons the government decided to sequester and not nationalize them, he was reasonably certain that the decision for sequestration was the result of intrigues by an Egyptian within the company. He had reason to suspect someone because, at the time, it appeared that the government only sequestered companies suspected of irregularity.⁷⁰ The possibility became all the more probable when Crown escaped being sequestered.⁷¹ Considering the long history between Kettner and Hafez, as well as the latter’s well-known desire to be the chief sequestrator, it was no wonder that Kettner suspected Hafez of turning the keys of the company over to the government. Kettner also came upon information that seemed to support the idea that it was Hafez who had sold out the company. The first bit of information came in discussions with the executives at Phillips, who said an Egyptian was selling them out just like “Ismail Hafez did at another Dutch company.”⁷²

For Kettner, this theory of treachery could explain why Hafez was so upset when he was not appointed sequestrator of the company.⁷³ It also explained why

Hafez delayed his departure to Holland until around the time of the company's sequestration. In addition to these hints, before sequestration, Hafez was a vocal proponent of a government plan to incorporate Pyramid in a newly created body for consumer products, of which one of his friends was in charge.⁷⁴ Of course, Hafez pinned the blame on Abu El Einayn al-Salim, another member of the board of directors.⁷⁵ This was not such an unreasonable statement, as Kettner suspected Salim as well. Kettner noted that during the Board Meeting on July 21, 1961, Salim "behaved very strangely and made, in Arabic, all kinds of threats." Then on August 3, he threatened Kettner that he was going to write to the government ministers about the "intolerable state of affairs" within the company. When Kettner informed Farghaly of Salim's odd behavior, Farghaly told him in French, "Salim is crazy and he is a moron."⁷⁶ Regardless of who was actually responsible for sequestration, Kettner decided on discretion—as he termed it, "waiting for the ulcer to burst"—because the company was still under investigation by the government, and he had no intention of bringing unneeded attention to the issue.⁷⁷

Part of his unwillingness to pursue the issue further may have derived from the fact that, from the beginning, Kettner had assumed government interference was inevitable. It would have been exceptional if the alcohol industry had avoided a reality that the majority of the private sector had suffered. In the case of Pyramid, avoiding sequestration would have been especially noteworthy because of the strong association the company had with Muhammad Ahmad Farghaly. He was the embodiment of the exploitative comprador that the Nasser government held up as the bane to the development of a self-sufficient Egypt. Exemplary of this fact is that Farghaly contravened every regulation that the Nasser government passed on the private sector and executives. For example, after 1955, when the government

modified the Company Law requiring anyone who sat on the board of companies as an *administrateur* or trustee to be under the age of sixty and to be a director at only one company, Farghaly was over the age of sixty and sat on the boards of twenty-nine different companies. When the Nasser-led government put forth its July Decrees in 1961, Farghaly, as the largest stockholder in Pyramid, was in clear violation of the law that one's stake in the company was not to exceed 10,000 Egyptian pounds.⁷⁸

It is thus not surprising that when the Egyptian government arrested individuals "planning to overthrow the regime," Ahmad Farghaly was among them. These arrests came in the aftermath of the secession of Syria from the United Arab Republic (UAR), which was a blow to Nasser's prestige in the Arab world as the head of Arab nationalism.⁷⁹ His crackdown on these supposed anti-regime forces was a way to prove the continuing vibrancy and effectiveness of his message in the wake of a diplomatic defeat. Striking out against his enemies in response to foreign policy issues was not a new policy. As Kettner stated, "Nasser becomes more dangerous as he has less success with his foreign policy."⁸⁰ These "anti-regime" forces were in fact "three different strains of the old regime: politicians, remnants of the old landed elite like the Badrawi Ashur Family; and a mixed group of merchants and industrialists, a few of Egyptian nationality and many more of foreign descent."⁸¹

The arrest of Farghaly and his ilk represented the Nasser regime's further expansion of those classified as enemies of the state. Despite all the legislation working against Farghaly, he was able to maintain his position after 1956 for the same reason that he was able to reach his position in the first place: namely, he had strong international business connections and claimed an identity as a Muslim-Egyptian. Farghaly's arrest and subsequent expulsion from the corporate sector represents the Nasser-led government's full enunciation that, like "foreign" forces, predatory

“Egyptian” Muslim capitalists like Farghaly had stifled Egypt’s economic development, too. For so long, Farghaly, and to a lesser extent Hafez and other Muslim Egyptians like Abu al-Enein Salim, had relied on the fact that they were the “good guys,” who could use their privileged position to avoid the fates of “foreign” entities. These arrests marked the end of that era.

After this point, Farghaly, like many of the business elites associated with the old regime, was broken and marginalized. Farghaly reportedly disappeared from Cairo, not even returning when the government confiscated his horses at the Sporting Club.⁸² In that same Sporting Club, the Nasser-led government carried out another symbolic act. They transformed the polo fields, the staging ground for a game of the wealthy, into football pitches, the staging ground for the popular (*sha’bi*) game of the people. The golfers of the club, displaying a bit of tone-deafness, were upset that this transformation also eliminated the main course on which they practiced.⁸³ Nevertheless, Farghaly did not disappear completely. Kettner later met him by chance at the upscale Semiramis Hotel, where he was eating with a “belle,”⁸⁴ and reported that Farghaly seemed pleased to see him and even inquired about the company. Farghaly expressed his regret that Hafez was so unwise as to refuse to cooperate with the new sequestrator, Dr. Isma‘il Omar Foda.⁸⁵ Under the watch of Dr. Foda, the company would accelerate down the path to full “Egyptianization.”

A New Boss

In Isma‘il Omar Foda’s capacity as, at first, the government’s sequestrator, he ran the beer industry in Egypt and indeed led it for the next twenty-one years.⁸⁶ This next section will look at what sequestration under Foda meant for the beer companies in practice. Specifically, it will look how Foda dealt with key people like Kettner,

Hafez, the Pilavachis, and the workers, and how the beer companies fared under his tenure in its activities, including domestic and foreign sales.

The regime's first choice for sequestrator had in fact been Dr. Abdel Aziz Hussein. But after Dr. Hussein recused himself of the position and recommended Foda instead, Foda assumed the position. With a Ph.D. in microbiology from the University of California–Berkeley, Dr. Ismai'l Omar Foda certainly claimed educational credentials and a degree of technical expertise that was unmatched among Egyptians. His doctoral work at Berkeley had focused on the nutrition and metabolism of a particular strain of bacteria, *acetobacter melanogenum*.⁸⁷ Specifically, he had examined *acetobacter*'s use of maltose as a nutrient, a process that would result in the production of “gluconic and 5-ketogluconic acids.”⁸⁸ This research expertise proved relevant to his work for Pyramid because many acetobacters can convert ethanol, the alcohol in beer and wine, into acetic acid. Likewise, because acetobacters “are acid- and ethanol-tolerant and not inhibited by hop compounds, they grow rapidly in beer, producing acid off-flavors and turbidity.”⁸⁹ As discussed above, this process had a negative impact on the flavor of beer; however, if brewers properly stored the beer and kept its exposure to oxygen low, they could avoid the problem of acetobacter altogether.⁹⁰

While hiring someone with such expertise was certainly a boon for Pyramid, it must also have been a difficult decision for the regime members who appointed him. Foda came from a family of landed elite, one of the main targets of the Nasser-led regime. In the view of Nasser ideologues, these feudalist property owners (*al-iqtā'īn*) had done with the country's land what the compradors had done to the economy. Dr. Foda was the grandson of a large landowner from Sinballawein in the Dahqaliyya province in the Delta, and his father was a member of the Chamber of Deputies

(*Majlis al-Nuwāb*). Emblematic of how Foda came from one of the targeted groups of the regime, the government had confiscated thousands of feddans of lands from his father, Hussein Foda, in the Agrarian reform acts, and also frozen the assets of his brother, Daoud, while placing him under house arrest in 1961. In other words, and perhaps ironically, Dr. Foda had direct familial experience with the kind of socialist takeover that had struck out against the beer companies—albeit in his own case, with regard to landed and not corporate property.

While the regime may have had difficulty in appointing Foda, he also had difficulty in accepting. The government's land reforms had hit his family hard, and many of his relatives privately maintained that the reforms had sent their paterfamilias, Hussein Foda, who was the father of Dr. Foda, to an early grave. And yet, with his father gone and his brother incapacitated, Dr. Foda had responsibility for supporting his mother and five sisters as they struggled with their new reality. He had been supporting his family by serving in the Department of Food Technology at the College of Agriculture at Cairo University, but the government position—despite being objectionable on philosophical grounds—offered the possibility that of government leniency in any other future dealings with the family. Indeed, Dr. Foda's appointment had elements of mutual convenience on both sides. For Dr. Foda, accepting the government's offer was done out of necessity and not out of liking, while the government officials were motivated by a pragmatic recognition that Dr. Foda was exceptionally qualified for the position.

Foda was cordially received by the Dutch contingent of Pyramid, despite being the physical embodiment of the government's takeover. Kettner and the Dutch Brewmaster, Gerardus Ulenberg Ulenberg, were well-disposed to him.⁹¹ Foda's intrusion was surely softened by the fact that he paid all respects to Heineken and

their operations.⁹² He also was quite forthcoming with Kettner on the reasons that precipitated the sequestration. As he made clear to Kettner, as well, the underlying reason for the sequestration was the regime's fear that the Egyptian board members would manipulate the company's finances to extract even more money from the country.⁹³ The government was also worried that "reactionaries" could use profits to "prevent the realization of a socialist state" by funding a counter-revolution.⁹⁴

Heineken's reaction to Foda's appointment reflects the awkward circumstances surrounding their new relationship:

Although—as a matter of course—the sequestration of a company never calls for congratulations, we would like to congratulate, in this case, the authorities and the company on their choice. Your name is well known to us as a gentleman of the highest integrity and of great authority in the agricultural field.⁹⁵

Beyond wishing Foda congratulations, Heineken also wished him luck with a company that they deemed difficult.

