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DAMES EMPLOYÉES AT THE SUEZ CANAL COMPANY: THE "EGYPTIANIZATION" OF FEMALE OFFICE WORKERS, 1941–56

Abstract
The article is a case study of work organization at the Services d'Egypte of the Suez Canal Company from the outbreak of World War II to the company's nationalization in 1956. In this multinational and multicultural workplace, organizational hierarchies and division of labor were traditionally defined according to "national" identities, while maintaining a strict segregation between *européens* and *indigènes*, to use the company's terminology. Starting in the 1930s, the company faced new measures of economic nationalism imposed by the Egyptian government, including required quotas of Egyptian personnel. These measures progressively redefined the political boundaries of the company's action in the management of its workforce. Using unpublished archival documents from the company's personnel files, this article analyzes the processes of feminization and Egyptianization of the company's office workers during World War II and the 1950s. The process was driven by a precise organizational strategy, based on both "racial" and "gender" criteria, which aimed to redefine the company's internal hierarchies and to keep management and decision making in the hands of the "Europeans," while complying with the terms of the conventions of 1937 and 1949 that regulated the relationship between the company and the Egyptian government.

Traditionally monopolized by studies of the communications revolutions of the 19th century and by accounts of the crisis of 1956, the Suez Canal has recently returned to the attention of historical research, either in the framework of the new global history of migrations and imperial connections[1] or from the perspective of economic and business history,[2] which has reconstructed the fascinating experience of the Compagnie universelle du Canal maritime de Suez (hereafter, the company), created in 1858.[3] This article explores the gender dimension of work organization at the Services d'Egypte of the company during World War II and the 1950s. The aim is to provide a new perspective on the history of the company's controversial presence in Egypt, in the framework of the making of Egypt as a nation-state in the first half of the 20th century and in a context that still bore a "striking resemblance" to a "typical colonial economy" at the beginning of World War II.[4] As a workplace representative of that "multiethnic

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Egypt" which was largely dispersed starting in the 1950s,[5] the Services d'Egypte offers a stimulating research ground to develop recent historiographical suggestions on patterns of modernization at the intersection of local and global dynamics, empires and smaller communities, and national political projects.[6]

Until the 1930s, the Suez Canal Company was a traditionally and typically "male" workplace. For the construction of the canal, opened to navigation in 1869, the company had relied extensively on a local labor force, mostly *en corvée*.[7] Subsequently, while Egyptians continued to constitute the majority of the unskilled labor force (largely daily or seasonal), the development of the canal and the company's hiring opportunities attracted a more diversified personnel. In part, it was drawn from European communities already present in Egypt,[8] and in larger part from a new multinational, multilingual, and multireligious community progressively settled along the isthmus thanks to a vast professional immigration, mainly from southern and Mediterranean Europe: France, Greece, Italy, Malta, and Austria-Hungary/then Yugoslavia.[9] This contributed to making the canal zone an area of "international colonization."[10] The Greeks, defined by some observers as the most "suited" for the canal's work activities ("ingenious, fast, practical," they had "the qualities of Ulysses"),[11] represented around 30 percent of the company's workforce until the 1920s; it was thus the largest "national" group on the payroll and remained so in 1956.[12] The Italians were the second largest group (around 15 percent in the 1920s).[13]

The company's diverse employees worked side by side in its workshops, offices, and other sites. At the same time, a rigid division of labor characterized the hierarchic internal organization of the Services d'Egypte. The primary distinction was between *employés* (white-collar workers and technical staff, engineers, pilots, foremen) and manual workers. No Egyptians were among the *employés* until the 1930s. Among manual workers, the division of labor usually followed national lines, always within the clear distinction between *européens* and *indigènes*, to use the company's terminology. It was a "racial" and segregated model of work organization, favoring social control of the workforce—social peace—and the minimization of labor costs.[14] This division of labor also contributed to the construction of a "Europeanness" that provided a community of non-Egyptian workers with a common identity,[15] according to mechanisms that have typically been observed in more properly colonial contexts[16] and have been elaborated by recent research.[17] This article does not deal, however, with the long disputed and periodically revised question of "cosmopolitanism" vs. isolation/self-isolation of foreign communities in Egypt.[18] Rather, its aims are to address the dynamics of "cultural racism" as an organizing principle, including the ways it works "to channel different peoples into specific economic roles,"[19] and to appraise the role that gender plays in these dynamics.

Starting in the 1920s and 1930s, the company was confronted with Egyptian nationalism and the imposition of quotas of Egyptian personnel (so-called Egyptianization), as well as with forms of labor unrest and social demands that progressively led to a redefinition of the political boundaries of its action in the management of personnel. I will argue that the feminization and Egyptianization of the company's offices between World War II and the 1950s was inscribed in a revision of the company's business strategy and the renegotiation of its political relations with the Egyptian government. The postwar organization of personnel inserted women into the traditional *européens/indigènes* dichotomy: gender thus provided an additional organizing principle, which

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contributed to tracing the new boundaries of occupational segregation and the division of labor.

This perspective confirms the centrality of work as a powerful vantage point from which to explore mechanisms of production and power and the ways these mechanisms change and interact according to internal and international circumstances. As Robert Vitalis has written, "It should no longer be possible to leave labor out of the familiar (and not so familiar) stories of how firms and states transformed the 20th century world . . . economy."[20] The gender dimension of work offers a particularly revealing vantage point for understanding patterns of modernization in a global perspective. As Alice Kessler-Harris has suggested, one of the challenges is to highlight "how racialized-gendered power relations infuse the distribution of work,"[21] and "the sometimes subtle ways" that gender functions to legitimize and order power relationships.[22] This is a particularly stimulating research agenda in colonial or semicolonial settings, such as the Suez Canal in the period dealt with in this article. Recent research on "gender and empire" has demonstrated the relevance of a gender perspective for exploring social processes, while also "repopulat[ing] the stage with a more diverse set of historical protagonists."[23]

This brings us to the question of sources in writing women's history in the context of global and colonial history.[24] This article is based on the records of the Suez Company Archives, and in particular the Personnel Department files. The records are rather diverse, and incomplete with regard to personal information about individual workers and their career paths and social conditions. Nevertheless, these files provide an institutional perspective and show how the interaction between race, nationality, and gender was perceived and used by the company as an organizing principle. The utility of subjecting traditional archival sources to new questions and novel interpretive methods has been underscored by historiography on the Middle East,[25] which has also invited further research on women as "economic actors" in changing economies and on the ways in which ideologies of gender and material histories "permeate and shape each other."[26] This applies in particular ways to the history of middle-class women's work, a subject practically ignored by global labor history[27] and underexplored in Middle East studies. Indeed, the social and political history of the Middle East has often been written "as though middle social strata did not exist or were unimportant."[28] Egyptianization was originally meant to favor the access of educated middle-class Egyptians to jobs previously reserved for foreign/European individuals. Egyptianization had a gender dimension, which has not been investigated in the existing scholarship and which was linked to processes of middle-class formation, institutional modernization, and social reform in interwar Egypt. The dynamics of feminization of the Suez Company's offices provides an original vantage point from which to expand our knowledge of these processes.

THE SUEZ COMPANY'S CONTROVERSIAL LEGAL-POLITICAL STATUS

The Compagnie universelle du Canal maritime de Suez was a French company created in 1858 to pursue the cutting of the isthmus according to the 1854 firman (decree) and the 1856 concession signed by Ferdinand de Lesseps, the founder of the company,

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and viceroy Muhammad Saʿid. French subscribers and the Egyptian viceroy held the majority of the company's shares. The company had a complicated legal status. It was the first limited liability joint-stock company created in Egypt. Since this typology did not yet exist in Egyptian law, the firman recognized that the Suez Company was also subject to French company law. With the agreement of the Ottoman sultan, in 1866 an additional convention established further mutual duties and rights. In 1869, the canal was opened to navigation; the concession was to last 99 years and thus to expire in 1968.[29] In 1875, as a consequence of Egypt's bankruptcy, the British government acquired the khedive's shares in the company, which thus became an Anglo-French enterprise, and British administrators joined the company board.[30] Starting that year, as a result of judicial reform and the subsequent introduction of company law in Egypt, foreign companies were subject to a single regulation (mixed codes) applied by mixed courts, which replaced the system of multiple consular courts each applying its own national law.[31] After the British military intervention in Egypt in 1882, negotiations over the status of the canal led to the signing of the Constantinople Convention of 1888 by the "great powers."[32] The convention affirmed the canal's neutrality, its "free use" in peace and war, and its international status in a new international legal environment designed to ensure the peaceful development of world trade.[33] The convention, which was to be renegotiated in 1936, also contained clauses for the defense of the canal, which was from that point on in British hands.[34]

The company was granted the concession for the exploitation of an Egyptian public service—the management of the canal—and provided the technology and finances to pursue that goal. At the same time, it performed an international service for maritime trade. These two legal-political dimensions would be a constant source of controversy between the company and the Egyptian state, especially in the aftermath of nationalization in 1956. According to French legal scholars, the international status of the canal was meant to include the company, too. The Egyptian government's position was that the company was subject to Egyptian law, and that its status was to be considered separately from that of the canal.[35] As we shall see, this controversial legal status affected decisions about work organization within the company.

