Informal Colonialism of Egyptology: The French Expedition to the Security State

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The academic discipline of Egyptology emerged in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as Europeans appropriated the knowledges of the Middle East. This article shows how this discipline has been part of coloniality ever since its creation, and how it has subsequently been utilised by Egyptian elites to stabilize their own position. Whereas Arabic scholars had earlier tried to make sense of ancient Egyptian remains, the creation of modern, European-dominated Egyptology coincided with the French expedition or rather invasion of Egypt in 1798. The French military tried to disrupt the British trade route to India (Said 2003) and to acquire colonies in Africa and Asia (Burleigh 2007). The French forces also counted scholars among them. Their mission was to explore Egypt in every conceivable way — to chart its landscapes and monuments. The result was the first scientific survey of Egypt — at least in a European sense. Arabic scholars had been studying ancient Egyptian sites in their own way for centuries.[1] This survey prompted the decipherment of the hieroglyphic script, and the ability to read and understand the Egyptian languages. From 1809, the findings of the expedition were published in the *Description de l'Égypte* by the French *Commission des sciences et arts d'Egypte*. In other words, the genesis of western Egyptology went hand in hand with European imperialism, i.e., colonialism, in the Middle East (Wynn 2007). This also coincides with the creation of modern *Orientalism* (Said 1994; 2003). [2] Since then Europe, or rather the West, has had the hegemony over the study of ancient Egypt.

However, according to Walter Mignolo, *Orientalism* was but the second stage in the creation of modernity or rather the colonial world system understood as epistemological domination by the 'West' along with the subsequent degradation of non-western knowledges and perspectives. In other words, the *local* European history turned into a narrative of global history. Other *local* histories became subaltern. The first step commenced with the colonisation of the Americas, the self-conception of European powers as the 'West' during the course of the sixteenth century as a result, and the subsequent division of the world by the papacy into a western and an eastern hemisphere. *Orientalism* merely resulted out of *Occidentalism* (see Mignolo 2012).

In effect, the production of Egyptological knowledge was firmly based on the colonial matrix of power (or coloniality) and, as a result, knowledge about ancient Egypt was colonial from the start. Coloniality goes beyond mere formal colonialism in that also knowledge is colonised (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2007). In that sense, Egyptological knowledge was very much a part of the colonial matrix of power in its early days, both as a means and as a target of Western policy in the Middle East.

Interestingly, the creation of Western Egyptology coincided with a power shift within the colonial matrix of power. Its centre shifted away from the Iberian Peninsula to France and Britain during the Enlightenment in the late eighteenth century — the second phase of modernity according to Mignolo (2012). The creation of Egyptology also coincided with the first permanent presence of European powers in the Middle East since the Crusades (1095–1291). The colonisation of the Americas helps explain this coincidence. France had lost its colonies in Canada, Acadia, and Newfoundland to Great Britain in the French and Indian War (1754–1763) and the Seven Years War (1756–1763)

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(Anderson 2000). Unable to compete with Britain, Portugal, and Spain in the Americas, the only accessible non-colonised regions lay in India and the Middle East — especially since Africa had not been opened up for European exploitation yet apart from the coastal regions on the way to the Indian subcontinent. Great Britain was already present in India. This led France to attempt to interrupt the British trade routes to India by capturing Egypt and Palestine. France had been pondering an invasion of Egypt since 1774 (Burleigh 2007). This coincides with the loss of the French possessions in continental North America. As Captain Joseph-Marie Moiret of the French expedition stated, 'This new colony would reimburse us for the loss of those that the wiliness of the English had stolen from us in the New World' (quoted after Cole 2007: 18).

Contrary to what was taking place in the Americas, where it was easy for colonial powers to largely destroy the visible and immaterial Amerindian heritage (see Mignolo 1995), the colonial forces of Europe chose to engage the Middle Eastern heritage in a different way. During the Crusades, European powers had tried to transform the Middle East in their own image directly via the Crusader States (Tyerman 2006). Centuries later it was the attempt to transform it by claiming and controlling Middle Eastern heritage. The French campaign realised old European plans to capture Egypt during the Crusades (ibid.). During this time, European empires constructed Egypt as a precursor to Western civilisation and as their natural appendix. French scholars assisted in portraying contemporary Egypt as barbaric and in need of liberation from Mamluk rule (Abul-Magd 2013). Joseph Eschasseriaux, a legislator in the commission to explore the possibility of French colonies in Africa, wrote,

What finer enterprise for a nation which has already given liberty to Europe [and] freed America than to regenerate in every sense a country which was the first home to civilization and to carry back to their ancient cradle industry, science, and the arts, to cast into the centuries the foundations of a new Thebes or of another Memphis. (quoted after Cole 2007: 16).