We express our sincere wish that you will be able to execute your difficult task in promoting the company's interest, aided by the support of the appointed sub-sequestrator, Mr. Ismail Hafez, and the unrelenting assistance of all the members of the company's staff."⁹⁶

While the letter was signed "Heineken," it had been written by the head of Cobra and former managing director of Pyramid Wittert van Hoogland, and it reflects Wittert's inherent distrust of Egyptians. It is no small coincidence that Wittert mentioned Hafez specifically in the letter because, as discussed throughout this work, the Dutch viewed Hafez the source of many of the company's intrigues. Unsurprisingly, Hafez was one of the first issues that Foda had to grapple with in his new position as the man in charge of Pyramid.

Hafez admitted spontaneously to Kettner that his relationship with Foda was extremely negative.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, despite Foda's power to remove Hafez, Foda kept him on as his assistant sequestrator. This relationship, like Foda's with the government, was defined by a need for convenience that overcame the enmity at its heart. For Foda, Hafez was one of the longest-tenured executives left who remained "acceptable" in the eyes of the government. As a Muslim Egyptian whom the government had not designated as *persona non grata*, he was a definite asset as well. He had the benefit of years of experience with the company, which Foda lacked.

Hafez did not face the same fate as Farghlay because, for one, he had not reached the high position of Farghaly. Another reason he may have been acceptable to the government was that he was an alleged government collaborator (see Chapter 7). Beyond the previously discussed allegations, which are all but confirmed by the archival record, Hafez had also served as an informant to the government on Pyramid, reporting that the Dutch were moving a large amount of money outside of Egypt in a form of capital flight. Hafez, who had wanted to be chief sequestrator himself and who therefore harbored ill will toward Foda, benefited from his contacts with the regime. He was able to become directing manager at Pyramid, the position that Kettner once held and that Hafez had always wanted. Nevertheless, Hafez did not make life easy for Foda. For example, Hafez almost caused mutiny among the staff by publicly proposing a plan that would replace all of them.⁹⁸ Foda was aware of Hafez's plans and his scheming, but they ultimately led to very little.⁹⁹ Foda kept him on regardless, as a way to maintain continuity.

The whole history of the relationship between Pyramid and Crown was characterized by dueling forces, as economic forces pushed the companies together and executives pulled them apart, so it is perhaps not surprising that the two

companies did not enter sequestration in unison. While Pyramid was sequestered in August 1961, Crown remained free from government control. However, everyone involved in both Crown and Pyramid recognized that this situation was temporary. Isma‘il Hafez, in particular, had his eyes on Crown and pushed hard for its sequestration. He hoped that if he led the charge, he could serve as the main sequestrator of the company, a position he failed to secure at Pyramid.¹⁰⁰ Hafez was so set on this plan that he fabricated an elaborate lie that there was a “Hafez Period” at Pyramid Brewery, where he ruled supreme and had taken over the Alexandrian brewery.¹⁰¹

Hafez was not the only one preparing for the eventuality of Crown’s sequestration. The Pilavachis, Zenon and Christine, were likewise preparing for imminent change. As Greek citizens, they realized that their stake in the company was in danger. This danger was made more fully manifest by the fact that the government had nationalized Zenon Pilavachi’s interest in Abu Zabal and Kafr el Zayat Fertiliser.¹⁰² When sequestration hit individual members of Crown’s board, Sameh Moussa and Mahmud Abdel Sidky, in 1961, Crown took the opportunity to reorganize. Christine Pilavachi resigned from the board, as did Spiro Spirits, who had served as managing director of the brewery, and Mohammed Wasik Abaza, a relative of Aziz Abaza.¹⁰³ Beyond this reorganization, the Pilavachis also followed a plan to limit the damage from Crown’s eventual sequestration. They sold a small amount of their shares to reduce their holding in Crown to 4,000 shares. The purpose of the sale was not to end their relationship, but rather, they believed, to establish a reasonable price for the shares. By establishing this price, they hoped that when the government did sequester the company, it would pay the established price for their shares.¹⁰⁴

The Pilavachis, who were ethnic Greeks born and raised in Egypt, anticipated the entrance of the Greek government into the matter. As they saw it, if the Greeks in Egypt voluntarily liquidated their assets, then the odds of Greek government intervention on their behalf would be quite low. The odds were much better if their property was forcibly confiscated. The Pilavachis based this assumption on the fact that the Greek government partially compensated those Greeks who had lost their possessions in the communist takeover of Bulgaria in 1946.¹⁰⁵ Kettner was confident that if the Pilavachis had not expected Greek intervention, they would have redone their entire business portfolio.¹⁰⁶

However, all of the Pilavachis' planning was for naught, as they never received a response from the Egyptian government. Instead, when the Egyptian government informed Crown and Pyramid that it would levy an excise tax on beer, they were left sitting on the stock. News of the tax spread, the stock tumbled, and the Pilavachis faced a significant loss. Meanwhile, the position of Greeks within Egypt was becoming more tenuous. News spread of state security forces capturing fourteen Egyptian-born Greeks carrying out espionage for Israel.¹⁰⁷ Because it was a matter of espionage, it is difficult to determine whether the accusations are true, especially because the papers remain closed to researchers, but in any case, the mere allegation was damaging enough. These events, coupled with the Greek government's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), meant that the situation for Greeks in Egypt was becoming increasingly awkward.¹⁰⁸

In December 1961, the government sequestered Crown Brewery. This sequestration was accompanied by the sequestration of the Central Bureau, the shared depot where both Pyramid and Crown sold their beer. Despite Isma'il Hafez's machinations, he was not awarded the position of head sequester, as that position was

once again given to Omar Foda. The government also passed over Hafez for the position of sub-sequester. In a case similar to that of Pyramid Brewery, the government gave no reason for the sequestration. Albert Farag speculated that the government targeted Crown because the Pilavachis did not offer enough of their shares up for sale.¹⁰⁹

Kettner believed that the Pilavachi's actions could have been part of the reason the government targeted Crown, but he believed a more significant reason was the reorganization of what he called "*Organismes Publiques*." These were the structures through which the Nasser regime aimed to organize the growing public sector. Prior to December 1961, formerly private assets that the government absorbed went into three public holding companies: the Economic Organization, the Misr Organization, and the Nasr Organization. The Economic Organization was the first structure that the government created, and it came in response to the nationalization of British and French assets in 1957.¹¹⁰ The government created the Misr Organization to handle the assets of the Misr Group, which included Bank Misr and its assets, which "accounted for 60 percent of all textile production and 53 percent of employment in the textile sector."¹¹¹ Finally, the Nasr Organization, which was composed of twenty-four companies capitalized at forty million pounds, covered the state enterprises that arose from the first Five-Year Plan laid out by Minister of the Economy 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Qayssuni in 1960.¹¹²

However, as Kettner noted, as Crown was being sequestered, the Egyptian government was rethinking its organization of the public sector. An upshot of their latest rounds of nationalization was that public sector was outgrowing these three ad-hoc organizations. On December 16, 1961, the government, through decree No.1899, "Effectively abolished the three existing General Organizations."¹¹³ In their place, the

government grouped 438 companies, including the newly sequestered Crown Brewery, into thirty-nine General Organizations organized along sectoral lines. Each of these General Organizations was attached to the Ministry that was most relevant. In the case of Pyramid Brewery, Crown Brewery, and the Central Bureau, all of their stock was nationalized, and the government placed them under the auspices of the newly formed General Corporation for Food Industries (*al-Mu'assasa al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-l-Ṣinā'āt al-Ghidhā'iyya*, GCFI), headed by Dr. Hasan Mohammed Ashmawi.¹¹⁴

The General Organizations' full integration into the Egyptian economic system had a great deal to do with how highly the Egyptian government valued beer exports (see Chapter 7). The government saw these exports as an easy way to bring foreign currency into the country. It was not coincidental, then, that one of the first directives the government assigned Foda as the head of the beer companies was to export 10,000 hectoliters of beer to Romania.¹¹⁵ This trade relationship proved to be one of the most fruitful for the company. Foda was even able to sign a trade agreement with Romania in 1968 that guaranteed the export of 40,000 hectoliters of beer in exchange for nearly one million dollars from the Romanian government.¹¹⁶ In a similar vein, the government also forced the company to start exporting to Aden.¹¹⁷ Perhaps the greatest example of the use of the beer company to expand foreign trade is that by 1966, the beer company had even expanded into the Jordanian market, owning forty percent of a company there.¹¹⁸

The government not only encouraged new foreign investment, but also cultivated the relationships the breweries already had. They were particularly concerned with the brewery's relationship with Blue Nile Brewery in Sudan. The nationalization of both Crown and Pyramid placed Blue Nile Brewery in Khartoum in

the middle of the struggle between Heineken and the Egyptian government. While it was Pyramid that owned an interest in Blue Nile and provided it with malt, most of its interactions were with Wittert van Hoogland, rather than with anyone in Egypt. Van Hoogland sat on the board *ex officio*, and his pay from the company went directly to Heineken.¹¹⁹ When the Egyptian government nationalized the two beer companies, Wittert van Hoogland held out hope that he could circumvent the Egyptian government by having Blue Nile Brewery pay a higher director's fee to him in exchange for goods and service rendered.¹²⁰ Unfortunately for Wittert, that was not to be, and Blue Nile soon removed him from his *ex officio* position on the board, citing the fact that he was working with an English brewery, Flowers, that rivaled Anchor Brewhouse.¹²¹ This rivalry between Flowers and Anchor Brewhouse was important because the latter had a controlling interest in Blue Nile Brewery. As for the Egyptian government, it retained a role in the Sudanese company by having Foda meet with the board in Khartoum and hosting representatives from Blue Nile in Cairo.¹²² Thus in his initial interactions with Pyramid, Dr. Foda did his best to balance his desire to assert his and the Egyptian government's new role in the company with his desire to maintain the aspects of the company that had made it so successful.

Workers' New Role

After Crown's sequestration in 1961, the government resolved that both it and Pyramid would be officially nationalized, which meant being conglomerated into Al-Ahram Brewing Company. This welding together of the two companies would occur in a multi-step process, and Foda was tasked with overseeing it. As noted above, both Foda and the government preferred to maintain as much continuity as possible for the simple reason that the beer industry in Egypt had been flourishing, and they wanted to

ensure that it continued to do so. Yet as this section describes, Foda soon faced limits in his attempts to ensure continuity in policies toward the workforce.

