Introduction: Modernity, Class, and the Architectures of Community

> They hold a refracted mirror in front of that which is civilized out of which a caricature of its obverse essence stares back.
> —Siegfried Kracauer, 1971

On the evening of 2 January 1910, Fathallah Qastun, a newspaper editor in Aleppo, one of the most important cities of the Ottoman Empire, addressed the inaugural meeting of the Mutual Aid Society. Simply titled "Becoming Civilized," the text of the speech, complete with parenthetical notations of spontaneous applause, was published in Qastun's own Arabic-language newspaper, *al-Sha'b* [The People]. Qastun began his speech by asking: "Why have we not yet become fully civilized and in particular, why have we not borrowed more from Europe?" He answered his own question by arguing:

> I say we have not become fully part of Western Civilization because we have only taken from it what is in conformity with the traditions and customs of the various races which make up our state. This has caused both material and cultural harm. . . . For if we just copy Europeans, we will disavow our origins and acquire an antipathy toward our [past]. Instead, we should follow them as closely as possible in the way in which they protect their own race and homeland. We should strive to protect our noble language and ways just as they protect their languages and ways.[1]

Beyond distinguishing between the mere reproduction of the superficial trappings of European manners and fashions and the complete adoption of the bases of what the editor would later call "true civilization" (*al-madaniyya al-haqqa*), the most striking feature of this lecture is Qastun's conclusion that incorporation of the "essence" of the West and not just its material culture was vital to the survival of his society. Moreover, the preeminent threat was not only that West (although it clearly remained a pressing concern), but rather, in his estimation, an *irrational* attachment

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[1] *al-Sha'b* (Aleppo), 3 January 1910.

to tradition and custom by his fellow citizens prevented them from joining the ranks of the "fully civilized."

The content of Qastun's speech was not especially unique in 1910: questions about civilization, political legitimacy, social reform, the place of the peoples of the Ottoman Empire in the passage of history, and, ultimately, what it meant to be modern had become commonplace in the few short months since the Revolution of 1908 and were being asked in the several languages of the Eastern Mediterranean—Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, Greek, and Ladino—on the pages of newspapers and from podiums throughout the region. The Revolution of 1908, also known as the Young Turk Revolution, ended the autocratic and paranoid rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II and led to the reinstatement of the quasi-liberal Ottoman Constitution of 1876. Unlike the prerevolutionary government, which had generally proscribed such forms of association and made the publishing of private newspapers difficult, if not impossible, the new régime, dominated by the reform-minded officers and bureaucrats of the Ottoman Committee for Union and Progress (CUP), the so-called Young Turks, had created an atmosphere in which civil society flourished, and voluntary associations and newspapers had become the most visible manifestations of the full measure of change.

As important as the content of the speech was its audience. The lawyers, bureaucrats, bankers, petty capitalists, high school teachers, doctors, agents of European and American companies, fellow journalists, and others who sat in rows of straight-backed chairs while they listened to Qastun employ a novel political and historical vocabulary to conjure a vision of the beguiling and dangerous aspects of the West were members of a distinct new urban middle class that owed its existence to the material, economic and political transformations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The men, dressed in coats and trousers of British wool, French cravats, and starched white collars, and the few women, faces uncovered, wearing linen blouses over corsets, tailored skirts, and Italian felt hats, had gathered, in part, to make sense of the rapid and accelerating change of those last few decades. But they had also come, in what was their leisure time, to see and be seen, enjoy an evening's entertainment masquerading as education, revel in one another's company, socialize, gossip, make business deals, scout out potential mates for their children, and, moreover, reinforce those particular cultural and social bonds that distinguished them from the city's poor and its "old social class" of Sunni Muslim *aʿyan*, a politically and culturally tenacious semifeudal landed elite.

Some had traveled by automobile to the society's hall, located on a wide, straight thoroughfare in a recently built district far beyond the narrow streets and blind alleys of Aleppo's walled old city; most had walked or taken a streetcar from their single-family homes and flats in a suburb

nearby, their way having been lit by gas streetlamps. The warm glow of electric light bulbs illuminated the proceedings and allowed the discussion that followed the talk to pass well into the evening. Many of those in the hall—filled with the smoke of machine-rolled cigarettes of American and Turkish tobaccos—were graduates of local Christian missionary or Western-style state schools, and a few had attended university in Istanbul, Beirut, or even Europe and the United States. They knew foreign languages, usually French, learned in the course of their education, but also as a necessity of doing business in a marketplace increasingly dominated by commerce with cities like Marseilles and Manchester. Those in government employ had mastered bureaucratic Ottoman Turkish in addition to Arabic.

In the months since the Revolution of 1908, the partial lifting of censorship meant that they could glean from their afternoon papers a less filtered view of their society and the wider world than had previously been the case; they could also follow spirited debates between editors of different papers, sometimes vicious arguments, and personal attacks by journalists on one another or those in positions of authority. The telegraph, which had already been in use for several decades, brought much of that news, but the introduction of a modest telephone network added even more. Bookshops carried domestic journals in the several languages of the empire, and magazines, full of advertisements and imported directly from Paris, London, Rome, or Vienna, made them aware—at about the same time as their Western counterparts—of the availability of consumer goods, musical instruments, and labor-saving devices, as well as *au courante* European fashion and cuisine. Equally consumed were serialized novels and poetry—in their original and translated versions—and cutting-edge scientific, medical, and literary journals. Local boutiques and department stores, some owned or managed by members of Qastun's audience, made certain that these items were readily available. Most recently, images of the world beyond the city had come in the form of an outdoor cinema set up by a local representative of the Pathé Frères, weather permitting, in a gated public park.

While Qastun's *al-Sha'b* may have been just one of the dozens of new newspapers of Aleppo, and the Mutual Aid Society indistinct from the hundreds of other European-style benevolent and cultural organizations taking shape in the cities of the region, collectively, the organizations, newspapers, seemingly familiar patterns of consumption, forms of sociability, and ways of thinking of the people who inhabited those new spaces or inscribed their thoughts on newsprint bespoke a fundamental cultural and political turn in the contemporary history of the Middle East. For the first time in the lives of anyone in that room, they could *imagine* connecting the ideas being expressed, discussed, and debated to what they would have considered the actual material and moral progress of their commu-

nity. This optimistic connection was not only a function of the restoration of liberal constitutionalism and the reintroduction of electoral politics by the revolutionary régime; rather the adoption of new technologies that increasingly collapsed space and time, the seeming embrace of secular citizenship by the Young Turks, the knowledge of organizational and intellectual tools like public opinion and nationalism, and the growing cultural and economic penetration by the West in various forms meant, for members of the emerging middle class, the possibility of changing their society and their role in it to such a degree and in such a fashion as to make it, in the way they understood the concept, *modern*.

However, progress had come at the price of short-term political instability and a breakdown of customary social and religious hierarchies. Not only did war continue the territorial erosion of the Ottoman Empire, but Qastun, his listeners, and his readers were keenly aware of the horrific pogrom of the prosperous Armenian community of the nearby city of Adana in April 1909 during a short-lived period of counterrevolution. Eventually engulfing rural communities in the northern tier of the province of Aleppo, the violence, in which Ottoman officials, soldiers, and religious students played a part, underscored how fragile and unstable the new order truly was; that the perpetrators of the violence had as yet escaped punishment by the Young Turks added to the anxiety of those in the room. Tensions between liberal reform and brutal reaction would continue to beset the empire as it stumbled into World War I (1914–1918) and was then broken apart altogether at the behest of European states in the postwar period.