Hereby, France established the intellectual encounter with the ancient heritage of Egypt and put itself in the tradition of the 'once great' ancient Egyptian civilisation. Its mission was to restore the country to its former greatness as a semi-autonomous colony (Said 2003). The Amerindian nations could never have been considered a legitimate part of European heritage. With Egypt's ancient links to Greece, Rome, and the Christian Bible, this would be different. This *mission civilisatrice* would provide the overall narrative of the French campaign in Egypt (Laurens 1987). The colonial encounter with Egypt prompted the creation of Egyptology. The Spanish had no interest in the Middle East and were fully occupied with the commercial circuits in the Americas and their access to the Chinese circuit through the Philippines (Mignolo 2012).[3] Spain was looking west, not east (Dussel 1998). Thus it was not necessary for Europeans to engage and appropriate its ancient heritage until the French invasion.

By 1900, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the United States of America, and other European countries were competing for Egyptian antiquities and access to archaeological sites. (Reid 1985; 2015). Europeans even pressed for the genesis of the Egyptian antiquities service and the *Egyptian Antiquities Museum* in Cairo (Reid 2002; Gady 2007). The Egyptian Antiquities Museum has been commonly known as the Egyptian Museum to foreign tourists since the late nineteenth century. The equalisation of ancient Egypt with the 'true' Egypt is demonstrated by this linguistic twist. Islamic Egypt is thus not regarded as properly Egyptian by Western audiences (Riggs 2013). The *Grand Egyptian Museum*, which is currently under construction and will also solely house ancient Egyptian objects, will continue this colonial tradition.

Modern Egyptology was an academic discipline conceived by Europeans for Europeans. Europe had appropriated Egypt's ancient heritage (Blakey 1994). Egyptian Egyptologists played virtually no role until the emergence of Egyptian nationalism and eventual formal independence from British domination in the 1920s. They were discouraged from pursuing the exploration of their own ancient heritage both by Islamic tradition and the Western archaeological or rather colonial agenda (Elshakry 2015; Reid 2015) and usually relegated to the role of anonymous archaeological labourers (Quirke 2013; Doyon 2015). Only recently, the importance of the indigenous workforce was highlighted in a project on the British Egyptologist William Matthew Flinders Petrie by Stephen Quirke (2010) and by Joanne Rowland (2014).

Furthermore, the academic languages of the discipline came to be English, French, and German, which reflected the

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power relations of the time within the modern/colonial world system; every other language was marginalised. In other words, the West was in complete control of the discipline and the production of its knowledge until at least the early twentieth century. This Western domination of Egypt's heritage had some peculiar results.

By the late nineteenth century, pharaonic Egypt had become a projection screen of monarchist values and a European sense of cultural and racial superiority. For example, Petrie's Egyptological research was crucial in lending historic evidence to the Eugenics Movement (Sheppard 2010; Challis 2013). The myth of 'Eternal Egypt' was also created at the time. The European monarchies felt threatened by the advent of new social movements seeking to abolish them (Moreno García 2015). This myth sees the ancient Egyptian monarchy remain virtually unchanged for nearly 3,000 years; ever conservative and ever paternal. Juan Carlos Moreno García explained what he once called a 'reactionary utopia' (Moreno García 2009) very well by saying:

Ancient Egypt became a lost paradise and an enchanted land of mystery, with Egyptologists playing the role of zealous keepers and unique interpreters of pharaoh's achievements, a position ultimately threatened by "materialist" approaches or by exigent intellectual agendas (Moreno García 2015: 52).

Yet, this 'reactionary utopia' has not only hampered the Egyptologists' comprehension of ancient Egypt so far, but also strongly affected the population of modern-day Egypt for it has helped legitimise authoritarian rule in the country.

