

# **Society and Economy in Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean**

**1600-1900**

## **ESSAYS IN HONOR OF ANDRÉ RAYMOND**

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### **Acknowledgements**

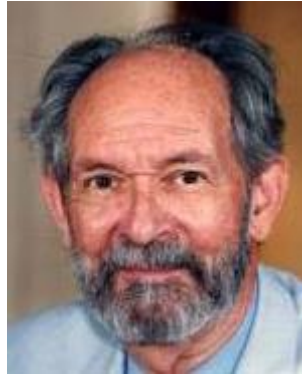
The editors would like to acknowledge the help and assistance of the various institutions that initiated, organized, and financed the celebrations in honor of Professor André Raymond and in particular the conference that gave rise to the papers included in this present volume. The Egyptian Society for Historical Studies was eager to celebrate the work of a historian who has spent much of his professional life studying Egypt. The response of the Supreme Council for Culture, especially Dr. Gaber Asfour, its secretary general, was similarly enthusiastic. Many months of organization undertaken by Dr. Emad Abou Ghazi of the Supreme Council for Culture, himself a historian, and the board of the Egyptian Society for Historical Studies, brought to fruition the meeting of 2-4 April 2005 at the Supreme Council for Culture in Gezira, Cairo. Provost Tim Sullivan and Dean Anne Lesch of the American University in Cairo also expressed an eagerness to be part of these celebrations and to publish the conference papers in the English Language. Their help in facilitating this publication is hereby acknowledged.

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## Introduction

### André Raymond, the Historian

*Nelly Hanna and Raouf Abbas*



André Raymond

André Raymond has been at the forefront of historical studies on Egypt during the Ottoman period for about four decades. His book, *Artisans et Commerçants du Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, published in 1973, was the first of several books on Cairo and other Arab cities in the Ottoman period, and of numerous articles on various subjects dealing with that same place and time. Today as we contemplate the work of this scholar, we can ask why his contribution to the field remains relevant to the present time despite the lapse of more than three decades since his first book appeared.

Raymond was among the first scholars to open the door to the possibility of studying eighteenth-century Egypt as history, applying the same methods and approaches as in the study of other regions in the Mediterranean or Europe. Until then, eighteenth-century Egypt had been considered the last phase of a millennium of decline, to which the modernization and orientalist paradigms had been applied. What Raymond suggested was quite a different approach. His work showed that there was a dynamic history and society, where change and material conditions had an effect on society. This was an enormous change in the way the history of Egypt before Muhammad 'Ali was interpreted. Peter Gran's article in this volume explores his contribution to the historiography of the early modern period in Egypt.

*Artisans et Commerçants*, as well as the many studies that André Raymond undertook, made use of two methodologies: the Annales school and historical materialism. The influence of the Annales school was evident in a number of

ways. First among these was the extent and precision of the data he based his work on, and his analysis of this data with the aim of identifying long-term trends. This work was based on an enormous amount of material, a large part of it from court records, which was statistically analyzed. The court records that were used as the basis for this book showed that it was possible, for the first time, to analyze in a systematic way the inheritance deeds of merchants, Mamluks, and craftsmen and tradesmen.

The influence of the historical materialism approach was also evident in his emphasis on economic conditions, on the struggle between Mamluks merchants, and craftsmen to control resources, usually in the form of taxation, and on the fundamental role of material conditions in forging alliances and shaping social relations. More importantly, social groups, whether the merchants, the Mamluks, or the craftsmen and tradesmen, were studied in relation to each other in an interactive relationship, rather than as static and unrelated social blocks. His work showed that we cannot simply talk of ruler and ruled because the relationship between the Mamluk ruling class and merchants and craftsmen was constantly being modified by the conditions of the time. The two centuries that preceded the French Expedition of 1798 and the rule of Muhammad 'Ali (r. 1805-48) were explored in the framework of social changes; the conflict over resources, and the power struggles among the Mamluks and between them and the state. Implicitly, this approach offered an alternative perspective to the one that dominated Ottoman studies at the time when *Artisans et Commerçants* appeared (1973), notably that Ottoman history could be divided into two large periods: a 'classical age,' which covered the sixteenth century, and an age of decline in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Raymond did not explicitly disagree with this periodization but he did show that there were other ways of understanding change.