In posing reflective questions about civilization and the West, adjusting to rapid technological change, responding to the draw of European aesthetics and fashions, and balancing the revolution and liberalism with the possibility of mass atrocities and ferocious communal violence, the emerging middle class had come face to face with the reality of being and becoming, to borrow a phrase from Harry Harootunian's study of interwar Japan, "overcome by modernity."[2] For critics like Qastun there was no doubt that "we," primarily but not exclusively his middle-class listeners, had already embraced modernity and were in the process of becoming *just as modern* as Europeans while at the same time retaining their own unique identity and way of life. Consider his enumeration of successful moments of claiming modernity, from the second night's continuation of the speech:

> The most beautiful thing to take from the Westerners is the science of industry as it is the basis of all advancement and the foundation of civilization. . . . the

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[2] Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan (*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

cultivation of the mind with science and law [also puts us] on the path of true civilization. Indeed we have established schools in all the corners of the kingdom, even villages have places of learning to instruct children in the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, moreover we have taken from the Europeans the cultivation of women. . . . We are nearing the summit of modern civilization, Europeans are amazed by our enterprise and our vigor. . . so much so that some have bowed their heads as if to say: he who wishes to attain real civilization let him follow the example of the Ottomans.[3]

By liberating Western civilization from Westerners, Qastun asserted that actual and understandable material and historical circumstance—primarily industrialization in the West and the reactionary autocracy and cultural backwardness of the Ottoman *ancien régime*—had created a temporary disparity. Casting blame in such a way, and centering reform on concrete issues of commerce, education, and industry, he also betrayed the overarching interests of his audience. These were not starry-eyed idealists conducting discussions of liberalism and political economy in the abstract, but instead many were businessmen and white-collar professionals, including members of his extended family, for whom interest rates, tariffs, monetary policy, official corruption, and nascent industrialization were the pressing realities of daily life.

More to the point, Qastun's acceptance of the underlying logos of Western civilization while asserting the ability of non-Westerners to resist the political and cultural hegemony of the West is the quintessential ambivalence at the center of the historical experience of modernity in the colonial and postcolonial non-West. Thus, in a telling paradox consonant with that ambivalence, the ultimate judges of whether Qastun and his audience had attained modernity were still external: the Europeans who "bowed their heads" and the "We" who were "nearing the summit of modern civilization" were doing so only after having crossed an axial barrier defined by the West, thereby folding themselves into a teleological narrative that had as its terminus the accomplishments of Western civilization.

The crossing of that boundary in the Middle East has often served as the organizing theme for historians of the Ottoman Empire's collision with modernity. Albert Hourani and Bernard Lewis, especially, assert the existence of a dialectical relationship between the commitment to modernization, which in this case means reaching a level of material and institutional equivalence with Europe, and a conservative reaction against modernity, in this context the ideation of the post-Enlightenment social and intellectual processes that led to the "rise of the West." This appears most clearly in Lewis's discussion of the *Tanzimat* period (1826–1878), during which the Ottoman Empire, when faced with overwhelming military

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[3] *al-Shaʿb* (Aleppo), 5 January 1910.

threats from Europe, accelerated the process of defensive modernization, thereby opening the door ever more slightly to modernity. Reform was imposed from above, often on groups ill prepared for and suspicious of the new way. While the reforms produced cadres of *moderns*, the Ottoman Empire could never achieve modernity until it became a "real" European nation-state in the form of the Republic of Turkey, as reflected in the title of Lewis's most noteworthy book on the subject, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. The key moment in this process was not the reform movement of Kemal Atatürk's post-Ottoman régime as much as it was the sloughing off of the forms of an "Oriental" Islamic past. Far from challenging the linear master narrative of progress and the unfolding of human freedom underpinning the historical consciousness associated with Western civilization, Lewis merely wrote a portion of the Ottoman Empire's population into it, and in so doing he excluded the rest of the population, primarily Arabs, from it.[4]

What remains cogent in his analysis is the possibility that modernization can occur without a simultaneous commitment to modernity. In other words, the grand nineteenth-century projects of modernization in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire—often involving the incorporation of recent technological and bureaucratic innovations—did not necessarily flow from an ideological engagement with modernity on the part of the reformers themselves. Furthermore, in drawing a distinction between the phenomenon of modernization and the idea of modernity, Lewis creates a way to account for the obvious attraction technology exerts on Islamists, the customary elite, even the poor, without a concomitant belief in emancipation, secularism, or rational epistemology.

For Hourani, writing from the perspective of Arabic-language authors in his seminal *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, modernity followed from elite local-European interaction in the salons of Arabophile British and French expatriates and on the campuses of American missionary colleges. It was a consequence, as well, of journeys to the West by generations of Arab students and Muslim scholars.[5] The series of exchanges between the French intellectual Ernest Renan and Jamal al-Din "the Afghan" best exemplify Hourani's understanding of the dialectic. Jamal al-Din, an intellectual of extraordinary abilities, engaged Renan in a debate about the compatibility of Islam and rationality in which he argued that philosophy (West) and prophecy (Islam) arrive through different means at the same

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[4] Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), and *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982).

[5] Albert H. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), originally published by Oxford University Press in 1962. Also Donald M. Reid, "Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age Twenty Years After," *IJMES* 14:4 (1982): 541–557.

truth. As Hourani shows, there is little evidence that Jamal al-Din would have expounded these ideas outside of the relatively free discursive environment of 1880s' Paris. When he did so in a more limited way in Cairo and Istanbul, the Muslim religious establishment labeled his ideas tantamount to heresy and ostracized him.[6] Hourani, like Lewis, conceived the entry of modernity into the region from multiple points, culminating primarily in the broader adoption of a secular nationalism or nationalisms built within the confines of nation-states like Egypt. In emphasizing Arabism as the logical consequence of modernization, Hourani placed that ideology at the center of intellectual, social, and cultural change, thereby obscuring any discussions and movements otherwise unintelligible in the language of nationalism.

Residues of this dialectic, under the influence of 1960s' modernization theory,[7] continue to control discussions of modernity in the region. Moreover, as Deniz Kandiyoti observes about the prevailing trends in Turkish and Ottoman historiography on modernity, "The relative impoverishment of this field has not been altogether accidental. The polemical perspectives adopted both by apologists of Turkish modernization—Kemalists in particular—and by its critics have inadvertently limited our conceptual horizons by falling short of interrogating the notion of the 'modern' itself and charting its local specificities."[8] With a few notable exceptions, primarily scholarship on middle-class and elite feminism, her comments could equally apply to the historiography of the Arab Levant.[9]

Any account, however, that privileges a linear narrative of modernization or "Westernization"—and resistance thereto—can shed light on only larger institutional and political modifications; at the same time such accounts tend to reinforce Eurocentric prejudices about Arab and Muslim societies by putting the onus for change solely on the shoulders of Westerners and characterizing reform as a mimetic reaction to the West. To

[6] Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani,"* including a translation of the *Refutation of the Materialists* from the Persian by Nikki R. Keddie and Hamid Algar (Berkeley: University of California, 1968); Rudi Matthee, "Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the Egyptian National Debate," *IJMES* 21:2 (1989): 151–169.

[7] Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963). At the time, the inevitability of the rise of the "New Middle Class"—though not modernization theory per se—particularly in Egypt, was dismissed by, among others, Amos Perlmutter, "Egypt and the Myth of the New Middle Class: A Comparative Analysis," *CSSH* 10:1 (1967): 46–65.

[8] Deniz Kandiyoti, "Gendering the Modern: On Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish Modernity," in Sibel Bozdogan and Resat Kasaba, eds., *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 129.

[9] Lila Abu-Lughod, "Introduction," in Lila Abu-Lughod, ed., *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

move beyond that narrative (but not reject elements of it altogether), I seek instead in this work to capture modernity as a lived historical experience and explore how it has colonized local politics, cultural practices, and everyday life by bringing into the discussion a consequence of modernity: modernity draws and redraws boundaries of class, and, critically, the ideas, institutions, and politics associated with modernity have given rise to a uniquely modern middle class.[10]

Based on archival, literary, visual, and oral historical evidence in several languages, including, Arabic, Ottoman and Modern Turkish, Armenian and French—and an eclectic body of theoretical literature—I argue in this book that in the crucible of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, World War I, and the imposition of colonial rule, a discrete middle class emerged in the cities of the Eastern Mediterranean that was defined not just by the wealth, professions, possessions, or levels of education of its members, but also by the way they asserted their modernity. To claim modernity, they incorporated into their daily lives and politics a collection of manners, mores, and tastes, and a corpus of ideas about the individual, gender, rationality, and authority actively derived from what they believed to be the cultural, social, and ideological praxis of the contemporary metropolitan Western middle classes. By *being modern*, members of this class distinguished themselves from the region's ruling Sunni Muslim oligarchy and subaltern class of urban and rural poor and evidenced how they conceived of themselves as a separate element of their society. Moreover, excluded by customary practices and political theory from structures of power, this class contested its exclusion and asserted its right to equality, citizenship, and political participation in the idiom of modernity. By being modern, its members declared their intention to take a preeminent role in the production of knowledge and culture, not just for themselves, but for society at large. The dedication to these ideas, praxis, and politics marks that middle class as both a distinct component and an unprecedented innovation in the social and cultural history of the Middle East, as well as a vital subject in the question of modernity in the non-West.