The very term 'Egyptology' itself solely limits Egypt to its ancient past and marginalises its Coptic or Islamic periods (Reid 1985).[4]

From Western Colonialism to Informal Colonialism

Egypt controls the economically important Suez Canal. Furthermore, the country is the centre of the Arab World and home to the single largest Arabic-speaking population. Due to this geostrategic importance, Egypt has attracted the interest of colonial powers for centuries. From the sixteenth century until 1882 the country was part of the Ottoman Empire and governed by a Turkish minority (Hunter 1984; Winter 1992). The year 1922 saw the independence of Egypt from British colonial rule on paper; however, Britain exerted some control over the country until 1954. In 1952, the Egyptian monarchy was overthrown in a United States-backed coup of so-called 'Free Officers' (Kandil 2014). Two years later, formal colonialism came to an end in Egypt, when the last remnants of foreign rule were dispelled (Selak 1955). However, even after abandoning monarchy and gaining formal independence, the Egyptian elite co-opted the colonial structures put in place by the former colonisers in order to fortify its own power (Kandil 2014).[5] Also, the country was not free of foreign influence and intervention. It soon became entangled in the Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union — the climax of which was the Suez Crisis in 1956 when Israel, Britain, and France invaded Egypt over the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, supposed Egyptian support for anti-colonial insurgents in French Algeria, and arms deals with the Soviets — only to be stopped by diplomatic efforts by the Soviet Union, United Nations, and United States (ibid.).

Initially under Soviet influence during the reign of Gamal Abdel Nasser (1954–1970), Egypt was part of the United States' sphere of influence since the signature of the *Camp David Accords* in 1978, receiving financial aid including $1.3 billion per year for the military from 1987 onwards (Sharp 2015). Close cooperation between the United States and the Egyptian military continued after the coup of July 2013, which saw the military formally back in power and turned the *January 25 Revolution* of 2011 into a failed one.[6] Since then the military regime has resorted to both physical and systemic violence to impose order and stability onto a profoundly divided Egyptian society. For political and economic reasons, Western leadership has turned a blind eye to the events in Egypt after the revolution of 2011. What might be the role of Egyptology in this informal colonialism?[7]

Appropriating Authority through Informal Colonialism

Ancient Egyptian heritage is important to Egypt in terms of the national tourism industry, which is one of the largest income generators for the country after the Suez Canal. Yet, apart from the economic significance, it is utilised in another way. The Egyptian elites utilise the myth of 'Eternal Egypt' to legitimise a strong, paternal, and traditionalist

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state governed by the military. In effect, today's elite profits ideologically from the attitude of nineteenth and early twentieth century Egyptology (Carruthers 2015; Omar 2015). The idea of an 'Eternal Egypt' is very much kept alive by modern-day Egyptology. Moreno García explains how Egyptology has mainly been devoted to art history, developing an elitist and romanticising attitude, alienating it from the social sciences in the process. Non-professional amateur societies help maintain a nostalgic vision of ancient Egypt — alongside museums and the entertainment industry (Moreno García 2015).

With the latter capitalising on 'Eternal Egypt,' it becomes apparent that Egyptology is still a captive of its own past. So, even in the present, the 'reactionary utopia' of 'Eternal Egypt' is reproduced — or maybe even amplified — by the very discipline that should have deconstructed it by now via the utilisation of self-critique and self-reflection. Connected to this is the neoliberalisation of the discipline throughout the industrialised countries. Only because of the privatisation of research it became necessary for researchers to collect third-party funds in order to conduct research. However, as implied by Moreno García, the conservative past might be piggybacking on the funds (Moreno García 2015). This might be exemplified by the *Qatar Foundation* — privately owned by high-ranking members of the Qatari elite who have also been involved with the Qatari government — which funds the Qatar branch of the *University College London*. Its purpose is the study of Middle Eastern heritage of which ancient Egypt forms a part.[8] Qatar has also been accused of funding the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Blanchard 2014; Dettmer 2014; Cockburn 2015) — which recently has taken to destroying Middle Eastern heritage — and of being one of the greatest opponents of the so-called *Arab Spring*. Third-party funding bears the possibility of influencing research on the part of the funder. This means that research could be used to support the Qatari elite's conception of the Middle East. The adherence to a 'reactionary utopia' makes it easy to oppose liberation from any kind of oppression in the Middle East or elsewhere.