In its early decades of operation, the company benefited from a stable political environment provided by British occupation, and showed relatively little interest in or concern for the granting authority, whose role was consistently "neglected."[36] In 1909, in the context of rising nationalist sentiment, an attempt was made by Prime Minister Boutros Ghali to renegotiate the convention, with the aim of increasing transit royalties for Egypt. The proposal was rejected by the National Assembly in 1910. The episode, which might have contributed to Boutros' assassination, revealed the growing symbolic politicization of the canal issue.[37]

WORK ORGANIZATION AT THE SERVICES D'EGYPTE

La composition du personnel, dans la zone du canal est curieuse à analyser, car elle correspond à une stratification de couches ethniques et sociales.[38]

The Services d'Egypte managed the company's activities in Egypt, implementing directives and decisions made by its executive headquarters in Paris. The organizational

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structure of the company was designed on the centralized and hierarchical model of large French companies and consisted of four main bodies: the Conseil d'Administration, the General Assembly of Shareholders, the Comité de Direction, and the Agence Supérieure (Superior Agency). The Conseil d'Administration (CdA, that is, the Board of Directors; hereafter, the board) consisted of thirty-two members (hereafter, administrators) nominated for eight years by the General Assembly of Shareholders (any person who held at least twenty-five shares of the company). The board elected the president and outlined the general strategy of the company on investment, tariff, and budgetary issues. All presidents were French.[39] No Egyptian was nominated to the board until 1938.[40] The Comité de Direction (CD) was the actual executive management board of the company, and consisted of the president, the director general (a role established in 1893; also in charge of personnel management), and four administrators. All members of the CD were French, with the exception of one Briton since 1887. A London office was created in 1883. Located in Cairo, the Agence Supérieure linked the Parisian headquarters with the Services d'Egypte. It was headed by the Agent supérieur (AS), who represented the company vis-à-vis the Egyptian government and was in charge of the administration and coordination of the company's activities in Egypt.[41]

The Services d'Egypte was organized into four main structures: Administration, Transit, Works, and Technical Services (the last two were combined in 1946). The Administration offices were first located in Alexandria and then moved to Cairo; the other services were in Ismailia. Each service was under a *chef de service*, and hierarchically structured on the model of the French administration of public works. In the Administrative Service, headed by the AS,[42] were the relatively less qualified white-collar workers (dactylographers, clerks, bookkeepers) along with some more qualified ones, such as accountants and lawyers. It also included the staff of the company's hospitals. The administrative personnel were predominantly French. The bulk of the labor force (almost half in the 1930s) was in Works.[43] Headed by a chief engineer, it included workshops (*ateliers généraux*) and the so-called annexed building sites (*chantiers annexes*), and had the highest percentage of skilled workers in relation to the total labor force. Most of the engineers and technical staff were French, the skilled workers and supervisors mainly Greek and Italian, and the unskilled workforce mainly Egyptian. Workshops, originally built in Port Said to guarantee the company's technological independence in spare parts and material and in repairing machine and tools, progressively became a full industrial site that included brass and steel works, foundries, and workshops for assembling, painting, molding, and repairing. In 1919, the site became a city, Port Fuad.[44] The annexed building sites dealt with land, road, and urban improvement and infrastructure for the canal zone, including electricity and gas plants as well as water purification and supply to the cities on the isthmus and to vessels in transit.[45]

Directed by the *chef de transit*, the Transit Service had the second largest labor force among the services. It provided services tied to navigation, including the drawing of the diagram of transit for every vessel, the placing and control of buoys and navigation signals, and radio communications. Here were the employees with the most prestigious jobs, such as the pilots who steered vessels through the canal. The passage, which took from forty-eight to fifty-three hours in the 1880s and around thirteen in the late 1930s, was dangerous because of the canal's low waters, fog banks, and frequent currents and winds.[46] In the canal's early years, vessels were accompanied by a towboat, and the pilots

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were actually the private owners of such boats, usually Italian, Greek, or Corsican. The service was progressively entrusted to the company's pilots, who were taken on board at Port Said to navigate the ships to Ismailia, then to Suez. An elite corps who had "le sens du canal,"[47] pilots had to hold a master mariner's license and were usually recruited among British, French, Dutch, and Scandinavian naval or commercial officers. Only in the 1930s, as a result of quotas imposed on foreign companies, were the first Egyptian pilots accepted as trainees. The rest of the labor force in Transit, mainly Greek, worked as sailors, shipmen, verifiers, ports officials, and skilled mechanics, and generally enjoyed salaries higher than those of workers in other services. The Technical services were in charge of the canal's maintenance and improvement, the dredging of the sandy bed, and the widening and terracing of the walls and embankments. Dredgers too were mainly Greek.[48]

In the interwar period, the company workforce (which at its peak in the 1920s amounted to between 4,000 and 5,000 employees) was divided into the following main categories: clerical workers, technical staff (including engineers, around seventy in 1938), pilots (100–120 in the 1930s), maritime workers (seamen, shipmen), foremen, and manual workers. Manual workers were divided into company workers and out-workers (that is, temporary or seasonal laborers, or so-called *du tâcheron*, recruited by local middlemen mainly for construction works). This last category represented 30–35 percent of the company's labor force until World War I, and was mainly Egyptian. All the other categories were European. Initially, most foremen were recruited in France and constituted the workers' elite; in the interwar period such positions were gradually taken over by Italians and Greeks, who comprised the majority of foremen after World War II.

The company's recruitment and training policies were designed to exclude Egyptians from skilled and technical positions (especially those of pilot and foreman), and tended to favor the sons and family members of European personnel. Only interwar legislation on quotas for Egyptian personnel enabled the progressive access of Egyptians to training for these jobs.[49] Over the years, an efficient, paternalistic, and hierarchical system of company welfare was established. It included housing, health care, residence allowances, pension schemes, paid vacation, and other forms of individual and family benefits that varied according to the different categories of personnel. Welfare measures were an instrument for managing national and cultural diversities, and for building up a sense of prideful belonging to the company, which was not uncommon even among Egyptian workers. Although there are no comparative studies, there is evidence that wages, salaries, and benefits were on average higher in the Suez Company than in other foreign companies on the isthmus.[50]

A MALE UNIVERSE?

No woman figured among the official statistics of the personnel of the Services d'Egypte until 1941. The company's archives, however, reveal a number of female clerks (*dames employées*) in the company's offices by the 1920s. They were recorded as "temporary trainees" (*stagiaires temporaires*) and worked mainly as telephone and telegraph operators, receiving a daily pay with no other benefits. I counted thirty such women during the 1920s, compared to seventy-four men with the same status. The difference was that,

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for men, the status of "temporary trainee" could lead to official hiring, while for women it was a somehow "permanent" condition. For them, there was no access to the official staff, which explains why they do not figure in the official statistics. Although their presence was not negligible in quantitative terms, women thus remained invisible in the company's offices for a long time. We do not have any additional information on their work experience. However, a search by name that I conducted in the personnel records identified a number of these women who were still employed (or had been reemployed) during World War II. Despite being invisible as officially temporary employees, clearly some of the women had rather long tenures.

Before the war, all of these *dames employées* were European: French, Greek, Maltese, and Italian. They were mainly the daughters, wives, and sisters of the company's white-collar and skilled workers. As noted above, the practice of hiring relatives of the company's employees was an organizational strategy, aimed to create ties of fidelity among workers and limit Egyptianization. Some of the women were orphans and widows: this kind of employment could have been a form of company welfare for the daughters and wives of deceased personnel. No Egyptian woman figured in the company's records before World War II.[51]

THE SUEZ COMPANY AND EGYPTIAN ECONOMIC NATIONALISM IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

After Egypt's formal independence in 1922, a series of nationality laws were adopted as part of the process of building a modern independent nation-state.[52] From the decrees of 1926 and 1929 (originally meant to settle the question of Ottoman subjects in Egypt after the Sèvres Treaty) to the abolition of the Capitulations in 1937 and the progressive abolition of the mixed courts, these provisions established an Egyptian nationality and the option of naturalization for foreign residents. They also accorded privileges of nationality for certain occupations (e.g., the practice of some liberal professions and access to public posts were reserved for Egyptians).[53] The effects of this legislation on foreign communities and individual identities have been extensively studied, though the quantitative dimension of naturalization is still controversial.[54] From a sociopolitical perspective, these laws enhanced the division between Egyptians and foreigners who kept (or Egyptians who opted for) foreign nationality.[55] The policy of employment quotas rested precisely on this division.