I trace not just what it meant to be modern for this class, but how the class's commitment to being modern shaped its attempts to create civil society and mold urban politics, the multiple ways it employed nationalism, history writing, and violence to make sense of the post–World War I

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[10] A relevant example of this link, especially as it bears on questions of white-collar professionals, middle-class city people, and culture, is seen in Siegfried Kracauer's *The Salaried Masses*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 1998). Important to take from Kracauer is the idea that modernity constitutes a reproducible experience connected to worldview, consumption, technology, and taste as well as wealth, and in "the real world" it often has as much to do with ideas and attitudes as it does with material things and observable simulation.

world, and its engagement with—or resistance to—European imperialism. Likewise, I explain how the emergence of this middle class began to alter the ideological, social, and cultural topography of the contemporary Middle East, especially as it bears on questions of secularism, citizenship, and liberalism. And as this new class, like its cognates in South Asia, Latin America, and East Asia, was, and continues to be, a salient feature of so-called globalization, or what should correctly be termed neomodernization, understanding its origins and its historical background is a crucial—and until now missing—dimension of postcolonial studies.

These issues are examined primarily through the history of the modernizing middle class in the city of Aleppo during the tumultuous period 1908–1946. Aleppo, a once cosmopolitan city at the southern edge of the Anatolian plateau, was one of the major provincial capitals of the Ottoman Empire and remains one the most populous urban centers in the Levant. In addition to its Sunni Muslim plurality, it possessed a substantial Arabic-speaking Christian population. Before 1948 a large and vibrant Jewish community also resided in Aleppo, and the city became the main center of resettlement for vast numbers of Armenian Genocide survivors in the interwar period. It was home to a complex, emergent middle class, of which these non-Muslim groups represented significant portions. Like Aleppo's counterparts throughout the Ottoman Empire, members of its middle class were generally multilingual, literate, and European-centered in much of their cultural activity. More important, to paraphrase Marshal Berman, they sought to inscribe themselves into what they saw as the modern world as modern people, making themselves both objects and subjects of modernity.[11] And while members of this middle class never acquired the kind of political preeminence their opposite numbers gained in the West, they indelibly altered the society in which they were enveloped. However, when their political or economic situation deteriorated, they often resorted to political quietism or chose emigration to Western Europe or the Americas.

Taking consummate modern moments from the lives of the members of the middle class like Qastun's speech—not just what was said, but also who was speaking and listening, who produced culture, knowledge, and history, and who claimed the right to be violent—this book brings into relief the way the inhabitants of places like Aleppo negotiated *for themselves* the distillates of urban life, capitalism, liberalism, nationalism, the material needs of bourgeois aesthetics and fashion, and the increasing technologically driven aspects of a mass-participant society—all of which, like class formation, colonialism, and later fascism, collectively represent

[11] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 5.

corollaries of modernity. In this way, being modern in the Middle East becomes an intelligible and understandable, albeit complex, historical process rather than just an inevitable consequence of imperialism or the region's integration into the global and hegemonic logic of high capitalism.

Still, it would be unwise to consider the region's modern middle class a purely localized occurrence, ignoring that logic altogether. Thus, as I explore the local transformations of modernity, I place the history of this new class firmly within the early moments of the formation of "middle-class modernity," a transnational phenomenon whereby being modern and being middle class became intertwined, if not one and the same thing, in the consciousness and praxis of members of emergent middle classes.

While this work is the first monograph to link the emergence of an urban middle class and the historical experience of modernity in the Eastern Mediterranean, by no means is it, nor indeed could it be, a comprehensive account of that process. Neither is it a narrative of Aleppo's political or economic history, especially as it devotes little attention to the calamitous financial impact of the division of the city from its hinterland in southern Anatolia and integration into an unprecedented French colonial construct, the Republic of Syria, in the interwar period. Likewise, this study does not divide the late-Ottoman (1908–1918), brief interwar Arab Kingdom (1918–1920), and French Mandate (1920–1946) periods into discrete units of investigation.[12] Writing the history of Aleppo and its inhabitants along those lines would represent a concession to nationalist and imperialist narratives. In those narratives, Aleppo is adjoined to the European imperialist construct of Syria as an Arab city and conversely, as it lay a few too many kilometers on the southern side of a boundary determined by the path of the Berlin-Baghdad railway, it is not depicted as a Turkish city. Often the current national designation of the subject acts to control the types of sources deemed legitimate for use.

To assert, likewise, the existence of a Syria or a Turkey in the prewar period is quite simply anachronistic, and to use the nation-state as a basis

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[12] For contrasting periodization in English, see James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); also Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), and Elizabeth Thompson *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights and Paternal Privilege in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). Philip Khoury argues for a high degree of elite political continuity in Damascus and Aleppo over the two periods in *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) and "Continuity and Change in Syrian Political Life: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *The American Historical Review*, 96:5 (December 1991): 1374–1395. See also Peter Sluglett, "Urban Dissidence in Mandatory Syria: Aleppo 1918–1936," in Kenneth Brown et al., eds., *Etat, ville et mouvements sociaux au Maghreb et au Moyen Orient Urban Crises and Social Movements in the Middle East* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1986), 301–316.

for this kind of study in the interwar period is also problematic. By rejecting the nationalist and imperialist definitions of the historical and political bounds of Aleppo, I can bring together evidence from Arab studies and Turkish studies, both of which have grown exclusionary in recent times. Gathering evidence from the diverse communities and various languages that contributed to the cosmopolitan nature of Aleppo produces a vivid and complex portrait of this remarkable city and its inhabitants at a moment of tremendous change.

Being Modern as a Historical Problem

Clearly, *being modern* was not a condition exclusive to the middle class of Aleppo in the period 1908–1946. Yet understanding the unique and the shared in their historical experience is a step toward claiming a position for the non-West (defined in modernist terms by what it is not) in the broader critique of the question of modernity. By doing so, it is possible to begin to understand the experience of modernity for those outside of the West as something more complex than mere colonial and postcolonial acts of imitation or mimicry. In this sense, my work rises to the challenge posed by Timothy Mitchell, to "find a way to theorize the question of modernity that relocates it within a global context, and at the same time, enables that context to complicate, rather than simply reverse, the narrative logic of modernization."[13] Crucial to that task is first unraveling how and why groups and individuals systematically adhered to a category of phenomena "Western," "modern," and "civilized," and then exploring the questions that arose in that particular social and cultural milieu because of that adherence.[14] Exemplary is the question occasioned by the internalization of "Weberian occidental reason" by putative "Orientals"—a question central not just to Qastun's speech, but also to Stefan Tanaka's *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History*—namely, "how to become modern while simultaneously shedding the objectivistic category of Oriental and not lose an identity?"[15]

[13] Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," in Timothy Mitchell, ed., *Questions of Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 7.

[14] "What is important . . . is to explore how the notions of modernity have been produced and reproduced through being opposed to the nonmodern in dichotomies ranging from the modern/primitive of philosophy and anthropology to the modern/traditional of Western social theory and modernization theory, not to mention the West/non-West that is implied in most of these dichotomies." Abu-Lughod, *Remaking*, 7.

[15] Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3.

At stake in this critique, beyond affirming Arif Dirlik's conclusion that "modernity is incomprehensible without reference to Eurocentrism,"[16] is revising the prevailing Eurocentrism of the question of modernity. It challenges, as well, the continuing dominance of Europe, as currently constructed, in the articulation of social theory and contemporary class, intellectual, and cultural history writing. Writing a post-Eurocentric history that can still make sense of Europe in that history is among the most important dividends of this critique, as is understanding not just why the Ottoman Empire was created as modern Europe's definitive "other," but also how it has been excluded from the genealogy of modernity despite the "almost universal perception of [it] as a European state" in the early modern period.[17] The relatively recent "Europeaness" of the Ottoman Empire and its uninterrupted connection with those city-states, kingdoms, and merchant republics of far northwestern Eurasia that became Europe in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though now largely ignored by modern historians, crystallize the unique nature of Ottoman history into the question of modernity itself and, moreover, have considerable implications for any attempts to impose colonial theory derived from South Asia on the Eastern Mediterranean.

