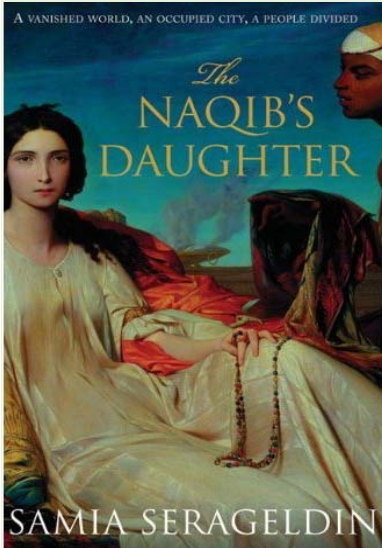




A historical novel . . . a clash of cultures . . . glimpses of Cairo at the turn of the 19th century . . .



The E.A.O. will inaugurate **The Book and Film Discussion Series** with a discussion of Samia Serageldin's *The Naqib's Daughter* on July 17, 2010. **Read more on page 3.**



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Egyptian American Report



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VOL .

Where we came from . . .

Where we're headed

Twenty-four years ago, the original Egyptian American Report published an article entitled "The Egyptian Spring Cultural Festival" in its April issue (vol. 2, no. 2). "In choosing a date for this annual cultural festival, Sham-El-Nessim presented itself as the oldest Egyptian feast--always celebrated by all Egyptians," the article states. Some of the same individuals who worked hard to make the festival a success then were present as we celebrated Sham-El-Nessim in the annual picnic at the beginning of this month--the event having morphed over the years. "It is important that we keep in our perspective, this year and in the future, that we are exposing our heritage . . . not only to ourselves . . . but to that larger segment of the American society interested in understanding the unique tradition of Egyptian culture"--I nod in concurrence, only to find that the author of the article was myself! As I flip through the pages, I find evidence of the community's involvement, dreams of the future, exciting programming, and words of wisdom.

I would like here to honor, in a few words of recognition, all the founders and the members of the E.A.O. who had a dream of giving something to our community, who have devoted time and energy to building something for the future. In the old Egyptian American Report, the names of contributors --those who are still with us and those who have moved on-- ring with the passion of commitment. Let's remember the dream; let's build on the foundation they've given us.

--Faiza Shereen

Sham-El-Nessim Event



May Day or May 1st is a perfect day for merriment and the EAO couldn't have picked a better day for their Sham-El-Nessim picnic. The day began at Mason Park in Irvine with a typical Sham-El-Nessim breakfast of fowl, green onions, warm pita bread and for some (not this writer) a very tasty treat of *fessikh*—salty, dried fish.

As soon as our plates were filled, our senses were filled with the lively music from the *UCSB Middle Eastern Ensemble*.

Three generations of Egyptians and Egyptian Americans tapped their toes, clapped their hands and nodded to the upbeat music of the songs they remembered from their childhood. We even had a raucous chorus of "*Mama Zamanha Gayyah*" with the picnickers singing in tune.



"Tawla Central" was a busy hub with the confident backgammon players competing for the Tawla Champion. At the adjacent picnic table were the serious chess players—they were seriously trying to have a good time, one-upping their competitors.



All too soon after breakfast---of course no one complained---we enjoyed a feast from Hatam Restaurant. Chicken, *kufta* and rice pilaf were the features of the lunch and the scrumptious baklava was the highlight.



Many groups were enjoying the company of their friends while basking in the warm sun or playing at the playground with their children. Great friends, wonderful conversation and lively music made this year's Sham-El-Nessim picnic a huge success. The live band made the day feel like the true festival that Sham-El-Nessim should be. A great joy for this writer was to see the smiles of the young and young at heart as they watched the belly dancer move to the lyrical, traditional, energetic music of the band.



Plans are being made to make next year's picnic even better. We hope to see you next year as we observe a true ancient Egyptian celebration.

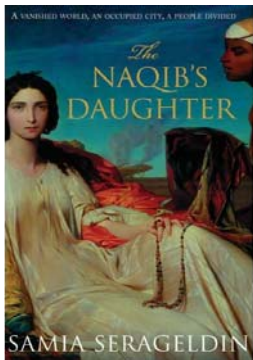
--Virginia Ghoneim

We were asked to provide pictures of the auctioned/raffled eggs. Many thanks to the donors.



The UCSB Middle East Ensemble at the Sham-El-Nessim picnic--
 Please go to the E.A.O. FACEBOOK for more photographs of the event

E.A.O. Book and Film Discussion Series--July 2010



Topic: *The Naqib's Daughter*
Date: July 17, 2010
Time: 3-5 pm
Place: Amany Elghamrawy & Hesham Ayoub's residence:
 28205 Covecrest Dr.,
 Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275
RSVP: Amany at (424) 432 1EAO or
 424 234 1326 or confirm on our
 FACEBOOK

From the book jacket blurbs:

"Lady Nafisa, aristocratic wife of Mamluke leader Murad Bey wakes one morning to find her worst fears confirmed. Cairo is under threat from the French, whose mission is to liberate the most ancient civilization in the world from what they see as superstition and darkness."

"Samia Serageldin brings to life the vanished world of the exotic Mamluke warrior-slaves and in so doing , explores the complex, often dangerous relationship between occupier and occupied."