Measures of "economic nationalism" were adopted in this same context.[56] Industrial companies were largely dominated by foreigners, sometimes residing in Egypt. Both "popular and populist opinion" and all political parties held that foreign ownership and management of Egyptian enterprises was "harmful" to the country, politically as well as economically, and that it should be replaced by domestic ownership and management.[57] Legislation was thus adopted between 1923 and 1927 to increase the share of Egyptian capital, management, and employment in companies active in Egypt—the so-called Egyptianization. The laws required that two members of the boards of directors of new companies, 25 percent of shares, and 25 percent of white-collar staff (*employés*) be Egyptian.[58] Egyptianization was connected to the *chômage des diplomés* (unemployment of graduates) and the need to create modern Egyptian ruling elites. The lack of diversification of the Egyptian economy and the propensity of foreign firms to hire

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foreigners limited employment opportunities for educated middle-class Egyptians, a situation aggravated by the economic crisis of the 1930s. The Egyptianization of middle-class employment was thus part of larger debates around national modernization and social reform.[59]

The question of women's work was a sensitive issue in such debates. It was also related to the growth of Egyptian feminist movements and a women's press.[60] During the 1930s, feminine journals such as *L'Egyptienne* produced a discourse linking women's work—specifically educated, middle-class women's work—to an image of national feminine modernity and emancipation.[61] In this context, the first protective legislation for working women was passed in 1933.[62] Although it is difficult to establish a direct link between this discourse and the official entry of women into the Suez Company's offices, and although more comparative research is needed on similar business cases, it is plausible that a general cultural attitude favorable to middle-class women's work, in combination with wartime conditions, may have eased this organizational innovation.

In this increasingly nationalist context, the new Wafd government came to power in 1936, and (also as a consequence of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia) the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty was renegotiated and signed in August 1936.[63] In May 1937 the Montreux conference abolished the Capitulations. The changing political framework forced the company to renegotiate the Convention with the Egyptian government. For the first time, the company conceded to reserve two seats on the board for Egyptian administrators, and "to progressively introduce a certain proportion of young Egyptians" into the white-collar staff of the Services d'Egypte.[64] The Egyptian parliament ratified the accord in August 1937, in a vote acclaimed as a Wafdist political success.[65] On 1 January 1938 the company began to hire Egyptian white-collar workers and the first Egyptian administrator joined the board.[66]

Although imposed by the government, this recruitment policy was also part of a larger ongoing strategy on the part of the company to address worker demands, including those of Europeans and Egyptians united in new trade unions, and to maintain social peace in the workplace. The 1930s was a period of growing social discontent aggravated by the contraction of commercial activity during the Great Depression and by widely disseminated Islamist propaganda along the isthmus.[67] In any case, the changing terms of the "colonial" relationship between large, Western companies and the Egyptian government in this period is evident, albeit complex.[68] As Vitalis has observed, these changes raised many questions around large fixed investments in countries "where sovereign, increasingly populist governments rather than colonial consuls or occupation authorities ruled—the fundamental change in the world order in the twentieth century." Outcomes varied across place and time, but "the trend away from extraterritorial privilege to domestication was clear."[69] The Suez Canal Company had to adapt to these new conditions.

THE WAR

During World War II a number of transformations occurred in the internal organization of the company and in the composition of its workforce. After the fall of France in June 1940, part of the company's headquarters was moved to Châtel-Guyon, in Vichy France. Under British pressure, and to counteract the Egyptian government's moves to take advantage of the situation by asserting greater control over the canal, the company's

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management was entrusted to the London offices. The Services d'Egypte, with its firmly pro-Allied management, developed a more autonomous decision-making structure. In October 1941, the AS Louis de Benoist (also the head of the *France Libre* delegation in Cairo) assumed the role of director of the Services d'Egypte. A *bureau du personnel* was created in April 1942 in Ismailia in order to centralize all questions related to the company's employees, including their security.[70]

The war produced many personnel gaps due to mobilization, retirements, and voluntary resignations of workers of various nationalities, who left to fight under different flags. Many Italians were dismissed after Italy's entry into the war in June 1940, and often confined to internment camps.[71] Traffic in the canal zone was reduced; in fact, it actually closed for seventy-six days during the war.[72] Between June 1940 and December 1944, the company's labor force (excluding white-collar and technical staff) dropped from 2,960 to 2,388.[73] In order to fill the gaps, the Services d'Egypte recruited Egyptian personnel, in particular clerical workers, whose "quality" was deemed "very satisfactory." In 1945, the proportion of Egyptian white-collar workers "greatly exceeded" the proportion required by the Egyptian government according to the Convention of 1937.[74]

The wartime hiring of white-collar workers had a twofold objective. On the one hand, it aimed to limit recruitment to temporary (auxiliary) personnel, who were provided with temporary, thus reversible, social benefits. According to a directive of the AS in December 1941, the Services could proceed with new hires of white-collar workers, on the condition "of not creating new positions." Wartime jobs should be considered "fictitious."[75] This category of personnel would receive a daily salary, and any absence, including for holidays and sick leave, would be unpaid.[76] The second objective was to give priority to Egyptians and women: "in order to safeguard the future," that is, to avoid the establishment of new rights that could be claimed once the war was over, "the auxiliary hires are, in principle, limited as much as possible to the feminine element and to Egyptian-born candidates."[77] Gender thus joined race/nationality as an additional hierarchical criterion to define lower categories of clerical workers.

The difficult material conditions and labor shortages of the war years led to several improvements in the conditions of the temporary auxiliary personnel, who benefited from measures thus far reserved for the permanent staff. Beginning in October 1943, auxiliaries were fully paid for three holidays (Lesser Bayram, Kurban Bayram, and Shamm al-Nasim). The cost-of-living allowance granted to permanent staff in December 1942 was extended to auxiliaries in January 1944. In August 1944, following Law 41 regarding labor contracts, auxiliaries had the right to fifteen vacation days annually. Measures regulating the "duration and conditions of absence due to childbirth" were adopted for female auxiliaries. Women were permitted two and half months maternity leave, an indemnity equal to thirty days' wages, and free care and hospitalization in the maternity ward of the Saint Vincent de Paul Hospital, which belonged to the company.[78] This signifies, too, that among the *dames employées* were married women. On 31 December 1944, there were sixty-nine male auxiliary clerks who had been hired during the war, including forty-one Egyptians, and forty-seven women auxiliary clerks. If there is minimal personal information for the men, for the women we do not even have their nationality or hiring date, only the indication of the Service to which they belonged: thirty-three were at the Works, including ten at the *ateliers généraux*; five at the general

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store (*magasin général*); one at Transit; and thirteen in the Agence supérieure and Administration.

POSTWAR REORGANIZATION AND THE NEW CONVENTION OF 1949

Immediately after the war, and as a result of the restoration of full powers to the Paris headquarters, the company underwent an internal reorganization. The autonomy that the Services d'Egypte and the AS had enjoyed in wartime was substantially reduced. The new internal organization was not only functional but also political: it was meant to elude the increasing pressures from Egyptian authorities and to resist the Egyptianization of personnel. This course of action was shared by the new (and last) president of the company, François Charles-Roux (from 1948 to 1956); and the new deputy director (in 1945), then director general (in 1953), Jacques Georges-Picot. In this context, the first American administrator joined the company board in 1948.[79] The reorganization of labor was intended to address several changes that occurred during and after the war. New hires became necessary because of the many displacements and losses caused by the war and by the postwar revival of traffic through the canal. Conditions of labor unrest—Law 85 of 1942 had legalized trade unions for the first time[80]—and the scarcity of experienced personnel led to the introduction of a pension plan for official workers in 1945, and it was deemed essential that "a certain number of technically qualified personnel" be sent from France.[81]