Many more studies emerged in the years following the publication of this first book. At the basis of many of them was the attempt to understand the urban history, not only of Cairo, but of some of the major cities of the Arab speaking world-Aleppo, Damascus, Tunis-and to develop a methodology for such urban history. André Raymond started off from some of the premises that dominated many of the studies at that time. Among these was the emphasis on the absence of municipalities in Islamic cities before the nineteenth century, which resulted in a state of urban 'disorder'; the isolation of the city from its hinterland and from the rest of the world; and the general decline that was supposed to have afflicted cities until then.

Raymond's work over the last three decades has addressed all of these issues. One of his concerns was to find ways to estimate urban populations. In view of the lack of the kind of Ottoman population census available for certain parts of Syria and Anatolia, such estimations were not easy. In the pre-industrial city,

prior to the period when permanent mass migration from rural to urban was an indication of crises in rural areas, the growth of cities was an indication of urban health and vitality. His attempts to find indications of population growth developed in different directions but were linked to urban geography or topography. One way he devised to estimate population growth was by the number of buildings for public use such as the public baths, which could be found in all the parts of the city. He took a significant growth in the number of public baths as being indicative of a growth in population. In another study, he studied the built-up area of Cairo, comparing the data available in the fifteenth century to that available at the end of the eighteenth century, again leading to the same conclusion: there was a significant expansion of the population. Finally, one of his studies was comparative in method. It explored a trend that he had detected in Cairo, Aleppo, and Tunis, at about the same time, notably the displacement of the tanneries, large industrial complexes usually located at the borders of cities, from where they had been located to regions in the peripheries of three cities which were less densely inhabited. This transfer was another indication of urban growth. The comparative method used in this study made another point, notably that the three cities in question experienced a similar phenomena at almost the same time, suggesting that there were common reasons for this phenomena. The implication was that the region had a certain coherence and there was a relevance in trying to understand cities in the larger regional context. Thus all these findings went beyond specific conclusions to more general perspectives of the period. Scholars studying other cities where similar data was available could henceforth apply a similar approach.

Another groundbreaking subject that was central to his concerns was the subject of craftsmen and guilds. Prior to *Artisans et Commerçants*, what we knew of guilds in Cairo was based on one or two manuscripts. The major contribution of the book was not only the use of court records to uncover a mass of available material that could not be found in any other source. It placed craft guilds in a dynamic light, at times reacting to transformations that society was undergoing, and at other times, suffering the consequences of developments over which they had no control. In either case, they were studied in relation to a changing power structure, as the Mamluks tightened their hold over economic resources, among which were the taxes on urban crafts and industries. The relationship between the power structure and the guilds was shown to have undergone dramatic changes in the course of the period from the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth century. This approach to the study of guilds meant that they were removed from being a static block to being part of a social and economic context. More important, the study of guilds was a way of understanding certain aspects of the economy, and more broadly, of society. He showed how they were affected by the acts of the ruling class as well as how they had an

influence on the broader economy. His approach, in other words, was to show a two-way rather than a one-way influence.

Through his archival study of the working population, and more specifically of the inheritances recorded in court registers, Raymond brought to the fore another dimension linked to the guilds, notably the numerical weight of people involved in production, services, and trade, and consequently, the weight of their contribution to the larger economy. His analysis of the number of craftsmen and tradesmen, which he estimated to form about a third of the population of Cairo, was placed in relation to their total wealth, as indicated in their inheritances, and then in relation to the total wealth of the ruling class. The inequalities between craftsmen and the ruling class, which grew dramatically between the late seventeenth and the late eighteenth centuries, were thus put in an economic perspective and could be understood as part of the larger changes affecting society.

*Artisans et Commerçants* made it quite clear that historians could dispose of source materials to write economic history that was not possible for periods prior to the sixteenth or seventeenth century: an economic history that considered the small producers, the merchants, and the tax collectors, all in relation to each other and that could analyze the change in the relationships of these various groups over time. This opened up vast possibilities for new studies.

In the years that followed the publication of *Artisans et Commerçants*, André Raymond extended the geographical sphere of his research. His presence in Damascus at the Institut Français de Damas, where he spent many years, and later on in Aix-en-Provence where he founded the Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman (IREMAM). Traveling frequently to North Africa, Tunis, Algeria and Morocco, he broadened his area of research so as to include cities other than Cairo. Choosing common themes enabled him to develop a comparative approach to Arab cities in their topography, economic activities, and social structures. This was an important step, occurring at about the time when the model of the 'Islamic city,' which had long dominated urban studies, was losing ground among scholars and historians working on the early modern period. It showed that although the 'Islamic city' as a model had some relevance for the early period of Islamic history, by the sixteenth or seventeenth century, it was a model that made less sense. Thus the approach that Raymond developed in relation to Cairo, Aleppo, Damascus, Tunis, and Algiers, based on empirical comparison, provided an alternative approach to understanding the city. Parallels between these cities could be drawn from the bottom up rather than on the basis of an abstract, possibly inexistent, model.