Three definitive aspects of modernity underlie the way it is employed in this work. First, what is "crucially distinctive about Modernity," observed Marshall G. S. Hodgson is that "Modernity has been not simply rational emancipation from custom, nor has it been simply the further unfolding of a bent for progress peculiar to the Western tradition; it has been a cultural transformation *sui generis*."[18] Hodgson's claim is particularly relevant as he was examining the transformative nature of modernity in parts of the world tangential to its place of origin. Consequently, conceptualizing modernity as a distinct cultural transformation is fundamentally important to both understanding world history from the last two centuries and decentering—or perhaps rationalizing—the presence of the West in that history.

Second, as a distinct cultural transformation, modernity possesses dimensionality. When historicized, it is buffeted by the conditional, the regional, and the subjective. However, in an often misunderstood paradox,

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[16] Arif Dirlik, "Is There History after Eurocentrism? Globalism, Postcolonialism, and the Disavowal of History," in Arif Dirlik, Vinay Bahl, and Peter Gran, eds., *History after the Three Worlds: Post Eurocentric Historiographies* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 25.

[17] Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 18.

[18] Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* vol. 2, *The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Period* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 375.

its acolytes believe it embraces everything and everyone in simultaneous and absolute terms unrestrained by place and time.[19] Thus conceived, modernity presupposes an absolute subject position, one that does not—and cannot—acknowledge its own contingency. When modernity is dislocated from its self-defined universality and made contingent on time and place, its intrinsic limit and fragmentary nature comes into view.[20] The last assertion does not constitute an endorsement of the problematic suggestion that non-Western societies can exist out of historical time as a consequence of some kind of regionally conditioned immaturity, and that that their modernity merely lies inchoate, waiting to be awakened. While observers and critics like Qastun may have regarded their societies as "behind" the West or "backward," they could not have imagined that they were in a historical moment outside of a global modern age, nor would they have conceded the existence of a unique "Ottoman" modernity—a modernity modified by an ethnic or national adjective would have made little sense to them nor have any utility; in fact, quite the opposite, as it would imply that Qastun and his counterparts, as non-Europeans, could never attain "true" modernity but rather were relegated to an inherently inferior local version thereof.

As Harootunian observes of a similar moment in Japan's encounter with modernity, "It is precisely this [concept] of time lag that produces the scandal of imagining modernities that are not quite modern—usually a euphemism for being 'not quite white'—and new . . . classifications like 'alternative modernities' . . . differentiated from the temporality of the modern West which, then, allow us to safely situate societies like Japan," and by extension the Ottoman Eastern Mediterranean, "in a historical trajectory derived from another's development."[21] Such formulations inadvertently play into modernity's ongoing process of universal-

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[19] "This subject-centered reason claims for itself a singular universality by asserting its epistemic privilege over all other local, plural, and often incommensurable knowledges; it proclaims its own unity and homogeneity by declaring all other subjectivities as inadequate, fragmentary, and subordinate." Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), xi. On this composite definition and the problem of defining "modernity," see Richard Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity," in Richard J. Bernstein, ed., *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 161–175; and Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[20] "Modernity must be staged as that which is singular, original, present and authoritative. This staging does not occur only in the West . . . to be later imitated in the non-West. Its authority and presence can be produced only across the space of geographical and historical difference. . . . Modernity, like capitalism, is defined by its claim to universality. . . . Yet this always remains an impossible unity, an incomplete universal." Mitchell, *Questions*, 24.

[21] Harootunian, *Overcome*, xvi.

izing, and its constant search for places unmodern against which to de-fine itself. Harootunian suggests as an alternative to "alternative modernities" the term "coeval." The use of this word emphasizes the real-time nature of the non-West's encounter with modernity. More to the point, the recognition of modernity's fragmentation that figures prominently in poststructuralism's critique of it is, on the one hand, rele-vant only in retrospect and from an exteriorized (often Eurocentric) view, and on the other, of limited value in the study of the historical experience of modernity. Important in understanding how people encountered and internalized modernity is probing the very lack of fragmentation in their perception; it is precisely the unity and coherence of modernity in the imagination and consciousness of those seeking to be modern that marks its overarching historical significance.

Clearly there is a measure of local adaptation—variations on the theme of modernity. However, anything claimed to be modern must maintain (or attempt to maintain) a transnational intelligibility to have any author-ity or power. To extend the linguistic metaphor further, modernity is a language that can acquire local dialects. However, were those dialects to lose coherence or a degree of lexical uniformity, they would no longer constitute modernity. I suspect what is often labeled "alternative moder-nity" is in fact these local idioms that at the most radical level are still comprised of the definitive components of modernity. An anxiety about the brutal homogenizing and flattening effect of neomodernization is the motive for identifying "alternative modernity," as though a not quite modern modernity could insulate indigenous societies and local knowl-edges from the hegemonic forces of high capitalism and neocolonialism. "Alternative modernity" is seductive, but it has the possible effect of ren-dering modernity itself an ahistorical essence rather than affirming its sta-tus as a historically contingent ideological construction with geographical origins in northwestern Eurasia.[22]

Third, the unreliability and instability of forms—the central cause of the "crisis of modernity"—was the shared cost of modernity's cultural transformations in the West and the non-West. As Georg Simmel noted in his uncharacteristically pessimistic 1918 essay "Der Konflict der mod-ernen Kultur," "What is happening [now] is not only a passive dying out of traditional forms, but simultaneously a fully positive drive towards life which is actively repressing these forms. Since this struggle, in extent and intensity, does not permit concentration on the creation of new forms, it makes a virtue of necessity and insists on fighting against forms simply

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[22] I explore these issues further in my "Die Grenzen der 'Alternativen Moderne' in der Geschichte des spätosmanischen östlichen Mittelmeers," in "Westasien und die Moderne," special issue, *Periplus* 13 (2003): 138–149.

because they are forms."[23] Simmel's writings on this crisis, complicated by his contention that "The nineteenth century, with its motley variety of intellectual currents, did not produce any . . . all embracing guiding concept," seem to anticipate the sense of cultural emptiness and ennui that the fascism of the interwar period capitalized upon and what today neomodernization seeks to anesthetize.[24] In the decade after Simmel's essay appeared, Sami al-Kayyali, the editor of the Aleppine journal *al-Hadith* [The Modern], voiced a similar conclusion. "The appeal of the 'new' is that its meaning effaces and annihilates the 'old.' The proponents of the 'new' always fail to see the usefulness of the 'old' and reject it out of hand."[25] As a remedy to the summary rejection of the old, Kayyali suggested novelizing the biographies of important figures from the Islamic past for didactic purposes. The irony of such a proposal is that it clearly reflected the adoption of the aesthetics of fin-de-siècle bourgeois historicism and not the resurrection of old forms associated with Islamic learning. This slippage of the stable cultural and aesthetic forms of the past into the instability of modernity's present echoes Walter Benjamin's observation that it is "precisely the modern which always conjures up prehistory."[26] Moreover, it hints at how moderns often found temporary refuge from the moral and intellectual uncertainties occasioned by the rapidity of change in nostalgia. Nevertheless, finding a "traditional" justification for doing the modern thing is a trope suffusing modernization programs; far from saving tradition from the modern and/or authenticating the modern with reference to tradition, it merely simulates tradition within a purely modern space. The most relevant and obvious example of this phenomenon is nationalism's body of invented traditions.[27]

Left unanswered in Simmel's conclusion—especially when seen through the lens of Kayyali's anxiety about the effacement of the "old"—are the possible consequences of the destruction or destabilizing of forms in the context of the colonial encounters of the last two centuries. Clearly, the historical experience of modernity in the Eastern Mediterranean was shaded by the increasing influence of Western Europeans and their governments in the Ottoman Empire, and likewise by the growing impact of the centralizing Ottoman Empire on the lives of its subjects; however, to

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[23] Georg Simmel, *The Conflict in Modern Culture, and Other Essays*, trans. with an introduction by K. Peter Etzkorn (New York: Teachers' College Press, 1968), 377.