The company then had to deal with the question of the auxiliary personnel hired during the war, who were exerting pressure to be included in the official workforce. This was a politically sensitive issue linked to the postwar wave of renewed economic nationalism. The promulgation in 1947 of Law 138, which included manual workers in the categories subject to employment quotas, marked a further step in the trend toward Egyptianization. The law required that, within three years, 40 percent of boards of directors of new companies, 51 percent of shares, 75 percent of white-collar staff, and 90 percent of manual labor be Egyptian. More politically than economically motivated, the law paid special attention to foreign concessions of public utilities (water, gas, and electricity), oil extraction, transportation (railways, tramways), and the Suez Canal Company. Most of these concessions were renegotiated. Although these measures implied a redistribution of value added in Egyptian joint-stock companies "in favor of native Egyptians," their effects in terms of investment, employment, and productivity are "difficult to appreciate."[82]

Law 138 opened a new chapter in the legal-political controversy between the Suez Canal Company and the Egyptian government, leading to the renegotiation of the Convention of 1937. According to the law, Egyptian members of the company board would be increased from two to twelve or thirteen, but the company was not willing to accept a provision that would substantially alter its top-level decision-making structure. It thus appealed to the Egyptian Conseil d'Etat (the supreme administrative authority), established in 1946. Once again, the company put forward the international status argument, refusing to be considered an Egyptian company.[83] The argument was probably "juridically weak,"[84] but the issue at stake was political, and it was related to the future of the management of the canal in the postwar world. Not surprisingly, the opinion of

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the Conseil d'Etat was that Law 138 was applicable to the company. After a three-month negotiation, a new Convention was signed on 7 March 1949. The Egyptian government obtained seven percent of gross profits. Regarding employment quotas and Egyptianization, the Convention exempted the company from some provisions of Law 138 and postponed the adoption of some others. With regard to the administrators, it was decided to proceed only with two immediate nominations (Egyptian administrators would thus increase from two to four). Subsequent nominations would be made gradually and according to future vacancies.[85] With regard to the workforce, it was agreed that there was "no total proportion to meet in a specified period." The company pledged to recruit, in the following years, four Egyptians for every five vacancies in the technical sector and nine Egyptians for every ten vacant clerical positions. The Convention recognized, however, that the company needed to safeguard technical capacities and responsibilities "independently from nationality, French, European, or other," and continued to allow the recruitment of "skilled European personnel." Exceptions to quotas were also agreed upon for maritime personnel and pilots (the most firm-specific skilled personnel). As for manual labor, the company would continue to recruit "all the skilled workers it would need regardless of their nationality and would even recruit, for ordinary jobs, a certain proportion of Europeans. This would allow us to welcome some sons and grandsons of former workers, as in the past."[86]

Some commentators saw the Convention of 1949, meant to remain in force until the end of the concession in 1968, as a political victory for the company (which explains its difficult ratification in the Egyptian parliament).[87] President Charles-Roux, for his part, believed the company had made "considerable" concessions in order to adapt "to the circumstances and to the evolution of Egypt in the political, economic, and social domain."[88] Between 1949 and 1955, the Egyptianization of the Suez Company's white-collar staff increased from 24 percent to 42 percent, a proportion lower than that of other French companies in Egypt. There were, however, substantial differences according to categories, with higher levels of Egyptianization among clerical workers (from 31.5 to 50.2 percent) and doctors (from 27.3 to 52.9 percent) and lower ones among pilots (from 7.1 to 15.4 percent) and foremen (from 2.9 to 4.8), as partly allowed by the Convention of 1949.[89]

THE FEMALE STAFF

Women had been employed as wartime auxiliaries in clerical positions, on a daily pay and with no other benefits. During the course of the war, benefits originally offered only to personnel on the official payroll (e.g., cost of living allowance, paid vacation) were extended to the auxiliary personnel. In November 1945 the auxiliaries were granted new regulations and pay arrangements, in particular the shift from daily pay to monthly salary. These decisions were the outcome of pressures coming from the AS, and motivated by the fact that auxiliary personnel worked "side by side with officially enrolled personnel." It would thus be right to offer them "more generous" conditions. Besides the shift to monthly pay, auxiliaries were granted full salary in case of illness for up to thirty days. These improvements would not mean, however, a change in the temporary nature of their employment. Since the shift to monthly salaries and sick pay were benefits normally acquired in case of official hiring, it was emphasized that in these wartime

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conditions such benefits "should not allow any ambiguity as to the specific character of the employment of auxiliary clerks, as it is formally stipulated in their contract that this category of workers is excluded from the permanent workforce."[90] In 1946, the company proceeded to regulate the terms of employment of auxiliaries hired during the war. Seventy office clerks (thirty-nine Egyptians and thirty-one non-Egyptians) were confirmed, while a certain number of women "will be retained in the future under a special permanent framework." All the other auxiliaries were laid off.[91]

Thus women entered the company's offices as permanent, official workers. However, this entailed an organizational innovation. In May 1946, a specific category of "permanent female auxiliaries" (DAP, *Dames auxiliaires permanentes*) was created; it included female office clerks, nurses, and maids. The vast bibliography on the dynamics of feminization of clerical work in Europe and the United States as a result of organizational change has revealed structural similarities in different national cases and time periods. It has convincingly demonstrated that the creation of a separate (female) staff was a common organizational measure of large, hierarchical organizations (banks, large companies, public administrations) in all industrialized Western countries until World War II (and even thereafter). Essentially, the separate staff sought to hinder women's access to higher levels and (better paid) managerial positions. Feminine "careers" were defined exclusively by seniority within the female staff. This system provided the company/organization with a less costly, interchangeable, low-level group of workers whose raises were tied only to seniority and whose turnover was generally guaranteed by the introduction of a marriage bar.[92] The female staff created at the Suez Canal Company in 1946 was designed according to this same rationale and was an important part of the company's internal postwar reorganization. Status on the permanent payroll represented a considerable improvement in the working conditions, social identity, and visibility of these women. However, given the rigid rules governing the female staff, women would somehow remain in an "auxiliary" status, segregated in their own staff. Though on the official payroll, they continued to be defined as auxiliaries, a synonym for female clerks. During the war, married women had been hired and even granted maternity benefits. By contrast, the new postwar regulation of the female staff introduced a marriage bar, justified as conforming to "Egyptian customs," according to which married women generally "did not work."[93]

All *dames employées* received the same basic salary (thirty EL), irrespective of their tasks. Salary increases were exclusively tied to seniority. However, in order to ensure efficiency and motivation, a system of bonuses was introduced. A monthly bonus of five EL was granted to those women "occupying a position of confidence" or those "who perform tasks where higher professional skills are required: editing, record-keeping, secretarial."[94] Nurses and maids had a lower salary—about half to one-third less—than female clerks. Benefits and other welfare measures, like housing allowances and pensions, were subject to limitations. Occasional requests from the Services d'Egypte to extend to women some such rights granted to male personnel were consistently rejected by the Paris headquarters. In September 1948, a request for housing allowances for women who "cannot live with their parents," and the introduction of merit-based salary raises for the female staff, met firm opposition. According to the deputy director general, Jacques Georges-Picot, the goal of the proposed measures was to "draw the status of auxiliary personnel closer to that of our permanent staff.

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However, current circumstances increasingly require a clear differentiation between the two statuses."[95]

The creation of the separate female staff had another fundamental motivation: favoring the recruitment of Egyptian women. The Egyptianization of women clerks would have helped the company fill the quotas of Egyptian personnel: hiring Egyptian women or Egyptians in less skilled positions was the "best way to use the credit of non-Egyptians," thus allowing the company to continue to recruit Europeans for jobs involving greater responsibility.[96] The separate female staff thus contributed to a twofold goal: it created a secondary, less expensive category of personnel, while at the same time confining Egyptianization to lower categories: it was necessary to "improve as much as possible the actual percentages of Egyptian women," and "to ensure that they do not usurp the functions reserved for the male personnel."[97] The combination of "racial" and "gender" criteria thus became the basis of an organizational strategy meant to restructure the enterprise after the upheavals of war, and to face the new political dimension of relations with the Egyptian government.

A long note written by the director general in November 1950 explained the political rationale underlying the creation of the separate female staff and its Egyptianization. The "course of action" was, first, to have the existence of the female staff "officially recognized by the Egyptian Administration." This would permit female clerks to be included in the fulfillment of quotas. Then, priority would be given to hire such workers, especially the least expensive among them: "I consider it absolutely indispensable to accelerate the Egyptianization of this auxiliary personnel, especially of Nurses and Maids." From then on, non-Egyptian women could be hired only as exceptions to the rule: "until further orders," the *chefs de services* could hire non-Egyptian female clerks "only in exceptional circumstances and after having obtained the prior agreement from Headquarters."