Ancient Egyptian Iconography as Instrument of Self-Legitimation in Elite Discourse

In fact, ancient Egypt plays a prominent role in the public imagery. For instance, obelisks from the New Kingdom (c. 1550–1069 BCE), Egypt's imperial age, are plainly placed in squares in and around Cairo. Some obelisks contain rhetorical inscriptions praising the king's authority and dominion over different areas and peoples of the world known to Egyptians in the Late Bronze Age (Habachi 1977). Especially since the French expedition, obelisks have become a symbol of imperial power. Obelisks, both ancient and modern, have been erected in modern imperial centres around the globe (Curran et al. 2009). These representatives of Egyptian autocracy are joined by a monumental statue of the New Kingdom's King Ramses II, also known as 'the Great,' which was relocated to a square in front of the central station of the Egyptian capital shortly after the revolution of 1952. This action represented a link between ancient and revolutionary Nasserist Egypt, implying the renaissance of ancient glory in modern Egypt (Carruthers 2014).

However, the most striking application of ancient Egyptian iconography in public imagery is modern. The outer walls of Egyptian barracks, for example, are decorated with reliefs depicting the 'glorious' history of the Egyptian military through the ages. The sequence begins with a New Kingdom style battle relief, showing the mighty king in his chariot, riding down and shooting foreign enemies with his bow. The relief then progresses with battle scenes up to modern times. In this fashion, the Egyptian military is set in the tradition of ancient Egypt's imperial age, glorifying strong and swift action as well as strong individual leadership. This supports the narrative that Egypt had always been governed by strong authority (ibid.; Lampridi 2011).

A more recent adaptation of ancient iconography was employed in a campaign to promote the Egypt Economic Development Conference in March 2015 (*The Cairo Post* 2015). The ancient Egyptian *Ankh*, a symbol for life, was chosen as its logo. The *Ankh* was artistically integrated into fields, construction sites, coral reefs, and the Suez Canal, implying a link between ancient Egypt and modern Egypt's economic elite, or rather that free enterprise ensures the continuation of Egypt's long history. The modern adaptation of ancient iconography continued in the summer of 2015 at the opening ceremony of the New Suez Canal.[9] During the opening concert, a performance of Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Aida* took place. Auguste Mariette, the leading figure of the European administration of Egyptian antiquities in the mid-nineteenth century, was integral in devising the opera's plot (Busch 1978) and, thus, in the creation of its idealised vision of ancient Egypt. In effect, the Egyptian elite decided to commemorate the

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opening of the canal with an orientalising piece conceived by Europeans. This demonstrates the co-optation of colonial Western narratives by Egyptians for their own purposes.

Another example is a twelve-hour concert at the Giza pyramids to celebrate the new millennium. In the process, the Eye of Horus was projected onto one side of the Great Pyramid as a light image. The Egyptian government cancelled its plans to lower a light-emitting, golden pyramid capstone by a helicopter beforehand after concerns had emerged that this might be a Zionist-Masonic plot to infiltrate the country. Zahi Hawass later defended the plans saying that it re-enacted a 'pharaonic national ritual' and a project of national unity (Wynn 2008).

Not only does ancient Egypt serve a political purpose in the public imagery, it is also used for rhetorical purposes in political speeches. For instance, Gamal Abdel Nasser was imagined as 'the first Egyptian ruler to come from the soil of this homeland in two thousand years' by Hosni Mubarak (Lampridi 2011: 232). Under Anwar as-Sadat's presidency (1970–1981), Nasser's pan-Arabism that sought to unite all Arab peoples was abandoned in favour of Egyptian nationalism. Egypt was constructed as the most important and oldest Arab nation given that its existence dates back seven millennia. In fact, this heritage was imagined as the very reason that Egyptians were the most precious of all Arab peoples (ibid.).

The reference to a distant, supposedly glorious past in order to generate legitimacy has been utilised by authoritarian governments throughout modern history. Prominent examples include Greece under the Metaxas regime and the military junta, Nazi Germany, Ba'athist Iraq, and Fascist Italy. Governments in these countries created legitimacy by referring respectively to ancient Greece and the Byzantine era (Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou 2006), Germanic prehistory (Arnold 1990), ancient Babylon and prominent figures of Islamic history (Isakhan 2013), and the Roman Empire (Munzi 2006). In this sense, one could regard the ideological exploitation of the distant past as a trademark of authoritarian governments. Consequently, the analysis of the way the Egyptian elite has engaged their distant past can help unmask the Egyptian government as authoritarian.