[24] Ibid., 79.

[25] Sami al-Kayyali, "Introduction," *al-Hadith* 2:10 (December/January1927/1928): 2.

[26] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. H. Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973), 171.

[27] See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (London: Zed Books, 1986); also, Deniz Kandiyoti, "Afterword: Some Awkward Questions on Women and Modernity in Turkey," in Abu-Lughod, ed., *Remaking*, 271.

ascribe an exclusive role to imperialism—Ottoman, French, British, or otherwise—in this experience denies the agency of inhabitants of the Eastern Mediterranean in playing an active role in confronting the crisis of modernity. Conversely, characterizing how the observable modernity of the colonized transforms the colonizer, regardless of the reciprocal recognition of that modernity, remains, if not the unacknowledged, at least the unanalyzed dimension of the colonial encounter.

Reduced to its fundamentals, being modern required either a passive or an active assent to the universal nature of modernity, a commitment to an assault on the forms of the past, and the incorporation of a specific, though in the end mutable and contingent, corpus of ideas and practices. Moreover, being modern had to be observable and reproducible, something that bisected the public and the private, often requiring the use of venues such as clubs, newspapers, Western consumer goods, and schools in which or with which to perform one's modernity. Interventions like Qastun's confirm the adoption of that corpus of ideas and practices, but more important, provide a basis for reconstructing what it meant to be modern *at that moment*. In a larger sense, being modern forced individuals into a series of new and complex dialogues and exchanges with elements of their society. Adopting the position of the modern, they embraced ideas, forms of knowledge, and practices and rejected others that would have engendered responses varying from outright acceptance to suspicion or even fear and animus from their neighbors, the elite members of the old social classes, and even members of their own families. Unlike relatively stable early modern Ottoman-Islamic forms, the legitimacy of the new ideas and practices would be based on their modernity or their more mercurial status as European, and fundamentally domesticating that praxis brought the moderns into alignment with an alien, non-Muslim, and acquisitive West. While their acceptance of the promise of modernity often at its most unironic face value, their unabashed faith in what they saw as self-evident rationality and science, and their firm belief in the inevitability of emancipation and progress may have solidified for some their links with a centralizing and modernizing Ottoman Empire, as well as securing their position with the colonizing West, it also put them in conflict with other components of the larger Eastern Mediterranean milieu. Where Qastun could formulate the benefits and necessity of being modern, less apparent from his talk, but certainly in his mind and in the minds of his audience, were the inherent risks of doing so.

It would be a mistake to conceive of this historical moment as one in which modernity appears from over the horizon to seduce delusional and passive natives who, lacking the will to resist it, naively and without guile gave in to its Panglossian promise to deliver the best of all possible worlds. This is the flaw inherent in Lewis's conclusion that the moderns of late-

Ottoman society were motivated by a desire to "win the respect of Europe by conforming to European patterns of culture and organization."[28] Such a conceptualization precludes the possibility that reformers and members of insurgent classes could and would employ modernity for their own ends and do so in a way that went far beyond resistance to or collaboration with the West. Observations like Lewis's disallow the possibility that those being modern could be makers of their own history.[29]

Middle-Class Modernity

This book approaches the Eastern Mediterranean's encounter with modernity through the historical lens of the emergence of an urban middle class. However, it takes shape in the context of very little scholarship on the middle class in the Eastern Mediterranean or elsewhere in the colonial non-West. When the middle class has appeared in the historiography of the region, it has only been in fleeting glimpses or footnotes and rarely in any systematic fashion: the way the literature has addressed the organizational and ideological role of the *effendiyya*—Western-style educated young men—in nationalist struggles, or the place of middle-class subordinates in elite-dominated feminist movements, are chief examples of this phenomenon.[30]

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[28] Lewis, *Emergence*, 234.

[29] As Talal Asad suggests, crucial to understanding the colonial encounter, modernity, and historical change in the Middle East at the onset of the twentieth century "is the determination of [the] new landscape, and the degree to which the languages, behaviors, and institutions [that modernity] makes possible come to resemble those that obtain in the West European nation-states. This approach requires some reference to the necessities and potentialities of modernity as these were presented by Europeans and interpreted" by people in the region. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 217.

[30] "Out of the 'traditional' urban and rural middle classes there emerged by the beginning of the twentieth century a new social group, the *effendiyya*. These men were the product of modern education, wore western-style clothing, emulated European lifestyles, and worked in the new occupations to which capitalist development had given rise. This category included secondary and university students, teachers, lawyers, journalists and other professionals, white-collar employees, and lower and middle-level government functionaries. These effendis would, despite their relatively small numbers, play a central role in Egypt's political life before 1952." Joel Benin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islamism and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882–1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 10. Gelvin, *Divided*, in particular his discussion of the *mutanawirrun* (the enlightened), 16–17. Hanna Batatu's monumental study of Iraq, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'thists, and Free Officers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), employs the term "middle class" in very much the same way I do in this work: "The term 'middle class,' as used in these pages, refers to that compos-

Perhaps neglected because of the visceral reaction that this "inauthentic," often comprador middle class evinces from those who claim solidarity with a more authentically national past, the centrality of the middle class to the shape of the contemporary world is by no means commensurate with the paltry amount of attention paid to it.[31] Or, as Arno Mayer argues in "The Lower Middle Class as Historical Problem,"

> social scientist[s] may question the authenticity of this . . . middle-class universe. They may also deprecate it for being an uninspiring mélange, not to say syncretism of the higher bourgeois and the lower working—class cultures. But even syncretisms have been known to develop striking and unmistakable structures as well as dynamic qualities; and they have also been known to leave indelible marks on the course of human history.[32]

From the perspective of the late-Ottoman and interwar Eastern Mediterranean, the most intriguing element of this seminal essay occurs again in a footnote: "The essay does not pretend to speak of the petit bourgeois phenomenon . . . in the developing nations of the non-Western world. At best it provides a starting point for the study of the character and

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ite part of society which is plural in its functions but has in common a middling income or a middling status, and which includes merchants, tradesmen, landowners, army officers, students, members of professions, civil servants, and employees of private companies. It would be a mistake to make too sharp a distinction of this class and another, say, between army officers and tradesmen or landowners, for it must not be forgotten that the real unit of class is not the individual but the family, and that members of one middle-class family pursue different professions" (28 n.55 and 5–12 passim). Khater links modernity to a middle class in the historically unique moment of Maronite peasants emigrating and returning to the mountains of Lebanon where they attempted to reconfigure their lives in accordance with new tastes and, more important, gender roles. In so doing he emphasizes the role of transnational mobility in the emergence of the middle class, but less the ideation of modernity. Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[31] The exclusive link between the Eastern Mediterranean middle class and the impression that it slavishly modeled itself on its European cognate has proved a gnawing source of embarrassment for many in the field and has contributed to the paucity of work on this group; in standard narratives, the middle class—often dominated by non-Muslims—somehow falls short of a nationalist ideal of authenticity (arguably a middle-class value as well). Writers have held up this supposed act of unself-conscious reproduction as an unintended communal character flaw. Leila Fawaz concludes a section on the *embourgeoisement* of a Beiruti entrepreneurial middle class with the conclusion, "The new clothes and houses were accompanied by a new European cultural orientation, and a passion for all things European developed among the city's Christians. Western ways were emulated, and Eastern ways were looked down upon. This new juxtaposition in Beirut of two ways of life was but one of the many challenges to sectarian harmony." Leila Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 102.

[32] Arno Mayer, "The Lower Middle Class as Historical Problem," *The Journal of Modern History* 47:3 (September 1975): 411.

place of the lower middle class . . . among the majority of the human race."[33] Nevertheless, in the thirty years since that article appeared, few in non-Western historiography have accepted Mayer's challenge. Brian Owensby's discussion of Brazil's white-collar middle class and a growing awareness of the need to situate the indigenous middle class in South Asian historiography like Sanjay Joshi's recent history of Lucknow's middle class are notable exceptions that still serve only to test the rule.[34] Crucially, Owensby and Joshi have also emphasized the cultural links among the members of the middle class and overarching questions of modernity and anxieties about being sufficiently modern in the practice of "middle classness."