This approach allowed for more interconnected coherence between different cities. The close links trade routes created between these different commercial centers meant that the cities were not only connected by parallel developments but also by the interaction that came with an active trade. As such Raymond's approach challenged the oft-repeated concept of the regional isolation before the French Expedition.

Most of André Raymond's work covered the period 1517 to 1798, or, from the Ottoman conquest to Napoleon's French Expedition. In the French tradition of scholarship, the Napoleonic Expedition brought to an end the decline that had beset the region and introduced the ideas of the *Lumières*. Raymond's book elaborates on the crisis of the last two decades of the eighteenth century without necessarily following this tradition in scholarship. In fact, his use of 1798 as a turning point had a more practical explanation. It was to a large extent related to sources. The sources of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are quite different from those of the nineteenth century. Scholars familiar with the eighteenth century sources have to move to quite a different set of sources, often state archives, when they study the nineteenth century. The court records, so important for the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, decrease drastically in number as the judiciary system was re-organized. State documents of all kinds, on the industries created by Muhammad 'Ali, the educational institution, and the army, appear in voluminous quantities. As a result, the scholar is faced with source materials that are for the most part not comparable. This is a major drawback for those who want to link the two centuries, for Raymond and other historians. The dividing line of 1798 consequently made sense in relation to the subject of available sources and was maintained for practical reasons rather than for broader historical ones. A number of scholars today are making a special effort to link the two centuries in some way, for instance, by studying the eighteenth century in such a way as to show continuity with the nineteenth century or by familiarizing themselves with the sources of both periods. Such efforts are of course very noteworthy.

The articles contained in this volume reflect the influence of André Raymond on the field-in method, approach, and themes-that his numerous books and articles explored, such as his interest in urban social structures and power structures; in trade, commerce, merchants, and artisans. The articles also reflect some of the developments in the field of social history, urban history, and economic history during the Ottoman period that have occurred since *Artisans et Commerçants* first appeared. Raymond's interest in urban social structures touched on numerous social groups, like merchants and craftsmen, non-Muslim communities, and Mamluks. It left out others, like the '*ulama*' and women. Gender studies have since then gained enormous ground. His focus on society and economy in the eighteenth century left out another field which is today at the fore of historical studies, notably cultural history. The articles reflect some

of these developments. They also show the impact that André Raymond had in the field.

Peter Gran's article, taking a global view of the contribution André Raymond made to the field, suggests that his work taken in its totality, has brought the eighteenth century into history. The eighteenth century, as a result of the studies Raymond undertook, could be a meaningful field of study. Gran compares Raymond with another great historian, the Italian Franco Venturi, who did something similar for the history of eighteenth century Italy. Not only periods of great artistic achievements are worthy of our attention. In an attempt to move away from the 'exceptionalism' that has characterized some studies of Middle East history, Gran goes on to compare the broad cultural developments of Egypt and Italy during that time span.

Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot takes a closer look at the power structure toward the end of the Ottoman period, showing a distinction between the power the Mamluk grandees had developed and the authority that the religious establishment had. She also shows how the two types of power were linked; in fact they showed a mutual need for each other.

The theme of work and workers, of craftsmen, merchants, and tradesmen, are central to a number of articles in the present volume. Nicolas Michel's article on the textile workers of Asyut is relevant on several levels. Raymond has shown many years ago the weight of textile production in the Egyptian economy. He also indicated in clear terms that this production spread to many parts of Egypt, although Cairo played a significant role, and that textile constituted one of the main exports of Egypt to Europe and other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, Nicolas Michel's study of textile workers in this Upper Egyptian city is a significant contribution because Asyut was a well-known center for textile production. Very little is known about urban economic activities outside Cairo. Unlike Bilad al-Sham, for which we have studies of many cities-Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Gaza, Jerusalem, for instance--for Egypt, scholarship is highly concentrated on Cairo.