The 1961 July decrees, which had arrested the private sector, also aimed to empower the Egyptian workforce. The decrees limited working hours to seven hours per day and eliminated overtime. Likewise, companies could not use any seasonal workers; anyone who worked for the company had to be a full-time employee. These regulations plus the ruling that a person could only hold one job at a time aimed at not only lessening the burden of employed workers, but also opening up more jobs for the unemployed. In addition to regulations on who could work for a company and for how long, the July Decrees also sought to close the wage gap. They set the upper limit for remuneration for everyone at a company at 5,000 pounds. They eliminated all dividends and required each company to use twenty-five percent of its profit for its workers, in the form of wage increases and increased social services.

This legislation had a serious effect on Pyramid, undercutting many of the policies Kettner had put in place to create a modern, total-control brewery. These new laws eliminated his two-shift system and his ability to keep the brewery open continuously with three teams of workers. Because a team could now only cover seven hours, three teams could only cover twenty-one hours. The company also lost the ability to take advantage of temporary workers, who used to fill in when needed and required a minimal commitment. The company now had to have everyone on the payroll, and it had to provide social services for all of them. Kettner, who was completely marginalized upon the sequestration of the company, saw all of these requirements as unnecessary increases in overhead and worried that without a price increase in beer, the company would suffer.¹²³ Besides increasing the operating costs of the company, this legislation also limited Pyramid's ability to shape its work staff.

All hiring and firing, even for the lowest-paid worker, had to be approved by the sequestrator and thus the government. This made it extremely difficult, in Kettner's opinion, to find a good second-in-command for Hasan Tawfiq, an Egyptian who had served as Pyramid's head of garages prior to sequestration, but who would now be assuming a more prominent role as the head of both Crown and Pyramid's factories.¹²⁴

Following the decrees, workers not only received a larger piece of the profits than before, but also gained a greater stake in the company. The July Decrees required the board of directors of each company to reserve spots for a representative of the workers (*'ummāl*) and a representative employee (*muwazzafīn*). This requirement forced a radical change in the board of the newly amalgamated company. Besides Foda, who occupied the position of delegated member (*'uḍu al-muntadab*) on the board of directors, the board was composed of appointed and elected members. In the case of appointed members, again, it appears that Foda preferred continuity under his tenure. He chose Egyptian workers, who had trained and worked under the watch of Dutch managers. To fill the role of director of factories, he chose Hasan Tawfik, who had previously served as the head of garages. As the new business director, Foda chose Alber Farag, who had previously headed Pyramid's communications department. Foda also elevated the assistant brewmaster, Fathi el Malt, to the new directorship of malt-making. The final appointment for Foda was placing Muhammad Ramses 'Awad, who had been in charge of the brewery's cellars, as the new director of beer-making.¹²⁵ With these appointments, Foda essentially elevated the Egyptians who had served as the heads of old departments to new directorships. Beyond not upsetting the hierarchy in the company, these appointments also allowed Foda to draw on the experience of men who had been with the company for many years.

Having experienced people on the board may also have been a counterbalance against the other four members on the board, who all sat in elected positions. While it is not clear who exactly was eligible to vote in these elections, it was most likely the members of the company union. The results appear to bear this out, as only one of the four elected board members, Ihab Shamaa', had served in any leadership position previously. Prior to being elected as the assistant director of beer-making, he had served as the head of fermentation under Ulenberg. As for the other three, Ghattas Hanna Ghattas was elected to the board as the head of the warehouses, Hussein Ahmed Muhammad Mani was elected as the head of the car workshop in Giza, and Galal Ahmad Rutan was elected as the head machinist at the factory in Alexandria.¹²⁶

This board represented the culmination of the government-led takeover of the beer industry. Not only did a handpicked representative sit at the top of the company, but also, the board embodied the government's demographic vision for the country. The entire board was composed of Egyptians. Perhaps unsurprisingly considering the regime's rhetoric, only two out of the nine members of the new executive board, Alber Farag and Ghattas Hanna Ghattas, were Christians. The rest, and the overwhelming seven-out-of-nine majority, were Muslims. Not only were all the "foreign" elements eliminated or outnumbered, but the Egyptian collaborators were sidelined as well. Even masters of industry like Ahmad Farghaly were absent from the board. And again, for personal reasons relating to the government's prior treatment of his family's property, the board's most powerful member, Foda, was subservient to the government as well. Thus the nationalization and consolidation created a board and workforce loyal to the regime. The board's subservience derived from the fact their continued employment was entirely reliant on the whims of the government and its

leader, Nasser. The workforce was loyal because they had been given unprecedented power, wages, and job security.

Dealing with the Dutch

Although the “foreign” elements had all been purged from the executive, the nationalization of the breweries did not mark the end of the relationship between the Dutch and Egyptian brewing. As I will show, due to both Dutch desire and the Egyptian government’s prodding, the relationship between the two countries’ brewing industries lasted until the mid-1970s. The government’s sequestration of Pyramid in 1961 signaled a new era in Egyptian brewing, but it was the government’s sequestration of Crown later that year that confirmed that the situation would never be the same. When the news of Crown’s sequestration reached Holland, Wittert conceded that Cobra and Heineken’s influence beyond the technical level was “0.0.”¹²⁷ As was true of all developments in the beer industry in Egypt after 1957, there was no better observer of this than Kettner.

Despite Kettner’s long track record with the company, upon the sequestration of Pyramid, he was immediately marginalized. He was removed from his post as managing director and assigned the role of consultant.¹²⁸ What this actually meant on the ground was something quite different than what he was expecting, as Kettner notes:

But to return to my office roles these are, as mentioned, minimal. The only regular contact I have takes place during weekly management meetings. Beyond that, Foda never consults me and I do not give unsolicited advice except during said meetings in the general discussions. Neither does [Alber] Farag come to me to ask for my opinion.¹²⁹

This total marginalization was quite a change from the elevated position that Kettner was accustomed to. Nevertheless, the Nasser led-government's policy initiatives meant there was no other way for the business to operate. Despite his well-demonstrated expertise, Kettner was the embodiment of the foreign capitalist exploiting Egypt.

Kettner did not succumb easily to these changes. His refusal to be sidelined is most obvious in a letter he sent to Dr. Foda in January 1962. In it, he expresses his worry that the significant gains that the company made in the years between 1958 and 1961 would be undone by the company's unwillingness to hire any new staff or upgrade the machinery as Heineken had planned.¹³⁰ As Kettner noted, the companies' machinery, especially the cooling system, was struggling to handle the increased demand, and without the planned changes, the brewery was likely to run into severe technical issues. However, Kettner also conceded that no matter what he, Cobra, and Heineken said, their roles were purely advisory. He noted this lack of control in order to exculpate himself and the rest of the Dutch from what he saw as the inevitable trouble facing the breweries, noting that, "In all those circumstances where our advice has not been followed, the responsibility for the consequences does not lie with us or our representatives in Egypt."¹³¹

Kettner was especially perturbed by one of the first moves Dr. Foda made after taking control of the two companies. The Nasser-led government, in a bid to gain greater revenue from the companies, and perhaps also to atone for the government's ownership of the beer companies, raised the excise tax on beer to six Egyptian pounds per hectoliter in 1962.¹³² The government's move put Foda in an unenviable position. Not only did he have no say in the tax increase, but he could also not raise the price of beer to reflect the tax increase without attaining government approval.

Nevertheless, Kettner believed that Foda was failing in his duties as his replacement by not pushing to raise the price of beer.¹³³ Kettner's justification for the price hike was that the six-pound excise tax was one of the highest in the world. Not only that, but when the government had carried out a similar move with cigarettes, the cigarette companies were able to raise their prices. Kettner viewed a one-pound per large bottle increase as completely fair and unlikely to have any negative effect on the consumer.¹³⁴ However, if the breweries were unable to respond to this excise tax with a complimentary increase in price, the shareholders and employees of the company would suffer, and the company itself might not be able to finance the continuing extension plans.¹³⁵ Kettner also noted, in another letter he sent to Foda, that the government would lose precious tax income without a price increase. Kettner reminded Foda that he also had precedent to act without government approval. The governors of Aswan and Assiout had increased the price of beer without prior approval.¹³⁶

Kettner met with Foda several times about this issue, but it did not seem that the Egyptian wanted his advice. Foda even justified his refusal to act to Kettner by noting that the price increases in Assiut and Aswan would soon be overturned. However, in February of 1962, Foda announced that he would increase the price once the breweries officially came under the control of the GCFI. Kettner was, of course, a bit peeved that Foda had decided on the price increase after rebuffing him so many times.¹³⁷

Besides lobbying for a price increase, Kettner was also in negotiations with Foda on the matter of a technical contract between Heineken/Cobra and the Egyptian breweries. The technical contract was an agreement that was meant to formalize the relations between Heineken/Cobra and the Egyptian breweries after nationalization. In

essence, it laid out what Heineken and Cobra would offer the Egyptian government in services and what the Egyptian government would offer Heineken and Cobra in payment.

Although there was a technical contract put in place upon sequestration, Heineken, the Egyptian government, and Dr. Foda agreed to negotiate a new technical contract after the conglomeration of the two beer companies. For Heineken, contracting with a hostile government with very different ideas for the future of the beer industry was their only option. Otherwise, they risked the possibility that another company would come into Egypt and capitalize on the more than twenty years of work they put in to grow a customer base in Egypt.¹³⁸ For the Egyptian government, on the other hand, dealing with a foreign company was the path of least resistance to ensure that its new property remained profitable and useful.

The text from a proposed technical agreement clearly lays out what each side was looking for in the relationship. The Egyptian government was using its strong negotiating position to try to extract as much as it could from Heineken. It sought to reify Heineken's position as a broker with foreign companies for raw materials and machines. This meant recommending companies that the brewery should buy from, and also pressuring those companies to replace faulty or insufficient products they supplied. The government also demanded the right to purchase these materials from third parties not recommended by Heineken, although they still wanted to have the Dutch company approve those materials and machines.¹³⁹ The Egyptian government was especially keen to hold on to the "secrets" of Heineken. It wanted the Dutch company to continue to provide the breweries with Heineken's proprietary strain of yeast free of charge.¹⁴⁰ Beyond the proprietary yeast, the Egyptian government also wanted Heineken to continue enforcing their particular way of malting and brewing

on the breweries. As the government said, they wanted the Dutch brewers to provide “the special and secret treatments for obtaining beer and malt of high quality.”¹⁴¹ As for the final product, the government wanted Heineken to continue in its position as adviser on quality control. This meant that Heineken should continue frequently testing the quality of the product and sending engineers to analyze the work of the companies. The Egyptian government even wanted Heineken to train employees of the two breweries in Holland and for the Dutch brewery to pay all the fees they incurred.