Ancient Egypt also has the potential to be instrumentalised by the opponents of the political elites. Adel Iskandar and Yasmin El Shazly portrayed activists of the *January 25 Revolution* as the direct continuation of ancient Egyptian workers who made fun of New Kingdom royalty using satirical graffiti (Iskandar 2013; El Shazly 2014). In this sense, activists can also utilise ancient iconography as can be seen from the work of (post)revolutionary street artists (for examples, see Hamdy & Karl 2014; Morayef 2016).

Ultimately, Egyptian heritage is a contested space — an ideological battleground between the different stakeholders within Egyptian society as well as scholars and politicians from abroad. The coloniality of Egyptology has made the country's ancient heritage a borderland where *local* histories meet and converge.[10] At stake is the interpretational sovereignty over the past of a people. The ancient heritage of Egypt is where the 'colonial difference' emerges.[11] In this sense, the Egyptian people are *dwelling in the border* — in the borderland and the according existential experience that colonialism has created.[12] *Dwelling in the border* is the necessary prerequisite to taking on colonial difference and engaging in *border thinking*. Border thinking is a different way of thinking that recovers subaltern knowledges and perspectives to counter hegemonic knowledge. Mignolo (2012: 85, emphasis in original) states that it

is the key concept of border thinking: *thinking from dichotomous concepts rather than ordering the world in dichotomies*. Border thinking, in other words, is, logically, a dichotomous locus of enunciation and, historically, is located at the borders (interiors or exteriors) of the modern/colonial world system.

Border thinking helps make visible the cracks in the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system (ibid.; see also Mignolo in this volume). For instance, such cracks become apparent through the study of how Egyptian elites have co-opted Western narratives of their own past.

Co-optation of Western Narratives

The study of ancient Egypt is an example of *Chakrabarty's Dilemma. Chakrabarty's Dilemma* refers to the

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circumstance in which scholars from marginalised or (formerly) colonised countries, in order to study their own history, need to refer to European historiography. This leads them to reproduce European narratives in some way since Europe still appears as the academic hegemon (Chakrabarty 1992; Mignolo 1999; 2012). Egyptian scholars, if they are serious about studying their own heritage, will eventually feel compelled to leave Egypt to study or conduct research at a Western university. An exception from this rule may be the *American University in Cairo*, which is basically a Western-style university and a place of education for the Egyptian elite at Tahrir Square in the centre of Cairo. Western Egyptological institutions remain the epistemological powerhouses of the discipline. Therefore, any Egyptian Egyptologist will develop a double-consciousness based on colonial disciplinary knowledge; regardless of whether they are studying for their first degree or PhD. This also includes writing scholarly works in the imperial languages of the discipline (see, also, Wynn 2007). Again, Egyptians are *dwelling in the border*.

In this respect, it might be premature to celebrate the advent of indigenous Egyptology beginning in the twentieth century. While the direct administration of the Egyptian heritage by Egyptians may be a sign of decolonisation (Walker 2012), it is only superficial. The reign of Zahi Hawass as Minister of State for Antiquities Affair, before he was ousted in the wake of the *January 25 Revolution*, has demonstrated that even Egyptians readily reproduce the myth of 'Eternal Egypt' and the colonial epistemology it embodies. Hawass became known for continuing the commodification of Egyptian heritage, mainly for economic reasons (Walker 2012; Elshahed 2015; Shenker 2016). However, other dimensions, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, factor into contemporary local approaches in Egyptology as well. Thus, discoveries such as the tombs of workmen were used in an attempt to disprove Israeli narratives concerning the construction of the Giza pyramids by Israelite slaves. Moreover, the construction of the same pyramids was retroactively constructed as 'the national project' of ancient Egypt, providing unity and an identity, and was likened to conscription in modern Egypt more than once by Hawass (Wynn 2008). Wynn argued that this narrative legitimizes the appropriation of labour of the lower classes of Egyptian society. In the wake of the *January 25 Revolution*, Hawass — still in office at the time — also stated that Egypt has 'always needed a strongman; without one you have chaos. Things change, but I am the only one who understands this country's history, who can truly see the past' (Shenker 2016: 120). Here, by implying that Egypt's ancient history had any bearing on modern society and that it is in some way ingrained in the DNA of Egyptians, Hawass basically co-opts an orientalist narrative of his own country and its population. One could say that the Egyptian elite has been 'occidentalising' itself by co-opting Western elites through informal colonialism and as a result 'orientalising' its own population. This implies that, in terms of decolonisation, it is simply not enough to replace Western rule with an Egyptian rule using colonial knowledge produced in the West to stabilize and enact its own authority. Or, to paraphrase, it is not enough to replace external colonialism with informal internal colonialism.