A middle stratum of Western and Western-style educated state bureau-crats and indigenous colonial officials, medical doctors, lawyers, military officers, middle-man agents, bankers, journalists, state high school teach-ers, college students, and similar professionals and white-collar employees is a fact of late-Ottoman and interwar Eastern Mediterranean urban soci-ety. This stratum was drawn primarily from previous generations of the urban merchant class, absentee landowners, the corps of dragomans, Muslim and non-Muslim clerics and scholars, and, in disproportionate numbers, the region's ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities. As will be explored further in subsequent chapters, the social roles and expecta-tions, forms of cultural capital and wealth, and training and education that made one a constituent element of this stratum were novel to the region and can be traced to individual ambition, reform efforts of the Ottoman state, and the growing presence of the West in multiple manifes-tations from missionary education to economic penetration and outright military occupation.

Critically my conceptualization of this stratum as the middle class builds upon a consensus that "middle class" is more than a neutral economic category, but rather constitutes an intellectual, social, and cultural con-struct linked to a set of historical and material circumstances; class is more than just one's relationship to the means of production or the accumula-tion of wealth (which is also a reason why I have avoided the potential confusion that might ensue were I to characterize this stratum as merely an Eastern Mediterranean petit bourgeoisie). Therefore, organizing this stratum as a coherent category carries with it significance that far exceeds

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[33] Ibid., 409–410

[34] Brian P. Owensby, *Intimate Ironies: Modernity and the Making of Middle-Class Lives in Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

a simple statement of economic status or profession.[35] Moreover, identifying it as a class is based on the conclusion that the middle class is not just a byproduct of industrialization, but that its appearance can be understood in the context of new kinds of communicative technology, transportation, and urban forms as well as high capitalism; and while classes emerge, they are also made and remade. Consequently this is less a work of traditional class history than an exploration of cultural and social change, using class as both a methodological tool and a basis for historical and transnational comparison. Nevertheless, class, similar to other analytical constructs like ethnicity and gender, elides a large body of experience and tends to flatten history. What might be lost in terms of diversity in this case is balanced, however, by making visible an otherwise ignored feature of contemporary Eastern Mediterranean history.

Indeed, many of those in the Eastern Mediterranean who would be considered middle class were they living in the West by virtue of vocation, education, or standard of living asserted their own cultural and moral distance from the poor and their distinctiveness from the customary patrician oligarchy of the region's cities in the language of class. This is evidence not just of the degree to which Western historical thought had entered into use very early in the colonial encounter, but also of how members of this stratum, recognizing the unique nature of their role in their society, sought to explain themselves to themselves using available means. By the early 1900s terms like "bourgeoisie" and "middle class" had been translated into Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and Armenian and were used as descriptive categories in journalism, official documents, and scholarly and popular writing. For example, in 1925 Edmond Rabbath, a Sorbonne-educated, liberal-nationalist Aleppine lawyer writing in *al-Hadith*, could address the historical role of *al-tabaqa al-wusta* (the middle class) in European *and* Ottoman history and argue that its existence was linked to the emergence of a modern Syrian national community.[36]

Toward the beginning of the twentieth century, the definitive elaboration of "middle classness" in Western Europe that Rabbath drew upon for his article revolved less around objective standards of wealth than

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[35] Dror Wahrman's writing on the dominant perception of the middle class in the period immediately before the British Reform Bill of 1832 echoes the transformation of the meaning of middle class when he contends that "it [the middle class] was rendered a natural and self-evidently visible part of social reality; it was seen as an uncontested and unproblematic statement of fact; it was provided with a cogent storyline that explained its origins and justified its existence; it was given the simplicity and power of an essence." Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 18.

[36] Idmun al-Rabbat (Edmond Rabbath), "The Decline of Democracy," *al-Hadith* 2 (February 1927): 100–101.

upon the desire of those in the putative middle class to distinguish themselves from the lower classes. As Christophe Charle contends, "the expression 'middle class' was synonymous with bourgeoisie in the first half of the nineteenth century [in France], but took on quite a different meaning, by acquiring a plural, at the end of the century. It was used to embrace everyone who tried to escape from the masses (workers and peasants) without being sure they would attain undisputed bourgeois status."[37] Critically, this French middle class, and that of much of Europe—linked to the political developments of the early 1800s—found itself defined primarily by what it was not. Peter Gay echoes Charle and argues further that this process of definition lacked precision:

> It had something to do with respectability, though not that alone, since it was the standard that upper segments of the working classes also hoped to achieve. Other ideals were more distinctly bourgeois: probity in commercial dealings, fidelity to one's spouse, self-control in expenditure, the need for privacy, the gospel of work, the love of beauty. Good taste was a badge craved by those who could, and often by those who could not afford it.[38]

Jürgen Kocka shares this emphasis on the sense of probity in public behavior and extends those features into the political and cultural spheres:

> By stressing the principles of achievement and education, work and self-reliance, a vision of a modern, secularized, self-regulating, enlightened "civil society" emerged that was supported by many middle-class persons, in opposition to the privileges and autocracy of the *ancien régime*. . . . While developing cohesion in opposition to people above and below, the middle class defined itself by its culture.[39]

And Eric Hobsbawm adds that the very imprecision of the definition of middle class required the creation of a distinctly middle-class "hierarchy of exclusiveness." This hierarchy authorized criteria for mobility into and within the middle class: "a middle-class lifestyle and culture was one such criterion, leisure activity, and especially the new invention of sport, was another; but the chief indicator of actual membership increasingly became, and has remained, formal education."[40] To situate the middle class

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[37] Christophe Charle, *Social History of France in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Miriam Kochan (Oxford: Berg, 1994), 278.

[38] Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*, vol. 3, *The Cultivation of Hatred* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 18. On Gay's discussion of the cultural dimensions of middle-class life, see his *Schnitzler's Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture 1815–1914* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001).

[39] Jürgen Kocka, *Industrial Culture and Bourgeois Society: Business, Labor, and Bureaucracy in Modern Germany* (New York: Berghan Books, 1999), 233.

[40] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 174. Also see Kocka, *Industrial Culture*, 234, "Families from various middle-class catego-

in modern history, a focus on the hierarchy of exclusiveness provides a means to conceptualize this class both in terms of its relationship to other classes and on the basis of its internal dynamics of distinction.[41]

The linking of the ideational and epistemological foundations of modernity with definitive middle-class cultural and political praxis is a phenomenon that I term "middle-class modernity." As previously noted, middle-class modernity describes a mutually reinforced calculus by which to be modern meant to be not like, but again *just as modern* as, the imagined, idealized middle class and, in a transitive sense, the bourgeoisie of Europe. By the same token, being middle class—here almost exclusively in a cultural sense—was the best evidence of being modern. Middle-class modernity suggests a specific kind of experiential phenomenon of modernity distinguished in part by the fact that its "surface momentum conceals its inner sameness, its increasing reproduction of the safe limits of the bourgeois world."[42] And while that sameness is precisely what led Charles Baudelaire and others like Karl Marx to label this modernity "false modernity," its association with Europe and its dominant class exercised an immense magnetic attraction on aspiring middle classes throughout the non-West. The open question is, how safe do these limits actually remain as aspects of the "bourgeois world" are introduced and adopted outside of the West?

As a consequence of technological changes in communication and transportation, the growth of print capitalism, and the introduction of modernist literary forms, a consensual language of social practice that used the perceived behavior of the Western middle class as a standard was available in the Eastern Mediterranean and could serve to make distinctions within that society by the second half of the nineteenth century. When examples of middle-class modernity gained currency in the Ottoman Eastern Mediterranean through media, literature (novels and self-help books), and later film and radio, education, bureaucratization, travel, and colonial encounters, it contributed both to the emergence and to definitive aspects of the middle class. Middle-class modernity provided at once a ladder and an objective for indigenous middle-class aspirations,

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ries shared a respect for individual achievement, on which they based their claims for rewards, recognition, and influence. They shared a positive attitude toward regular work, a propensity for rationality and emotional control, and a fundamental striving for independence, either individually or through associations. The middle class emphasized education. General education (Bildung) served as a basis on which they communicated with one another, one that distinguished them from others who did not share this type of (usually classical) education. Scholarly pursuits were respected, as were music, literature, and the arts."