As for Heineken, the biggest incentive for negotiating was the right to be the exclusive technical advisor to every brewery, malt house, and soft drink company in Egypt, including extant and future operations. Finally, the Egyptian government agreed not to disclose any of the technical information that Heineken provided.¹⁴² Beyond these stipulations, the Egyptian government would also remunerate the Dutch brewer. While the exact terms were not agreed upon, the breweries were to pay Heineken all their profits over and above the costs. The sum would be paid in Dutch currency, or if there was not enough available, in malt.¹⁴³

One of the key points of disagreement between the two sides involved the role that Gutsavus Ulenberg, the head brewmaster, would continue to play in the operations in Egypt. The government allowed Ulenberg to stay on after nationalization as the director of brewing in Egypt because he was much less visible than Kettner and much more central to the brewing operations. However, it was not clear what his future with the company would be. Kettner tried to map out that future in discussions with Dr. Foda. Kettner relayed the results of these discussions in a letter to Ulenberg. In the letter, Kettner stated that Ulenberg’s role would remain unchanged as the production manager. He would still be associated with the company,

and he would be required to produce a “first class product.”¹⁴⁴ More specifically, he would be tasked with the six following jobs:

- 1) Specifying in a timely manner to the sequesterator (Dr. Foda) the need for land and excipients (preservatives or anything added to help the beer), as he had done previously.
- 2) Identifying deficiencies in the technical equipment to the chief engineer, stating the date on which this issue should be remedied without running a risk to quality.
- 3) In consultation with the chief engineer, drafting of the maintenance program.
- 4) Providing for staff and identifying whether their requirements are met.
- 5) Supervision of the laboratory.
- 6) Correspondence with Holland on brewing practices and other technical matters.¹⁴⁵

While this move may at first appear to be an example one Dutchman looking out for another, in fact it was Kettner's last play at relevance. As we see from a letter Wittert later sent to Kettner, he had overstepped his bounds. While Wittert recognized that Kettner may have been trying to give Ulenberg strength or solace, he was actually doing more harm than good.¹⁴⁶

In Wittert's eyes, Kettner's only role, which he made clear in several letters, was to serve as the liaison between Heineken and the Egyptian government. Beyond that, Wittert van Hoogland wanted Kettner to fully recuse himself from any of the day-to-day happenings of the brewery. His meetings with Foda on the price of beer and the role of Ulenberg as well his insistence on receiving daily reports on the status of the brewery were all unnecessary and unwanted. Wittert's commands to Kettner were part of his larger plan for extricating Heineken from Egypt. As Wittert saw it, the Egyptian government was quite satisfied with the status quo after sequestration. As such, the Egyptian government would stall negotiations indefinitely, in hopes of receiving the technical advice of Ulenberg, who was still living and working in Egypt,

without paying a penny “in the form of technical compensation, pension premiums, to say nothing of dividends” to Heineken or Cobra.¹⁴⁷

Wittert conceded that he and Heineken were also not willing to go the other route, selling a portion of their shares and leaving a technical advisor to keep “a finger in the pie.”¹⁴⁸ Having witnessed what had happened to the Pilavachis made them extra cautious. He and Heineken had something else in mind. The Dutch side would go silent in the negotiations on the technical contract and eventually break them off. This break would allow them to maintain their rights as the majority shareholders of both Crown and Pyramid, if there ever came a day where the ruling regime of Egypt normalized its relationships with the West.¹⁴⁹ With this plan in mind, it was absolutely essential for Kettner to stay quiet and minimize his role, lest he reveal the true intentions of Heineken. After a period of quiet, Wittert assured Kettner that he could exit the country without issue or complaint from the government.¹⁵⁰ Likewise, Wittert and Heineken needed Kettner’s silence in order to ensure that Ulenburg would also be able to leave the country without issue.

Kettner’s response was rather fractious considering Wittert’s position as his superior. Kettner argued that Wittert’s criticism of his decision to talk to Foda about the price of beer, albeit mild, was “frankly incomprehensible.”¹⁵¹ In Kettner’s view, how could he possibly “show his face again” in Holland if he had not raised his voice against administrative incompetence that would cost the shareholders nearly 200,000 pounds per year? Should he, as the representative of the largest shareholders in the company, have sat on his hands as the Egyptian government robbed the company of its money? He hoped that Wittert’s accusations were not in earnest, but rather a way to test his “fighting spirit.”¹⁵² As for his advice to Ulenberg, he felt completely justified. Not only was he Ulenberg’s former superior, but the demands of both Foda and

Heineken had left Ulenberg unclear of his role in the company. In addition, he had made it very clear to Ulenberg that if he received a letter from Heineken, he should follow the directions contained within, rather than the advice of Kettner.

As for Wittert's plans for him and for Heineken's future in Egypt, Kettner was completely on board. He was fully prepared to leave Egypt, and conditions were lining up for his departure. His residence permit was expiring, and in order to renew it, he had to provide a reason for staying. Because he was no longer an administrator on the board of Pyramid, the only valid pretext for his continued residence was to present himself as an official representative of Cobra or Heineken in Egypt.¹⁵³ However, considering Wittert's plan, making this claim made very little sense. Thus, Kettner would tender his resignation to Foda.

Kettner was further convinced of the appropriateness of his resignation because, in his eyes, the brewery was descending into greater disorganization with Foda at the helm. The intrigues and mutual distrust that Kettner was so keen on fighting in his tenure as the managing director were, in his words, "rampant."¹⁵⁴ Kettner did not believe that Foda was long for the position, if the current state continued. He believed that the company needed an expert, like himself, to run it. Unfortunately, as Kettner noted, there was "every reason for these types" to stay away from the brewery, as they would not take kindly to giving unheeded advice and then being blamed when the brewery did not succeed.¹⁵⁵ Thus, he came to believe that Heineken should accept whatever plan the government put forth and agree to serve in an advisory role to the GCFI. This course of action was the only way to get out while minimizing the losses.

Although the departures of the last Heineken element from Egypt were all but decided by March 1962, they did not take place until May 1962. This delay was due to the fact that even in the act of resignation, the Egyptian government held control. Specifically, all departures had to be approved by Dr. Foda. In addition, all outstanding debts and payments had to be settled with the Egyptian authorities. Only then did the government grant an exit visa. Although it took Kettner a significant amount of time to settle his account with the Egyptian government, Dr. Foda eventually accepted his resignation and departure.

However, Dr. Foda was not as conciliatory with Ulenberg, as his departure from Egypt became a serious bone of contention between the Dutch and the Egyptian. This turn of events came as a shock to the Dutch because it appeared initially that Foda was fully behind the move. Foda had even committed to paying the full travel expenses for Ulenberg's departure. However, after the initial appearance of support, Dr. Foda made "an about face."¹⁵⁶ Heineken could not figure out why Dr. Foda had taken this position because it appeared to go against the interests of the breweries and the Egyptian government. If it was an attempt at intimidation, Heineken believed that they could take a strong stand. First, they understood that the breweries and the Egyptian government would like the technical support of Heineken to continue "at all costs."¹⁵⁷ In addition, Egypt was looking for international loans. Thus, any international incident could possibly endanger their chances of receiving help from other Western countries. Heineken conjectured that Dr. Foda was acting on his own accord. In their eyes, his actions were a poor attempt to make sure that the relationship between the breweries and Heineken continued when they became part of the GCFI.¹⁵⁸ Regardless, Heineken was able to extract Ulenberg and Kettner from the country in the summer of 1962.

For Ulenberg, this was the end of his tenure in Egypt, but not his relationship with the brewery. In 1964, he would visit the brewery as a representative for Cobra/Heineken to make a technical assessment of the brewery. This visit was part of a larger tour of breweries he made for Cobra. For example, he would also carry out a technical evaluation of a brewery in Australian New Guinea.¹⁵⁹ Thus, Ulenberg slid from his position in Egypt back into the world beer empire of Heineken/Cobra. Kettner, however, did not reintegrate so easily back into the Cobra/Heineken world. Heineken wrote him in January 1963, stating that they were unable to find a “suitable” position for him within the company. As a result, they were giving him a severance package of fifty thousand dollars. The board expressed regret, but affirmed that they had tried as hard as they could to find a position that would be in some way connected to what he did in Cairo. Unfortunately, no position existed for him. Thus, his years of work in Egypt assured him nothing except a generous severance package. One wonders whether Heineken’s failure to find a position for Kettner had anything to do with his difficult, imperious personality.

Although the last vestiges of their control on the ground had disappeared, Heineken and Cobra’s relationship continued with the breweries and the Egyptian government. In 1964, they finally signed a new technical contract for a period of five years. As part of the agreement, the conglomerated breweries could request a technical advisor from Heineken. However, they never took the Dutch brewery up on that provision. Rather, the relationship was much more distant than during the time of Kettner. The most probable reason for the distance was the heated debate among the entities over the remuneration for the nationalization of Heineken’s interest in the two companies.

According to Law 82 of 1961, when foreign companies were nationalized, the foreign stockholders were paid for the stock they lost. The dispute between Heineken and the Egyptian government was over what stock price should be used when calculating what the Egyptian government owed foreign investors. The Egyptian government claimed that it was the price of the stock in the Egyptian exchange on the day of its nationalization. While this may seem to be a reasonable way to determine the value of a share, Heineken argued otherwise. They claimed the Egyptian government's sequestration of the beer companies' assets in 1961 before nationalization had driven down the price of the stock, and thus, the price of the stock on the exchange was not an accurate reflection of Heineken's investment in the company.¹⁶⁰ This impasse was a common feature of the post-1963 Egyptian economy. So common was such a dispute, in fact, that there was a permanent committee delegated with arbitrating them, called the Permanent Committee for Negotiation of Compensation. The two sides finally came to an agreement in 1970, in which Heineken would be paid seven Egyptian pounds per share, which Heineken considered close enough to the pre-sequestration share price of ten Egyptian pounds.¹⁶¹ Perhaps not coincidentally, the thawing of the relations between the foreign company and the Egyptian government took place in the very year that Nasser died.