> Next 1 January [1951], we can estimate that the percentage of Egyptians in the white-collar category [*cadre des employés*] will be approximately forty-three percent. As soon as our staff of female auxiliaries reaches a percentage more or less equivalent to that of the Egyptian elements—it only reaches twenty-three percent currently—I will put the Agent Supérieur in charge of contacting the Egyptian Administration to request official recognition of this staff, the access to which . . . should be regulated in respect to the percentage of Egyptians and non-Egyptians likely to be hired.[98]

Thanks to Egyptian female clerks, it would be less painful for the company to honor the Convention of 1949 requiring quotas of Egyptians, and therefore "to accommodate monsieur Mahmoud el Haguine," the director-general of the Department of Companies in the Egyptian Ministry of Industry,[99] while reserving as many high-responsibility jobs and positions as possible for Europeans.

FEMALE HIERARCHIES

Following these decisions, the number of Egyptian women within the company's female clerical staff jumped from four out of thirty-four, or 8.8 percent, in 1947, to thirty-two out of sixty-six, or 48.5 percent, in 1952 (see Table 1). Other nationalities were represented in more or less the same proportion as before the war, with a predominance

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TABLE 1. *Evolution of female clerical employment (*dames auxiliaires permanentes *[DAP]) at the Services d'Egypte of the Suez Canal Company, on 31 December of each year*

Year	Total DAP	Egyptian	% Egyptian
1947	34	4	8.8
1948	51	7	13.7
1949	53	11	20.7
1950	61	20	32.8
1951	62	22	35.5
1952	66	32	48.5
1953	66	37	56.0
1954	72	45	62.5
1955	84	56	66.7

Source: "Effectif des dames auxiliaires permanentes de 1947 à 1955," Archives historiques de la Compagnie universelle du canal maritime de Suez, 2000 038 318.

TABLE 2. *Permanent female auxiliaries (*dames auxiliaires permanentes *[DAP]) at the Services d'Egypte of the Suez Canal Company, on 31 December 1951, by nationality*

DAP	Nationality
22	Egyptian
15	French
6	Greek
6	Maltese
5	Italian
3	Yugoslav
1	Polish
1	British

Source: Archives historiques de la Compagnie universelle du canal maritime de Suez, 2000 038 317/2.

of French nationals (see Table 2). Table 2 raises the question of naturalization. Some of the "Egyptians" listed here could in fact have been naturalized "Europeans." However, some archival clues allow us to establish that the classification by nationality, as provided in Table 2, shows an awareness of national distinctions that was not present in similar prewar statistics, as one would expect given the new legal requirements. In two cases reported in Table 2, a non-Egyptian nationality is specified (one Russian, the other Lebanese), indicating that these were probably cases of naturalization and thus that all the others were "real" Egyptians (see next section).

We have no personal information, other than age, about these Egyptian women (Table 3). We have scant more about the Europeans, gathered mainly from some of their correspondence with the Office of Personnel regarding retirement or dismissal,

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TABLE 3. *Permanent female auxiliaries (*dames auxiliaires permanentes *[DAP]) at the Services d'Egypte of the Suez Canal Company, on 31 December 1951, by service*

DAP	Number
Agence Supérieure Administration	8
	13
Works	24
Transit	17

Source: Archives historiques de la Compagnie universelle du canal maritime de Suez, 2000 038 317/2.

letters of recommendation for other jobs, or repatriation of their furniture when they left for France, Italy, or Great Britain after the company was nationalized in 1956. Most of these European women clerks were born in Egypt, probably *enfants du canal*,[100] that is, the daughters of previous generations of immigrants to the canal zone, as consistent with all other findings in this research. Two of our Maltese clerks were sisters, born in Port Said, and lived in Ismailia. Two Italian sisters were the daughters of an Italian consular agent in Ismailia, where they lived, on rue Negrelli. One Frenchwoman hired in September 1939 was born in Cairo in 1915 and lived in Ismailia, on rue Bucarest. One Yugoslav, hired in October 1943, was born in Port Said in 1924.

Half of the women in the workforce in 1951 had been hired before or during the war (see Table 4). The other half, hired after the war, were all Egyptian. Most of the female clerks were unmarried, and the few exceptions had been hired before the war.[101] They showed frequent bonds of kinship with other personnel in the company: a Frenchwoman was the daughter of a company's "retired clerk," another Frenchwoman was the daughter of a Transit worker, a Maltese was the daughter of a retired foreman, an Egyptian (the one of Russian origin) hired before the war was the daughter of a retired worker, an Italian had two employed brothers (one as a copywriter in the Administrative Service and the other a measurer at Transit), and another Egyptian had a brother employed as a copywriter in the Works Service. This practice was so common that a special measure was adopted to exclude *dames employées* from family benefits if they were "daughters of Company's employees."[102]

In December 1951, the procedure for hiring clerical workers (male and female) was further defined, in order to avoid any doubt about the question of nationality. First, a written exam had to be passed in Cairo. Then, candidates admitted to the oral exam, which was to be taken "in presence of a delegate of the Egyptian government," had to provide documentation attesting that "they are real Egyptians" (*qu'ils sont bien Egyptiens*).[103] These new rules were probably responsible for the further increase in the number of Egyptian female clerks, which in 1955 reached fifty-six, or 66.7 percent of the female clerical workforce (see Table 1).

As we have seen, the rules governing the female staff were rigid: all women (except nurses and maids) had the same base salary irrespective of their tasks and could not

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TABLE 4. *Permanent female auxiliaries (*dames auxiliaires permanentes *[DAP]) at the Services d'Egypte of the Suez Canal Company, on 31 December 1951, by seniority*

DAP	Seniority
20	>8 years (between 8 and 14)
15	Between 4 and 7 years
11	3 years
16	≤2 years (all Egyptians)

Source: Archives historiques de la Compagnie universelle du canal maritime de Suez, 2000 038 317/2.

receive salary increases except for seniority. Nor was any career advancement foreseen: indeed, the rationale underlying the creation of the female staff had been to exclude women from high-level positions in the company's hierarchy. However, the increasing number of female clerks, the progressive Egyptianization of the female staff, and the fact that some of them may in fact have performed tasks of some responsibility, which could not be rewarded under the current rules, led in December 1953 to a revision of the structure of the female staff. The revision provided for a hierarchization of the female staff, which, beginning on 1 January 1954, was divided into two groups: *dames auxiliaries* (DA), which was the bottom level, and *dames auxiliaires confirmées* (DAC). The rules specified that the latter group should never exceed half the total female staff. In order to be assigned to one group or the other, all female clerks in service had to take an exam (writing, orthography, dactylography, stenography). For future hires, a preliminary interview dealing with "general culture and professional attitudes" had to be passed. After a six-month trial period, a regular exam would be taken. Exams for the female staff would be held periodically.[104]

The salary structure was revised, too. For clerks hired before 1954, salaries would range from 36.5 to 48 EL for DA; and from 40 to 60 for DAC. For those hired after 1954, salaries were as follows: DA on trial (first 6 months), from 32 to 36.6; DA, from 36.5 to 52; DAC, from 44 to 60 EL. Since it was "more difficult to recruit in the isthmus area than in Cairo," women in the isthmus offices should be "a little better paid." In any case, the *chefs de service* had to make sure that they would perform only "feminine administrative tasks" (*travaux administratifs féminins*), that is, "dactylography, stenography, minor archival tasks and filing, incoming and outgoing correspondence." They were to be excluded from all "accounting tasks," which were entrusted entirely to men.[105] It is evident that the hierarchization of the female staff and the strict definition of their tasks and salaries were part of the postwar rationalization and modernization of the company's offices. And rationalization meant a redefinition of the gendered structure of office work. As far as salaries were concerned, increases progressing "too quickly towards the maximum salary for each group" were to be avoided. The maximum salary should not be attained "prior to five years before the age of sixty." Instead, the system of merit-based bonuses was enhanced. Monthly dactylography prizes could be awarded, amounting to one EL for DA, from two to three EL for DAC, with a maximum ceiling of three such prizes assigned in the Agence Supérieure, four in the Administrative

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Service, four in Transit, and six in Works. DAC could be granted an additional monthly "function bonus," from three to five EL, "depending on personal merit and relevance of responsibility or specialization."[106] The hierarchy within the female staff was thus founded not in terms of "careers," as no such thing existed for women, but on seniority-based raises and on extra-pay bonuses for women who performed tasks of responsibility or showed particular efficiency.