As shown above, a regime of informal colonisation instrumentalises the Egyptian heritage. Moreover, the Egyptian tourism industry has been mainly directed at foreign, and predominantly Western, tourists (Mitchell 2002; Doyon 2013). As such, it largely satisfies the image of ancient Egypt that is expected by Western audiences, i.e., the myth of 'Eternal Egypt' outlined above. This is made especially clear by the evocation of the eighteenth-century dynasty king Tutankhamun (c. 1332–1323 BCE) and the story of the discovery of his tomb in 1922. Furthermore, there is a difference in the treatment of foreigners and Egyptians when it comes to access to ancient sites and museums. For instance, there are geographically separate entrances for both groups to the Giza plateau — the entrance for Egyptians is four kilometres away from the pyramids while the one for foreign tourists is much closer. This was justified by Hawass, alleging that Egyptians behaved disrespectfully toward their ancient heritage (Shenker 2016). Fanon, based on his observations in the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962), indicated that the tourism industry of (formerly) colonised countries would focus on Western audiences as the target group when he wrote that,[13]

the national bourgeoisie identifies itself with the Western bourgeoisie, from whom it has learnt its lessons … The national bourgeoisie will be greatly helped on its way to decadence by the Western bourgeoisies, who come to it as tourists avid for the exotic, for big game hunting, and for casinos. The national bourgeoisie organizes centers of rest and relaxation and pleasure resorts to meet the wishes of the Western bourgeoisie. Such activity is given the name of tourism, and for the occasion will be built up as a national industry (Fanon 1963: 153).

The discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb also provided a link for Egyptian nationalism (Mitchell 2002; Mondal 2003;

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Reid 2015) and the evocation of a once great nation as a precursor of contemporary Egypt. This ideology of *Pharaonism* saw the creation of national monuments that combined ancient and modern Egyptian iconography (Hassan 1998). As a result, Egyptology, both past and present, does offer the Egyptian elite an ideological legitimisation for authoritarian government. This confirms the prevalent internal colonisation of the Egyptian heritage.

Conclusions and Outlook

What has become apparent is that the study of a country's past and cultural heritage has a direct relevance to international relations. It bears the power to colonise local histories and ideologically legitimise governments.

From formal to informal colonialism, Western Egyptology provides Egyptian ruling elites with a legitimising ideological narrative of paternalist rule. It is for this reason that the auto-critique and decolonisation of Egyptology is an imminently political act.

While the wealthy elites of Egyptian society instrumentalise Egypt's heritage for political and economic purposes, it may seem as if the working poor are merely being exploited to maintain a system of informal colonial-style elite rule. For those not part of the elite, however, this instrumentalisation may also be central to making a living in the tourism industry. While decolonising Egyptology might be an urgent issue for Egyptian academics, who often belong to the upper and middle class, this might not necessarily be the case for lower class Egyptians depending on the commodification of this heritage for their living.[14] However, in considering such aspects of economic necessity, one must be careful not to create apologies for the status quo. This would mean that the current system be maintained so as not to threaten the material survival of the working poor through any overall changes to the informal colonial identification of Egypt with the ancient Egypt of Western-style Egyptology. In that case, any decolonial approach, not unlike current contemporary Western foreign policy, would find itself stuck in the dilemma between radical political critique and the wish for social, political, and economic stability in a post-colonial globalized world order.

The future will show whether Western and Egyptian Egyptologists are willing and capable of performing serious self-critique and self-reflexion in order to tackle this dilemma. Beyond being a formal problem concerning the coloniality of knowledge production within the academic discipline of Egyptology, ancient Egypt describes a trope with profound political and economic implications for contemporary Egypt. As this chapter has shown, elite rule in Egypt is performed through informal colonialism that is based on the co-optation of Western colonial narratives. Ending its ideological legitimisation is thus inseparable from the decolonisation of Egyptology.