A Lasting Impact

Although the departure of Kettner was rather unceremonious considering the duration he had spent working for Pyramid, the Dutch involvement that he represented in the Egyptian beer industry had a lasting cultural impact. A testament to his work there was the penetration of Stella beer into the Egyptian market. By 1974, an estimated five million of the thirty-five million Muslims in Egypt consumed beer,

most of which was sold by the Al-Ahram Brewing Company.¹⁶² While we cannot be sure of the veracity of these numbers, it surely gives a sense of how significant Stella beer's presence was in Egyptian culture.

As Chapter 7 showed, by the 1960s, advertising campaigns had helped to make beer the young Egyptian's choice for a party beverage, perfect for warm days and nights on summer vacations. The image Stella beer exuded was one of youth, sociability, and refreshment. This image continued during and after nationalization and sequestration. One particularly notable example comes, again, from a cinematic adaptation of an Ihsan Abd el-Quddus story, *Al-Naddara al-Sawda* (*The Dark Glasses*, 1963). The film revolves around another "bad" girl, Madiha, nicknamed Maddy (played by Nadia Lutfi), and her relationship with 'Umar (Ahmad Mazhar) as they both struggle with finding love and happiness in Nasserite Cairo. Beer makes a cameo in their love affair when Maddy brings 'Umar to the pool of the social club that she frequents. As she introduces 'Umar to all of her friends using their nicknames, we see the young crowd wearing bathing suits and sitting around a table with beer bottles upon it.

'Umar, who is a conscientious and serious factory manager, is visibly put off by the lighthearted attitudes of her friends. This dichotomy between the serious and the trivial is a major theme in the film, and one that both Maddy and 'Umar struggle with. In the pool scene, the beer bottles, like the nicknames and the pool, are part and parcel of the fun and triviality of Maddy's life. They sit in opposition to the classicist literature that 'Umar reads—Balzac, Shaw, Checkov, Ahmad Shawqi, and Taha Hussein—and the social consciousness he shows by visiting infirmed factory workers.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, beer still carried the same association: youth, fun, and refreshment.

The message of refreshment would have a permanence that far outlasted Kettner and the Dutch influence on the Egyptian beer industry. For example, in a 1972 advertisement for non-alcoholic Stella, reads

Stella Beer

Non-Alcoholic

Refreshing and Reinvigorating

Always Fresh and Pure.¹⁶⁴

Although Pyramid had discussed producing a non-alcoholic beer in 1949, al-Ahram Beverages only started production of it in the 1970s in response to the rising tide of Islamic religiosity in the country.¹⁶⁵ Thus, even when the company branched out into non-alcoholic beers, they held firmly to fresh and refreshing aspects of their beer. In fact, there is very little in the advertisement to suggest that the beer was non-alcoholic outside of the bottle, which had the words, *bidūn kaḥūl* (non-alcoholic) on the label beneath the Stella name. The image of the frothy glass of beer on the left side of the advertisement could easily have been lifted from an advertisement for regular Stella.¹⁶⁶ As I have discussed above, this repurposing would not have been difficult, as Stella in the 1960s had transcended its position as solely an alcoholic beverage and had come to be seen, especially among middle and upper-class Egyptians, as a refreshing summertime beverage.



All of this is not to say, however, that nationalization and sequestration did not change the place of Stella Beer in Egyptian culture. One significant index of that change comes from an English novel published in 1964, called *Beer in the Snooker Club*. Written by a previously unknown Anglophone Copt named Waguih Ghali, it tells the story of Ram, “a Francophone, British-educated Copt” as he struggles with his trans-cultural identity.¹⁶⁷ As should be obvious from the title, beer has some role to play in his internal struggle. The clearest example of this role relates to a concoction, a sort of cocktail, that Ram makes and calls “Draught Bass.” While its name was taken from the English beer, Bass, it had very little in common with that beer, as it obvious from Ram’s recipe for it:

I opened two bottles of Egyptian Stella beer and poured them into a large tumbler, then beat the liquid until all the gas had escaped. I then

added a drop of vodka and some whisky. It was the nearest we could get to Draught Bass.¹⁶⁸

This cocktail, one literary critic has suggested, was “as much as a symbol of Nasser’s Egypt, as of the characters’ divided sympathies.”¹⁶⁹ Further, Ram’s mixing of constituent alcohols represents his desire to eschew “the English brew and the prefabricated cultural hegemony it represents” to produce “a more complex construction of himself influenced by, but not a product of, England.”¹⁷⁰ However, Ram’s use of Stella goes beyond merely its identification as an Egyptian beer. The violence he performs on it, as well as its centrality to his concoction, represents his complicated relationship with this product.

This novel came out at a time when Stella was the only beer that an Egyptian could buy on the open market. As *the* beer of Egypt, it did not hold the same allure that a drink like Bass did. It was a semi-luxury product, one that was easily accessible, but because of its long cultural history, not devoid of meaning. The beer was not as luxurious as Bass, and its consumption did not connect its drinker to another world of the imagination, namely,

The world of intellectuals and underground metros and cobbled streets and a green countryside... The world where students had rooms, and typists for girl-friends, and sang songs and drank beer in large mugs... A whole imaginary world.¹⁷¹

Nevertheless, Stella had such hegemony over the beer market in Egypt that it was still central to the life that Ram wanted to live. For example, when he goes to a club to swim at the pool, he drinks a cold Egyptian beer with lunch.¹⁷² Then, another time at the club in Egypt, he gets the urge for a beer:

I felt like having a cold beer and eating salted peanuts; then a cigarette and another beer and more peanuts. I could do it, of course, even though I had no money. But I knew the pattern too well; the depression afterwards and the self-disgust.¹⁷³

In both instances, the temperature of the beer is central to its description. This description shows how as much as he would like to transcend it, both Ram and Ghali were attuned to the pleasures of a cold Stella on a warm Egyptian day by the pool or in the club.

The relationship that the fictional character Ram had with Stella paralleled the one that the author Waguih Ghali had with the Nasser regime. Ghali was conflicted: he supported the socialist, anti-colonial platform of Nasser, but he was also a strong opponent of its repressive policies, including its curtailment of political expression.¹⁷⁴ Stella beer was an ideal commodity to embody this dilemma: the regime produced it after the beer companies' nationalization, and yet it had become so central to lives of a certain class of Egyptians that its cultural value was able, in many respects, to transcend this or any regime.

The changing role of beer was also on display in the film adaption of an Ihsan Abd el-Quddus story, called *Abi Fawq al-Shajara (Father's Up a Tree, 1968)*. The last film to feature one of Egypt's most famous singers and actors, Abdel Halim Hafez, *Father's Up a Tree*, tells the story of the moral rise and fall of 'Adil, a young Egyptian male student. The main driver of the story is 'Adil's love for a girl named Amal. Although she reciprocates the feeling, she is unwilling to spend time alone with 'Adil out of her own sense of propriety. Amal's repeated rebuffing of 'Adil's demands for alone-time of the kind that, he claims, lots of other young men and women were having, leads 'Adil to fall in with the "wrong" crowd.

‘Adil first meets the “wrong” crowd—where else?—on the beach. Beer plays a central role in this critical moment of the film. As ‘Adil jogs out of the water onto the beach, the camera frames him and an unidentified hand, its owner otherwise obscured by a beach umbrella, emptying a green bottle into a glass embossed with the famous Stella star. Signaling the imminent danger, the music shifts from playful to ominous as we watch the hand perfectly pour the beer. When ‘Adil reaches the umbrella, the camera reveals a group of four young men drinking and having fun. After exchanging English “hellos,” one of the young men asks ‘Adil if he would like a sip. He says, “No thank you, I don’t drink.” They all burst out laughing when they hear his response. They invite ‘Adil out to party with them, but he turns them down.

The short conversation is filled with laughter and jokes. After ‘Adil excuses himself from their presence, they make fun of him for not coming out. ‘Adil then meets one of his friends, who ask him how he knows the group of “guys,” a leading question meant to signal that the friend does not trust the group. ‘Adil assures his friend that the men have *damm khafif* (Arabic, a sense of humor, lit. light blood). He states that they meet everything in the world with a sense of humor and are willing to try anything. His friend warns ‘Adil to stay away from them, saying that it is obvious to him that they are not good people.

After a couple of encounters between ‘Adil and Amal, where ‘Adil lays out what he wants from Amal and meets only rejection, ‘Adil decides to make a change. Instead of going to the beach where ‘Amal and the rest of his social group (*al-shilla*) hang out, he joins the “wrong” crowd for a party on another beach. Their beach party is rowdy and alcohol-infused. The scene opens with the leader of the gang, Ashraf (Samir Sabri), guzzling a whole large bottle of beer as the beer spills all over his chest and face. There is music and dancing, and beer is central to the party. One partygoer

dips his sandwich in his beer and then eats it. Another couple dances while they balance a beer bottle between their foreheads. At first, 'Adil observes on the sidelines, but then Ashraf comes over and pours him a beer. 'Adil asks him what he is pouring, and when Ashraf responds, "beer," 'Adil states, again, that he does not drink. Ashraf goads him to "just try it." When he does, he immediately spits it out. Ashraf encourages him to try it again and pours him some more. While he pours, he says to 'Adil, "Look, this here (points at the beer) *fāṭha shahiya* (awakens your appetite) and when you drink it you will have a night that you will never forget."