Although European and Egyptian female clerks (like other employees) continued to work side-by-side in the company's offices, the 1953 revision redefined informally extant hierarchies between *européennes* and *indigènes.* Only Europeans were hired for "top" female positions, that is, those with greater responsibility and higher bonuses: all the personal secretaries of the *chefs de service* were European (the personal secretary of the chief engineer was Italian and the two personal secretaries of the AS were French, as were those of the chief of transit). Almost all the younger and newly hired women were Egyptian. All women employed as telephone switchboard operators (an all-female preserve) and as nurses and maids—the lowest grade of the female staff—were Egyptian.

CONCLUSION

We do not know whether there were Egyptians among the signatories of the collective petition sent in August 1954 by the "female auxiliaries of the Agence Supérieure" in Cairo to improve the conditions of their summer vacation, which most of them spent in Cairo, where the climate was very bad for their "health." For workers living on the isthmus, the proximity to the sea made summer vacation acceptable and it was relatively easy to stay "in good physical conditions"; moreover, the Company provided subventions to allow its personnel to join the clubs along the isthmus. No such provision was adopted in Cairo, where other large European and American firms and Egyptian institutions (Shell, Socony, Bank Misr, and Crédit Lyonnais, according to the petition) had created private clubs for their personnel or gave them subventions to join others. The Cairo female clerks thus asked the company to help them "morally and financially" to join the Cairo clubs.[107] The available documentation does not clarify the outcome of the request.

This episode raises a number of questions about the social visibility of these middle-class women, and of their consumption and social practices, that are beyond the scope of this article, though certainly worth investigating.[108] It is interesting to note, however, that the Suez Canal Company promoted the visibility of its female clerks as a sign of modernity to celebrate its new relations with the postrevolutionary Egyptian government. Together with the Egyptian (male) pilots (who at the time constituted 31 out of 183 pilots, or 17%), Egyptian women operators of the company's telephone center in Ismailia were the protagonists of the August 1955 issue of the company journal, *Le Canal,* written in French with parallel text in Arabic, the last issue before nationalization. Enshrouded in a rhetoric celebrating the company as an instrument of Egypt's new modernizing effort, the article was a collection of interviews with female operators, touching on preferred books (Georghiou's *La vingt-cinquième heure*, de Musset's *Les nuits*), favorite sports (basketball, ballet performed with a sister "auxiliary at Transit"), what they would have liked to do if not phone operators (journalism), and love for their work. Switchboards appeared as the new technological frontier of "risk, the unknown, danger": "My joy peaks

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when, before my very eyes, the board is stabbed with all of my electronic plugs . . .”[109] As we know, this project of shared modernization was short-lived.

The case of the feminization and Egyptianization of clerical work at the Suez Canal Company may provide useful insights into more general patterns of economic and social change in colonial or semicolonial settings, where “contested,” “alternative” modernities are increasingly investigated by historians.[110] As has been suggested, “global histories of modernization must be written from the local—about specific projects and individuals . . . without losing sight of regional, national, and international circumstances.”[111] The aim of this article has been to trace the dynamics of the Egyptianization of female clerical work, which used race/nationality and gender as criteria of exclusion/inclusion and of business organization. The pattern of Egyptianization at the Suez Canal Company can also be seen as a process of exclusion from the company’s internal managerial know-how, with the goal of keeping decision making and jobs of higher responsibility in the hands of Europeans. The company’s decision to create a specific female staff and to accelerate its Egyptianization has been assessed here at the intersection of sociocultural change related to the war experience, the Egyptian government’s postwar political priorities, and the recomposition of gender and national hierarchies and roles within the company.

This article has thus situated the experience of the Suez Company’s first female clerical workers at the intersection of local dynamics (Egyptian nationalism, national projects of modernization and social reform), more general dynamics (cultural models, economic growth, wartime conditions), and business strategies and structures (the organization of a *sui generis* Western enterprise, policies of job stratification and segregation). This experience shows how the “complicating categories” of gender, race, ethnicity, and class are related to each other,[112] and how they are redefined according to historical circumstances. In particular, it confirms the relevance of gender as a methodological category for understanding paths and practices of modernization.

NOTES

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[1]Valeska Huber, *Channelling Mobilities: Migration and Globalisation in the Suez Canal Region and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[2]Hubert Bonin, *History of the Suez Canal Company, 1858–2008: Between Controversy and Utility* (Geneva: Droz, 2010). This is an updated edition of his *Suez: du canal à la finance, 1858–1987* (Paris: Economica, 1987).

[3]Caroline Piquet, *La Compagnie du canal de Suez. Une concession française en Egypte (1888–1956)* (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris Sorbonne, 2008); idem, *Histoire du Canal de Suez* (Paris: Perrin, 2009).

[4]Roger Owen and Sevket Pamuk, *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 33.

[5]Anthony Gorman, *Historians, State and Politics in Twentieth Century Egypt: Contesting the Nation* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 178.

[6]For methodological overviews of the relationship between local and global history, with specific reference to labor history, see Jan Lucassen, ed., *Global Labour History: A State of the Art* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008); and Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

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[7]On the construction of the canal, see Nathalie Montel, *Le chantier du canal de Suez (1859–1869). Une histoire des pratiques techniques* (Paris: Presses de l'École nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, 1998); and Zachary Karabell, *Parting the Desert: The Creation of the Suez Canal* (New York: Vintage, 2003).

[8]Foreign communities in Egypt are the subject of a large bibliography. Classic general studies include Marius Deeb, "The Socioeconomic Role of the Local Foreign Minorities in Modern Egypt, 1805–1961," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9 (1978): 11–22; and Joel Beinin, "Society and Economy, 1923–1952," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. M.W. Daly (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2:309–33. On the settlement in the canal zone of Egyptian and Middle Eastern Jews who were attracted by hiring opportunities at the Suez Company, see Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914–1952* (London: Tauris, 1989).

[9]The vast intra-Mediterranean movement of workers in the late 19th and mid-20th centuries has attracted new interest in the historiography of colonial interactions and entanglements between the two shores of the Mediterranean. See Manuel Borutta and Sakis Gekas, "A Colonial Sea: The Mediterranean, 1798–1956"; and Sakis Gekas, "Colonial Migrants and the Making of a British Mediterranean," *European Review of History-Revue européenne d'histoire* 19 (2012): 1–13, 75–92.

[10]Valeska Huber, "Connecting Colonial Seas: The 'International Colonisation' of Port Said and the Suez Canal during and after the First World War," *European Review of History-Revue européenne d'histoire* 19 (2012): 141–61.

[11]André Siegfried, *Suez Panama et le routes maritimes mondiales* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1945), 70.

[12]Piquet, *La Compagnie du canal de Suez*, 255. On the Greek presence in Egypt, see Floresca Karanasou, "The Greeks in Egypt: From Mohammed Ali to Nasser, 1805–1961," in *The Greek Diaspora in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Richard Clogg (London: Macmillan, 1999).

[13]Among the vast bibliography on Italian communities in Egypt, see Marta Petricioli, *Oltre il mito. L'Egitto degli italiani, 1917–1947* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2007); Davide Amicucci, "La comunità italiana in Egitto attraverso i censimenti dal 1882 al 1947," in *Tradizione e modernizzazione in Egitto:1798–1998*, ed. Paolo Branca (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2000), 81–94; and Ettore Rossi, "Gli Italiani d'Egitto," in *Egitto moderno*, ed. Angelo Sammarco et al. (Rome: Roma Edizioni, 1939), 79–88. For a general overview on Italy and the canal, see Salvatore Bono, "Il Canale di Suez e l'Italia," *Mediterranea* 3 (2006): 411–22. On Italian workers in the Suez Canal zone, see Federico Cresti, "Comunità proletarie italiane nell'Africa mediterranea tra XIX secolo e periodo fascista," *Mediterranea* 5 (2008): 189–214.

[14]This was a "racial" model of work segregation very similar to that of the American oil fields in the Middle East studied by Robert Vitalis, in *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (London: Verso, 2009).

[15]Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

[16]Ann Laura Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31 (1989): 134–61, esp. 138.

[17]Huber, "Connecting Colonial Seas."

[18]For recent reviews of this discussion, see Will Hanley, "Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies," *History Compass* 6 (2008): 1346–67, who also suggests that histories of Middle East cosmopolitanism should rely less on literary sources and more on administrative, economic, and legal records. See also Henk Driessen, "Mediterranean Port Cities: Cosmopolitanism Reconsidered," *History and Anthropology* 16 (2005): 129–41.

[19]Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997), 3, 10–11, 18.

[20]Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*, 26.

[21]Alice Kessler-Harris, "Reframing the History of Women's Wage Labor: Challenges of a Global Perspective," in *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 273.