Abdul-Karim Rafeq, whose article spans both Bilad al-Sham and to a lesser extent Egypt, touches on the subject of religious integration in the workplace. He examines the craft guilds, and using a comparative approach, explores the integration of Christians and Jews in the craft guilds by showing the religious affiliations of their members as well as of their leaders. By studying the membership and leadership of the guilds, he comes to the conclusion that although the majority of guild membership was Muslim, many guilds integrated members of the other religious groups, notably Christians and Jews. When Syrians emigrated to Egypt, they tended to maintain the patterns that they had followed in Bilad al-Sham. Thus Syrian Christians and Syrian Muslims were

better integrated in the workplace than Syrian Christians with Copts. Rafeq's argument of religious tolerance in the workplace supports the conclusions that André Raymond reached in a number of articles he wrote on the relations between religious communities.

Husam Abdul Mu'ti's study of merchants from Fez settled in Cairo shows the importance of Maghribi migration from Fez to Egypt in the eighteenth century. The merchants of Fez, many of whom came with already established credentials as merchants, were able to integrate themselves into one of the most lucrative commercial sectors of the time, the Red Sea trade.

Pascale Ghazaleh picks up a theme that was central to Raymond's work. Her article, based on inheritance records, mainly of merchants, explores the way that property was transferred at the death of the owner. Although the laws governing inheritance are very strict, and were in fact strictly adhered to in practice, in reality many of the merchants that she studied found alternative ways of transferring inheritances to persons of their choice whether or not they were natural heirs. The article therefore questions the notion that the law of inheritance was behind the fragmentation of property.

Taking a more theoretical approach, Amira al-Azhary Sonbol considers the issue of working women at three levels: modern discourse, Islamic law, and actual practice in the Ottoman Empire, as witnessed by the deeds recorded in court registers. These records, for the most part based on sources in Jerusalem, show that women were involved in a large variety of economic activities. Some of them worked in the crafts and guilds, others in manual labor, such as in quarries, and others in activities that could be carried out from their home, such as *multazims* (tax-farmers) and *waqf* supervisors.

Sabri al-'Adl takes a new look at the chronicle of al-Jabarti, focusing on the field of astronomy and astronomers. Sabri al-'Adl shows the importance of applied sciences in the eighteenth century, a field that modern historians have not so far looked into. He shows the interest of al-Jabarti himself in these sciences, as witnessed by the fact that he himself copied many books in astronomy and other applied sciences and owned an enormous library inherited from his father and had numerous scientific instruments. Al-'Adl in fact suggests that there was a school of astronomy in eighteenth-century Cairo functioning mainly outside the educational institutions. He attributes the interest in astronomy to the fact that after the Ottoman conquest and the introduction of the Ottoman calendar, a certain level of confusion was created by the existence of three sets of calendars at one time: the Islamic, Coptic, and Ottoman.

Using different sources (both court records and archival material from the Coptic patriarchy) and a different approach, Magdi Guirguis confirms a thesis that Raymond had already developed in relation to religious communities in



Bilad al-Sham, notably that there was a high level of tolerance toward non-Muslims in the eighteenth century. Magdi Guirguis attributes the tolerance toward Copts to changes in the internal structure of the community. He argues that in the course of the period from the beginning of the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth centuries, the religious administration of the Coptic community gave way to a civilian hierarchy that ran the affairs of both the church and the community. This civilian hierarchy was made up of wealthy Copts, whose influence was the result of their links to the Mamluks.

The Russian pilgrims who visited the cities of the region on their way to Jerusalem form a source that few English readers are aware of. In many ways, he comments these pilgrims made on the things they saw did not fundamentally differ from those of western pilgrims. Svetlana Kirillina's study highlights their prejudices through the language that they used to describe Arabs and Muslims. Many of them nevertheless admitted that the pilgrimage was organized quite efficiently, and that Christian communities enjoyed extensive rights. Russian pilgrims also noted that some of the pilgrimage sites and shrines they visited were places of pilgrimage for both Christians and Muslims-sanctuaries that were 'interreligious,' like the churches in Ma'lula, Saydnaya, and Bethlehem.

The articles in the present volume are presented to André Raymond by his friends, students, and students of students as a token of appreciation for his untiring work and his great contributions to the field, and as a token of respect and affection for him as a person. They are part of a celebration that was held in Cairo on 2-4 April 2005, hosted by the Egyptian Society for Historical Studies and the Supreme Council for Culture, and sponsored by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. For the occasion, his major work, *Artisans et Commerçants* was translated into Arabic, the first translation of this book to be undertaken. The celebration coincided with Raymond's eightieth birthday.