True to Ashraf's words, the group transitions from the wild beach scene to a cabaret. There they continue to drink beer and have a wild night watching the dancer Fardos (Nadia Lutfi). 'Adil meets Fardos, who has taken a liking to him, and they eventually start drinking whisky together. From here, the plot takes 'Adil and Fardos, now lovers, to Beirut. 'Adil's father, worried by his son's actions, travels to Lebanon, only to fall into the "libertine charms of Beirut."¹⁷⁵ Eventually, son and father meet, come to their senses, and leave Beirut together. The movie ends with 'Adil reuniting with Amal, who has abandoned her "old ways." The film ends with the two "running then embracing and kissing numerous times, silhouetted by the setting sun."¹⁷⁶

This film, which was a "smash success," tells us a great deal about Stella beer's role after nationalization. In this film, beer still carried its association with youth, refreshment, beaches, and summer. It also had achieved an association with the medicinal properties that advertisers had been attributing to it. As Ashraf noted, it really "opens up the appetite." However, this phrase, like beer itself, had a double meaning. It was not only an appetite for food, but for sex. In this movie, it was a straight line from 'Adil tasting a beer on the beach to cavorting with a dancer in Beirut. Thus, post-nationalization, beer regained its sense of danger. Yes, it could

refresh, but it could also lead to intoxication and poor decision-making. Still, it was only a “gateway” drink. When ‘Adil really starts to veer off the righteous path, he eschews beer for hard liquor. This positioning of beer as a gateway drug for friends gathering on a public beach is a reflection of how deeply beer had penetrated Egyptian society, but it was also a sign that beer was developing a more ominous reputation and that attitudes towards it were shifting. After nearly eighty years in the country, beer was no longer a generic and unambiguously negative beverage grouped with all the other alcoholic drinks in the category of “alcohol.” But nor was it the harmless and refreshing soft drink that advertisers tried to portray it as. It was something that could refresh *and* intoxicate, something that could be fun *and* dangerous. By the end of the 1960s, the position of beer in popular Egyptian culture was becoming more complex.

Conclusion

Through the nationalization of Crown and Pyramid Breweries, a process that the business sector was powerless to stop, the Egyptian government achieved the indisputable “Egyptianization” of the country’s beer industry. What this Egyptianization meant in practice was a company devoid of both “foreign” elements and rich indigenous Egyptians who had ties to the business order of the former regime. The Egyptianized beer industry was also one in which the gap in power and wealth between the executive and the workforce was small, and in which operations were ultimately controlled by a Nasser-led government.

The nationalization of companies occurred not by means of police raids and arrests, but through polite letters and high-level negotiations. These outward expressions of decorum masked the forceful maneuverings of a government that was determined to wrest control over the economic system by pushing individuals like

Kettner and Farghaly out of the way. Yet Heineken, the multinational beer conglomerate, pushed back to the extent that it could, fighting well into the 1970s for the value of its nationalized shares—a fact that suggests, again, how protracted nationalization was in practice. The beer industry that remained after that process found itself docile, beholden to Nasser’s regime and its quest for a self-sufficient and self-assured Egypt. Nevertheless, the continuing high demand for Stella in Egypt testified to the cultural history of beer in Egypt, which had been shaped by the work of Dutchmen and their associates in Egypt.

¹ Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islamism and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 9.

² “Letter from Erick Karl Kettner (henceforth, EK) to O. A. E. E. L. Wittert van Hoogland (henceforth, WvH),” 29 December 1960, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland als administrateur-delegue en Kettner als administrateur van Les Pyramides, 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-Archives of Heineken NV (henceforth, AH), Stadsarchief Amsterdam (henceforth, SAA).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Elie Podeh and Onn Winckler, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Nasserism : Revolution and Historical Memory in Modern Egypt* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).

⁶ Ibid.19

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “Letter from EK to WvH,” 29 December 1960, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland ..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834- AH, SAA.

¹² Ibid., and “Letter from EK to WvH,” 29 September 1958, “Letter from EK to WvH,” 29 December 1960, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland ..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834- AH, SAA.

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¹⁵ Ibid.

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- ²¹ "Appointing a Consultant Engineer for the Bahtim Factory Project," NL-SAA-191356, "Letter from EK to WvH," 29 December 1960, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland ..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834- AH, SAA.
- ²² Report on the Visit to the Société de Bière "Les Pyramides", S.A.E. Cairo by Drs. G.L.Rinkel from January 12th-until 15th 1961, p.2, NL-SAA-191247, 1086-Reisrapporten inzake Noord-Afrika: Egypte en Soedan, -2.2.9.2.5 Afrika, 834-AH, SAA.
- ²³ "Letter from EK to WvH," 29 December 1960, NL-SAA-191356, "Letter from EK to WvH," 29 December 1960, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland ..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834- AH, SAA.
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- ²⁸ Ibid.
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- ³¹ Ibid.
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- ³⁴ Elie Podeh and Onn Winckler, "Introduction", in *Rethinking Nasserism*, 15.
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- ³⁷ Relli Shechter, "The Cultural Economy of Development in Egypt: Economic Nationalism, Hidden Economy and the Emergence of Mass Consumer Society during Sadat's *Infītah*," *Middle East Studies* 44(2008): 574.
- ³⁸ "Letter from EK to WvH," 18 June 1961, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland ..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.
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- ¹⁴¹ Ibid.
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- ¹⁴⁴ “EK to Gerardus Hubertus Ulenberg,” 14 February 1962, NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland ..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-AH, SAA.
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- ¹⁶⁰ “Letter from Albert Tager and Raymond Shumek to the General Director of the Department of Companies,” DWQ, MS, 3019- 5505-0009, *Sharikat Birat al- Ahram*.
- ¹⁶¹ “Letter from the Royal Netherlands Embassy to Zakaria Tewfik,” 27 January 1970, NL-SAA-191358, 1187- Stukken betreffende de sequestratie en daarna nationalisatie van Les Pyramides door de Egyptische overheid, alsmede betreffende schadeloosstelling en de affaire Maitre Delenda- 2.2.10.3, Afrika, 834-AH, SAA.
- ¹⁶² “Letter from Nicholas Mamatis to Direction Générale de la Amstel,” NI-SAA-191358, 1187- Stukken betreffende de sequestratie en daarna nationalisatie van Les

Pyramides door de Egyptische overheid, alsmede betreffende schadeloosstelling en de affaire Maitre Delenda- 2.2.10.3, Afrika, 834-AH, SAA.

¹⁶³ Joel Gordon, *Revolutionary Melodrama: Popular Film and Civic Identity in Nasser's Egypt* (Chicago: Middle East Document Center, 2002), 146.

¹⁶⁴ *Ruz al-Yusuf* 17 July 1972.

¹⁶⁵ Jonkheer Pieter Feith, "Reisrapport," November /December 1949, 11, typed, NL-SAA-191146, 1098-Reisrapporten van Jhr. P.R. Feith inzake het Midden en Verre Oosten (Egypte, Singapore, Australië, Indonesië, Soedan, Papua Nieuw-Guinea en Italië) 2.2.9.2.7-Azië en het Midden-Oosten, 834-AH, SAA; Galal Amin, *Whatever Happened to the Egyptians?* (Cairo, American University in Cairo, 2000), 31-45.

¹⁶⁶ *Ruz al-Yusuf* 17 July 1972.

¹⁶⁷ Deborah A. Starr, "Drinking, Gambling, and Making Merry: Waguih Ghali's search for cosmopolitan agency," *Middle Eastern Literatures*, Vol. 9, No. 3, December 2006: 271.

¹⁶⁸ Waguih Ghali, *Beer in the Snooker Club* (New York: New Amsterdam, 1987), 17.

¹⁶⁹ Starr, "Drinking, Gambling, and Making Merry, 276.

¹⁷⁰ Starr, "Drinking, Gambling, and Making Merry, 276.

¹⁷¹ Ghali, *Beer in the Snooker Club*, 55.

¹⁷² Ghali, *Beer in the Snooker Club*, 141.

¹⁷³ Ghali, *Beer in the Snooker Club*, 131

¹⁷⁴ Starr, "Drinking, Gambling, and Making Merry, 271.

¹⁷⁵ Joel Gordon, *Revolutionary Melodrama: Popular Film and Civic Identity in Nasser's Egypt* (Chicago: Middle East Document Center, 2002), 124

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Chapter 9: Conclusion

You know, without doubt, every group of people needs a distraction. For example, there's *arak* in Turkey and Lebanon. We wish for beer to become the popular drink in Egypt. It is my pleasure to inform you that it was the ancient Egyptians who first manufactured beer.¹

These words were spoken by an employee of Pyramid Brewery, Isma'il Hafez, to the president of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, in 1960. The context of the remark was a conversation between the two men at the Agricultural and Industrial Production Fair in Cairo on January 3, 1960. To read this passage in the context of Egypt today, where conservative Muslim piety exerts a strong force in public culture, where beer no longer enjoys wide public visibility and acceptability, and where sales of nonalcoholic beer-like beverages have been soaring, Hafez's claims sound unrealistic or even delusional. However, when read in the context of 1960s Egypt, the comment makes sense, coming from a businessman who expected to see the nation's beer industry enjoy sustained growth and who believed that there was no reason why beer could not become an ever-more popular commodity among a diverse array of Egyptian people.

As the preceding chapters have shown, Crown and Pyramid Breweries had by 1970 achieved their goal of making Stella Beer the alcoholic beverage of choice for the large population of Egyptians who drank alcohol. By this date, Stella beer had achieved both a cultural and economic hegemony that would not be challenged until the 1990s. This dissertation, tracing the rise of Stella, has detailed the development of

the Egyptian beer industry, and in so doing, has illuminated the history of debates over what it has meant to be Egyptian, as well as the history of Egyptian business and popular culture.