[22]Alice Kessler-Harris, "Gender and Work: Possibilities for a Global, Historical Overview," in *Women's History in Global Perspective*, ed. Bonnie Smith (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2004–2005), 1:145–94, esp. 147.

[23]Philippa Levine, "Introduction: Why Gender and Empire?," in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1, 3; Pascale Barthélémy, Luc Capdevila, and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, "Femmes, genre et colonisations," *Clio* 33 (2011): 7–22.

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[24]Jean Allman and Antoinette Burton, "Destination Globalization? Women, Gender and Comparative Colonial Histories in the New Millennium," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 4, no. 1 (2003).

[25]Julia Clancy-Smith, "Twentieth-Century Historians and Historiography of the Middle East: Women, Gender, and Empire," in *Middle East Historiographies: Narrating the Twentieth Century*, ed. Israel Gershoni, Amy Singer, and Y. Hakan Erdem (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 2006), 70–100.

[26]Marilyn Booth, "New Directions in Middle East Women's and Gender History," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 4, no. 1 (2003).

[27]The "neglect of non-industrial and non-revolutionary workers" is precisely one of the "drawbacks" of global labor historiography, as underlined by Jan Lucassen, "Writing Global Labour History, c. 1800–1940: A Historiography of Concepts, Periods and Geographical Scope," in Lucassen, *Global Labour History,* 88; and Jürgen Kocka, "How Can One Make Labour History Interesting Again?," *European Review* 9 (2001): 201–12.

[28]See Geoffrey D. Schad's review of Keith D Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011): 556–58.

[29]The firman, the statute of the company, and additional official documents are published in Jules Charles-Roux, *L'isthme et le canal de Suez: Historique—Etat actuel* (Paris: Hachette, 1901); and in English in *Archives of Empire*, vol. 1, *From the East India Company to the Suez Canal*, ed. Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

[30]Charles W. Hallberg, *The Suez Canal: Its History and Diplomatic Importance* (New York: Columbia University Press, reprint New York: Octagon Books, 1974), 405–406; David Landes, *Bankers and Pashas: International Finance and Economic Imperialism in Egypt* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), chap. 7; Pierre Crabitès, *The Spoliation of Suez* (London: Routledge, 1940).

[31]Hossam M. Issa, *Capitalisme et sociétés anonymes en Egypte* (Paris: Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence, Pichon et Durand-Auzias, 1970); Samir Saul, *La France et l'Egypte de 1882 à 1914. Intérêts économiques et implications politiques* (Paris: Comité pour l'Histoire économique et financière de la France, 1997).

[32]The Convention of 1888 was signed by Great Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Spain, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire. On the convention as part of "the Egyptian question," which was in turn "part of the Mediterranean question" of the time, see Hugh J. Shonfield, *The Suez Canal* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939); and idem, *The Suez Canal in Peace and War, 1869–1969* (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1969).

[33]Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law, 1870–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[34]Douglas Anthony Farnie, *East and West of Suez: The Suez Canal in History, 1854–1956* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

[35]On this controversy, classic readings are Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Youssef Chala, *Le Canal de Suez, 1854–1957* (Alexandria: Société Egyptienne de Droit International, 1958); and Mohammed Hassaneyn Heykal, *L'Affaire de Suez, Un regard égyptien* (Paris: Ramsay, 1987). On the French perspective, see Roger Pinto, "L'affaire de Suez. Problèmes juridiques," *Annuaire français de droit international* 2 (1956): 20–45.

[36]Piquet, *La Compagnie du canal de Suez,* 517.

[37]Ibid., 90, 509. On the 1909–10 negotiations see also Hallberg, *The Suez Canal*, 405–406.

[38]"The composition of the workforce in the canal zone is peculiar, as it is characterized by a stratification of ethnic and social groups." Siegfried, *Suez Panama*, 70.

[39]The presidents of the company were: Ferdinand de Lesseps (1858–94); Jules Guichard (1894–96); Auguste Louis Albéric, prince d'Arenberg (1896–1913); Charles Jonnard (1913–27); Louis, Marquis de Vogüé (1927–48); and François Charles-Roux (1948–56).

[40]The CdA included representatives of French aristocratic families and business and financial interests, British armed forces and shipping companies, and other European commercial interests. On the eve of World War I, it included nineteen French, ten British, one German, and one Dutch member. For extensive accounts on the company structure, see Bonin, *History of the Suez Canal Company*; and Piquet, *La Compagnie du canal de Suez.*

[41]For the period covered here, the AS position was held by Comte Charles de Sérionne (1894–1929); Baron Louis de Benoist (1929–48); and Comte Jean Philippe de Grailly (1948–56).

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[42]On the "triple" nature of the AS, who was chief of the Services d'Egypte, chief of the Administrative Service, and liaison officer with the Paris headquarters, see Piquet, *La Compagnie du canal de Suez,* 72–73, 237.

[43]Ibid., 228.

[44]Ibid., 231–32.

[45]On the role of the company in the "urban governance" of the isthmus cities, see Michael Reimer, "Urban Government and Administration in Egypt, 1805–1914," *Die Welt des Islams* 39 (1999): 289–318.

[46]Siegfried, *Suez Panama*, 76–77; Paul Parfond, *Pilotes de Suez* (Paris: Editions France Empire, 1957).

[47]Siegfried, *Suez Panama*, 76.

[48]Piquet, *La Compagnie du canal de Suez*, 229.

[49]Reading through the company's records, the only exceptions to this rule seem to have been the company hospitals, where young Egyptian doctors and nurses were trained, as these personnel were relatively external to the actual organization of the company.

[50]Caroline Piquet, "Les employés de la Compagnie du Canal de Suez de 1869 à 1956: culture du travail et douceur de vie de l'Egypte," in *Des Français Outre Mer*, ed. Sarah Mohamed-Gaillard and Maria Nomo Navarrete (Paris: PUPS, Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2005), 85–97.

[51]Services d'Egypte, *Employés surnuméraires et temporaires*, au 31 decembre 1924; Services d'Egypte, *Employés surnuméraires et temporaires*, du 1er Janvier 1925 au 31 decembre 1928, Archives historiques de la Compagnie universelle du canal maritime de Suez (hereafter AHCUCMS), Archives du Monde du Travail, Roubaix, 2000 038 319.

[52]On the Egyptian political context after World War I, see Selma Botman, "The Liberal Age, 1923–1952," in Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 2, chap. 12.

[53]For a fine and detailed analysis of nationality laws of the 1920s and their effects on foreign identities in Egypt, see Frédéric Abécassis and Anne Le Gall-Kazazian, "L'identité au miroir du droit. Le statut des personnes en Égypte (fin XIX^{e} - milieu XX^{e} siècle)," *Égypte/Monde arabe* 11 (1992): 11–38.

[54]On the effects of nationality laws on foreign minorities, which have been studied mainly in relation to Egyptian Jewry but which also affected other non-Muslim, *mutamaṣṣir* communities, see, among many others, Shimon Shamir, "The Evolution of the Egyptian Nationality Laws and Their Application to the Jews in the Monarchy Period," in *The Jews of Egypt: A Mediterranean Society in Modern Times*, ed. Shimon Shamir (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987); Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998); and Deeb, *The Socioeconomic Role of the Local Foreign Minorities*, 21–22.

[55]Abécassis and Le Gall-Kazazian, "L'identité au miroir du droit," 34.

[56]The relationship between the Egyptian government and private business has been the subject of a long historiographical debate. See Robert L. Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise, and Economic Change in Egypt, 1918–1952* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Eric Davis, *Challenging Colonialism: Bank Misr and Egyptian Industrialization, 1920–1941* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983). For a review of the debate, see Robert Vitalis, "The End of Third Worldism in Egyptian Studies," *Arab Studies Journal* 4 (1996): 13–32. For recent research and an updated methodological discussion on this subject, see Omar D. Foda, "The Pyramid and the Crown: The Egyptian Beer Industry from 1897 to 1963," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 139–158.

[57]Bent Hansen, *The Political Economy of Poverty, Equity, and Growth: Egypt and Turkey* (New York and Oxford: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 1991), 103.

[58]The category of *employé* included "any person performing an administrative or technical task or having the position of clerk or accountant and receiving a salary from the company." Issa, *Capitalisme et sociétés anonymes*, 181.

[59]Iman Farag, "'*Un emploi pour un diplôme*'. L'usure d'un accord tacite (1930–1990)," *Égypte/Monde arabe* 4–5 (2001): 173–90.