[41] Distinction is used here in the sense suggested by Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

[42] Peter Nicolls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 7.

while the underlying motives for wanting to incorporate that praxis and those ideas remain as complex as the class itself. Variables including education, wealth, and religion controlled the manner in which middle-class modernity was understood and employed at any given moment; nevertheless, it formed a stable matrix of ineffable specificity that had the power to shape this stratum politically and socially and provide them, in turn, with a warrant and a guide with which to seek to shape their own society. To paraphrase Potter Stewart, one knew middle-class modernity when one saw it without necessarily being able to explain exactly why. Likewise, the adoption of middle-class manners, patterns of consumption, and ways of thought perceived as inherently modern was by definition a cultural necessity and their implementation a social imperative.

Equally important is the recognition that the adoption of middle-class modernity did not necessarily efface all pre-existing forms of social and political interaction; rather, at moments, the actual praxis of the middle class took on the quality of a palimpsest, where the pre-existing practices and modern ones often operated simultaneously and not always exclusively. A salient example of this phenomenon is the grafting by middle-class intellectuals of the key middle-class concepts of respectability, mannered behavior, and probity in public and business dealings to the core "traditional" concept of *adab*, loosely defined as manners, good taste, and humaneness.[43] Adab, and other terms like *husn al-mukafa'a* (social grace) and *maslaha* (common good), which have extensive genealogies in Ottoman and Arab-Islamic thought, figure prominently in historical and political writing of the period. However, as used in those modern contexts, these concepts bore less resemblance to their historical antecedents and more, in practice, to calques of French and English words; in the lexical sleight-of-hand peculiar to modernism, concepts and ideas could be rendered more palatable to, or incur less resistance from, a conservative audience when repackaged in antique garb; and conversely, the residual power of certain key words, especially those linked to identity, ethnicity, and religion, would be harnessed by a modernizing elite for its own purposes.

It is crucial to note that thus conceived, middle-class modernity is not a phenomenon unique to the non-West, and echoes of it resound throughout the social history of contemporary Europe and the Americas.[44] By

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[43] *EI²* 175–176.

[44] An instructive comparison can be drawn between the emergent middle class in the Ottoman Eastern Mediterranean and the class of white-collar, salaried wage earners of contemporary Western Europe. Like the office workers of Berlin, *Die Angestellten*, that Siegfried Kracauer used to mark the links between modernity, culture, consumption and class, the emergent middle class of the Eastern Mediterranean "quite unequivocally signal[ed] their will to climb socially in the aspirations symbolized by their trappings. They [did] their

thinking about the Eastern Mediterranean's middle class in terms of a globalized middle-class modernity, this work places the regional experiences of class dynamics and struggle into a larger transnational frame; at the same time it underscores the hegemonic power of high capitalism and colonialism to shape social and communal relations on the most local and intimate levels.

Fatma Müge Göçek's, *Rise of Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire* also locates formative moments of this class in the "unintended consequences" of the elite-sponsored reforms of the Tanzimat period, which "transformed three Ottoman social groups—merchants, officials, and intellectuals—into an emergent bourgeoisie segmented along religious and ethnic lines."[45] The segmentation along religious lines evolved from the basic terms of the customary relationship between the Muslim ruling majority of the empire and its non-Muslim minorities. Already encapsulated into quasi-autonomous administrative units, *millets*, the form of religious distinction in Ottoman society served as a template for the formation of separate classes.[46] The higher degree of access to Western education and forms of socialization and organization transformed the movement of some in these already self-contained groups into the middle class.[47] The cultural origins of this part of the middle class support the argument that the notion of "middle class" hinges less on objective standards of wealth than on a systematic adherence to patterns of behavior and presentations of self.

Also crucial to this sectarian bifurcation of the class was the Ottoman Land Law of 1858 (Arazi Kanunnamesi). Before the midcentury, real property was not owned per se, but rather held by individuals for use, often in perpetuity, the land itself belonging to the state. As a feature of economic liberalization, the Ottoman state promulgated a series of land registration and purchasing laws. Used primarily by the urban notability to secure its position by recording vast amounts of land in its names, it also opened the door for smaller agricultural entrepreneurs and land speculators. Growing wealth among these smaller landholders created an economic basis for their movement into the middle class, primarily through the vehicle of state education and white-collar bureaucratic jobs.

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best to enter the middle class by means of mere semblance, by mimicry of the existing systems of rule." Gertrud Koch, *Siegfried Kracauer, an Introduction*, trans. Jeremy Gaines (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 69.

[45] Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 109–110.

[46] On the millet system in the nineteenth century, see Roderic Davison, "Millets as Agents of Change in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," in B. Braude and B. Lewis, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Holmes and Meir, 1982), 1:71–84.

[47] Göçek, *Rise*, 110.

Legally, non-Muslims could own land; in practice, however, state bureaucrats tended to obstruct the purchase of real estate by Christians and Jews in favor of Muslims.[48] On the one hand, this solidified the position of non-Muslims in the retail and banking sectors and resulting forms of cultural capital; on the other, it strengthened their sense of alienation from the larger Ottoman community.

Göçek's work represents a fundamental departure from previous studies of nineteenth-century Ottoman intellectual and social history in that she includes evidence from bourgeois intellectual productions and material culture, thus allowing this group to speak for itself, as it were. However, by her almost exclusive focus on the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul, she neglects to study the formation of the middle class in the periphery of that vast state. The process of fragmentation and bifurcation described in her work certainly occurred in other parts of the empire.

Such a process took on a specific character in cosmopolitan provincial cities like Aleppo, Beirut, Baghdad, Salonica, and Alexandria. One of the pertinent questions raised in the periphery is, to which grand world city (*métropole*) does the middle class look as its ideal? Some Constantinopolitans may have sought to re-create themselves in the image of their imagined Parisian cognate. They would never have considered Aleppines proper exemplars. In Aleppo, however, the fashions, manners, mores, and practices of the idealized class cognate in Istanbul, Cairo, Paris, or London—or any combination thereof—would have been considered exemplary by the middle class, though perhaps not equally so. Thus one not only behaved outwardly modern but also shared thereby in a middle-class anxiety about being as modern as European and central Ottoman archetypes. The Aleppine experience, similar to that in the remainder of the colonial world, confirms that both the desideratum of middle-class modernity and actual examples of it drawn from several métropoles were in a constant and fluid process of juxtaposition and informed possible choices and patterns of behavior.[49] The major distinction revolved around not just an abstract idea of modernity, but rather the degree to which the individuals or groups actively identify with a specific metropolitan practice of modernity. For the Aleppo of the nineteenth and early twentieth

[48] Kemal Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late-Ottoman State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 93–98; Peter Sluglett and Marion Farouk-Sluglett, "The Application of the 1858 Land Code in Greater Syria: Some Preliminary Observations," in Tarif Khalidi, ed., *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East* (Beirut: American University Beirut 1984), 409–424.

[49] "The specific categories and constellations of categories used by individuals within these groupings to organize their world and order their society naturally cohered with, and in some cases even duplicated, those enjoined by the dominant culture with the *métropole*." Gelvin, *Divided*, 16

centuries, the exemplary métropoles were Paris, London, and Istanbul; later, in the 1930s, Berlin, Moscow, and Cairo were incorporated, and certainly now that list must include Hollywood and New York.