The growth of the Egyptian beer industry coincided with a period of nationalist ferment in the Egyptian landscape, as diverse thinkers grappled with questions about what it meant or should mean to be Egyptian. This struggle to define Egyptianness seeped into the economic sphere in the form of Egyptian economic nationalism, the belief that Egyptians should run the Egyptian economy. Between 1916 and 1922, institutions like the Sidqi Commission on Commerce and Industry, Bank Misr, and the Egyptian Federation of Industries emerged in response to the calls for a more Egyptian economy. Bank Misr, which was founded and led by Egyptians, seemed to be the example par excellence of Egypt's new economic nationalism. However, as Robert Vitalis has shown, these institutions were still tied intimately to non-Egyptian capital. In the 1920s, economic nationalism was a convenient way to support new ventures and garner public support for the multinational business groups that were forming around certain enterprising Egyptian individuals.² However, beginning in the 1930s and culminating with the Joint Stock Company Law of 1947, the ideals of Egyptian economic nationalism became more of a reality. The law required Egyptian companies (those with major bases in Egypt) "to offer 51 percent of their stock to Egyptians and to place Egyptian nationals on 40 percent of the board seats."³

In the immediate aftermath of the Free Officers coup of 1952, these debates reached a new pitch as the revolutionary regime promoted a nativist vision of Egyptian identity that privileged local Muslims. Through close study of the beer enterprise, and through the struggles between beer company shareholders, trustees,

and executives on the one hand and Egyptian government authorities on the other, one can see how the tug-and-pull over Egyptian identity gained expression within this one sector of the business community. This struggle would persist until the Nasser-led government, dissatisfied with the progress that the private sector was making toward the goal of a self-sufficient Egypt, nationalized large swaths of the private sector in the 1960s, including the two beer companies. This turn toward large-scale nationalization came only five years after the Nasser's regime's first and most famous nationalization, that of the Suez Canal in 1956. As I have shown, the nationalization of the beer companies entailed the transfer of control over Crown and Pyramid to the government, which amounted to their *de facto* and *de jure* Egyptianization.

A History of Egyptianness

The parameters of this struggle over Egyptian identity can only be understood with a firm grasp of the actors caught within it. To map out these actors, it is useful to turn to Will Hanley's study of citizenship in the courts in turn-of-the-century Alexandria. Hanley divides the residents who appeared before the courts into four groups. The first group included the reasonably well-to-do foreign notables secure in Egypt and abroad. The second group covered the poor workers who left Europe to make a living in Egypt. The third included those with European privileges born outside of Europe. The final grouping contained those without foreign status: the locals.⁴ Four similar groupings existed within the beer companies, and in the private sector more broadly, each group affected to varying degrees by the Egyptian government's application of the principles of economic nationalism.

The first grouping comprised those reasonably well-off transnational entrepreneurs, who were secure both in Egypt and abroad. These were men like

Walter Bomonti, Rene Gaston-Dreyfus, and Wittert van Hoogland. To the government, these men were undeniably foreign, having been born abroad and with foreign citizenship, and they made no attempts to change or hide that status. Below them sat those well-to-do or well-connected *mutamaşşirūn*, those “people of foreign origin who had become permanent residents,” and who in their language and habits had become “Egyptianized.”⁵ This group included the Mouratiadis, the Pilavachis, the Nattis, and the Ismaluns and covered those members of the Greek, Italian, and Jewish community who, despite often having foreign citizenship, had a strong connection to the country. The third grouping included all of those workers and laborers whom the government classified as foreign. This group included both the less well-off *mutamaşşirūn* and the workers who had migrated to Egypt to find work. The final group contained those who did not have any foreign status. As Hanley argues, in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Alexandria, the court referred to this group as “locals.” He uses this broad term to refer to the panoply of identities that could be included or classified as “local” in Alexandria. In this study, this last grouping is more accurately called “Egyptian.”

As this study has shown, in the thirty-year period between 1930 and 1960, there was a narrowing of what it meant for an individual and a company to be Egyptian. For the government, an “authentic” Egyptian citizen was the native-born Muslim; that is, one born between Dumyat and Aswan and between Suez and Marsa Matrouh. All others had to “prove” that they were not “foreign.” Generally, native-born Coptic Christians, because of the deep historical roots of their community, were spared from having to prove their Egyptian credentials; however, their loyalty could always be questioned, especially if they had foreign citizenship. For those who were

neither native Coptic Christian nor Muslim, proving one's Egyptianness was difficult, if not impossible.

The government's definition of an individual's Egyptianness was linked to its definition of companies' Egyptianness. The definition of what it meant to an Egyptian company shifted between 1930 and 1960, from being a company that had its main base of operations in Egypt to being a company whose ranks were filled with unambiguously Egyptian managers and workers; with a management and workforce that were narrowly separated in terms of power and wages; and whose executive was under the control of the Egyptian government.

Both of these narrowing processes gradually and disproportionately affected the immigrant and *mutamaşşirūn* workers. These workers did not have a strong network or the money to fight the challenges put forth by the Egyptian government. Thus, if they were unable to acquire government sanction of their citizenship, they were the ones whom companies sacrificed in order to bring their percentages in line. It was only when the Egyptian government nationalized a large part of the private sector and declared all foreigners enemies of the state that well-connected men like Erick Karl Kettner were ultimately excised.

Nevertheless, this nativist legislation, especially that of the Nasser government, did alter the reality of those well-connected transnational entrepreneurs and *mutamaşşirūn*. The legislation transformed everyday disagreements between those with Egyptian status and those with foreign status into nationalist struggles between the "foreign" and the "Egyptian." This legislation also meant that transnational managers and executives, like Kettner, who had a very specific view of how the company should run, were placed in opposition to the Egyptian government,

which sought to empower the Egyptian worker by improving his pay, his quality of life, and his job security.

Ultimately, these transnational entrepreneurs and the *mutamaşşirun* met the same fate that so many below them already had. With the mass nationalizations of 1961, the Nasser-led government pursued an aggressive program aimed at the full Egyptianization of industry in Egypt. This “Egyptianization” went beyond ensuring that everyone who worked in the companies had an Egyptian passport. It entailed the excising of all “foreign” elements and those Egyptians who, in the eyes of the government, had used their financial position to exploit the country. Tied to that, Egyptianizing also encompassed removing those businessmen with Egyptian status, like Ahmad Farghaly, whom the government deemed to be exploiters, and placing the entire industry under the control of the government. In short, this dissertation has argued that in the post-1952 economy, when it came to defining Egyptianness, the government’s imagined Egyptian was the native-born, non-elite, Muslim man, and its imagined Egyptian company was one whose ranks were filled with unambiguous Egyptians, whose management and workforce were narrowly separated in terms of power and wages, and whose executive was under the control of the Egyptian government.

A Social History

As I have shown, the history of beer in Egypt had important economic and political dimensions that were tied to the construction of Egyptian identity among people and corporations alike. That history also had strong cultural dimensions. This study, by examining the consumption of beer as well as the representation of beer in movies, advertisements, novels, and other vehicles of cultural expression, has

highlighted the “native” appeal of beer as an Egyptian commodity. Unlike, for example, vodka in Russia, the history of beer in Egypt was not the story of how a colonial power or government used a beverage to dull the mind of the populace and exploit them.⁶ Nor was it a story of government officials desperately seeking to extirpate the evil of a beverage as backyard brewers and moonshiners stayed one step ahead. Rather, it was a history of a beverage that, amidst social and economic changes and clever advertising, became an integral and mainstream part of Egyptian culture.

This dissertation has told this cultural history of beer by focusing, above all, on the brand known as Stella. It took only thirty years from Stella’s creation in the 1920s, as a joint Pyramid and Crown venture, to become the dominant local brand. Stella reached such a level of cultural penetration that it achieved the ultimate goal of any brand, becoming synonymous with the product that it sold. It would not be an exaggeration to state that after 1950, for a certain class of Egyptians, Stella *was* beer. To say “Ayza Stella” (“I want a Stella”), in colloquial Egyptian Arabic, meant, “I want a beer.” The success of Stella in Egypt as a modern, industrially manufactured product, was built upon the cultural legacy of Egypt’s home-brewed *būza*. *Būza* had deep roots in Egyptian culture: its antecedents date back centuries, perhaps to the Pharoanic era. Egyptians enjoyed the beverage in the privacy of their homes and in social settings like taverns, even if devout Muslims and Christians often frowned upon its consumption.

The years 1897 and 1898 were watersheds in the history of beer in Egypt. This was when a set of Belgian entrepreneurs established Crown Brewery in Alexandria and Pyramid Brewery in Cairo, thereby making beer into an industrially produced commodity. During the pre-World War I period, the two breweries

struggled to build up their clientele in the face of competition from a whole host of foreign beers and other local and foreign alcohols. Fortunately for the breweries, the sale of ice and malt—two auxiliary products of its factories—proved profitable enough to make up for any lag in the sales of beer until the arrival of World War I. It was during this war that the two companies, freed by Egypt’s detachment from the world market, established a profitable business selling beer. Linked to a shared parent company in Brussels, both companies found customers among the heterogeneous expatriate communities in Egypt: Greeks, Italians, Britons, and others who had ventured to Egypt in search of new economic opportunities following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. It soon became clear that the two Belgian beer companies had tapped into another significant pool of customers: native Egyptians.

Specifically, the companies were successful in selling to a developing class of Egyptians called the *effendiya*. This group, like beer itself, had undergone a historical transformation. The first generation of *effendiya*, who had their origins in the Muhammad Ali era in the 1840s of Egypt, were a small group of “new men,” set apart from other Egyptians by their education, their Western manners and dress, and their worldviews.⁷ By the end of the century, the *effendiya* came to represent a “new urban society, new social institutions, and new ways of life,” serving as engineers, doctors, lawyers, journalists, and political activists.⁸ By the time Egypt became semi-independent in 1922, the *effendiya*, the urban office class, came to represent, at least for the liberal nationalists, the perceived middle of Egyptian society. The *effendiya* were the bearers of the national mission, and they were distinct from the *awlād al-balad* (native sons, “the good guys”), the *fellahin*, and the *awlād al-dhawāt* (Arabic, sons of distinction, the “elite”).⁹ In practice, to be an *effendi* was to inhabit a liminal space between the lower and upper classes. They, like the elite, were trained

in the same traditions of secularism, modernism, and liberalism, but their background and financial status kept them separate from that elite.¹⁰

Notwithstanding the historical era, Crown and Pyramid targeted the effendiya in their sales strategy because this was the ideal consumer of their local product. On one hand, alcohol served as the perfect commodity to perform effendi modernity.¹¹ Its consumption achieved a double effect: while linking its Egyptian drinker to the “modern” European, who drank on social occasions, it also separated him from both the non-elite and the religious Egyptian, who viewed alcohol as socially suspect at best or as religious anathema at worst. On the other hand, the effendiya’s consumption was tied somewhat to price because they lacked the financial wherewithal that enabled the Egyptian elite to strictly drink imported alcohol. For these reasons, Stella beer proved to be the ideal beverage for this class: it offered the quality and some of the social capital of foreign alcoholic beverages, while carrying a much more reasonable price. Likewise, because of its effervescence and the beer industry’s mastery of refrigeration techniques, it could be presented, unlike that other cheap beverage, *būza*, as a cool refreshment that was ideally suited to the warm climate of Egypt. It is not surprising, then, that as I have shown, early advertisements for beer in Egypt depicted the Egyptian effendi. Granted, the effendiya was not a monolith. While there were those who found “modernity” at the bottom of a mug of beer, there were others who found it in the total abstention from alcohol. Effendi teetotalers were inspired both by the indigenous tradition of temperance and by the international Christian temperance movement that entered Egypt in the 1880s in the form of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).

