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FACULTY OF ENGINEERING
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

The effect of British imperialism on the Egyptian architecture

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the M.SC.
In Architectural Engineering

by

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B.Sc. in Architectural Engineering, June 2014

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STATEMENT

This thesis is submitted as partial fulfillment of M.Sc. degree in Architectural Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Ain Shams University.

The author carried out the work included in this thesis, and no part of it has been submitted for a degree or qualification at any other scientific entity.

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Abstract

Imperialism is the political, cultural, and financial dominance of one country over another. The change in any of these factors affects the country's architecture, proving its relevance to imperialism. Architecture is sometimes even used as a means to impose culture and political order by the imperial power. British Imperialism lasted for 74 years in Egypt, affecting the culture, politics, demography, and society. As architecture reflects and embodies the cultural and political life of a society, British Imperialism must have an influence on the architecture in Egypt.

This thesis will address the effect of British Imperialism on Egyptian architecture. It will be divided into three main phases: before the formal British colonization, during the formal British protectorate over Egypt and after the 1919 revolution and the rise of the nationalism movement. The aim of this thesis is to argue that British Imperialism had a significant effect on Egyptian architecture. Each phase of imperialism had dissimilar factors and conditions, which caused visible changes that, can be witnessed through architecture. This thesis will analyze several examples from the three different phases to support the hypothesis that each phase had a different, distinct effect on architecture.

Key words:

Postcolonial theories, colonial cities, postcolonial cities, Orientalism, Neo-Mamluk, Heliopolis city, Imperialism, colonialism, Neo-Islamic.

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Introduction

Imperialism and colonialism are not events far distanced from us nor from architecture and until today, post-colonial cities bear consequences and effects of those eras. Despite that since the emergence of post-colonial theories, little research made its way to the field of architecture and urban design. In addition, different post-colonial discourses and accounts developed in the context of ignoring the colonial urban built environment and spatial studies.

The formal British colonialism over Egypt lasted for 74 years, preceded by Britain's full control over Egypt's finances, hence controlling the country's trade and major projects. This period was eventful, subjecting both Egypt and its society to major changes and reforms. These changes drastically reshaped the country politically, culturally and demographically. This in return must have had an effect on both the country's architecture and the urban built environment.

Leading from that point a question arises, did the British imperialism had an effect on the Egyptian architectural identity. If so, how far did it affect and shape the country's architecture. While knowing that the architecture is an aspect of culture and is the physical embodiment of the society's everyday life practices and activities. In addition, Egypt underwent cultural and political changes during British imperialism. All this must have had an impact on Egyptian architecture in one way or another.

In order to answer this question a qualitative case study research will be followed. First, it is important to explain 'post-colonial' theories, the circumstances of their emergence, and their relevance to both architecture and urban built environment. Then, moving from this point towards explaining and understanding Bhabha's theories and discourses, who is one of the post-colonial theorists' influential pioneers. Then, show the relevance between Bhabha's theories and architecture. In order to summarize all the previous, the general features of post-colonial cities and

their counterpart imperial cities will be explained with a specific emphasis on those colonial or post-colonial cities.

Secondly, we will move to explaining the work of another prominent 'post-colonialism' theorist: Edward Said who redefined the term 'Orientalism'. 'Orientalism' is commonly used as a descriptive term for the fascination of occident scholars with studying eastern societies, cultures and people and then depicting them in their art and writings. Until Edward said introduced in his book 'orientalism' a new definition; He defined it as the way the west view, understand and assimilate Eastern cultures and how this affected their interpretation, judging, writings about this culture and; hence its architecture.

Thirdly, a background about the politics, culture, and architecture during Muhammad Ali reign and his ambitious grandson Khedive Ismail will be displayed. Then show the events that followed Khedive Ismail accession to the rule of Egypt. These events that were the reason behind Britain taking control over Egypt's finances and later declaring the British formal protectorate over Egypt. Not only did this change the Egyptian society culturally and politically, but also triggered the nationalism movement and then the 1919 revolution. This was followed by a seeking for what represent the Egyptian identity either in terms of culture or in terms of architecture.

Finally, case studies from three different main phases: before formal British colonization, after, during the formal British protectorate, and after the 1919 revolution will be analyzed. This will be conducted in an attempt to test 'post-colonialism' theories and see how relevant and applicable they are to the case of the effect of British imperialism on the architecture in Egypt. Then reaching from this to the research main findings and find out to what extent the British imperialism affected the Egyptian architectural identity.