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Notes

[1] For more information on indigenous Egyptology prior to the French invasion, see Okasha El Daly (2005) and Louise L. Wynn (2007).

[2] Orientalism means the construction of 'oriental' societies as backward and barbarian who, as such, have been considered the anti-thesis to an enlightened, civilized 'West.' For instance, orientalist thought includes the narrative that Middle Eastern people are not ready for democracy and human rights, that only autocracy can make their societies work. However, not only Arab people are orientalised. This rather includes all people of (former) European colonies around the world.

[3] At the time, the economic centre of the world lay in China with Western Europe at the fringes of the regional commercial circuits. Mignolo sees this as the reason for Iberian interest in China and their attempts to reach it directly by sea. As a result of the colonization of the Americas, the global economic centre shifted to the Atlantic (Mignolo 2012). The Crusades, as a quest to capture Jerusalem, appear as a European attempt to connect with the economic centre in Asia (Dussel 1998).

[4] On the curriculum of Egyptology, see Quirke (2010). Contrary to widespread belief, Egyptology does not research Egyptian history after Late Antiquity. Islamic and modern Egypt are not part of the curriculum.

[5] For instance, this holds true for the secret police apparatus which was installed by the British colonial administration prior to 1952. The Egyptian surveillance structures are the most striking example. Subsequently, the Nasserist government expanded the existing structures — especially the internal intelligence services — in order to consolidate its rule. This was advised by the administration of the United States (Kandil 2014). In that sense, there is a direct continuity between the modern Egyptian security apparatuses and those established by colonial powers.

[6] On the military coup of 2013, see Kandil (2014). For further reading on the revolution of 2011, consult Korany and El Mahdi (2014).

[7] Informal colonialism is to be understood as a colonial system in which local elites are politically independent in domestic policies but act as agents in the interests of an external 'Big Brother' should the scenario arise (Gallagher and Robinson 1953; Osterhammel and Jansen 2012).

[8] As of March 2016, the *Qatar Foundation* has withdrawn its financial support to archaeological missions in both Egypt and Sudan.

[9] The performance starts at about the 48-minute mark using the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yyut0C7TVHc.

[10] Borders are not only physical divisions, but also psychological and racial classifications as well as divisions of gender or sexuality (see Mignolo 2012).

[11] 'The colonial difference is the space where coloniality of power is enacted. It is also the space where the restitution of subaltern knowledge is taking place and where border thinking is emerging. The colonial difference is the space where *local* histories inventing and implementing global designs meet *local* histories, the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored. The colonial difference is, finally, the physical as well as imaginary location where the coloniality of power is at work in the confrontation of two kinds of local histories displayed in different spaces and times across the planet' (Mignolo 2012: xxv, emphasis in original).

[12] On dwelling in the border, see Mignolo (2012). On the existential experience of border-dwelling, see Anzaldúa (1987).

[13] Lynn Meskell (1998) has already noted the connection between tourism and colonialism.

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[14] It has been argued that archaeological missions fulfil a role of charity since they provide labourers in rural areas with an increased chance for material survival (Quirke 2010). However, this narrative of philanthropy should perhaps rather be seen in the overall context of the modern/colonial world system. There, narratives of philanthropy help maintain or reorganise the very system they seem to critique. For more information, see Negri and Hardt (2000), Badiou (2001) Cohen et al. (2008), and Weizman (2011).

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Christian Langer is a doctoral candidate in Egyptology at the Free University of Berlin. His doctoral dissertation looks at deportations in ancient Egyptian history between 3000 BCE and 332 BCE. For the academic year 2016/17, he is an ERASMUS visiting research student with the Institute of Archaeology at University College London. His research interests include political and social history, political theory, imperialism and colonialism, ideology, foreign and domestic policy, unfree labour and forced migration in pharaonic Egypt, and the colonial heritage of Egyptology and its impact on modern Egyptian society. His notable publications include his MA thesis on 'Aspekte des Imperialismus in der Außenpolitik der 18. Dynastie' and the article 'The Political Realism of the Egyptian Elite: A Comparison Between the 'Teaching for Merikare' and Niccolò Machiavelli's *Il Principe*' on the theoretical similarities between ancient Egyptian and Machiavellian political thought.