Toward an Architecture of Eastern Mediterranean Community

By the end of the nineteenth century, the middle class had become a palpable public and social presence in the Ottoman Empire. And while increasingly substantial, it still represented a small portion of the total population. The middle class's growing role was determined less by numbers and more by its unique control of critical aspects of a modernizing society and increasing amounts of liquid wealth. From expertise in new military and communication technology, journalism, banking, espionage, and secular education, to a greater ability to interact with the West through knowledge of foreign languages, dual nationality as agents of foreign companies and governments, and legal and commercial acumen, this class occupied a position of power and influence in society disproportionate to its size. However, despite the large-scale political reforms of the Tanzimat period, the Eastern Mediterranean middle class never attained juridical legitimacy in the complex political theory of the Ottoman state. In other words, where the nineteenth-century political orders in France and England began to reckon with the demands of an increasingly substantial middle class, in the Ottoman Empire, no special political rights accrued to members of this stratum.[50] Not until the Young Turk Revolution did discussions arise about the actual position of a middle class in the new political order. While Aykut Kansu's insistence that the Revolution of 1908 was "one of the last examples of bourgeois revolutions to have taken place before the First World War" is overstated, it does reflect the fact that several Young Turk ideologues, most notably Yusuf Akçura, argued that the formation of a national middle class was fundamental to institutionalizing the revolution.[51] Indeed, aspects of Young Turk economic policy in the period after 1908 and later those of the Kemalists were dedicated to creating this class through the implementation of a *millî iktisat*, a national economy. This policy often resulted in the marginalization of Jewish, Armenian, Greek, Arab Muslim, and Christian middle-class merchants and bureaucrats and, in a few cases, the attempted violent elimination or the

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[50] Selim Deringil's *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998) describes the political formulas and political structures Ottoman society in the prerevolutionary period, and the lack of the middle class in those formulas.

[51] Aykut Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 27.

mass extra-judicial killing of entire ethnic and religious communities, to facilitate the creation of a Turkish-speaking Muslim middle class.[52]

In Aleppo and in provincial cosmopolitan cities like Izmir,[53] Beirut,[54] or Alexandria,[55] this commercial or entrepreneurial middle class was dominated by non-Muslims. Why the middle class segmented so thoroughly along sectarian lines and persistently conceptualized politics in this vein is a question central to this book. Consequently, my analysis reflects the fact that historically contingent sect and communal conflict conditioned both inter- and intraclass relations, and as questions unfolded about the middle class in Eastern Mediterranean urban society, religious affiliation took on a significance it may not have acquired in the West. Nevertheless, this recognition points to a larger need to acknowledge how the question of modernity in the Eastern Mediterranean must be formulated against Muslim-Christian subordination, difference, and conflict. In prewar Aleppo the problematic sectarian element of Young Turk economic policy, the full dimensions of which had yet to be realized, caused some anxiety, but on balance the "bourgeois" nature of the Revolution of 1908 resonated positively with the local middle-class community.

More important than the economic policy was the premium Young Turk liberalism placed on elevating the middle class into a position of authority, over and against the empire's ruling elite and palace bureaucracy. Countering the customary political and legal restrictions placed on non-Muslims in Ottoman society, the idea of an increased role for the middle class filtered into provincial locations like Aleppo and introduced members of this class into the "politics of notables." In late-Ottoman provincial urban society, the calculus of power was the "politics of notables," in which the traditional Sunni Muslim urban oligarchy, in local parlance the *aʿyan* (literally, "those in the public eye"), held power by virtue of both secular and divine sanction.[56] The middle class, especially

[52] Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 1993), 42–46; Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1993), 129; Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de "Millî {{Icircumflex}}ktisat," 1908–1918* (Istanbul: Yurt, 1982).

[53] Daniel Goffman, *Izmir and the Levantine World, 1550–1650* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990); Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters, *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[54] Fawaz, *Merchants*.

[55] Malak Zaalouk, *Power, Class and Foreign Capital in Egypt: The Rise of a New Bourgeoisie* (London: Zed, 1989); Robert Ilbert, *Alexandrie, 1830–1930: Histoire d'une communauté citadine* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1996).

[56] "A relatively high degree of social and religious uniformity and cohesion in urban society itself allowed the urban upper class to pose successfully as a 'natural' leadership. In a sense, its domination of urban society was 'legitimized' because a high proportion of the population in each town—a population that, despite the dramatic changes of the era, was

its non-Muslim component, is likewise a silent element in studies of the "politics."[57] In the revolutionary period, the Eastern Mediterranean's middle class grew increasingly disconnected from the hegemonic social group of aʿyan, but it nevertheless maintained an ambivalent relationship with it. More important, many members of the middle class—Muslim and non-Muslim—had grown dissatisfied with the form of political control it legitimized and sought self-consciously modern alternatives. If the idea of class can be built on a group's "sense of an overriding collective struggle for independence or hegemony," as Charles Maier has suggested, the many merchants, doctors, lawyers, bankers, and teachers who exhibited antipathy to the illiberal politics of notables in their everyday political practice clearly qualified as a class.[58]

The collision between the "politics of notables" and the notions of citizenship and representational politics authorized by middle-class modernity demands a more robust connection between state, society, religion, and culture in the writing of the contemporary history of the Eastern Mediterranean. Rather than a mere supplanting of old styles of leadership and the effacement of customary modes of legitimacy, the transformation of society linked to the emergence of the middle class transcended the political and entered social and cultural history in unprecedented ways.

What happened was something larger than the displacement of the "traditional" by the modern. For the middle class and the society that encompassed it, relationships with colonialism, emigration, forms of mass violence including genocide, new uses of space and kinds of technology, the draw of nationalism, the artifice of historicism, and the persistence

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still very much attached to its traditional religious beliefs, cultural practices, and customs—identified the defenders of the faith and guardians of culture as well as the providers of vital goods and services with the local upper class." Khoury, *Mandate*, 13. The term "natural" leadership in this passage is drawn from the seminal work of Albert Hourani in his "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables," in William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers, eds., *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 41–68. On the rise of the aʿyan in the Ottoman period, see Halil Inalcik, "Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration," in Thomas Naff and Roger Owen, eds., *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 27–52.

[57] Khoury notes, albeit viewing the question from the top down, "Our understanding of their [the notables'] connection to Christian merchants and moneylenders, and their relations with the urban religious minorities in general, remains grossly inadequate. . . . Indeed we need more information on the ways individual notables or their families were able both to mobilize and contain popular forces. . . . And greater attention must be paid to their role of notables in the cultural life of the towns, in particular their role in education and literary activities in this period of profound intellectual change." Philip Khoury, "The Urban Notables Paradigm Revisited," *REMMM* 55–56 (January and February 1990): 226.

[58] Charles Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade after World War I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 19.

of sectarianism created a form of historical experience more fluid and dynamic than discretely constructed social or political history can describe. Understanding that history requires instead a recognition that "experience," in the words of Ronald Grigor Suny and Geoff Eley, is "always itself discursively framed and understood [and] creates identities of 'interest,' textures of identification and architectures of community"; at issue for the historian "is the way in which experiences are handled in cultural terms, embodied in traditions, value systems, ideas, and institutional forms."[59]

By forging a link between being modern and the emergence of the middle class, my work creates a template for locating the historical experience of modernity in the history of the Eastern Mediterranean that captures those "textures of identification and architectures of community." Moreover, by combining the cultural-intellectual dimensions of modernity with the radical alteration of urban political and social structures in the cosmopolitan cities of the Eastern Mediterranean, my approach offers a critical-theoretical and comparative means by which to describe the humanity, sophistication, and urbanity of a community and its members in an era of anxiety and rapid change that at once secures the uniqueness of their experience and confirms its familiarity.

Following an introductory discussion of the political and urban history of Aleppo in the late nineteenth century, the book traces in a roughly chronological fashion the middle class's historical experience of modernity in the three fields of revolutionary politics, historicism and nationalism, and colonialism. Preceding each of the three sections are short discussions of the theoretical implications of what follows, as well as the broader historical context, which may not be familiar to nonspecialists.

Qastun's New Year's address not only highlights the manifestation of the middle class in the political and social history of Aleppo but also serves as the point of departure for the first of these sections, "Being Modern in a Time of Revolution." This section locates the middle class in the political history of the city and follows the process by which it created and contested the civil society in the late-Ottoman period and into the early postwar years. Qastun's words also confirm the internalization of a specifically modern and middle-class view of history. Embracing a Hegelian notion that History is the unfolding of human freedom, this style of imagining the past derived from a general incorporation of modernist forms of history writing and narrative. The second part of the book, "Being Modern in a Moment of Anxiety," examines the way middle-class Alep-

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[59] Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, "Introduction," in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Becoming National: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 10.

pines wrote their own history, reacted to the introduction of an official Arab nationalism, and dealt with the aftermath of the tumultuous period of the Great War. The final section, "Being Modern in an Era of Colonialism," follows several of these innovations in Aleppo as Ottoman suzerainty gave way to the French colonial presence, an occupation welcomed, at least initially, by Qastun.