These calls for temperance did not present a serious challenge to the profitability or growth of the beer industry at this time. After 1933, Stella beer started

to take off in Egypt. This ascendancy was the result of two factors, the continued growth of the effendi class who consumed the beer, and the entry of one of the world's most successful brewers, Heineken, into the Egyptian market. The Dutch brewers, who took control of Pyramid and bought a large number of Crown shares, did their best to take a rather successful brand in the 1920s and 1930s, Stella, and transform it into the beer of Egypt. As I have shown, they crafted a brand of beer, Stella, that traded on its light golden color, its crisp taste, and its effervescence to make it synonymous with summertime refreshment. The breweries also did their best to portray Stella as a drink of the young and the hip, and as an instant party starter that could break the ice between shy men and women of a certain class. If the cultural productions of Egypt in the 1950s are any indication, the breweries succeeded. They depicted beer not as a harmful intoxicant, but as part of the life of a young, modern, urban Egyptian.

Thus, when the Nasser regime casted its first look at the beer industry, it recognized the value of the product that Crown and Pyramid were selling. While the people selling the beer may have been obstacles to Egypt and its economic progress, the beer that they were selling was not. It had value to the regime as drink that was popular both within Egypt and abroad. Yet even as Gamal Abdel Nasser was ready to recognize Egyptian beer as part of modern Egyptian culture, he saw the beer industry as being ripe for nationalization as part of Egypt's larger push for economic independence and international respect. While Nasser's nationalization and conglomeration of Pyramid and Crown in 1963 marked the full Egyptianization of the beer industry, Stella beer had really been Egyptian for decades. The transformation that came with the government takeover of the beer industry was that Stella changed from being a drink of fun and sun, to being one with a dark and dangerous underside.

It thus became a complex drink for a complex period in Egypt's history, when a great many people were elated by the Nasser regime's creation of a newly self-confident Egypt, but were also troubled by his increasingly authoritarian streak.

An Industrial History

The history of beer in Egypt is also a history of the country's industrialization. Again, before the advent of Pyramid and Crown breweries in the late 1890s, Egyptians were already making a beer-like alcoholic product, *būza*, using an artisanal process that I described as "permeable." That is, due to the nature of the machinery (earthenware containers, reed pipes, palm-leave filters, etc.) and techniques (hand-crafting, lack of sterilization and refrigeration, etc.) used in pre-industrial beverage production, foreign organisms and materials were bound to permeate or enter somewhere in the transition from raw materials to final product, just as materials essential to production were bound to exit. The permeability of the *būza*-making process was an essential feature of this product, and more broadly, was central to the production of alcoholic beverages in Egypt prior to the 1880s. *Būza*'s production did not work if yeast did not enter into the process through a permeable boundary. The permeability of the process not only made the product possible, but also put its production into direct conflict with the "technoscientific ideals" that began to enter Egypt after the arrival of the French in 1798.¹²

Whereas *būza* and the rest of the pre-industrial alcoholic beverages of Egypt were in opposition to these ideals of standardization, efficiency, and reproducibility, industrialized beer was fully in line with them. In the 1890s, as the technologies of beer allowed for greater transportability, and the Egyptian government, under the watch of Sir Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer, was opening the Egyptian market up to

“modern” and European products, the beer industry entered Egypt in the form of Crown Brewery in 1897. However, it would be too simplistic to attribute the arrival of the techniques and technologies for making modern beer to European entrepreneurs “enlightening” the Middle East. Although these Europeans had an integral role in bringing many of these technologies to Egypt, the beer industry only succeeded after it had adapted itself to the environment of Egypt.

All of the Europeans who tried to manufacture beer in Egypt had faith that “total control brewing” would allow them to overcome every obstacle in Egypt. The Europeans assumed that through the assiduous application of the most current techniques and technologies, brewers could produce a standardized and durable product in a timely and cost-efficient manner. This sense of control was especially important in a market like Egypt, which, in the eyes of these entrepreneurs, had not been fully modernized. These entrepreneurs were ultimately misguided in this belief and needed to adapt. It was simply not feasible to produce a beer in Egypt by importing all the materials and making no concessions to the environmental realities of the country. That is part of the reason that it took until World War I for the breweries to find a firm footing in Egypt. The breweries did eventually find a winning formula for the alcoholic beverage business in Egypt, using cutting-edge technological practices to exploit the local advantages of the Egyptian market: primarily cheap labor, plentiful water, a hot and dry climate, and a thirsty population that was eager for a refrigerated product.

Soon after the establishment of the breweries, European entrepreneurs took a great interest in them. First, in the 1920s, the enterprising Swiss Bomontis purchased control of Pyramid, endowing it with their name and linking it to their Istanbul-based beer-making interest. The Bomontis not only kept the breweries current on the latest

in brewing techniques and technologies, but they also established an effective selling partnership between Pyramid and Crown. This partnership—which allowed each of the breweries to focus on one of the two major urban markets in Egypt, Alexandria and Cairo—would be the basis of all later beer-selling operations in Egypt. Rene Gaston-Dreyfus, the French head of another transnational brewing group, followed the Bomontis in his interest in the Egyptian beer market, and he took control of Bomonti-Pyramid in the early 1930s. However, the most significant and most global of the entrants into the Egyptian beer business was Heineken, which sought to add Egypt to its growing multinational beer empire.

It is under Heineken's reign that we can truly see the interaction between “total control brewing” and the reality of the Egyptian environment. Heineken was on the cutting edge of brewing techniques and technologies and did everything in its power to instill those principles in Egypt's breweries. Until the companies' nationalization in 1963, Crown, because of its distance from Cairo, where Heineken chose to be based, proved, inimical to any push to fall in line with Heineken's “modern” methods. They believed that they had figured out how to make and sell beer to the Alexandrian market and generally refused to be cowed by Heineken. Pyramid, on the other hand, opened itself up fully to the Dutch conglomerate, as its managing director from 1938 to 1963 was a Heineken-appointed Dutchman. Nevertheless, the application of the latest techniques and technologies only occurred when they were approved and supported by the locals in the management and the workforce. Although men like Wittert van Hoogland and Erick Karl Kettner believed that the deceitful and indolent locals were in constant need of reform and modernization, they also realized that nothing was accomplished without those locals. Although the management on the ground was oftentimes imperious and adversarial, Heineken worked also to adapt the

best they could to the Egyptian market. One of the great innovations of Egyptian brewing—the adaptation of a strain of barley, beer’s main ingredient, to the Egyptian climate—happened under the watch of a Heineken-trained brewmaster.

Heineken was so committed to producing the highest-quality and most “modern” beer that when Crown and Pyramid breweries underwent the slow transformation from a completely private to a state-controlled enterprise, the Heineken representatives on the ground never forgot about the product. Private correspondence suggests that they may have disliked the working conditions and the fractiousness between the workers and the local members of the executive, but they never stopped caring about the beer they made until they were no longer welcome in Egypt. The Nasser-led government recognized that Heineken brought something special to the equation. When they negotiated with Heineken to hammer out the details of nationalization, the government fought hard to maintain the relationship with Heineken and hold on to their “secrets” for making great beer.

Conclusion

The history of beer in Egypt unfolded during an exciting period for the country, from the late 1890s, when the country was a quasi-colonial state under British occupation, through the 1960s, when the country was a socialist republic trying to assert its independence within a highly competitive global economy. The study ends around 1970, just as Egyptian beer had enjoyed its peak popularity and visibility. What came next, the erasure of beer from the Egyptian public sphere, is another, equally complex story, one that is tied to the massive social changes that took place in Egypt between 1970 and the present. Among those changes was the assertion of a certain kind of Islamic modernism during the regimes of Anwar Sadat (1970–81)

and Husni Mubarak (1981–2011). This post-1970 history of beer is beyond the scope of this study, and yet the early signs of a popular Islamist opposition to beer were already becoming evident in the 1920s and 1930s with the emergence of a Muslim temperance movement. Suffice it to say here that as Islamist ideologies became more widespread and assertive during the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, beer lost its public credibility among vocal segments of the Egyptian Muslim population. Nevertheless, in recent years, the Stella beer company, Al-Ahram Beverage Company, has not been suffering: rather, it has compensated for the relative decline of beer sales by promoting the sale of non-alcoholic, beer-like alternatives. For example, in 1997, Al-Ahram's sales of non-alcoholic beverages, including its non-alcoholic beer offering, *Birell*, and its malt beverage line, *Fairuz*, made up a quarter of its sales.¹³ Although Hafez may never have envisioned the company as such, Al-Ahram is still trying to package beer, even non-alcoholic beer, as the distraction of the Egyptian people.

In the 1950s, a flashing, neon-lit Stella advertisement atop a building in downtown Cairo might have been commonplace. By the 1990s, such a sign would have been unthinkable in Egypt, perceived as an affront to Egypt's sensibilities and to its "culture." To trace the half-century's worth of events that connect these two very different realities, and to situate that half-century within several millennia of Egypt's history, is to tell the economic, political, and cultural history of Egypt at large—viewed entirely through a mug of beer.

¹ "Rapport sur la visite de M. Le Président de la République Gamal Abdel Nasser au stand "Stella" à la Foire de la Production Industrielle et Agricole, lors de son inauguration," January 3rd 1960," NL-SAA-191356, 1978-Correspondentie tussen Wittert van Hoogland..., 4.1.2.4.2.6- Overige brouwerijen buiten Europa, 834-Archives of Heineken NV, Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

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