[60]Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005); Mona L. Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman: Consumerism, Education, and National Identity, 1863–1922* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Nadje Al-Ali, *Secularism, Gender and the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women's Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Selma Botman, *Engendering Citizenship in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Lucia Sorbera, "Gli esordi del femminismo egiziano. Costruzione e superamento di uno spazio nazionale femminile," *Genesis* 6 (2007): 115–36.

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[61]Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 174; Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing and Liberating Egypt (1805/1923)* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005).

[61]On the work of Egyptian women between the wars, see Judith E. Tucker, "Women in the Middle East and North Africa: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Women in the Middle East and North Africa: Restoring Women to History*, ed. Guity Nashat and Judith E. Tucker (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1999). See also, for references to middle-class education and work, Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie, eds., *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[62]This connection is highlighted also by Alain Roussillon, "Réforme sociale et politique en Égypte au tournant des années 1940," *Égypte/Monde arabe* 18–19 (1994), http://ema.revues.org/105.

[63]The agreement provided for the end of British occupation and redefined the presence of British troops in the Suez Canal, although its actual implementation would be postponed until after the war, when a new agreement was signed. Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 229–30. For a recent general assessment of the role of the canal as a long-term persistent strategic priority of British presence in the Middle East, see John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[64]Compagnie universelle du Canal maritime de Suez (hereafter CUCMS), Assemblée générale des actionnaires, *Rapport presenté au nom du Conseil d'Administration* (hereafter CdA), 1936 and 1937.

[65]Piquet, *La Compagnie du canal de Suez,* 132.

[66]CUCMS, CdA 1938. The first Egyptian to enter the board was Sabri Pasha, undersecretary of state for foreign affairs and brother of the queen mother; the second, the following year, was Ismaʿil Sidqi Pasha, the former prime minister and former finance minister.

[67]Paola Pizzo, *L'Egitto agli Egiziani! Cristiani, musulmani e idea nazionale (1882–1936)* (Turin: Zamorani, 2002); Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882–1954* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1998).

[68]Robert L. Tignor, *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire: State and Business in Decolonizing Egypt, Nigeria, and Kenya, 1945–1963* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998); Robert Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide: Business Conflict and the End of Empire in Egypt* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1995).

[69]Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*, 13.

[70]Guerre 1939, Questions de Personnel, Tome Second, Mesures nées de la guerre, *Création d'un Bureau de personnel,* AHCUCMS, 2000 038 315.

[71]Guerre 1939, Questions de Personnel, Tome Premier, *Evolution des effectifs depuis Juin 1940,* AHCUCMS, 2000 038 315.

[72]Piquet, *La Compagnie du canal de Suez*, 145.

[73]Guerre 1939, Questions de Personnel, Tome Premier, *Evolution des effectifs du personnel ouvrier de la Compagnie*, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 315.

[74]CUCMS, CdA 1945.

[75]Guerre 1939, Questions de Personnel, Tome Premier, *Nominations et augmentations en 1942, Caractère fictif de ces dernières*; Conférence des Chefs de service, 10 December 1943, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 315.

[76]Guerre 1939, Questions de Personnel, Tome second, Mesures nées de la guerre, *Conditions de solde des agents auxiliaires*, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 315.

[77]Guerre 1939, Questions de Personnel, Tome second, Mesures nées de la guerre, *Personnel auxiliaire*, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 315.

[78]Guerre 1939, Questions de Personnel, Tome second, Mesures nées de la guerre, *Mesure spéciale pour le personnel auxiliaire féminin: durée et conditions de l'absence motivée par les couches*, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 315.

[79]It was S. Pinkney Tuck, ex-*chargé d'affaires* in Vichy France and U.S. ambassador to Egypt between 1946 and 1948. On postwar nominations, see Piquet, *La Compagnie du canal de Suez*, 174–75; and Jacques Georges-Picot, *Souvenirs d'une longue carrière. De la rue de Rivoli à la Compagnie de Suez, 1920–1971*, ed. Nathalie Carré de Malberg and Hubert Bonin (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 1993).

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[80]On this law, see Joel Beinin, *The Struggle for Worker Rights in Egypt* (Washington, D.C.: Solidarity Center, 2010), 8; on the effects of the war on Egyptian trade unions and on workers' protests in general, see Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*.

[81]CUCMS, CdA 1945.

[82]Hansen, *The Political Economy of Poverty,* 103.

[83]CUCMS, CdA 1949.

[84]Issa, *Capitalisme et sociétés anonymes en Egypte,* 203.

[85]At the moment of nationalization in 1956, the board was composed of sixteen French, nine British, five Egyptian, one American, and one Dutch administrator.

[86]CUCMS, CdA 1949.

[87]"Once more Egypt bowed before the Suez Company . . . once again the foreign control turned into political power." Issa, *Capitalisme et sociétés anonymes en Egypte*, 214.

[88]CUCMS, CdA 1949.

[89]Piquet, *La Compagnie du canale de Suez*, 305–307.

[90]Lettre du Directeur du Personnel au Directeur général, *Commis auxiliares. Contrat de travail 1946*, 14 November 1945, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 317/1.

[91]*Création du Cadre des DAP (Dames auxiliaires permanentes)*, Décision 85951 du 6 Mai 1946, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 317/1.

[92]Among many others, see Gregory Anderson, ed., *The White Blouse Revolution: Female Office Workers since 1870* (New York: St. Martin's, 1988); Samuel Cohn, *The Process of Occupational Sex-typing: The Feminization of Clerical Labor in Great Britain, 1870–1936* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1985); and Rosemary Crompton and Gareth Jones, *White-Collar Proletariat: Deskilling and Gender in Clerical Work* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

[93]Services d'Egypte, *Etat des dames auxiliaires du cadre permanent au 1er avril 1950*, AHCUCMS, 200038 316.

[94]Service du Personnel, Dames auxiliaires de bureau, "Lettre du Directeur général adjoint Jacques Georges-Picot à l'Agent supérieur," 23 September 1948, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 317/2.

[95]Service du Personnel, Dames auxiliaires de bureau, "Lettre du Directeur général adjoint Jacques Georges-Picot à l'Agent supérieur," 23 September 1948, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 317/2.

[96]Service du Personnel, Dames auxiliaires de bureau, "Lettre du Chef de Service administratif au Directeur Général," *Mutations Engagements*, 30 January 1950, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 317/2.

[97]"Note jointe à la Lettre n 654 du 4 août 1950 de M. le Chef du service administratif à M. le Directeur général," 29 September 1950, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 316.

[98]Service du Personnel, Dames auxiliaires, Situation des D.A. devant le gouvermement égyptien, "Lettre du Directeur général au Chef du service administratif," *Personnel auxiliaire féminin,* 29 November 1950, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 316.

[99]Ibid.

[100]Piquet, "Les employés de la Compagnie du Canal de Suez," 93.

[101]A divorced French woman had one child; a Greek was married to a Transit worker and had a child; a Yugoslav widow of a worker had a child.

[102]*Création du Cadre des DAP (Dames auxiliaires permanentes)*, Décision 85951 du 6 Mai 1946, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 316.

[103]"Personnel-Engagement-Procédure Administrative à suivre depuis le dépôt de la candidature jusqu'au classement. Candidats egyptiens à un poste d'employé," 31 December 1951, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 317/2.

[104]"Lettre du Chef du Personnel au Chef de Service Administratif," *Auxiliares féminines—Améloration de leur position administrative*, 16 December 1953, AHCUCMS, 2000 038 318.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Ibid.

[107]AHCUCMS, 200038 316.

[108]A recent work touching on these themes is Nancy Y. Reynolds, "Entangled Communities: Interethnic Relationships among Urban Salesclerks and Domestic Workers in Egypt, 1927–1961," *European Review of History-Revue européenne d'histoire* 19 (2012): 113–39.

[109]*Le Canal*, no. 19, August 1955.

[110]Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C.A. Bayly, "The Connected World of Empires," in *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, ed. Fawaz and Bayly (New York: Columbia University Press,

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2002); with particular reference to Suez, see Huber, *Channelling Mobilities*; and idem, "Connecting Colonial Seas."

[111]David C. Engerman and Corinna N. Unger, "Towards a Global History of Modernization," *Diplomatic History* 33 (2009): 375–85, esp. 377.

[112]Eileen Boris and Angelique Janssens, eds., *Complicating Categories: Gender, Class, Race, and Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7; Ruth Frager, "Labour History and the Interlocking Hierarchies of Class, Ethnicity, and Gender," *International Review of Social History* 44 (1999): 217–47; Pamela Scully, "Race and Ethnicity in Women's and Gender History in Global Perspective," in *Women's History in Global Perspective*, vol. 1, ed. Bonnie Smith (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2004–2005).

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