THE BOOK IS AVAILABLE AT AMAZON.COM

UPCOMING EVENT

In August (before the start of Ramadan), look out for a poetry reading event. Both Arabic and English poetry, both traditional and not-so-traditional will be featured. Readers or choices are welcome. Please contact us or leave a message on the E.A.O. FACEBOOK wall if you would like to propose a piece or to read.

MORE INFORMATION FORTHCOMING IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER

THE E.A.O. FACEBOOK

The E.A.O. now has a window to the world of the young and the young-at-heart! Just go to FACEBOOK:

<http://www.facebook.com/vj.um.amel?ref=mf#!/group.php?gid=118164328204651&ref=ts>

(you may have to copy and paste if unable to click)

Check out Sham-El-Nessim photographs, announcements and details on upcoming events, threaded discussions (proposed currently a discussion on: "what do our second and third generation think?"). Connect and communicate! Send the message around to your friends and to the younger generation: we want to hear their voices, encourage them speak on E.A.O.'S FACEBOOK wall! **TAKE OWNERSHIP!**

Egyptianspeak

A historian of the Middle East, who had learned Arabic in Palestine, once remarked to me about what she thought were the shortcomings of the Egyptian dialect. She had adopted the *shami* dialect, of course, and with it some of the partisan prejudices for that particular brand of Arabism. "Take the word '*tarabeza*,' for example," she said. "What a ridiculous word! And where does it come from, anyway?" I found myself at a loss and feeling defensive.

"But Egyptian Arabic is the easiest to learn and the most commonly understood!" I exclaimed, half **accepting the non-Egyptian Arab's claim to the greater authenticity of the language, while at the same time** I was aware that most Egyptians have exactly the opposite attitude. How often had I heard Egyptians amused by the "other" Arabs' use of "*mara*" for woman, or the Lebanese translation of "fountain" into "*khararah*."

Sometime after that, I read an article somewhere, also by a "non-Arab" American who had traveled through the Arab world. This writer's point was that there was no truth to the claim that Arabic speaking peoples could communicate because they spoke a common language. The Egyptian, the Lebanese, the Moroccan and the Saudi speak such different dialects, she contended, they must be incomprehensible to each other. Take the number "two," she argued; for the Egyptian, it's "*ethnayn*"; for the Lebanese "*tentayn*," and for the Moroccan "*jouj*." Or "sleep" which is "*nam*" for the Egyptian but "*na'as*" for the Moroccan. Or the greeting "how are you?" "*Ezayyak*" in Egyptian; "*keefak*" in Lebanese, and "*labass*" in Moroccan. When I went to Morocco a couple of years later, I was first inclined to agree with this writer. I could hardly understand what the locals said! But then I met a fellow Fulbrighter who was an Arabic linguist. A brief lesson in the history of the Arabic language from him and a little careful listening on my part, and I found myself having no trouble understanding my Moroccan colleagues' Arabic.

The linguist reminded me of what we all know but tend to forget--all languages are live and change and evolve according to the history--social, economic and cultural--of the region in which they are spoken. So French as spoken in Quebec, for instance, is closer to the language spoken by French settlers in the 17th century than it is to the French spoken in France today (though the claim that it is therefore more correct French is invalid). Similarly, the Arabic spoken in Morocco today is closer to the language spoken by the Abbasids who had established Arabic as the language of North Africa in the 8th century. The word "*na'as*" which was then a synonym for "*nam*" (sleep), has evolved in Egypt and other Arabic-speaking nations into a word meaning "overcome with sleepiness" while "*nam*" means sleep.

My own more conscious listening also led to discoveries. "*Jouz*" is the Arabic word for "pair" (with the soft "g" used by non-Egyptians in general), and any Arabic speaker understands that that is another way of saying "two." The Moroccan "*jouj*" is its derivative. If "*labass*" sounds funny to Egyptians, they need



[O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other, not that you may despise each other.]

Classical Arabic, as opposed to spoken Arabic, remains relatively stable partly due to the elaborate use of calligraphy.

WORDS OF WISDOM . . .

"Forty is the old age of youth; fifty is the youth of old age." --Victor Hugo

"Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly." --Robert F. Kennedy

"Anxiety is the interest paid on trouble before it is due." --Dean Inge

From the E.A.R. issues of April and January 1986.

ABOUT THE PHOENIX . .

Who received the egg with the Phoenix motif in Sham-El-Nessim? In the April 1986 issue of the EAR, Nabila Badawy writes: "Do you know that Phoenix, Arizona, owes its mythical name to an ancient Egyptian story? To the Ancient Egyptians, the Phoenix bird was a symbol of immortality. They believed that every 500 years, this bird set itself on fire only to rise again from its own ashes. . . ."



Egyptianspeak cont'd

only listen and think a moment and they will see the classical Arabic "*la ba's*" in it. While "*keftek*" also contains "*kayfant*."

So what about *tarabesa*? Where indeed does that come from? And should I really feel defensive, as though Egyptians were guilty of distorting the Arabic language while the other Arabs were not? So I searched. Some etymologies appear as possibilities. One source claims the word is imported from an Indian language. Another sees the combined "tara" and "basa" from Latin and the Basque language, referring to a plateau of sorts. Whatever the case, the word is clearly imported from another language. The point, however, is that it is no less Arabic than the *shami* "*tawla*" which itself is an imported word from a Latin root: *tabula*. The only really Arabic word for table is "*maa'ida*." (*Sofra*, another word used in Egyptian Arabic for a dining-table, is Farsi.)

So we speak Arabic--but whatever happened to the heritage from the Pharaonic times. We have the monuments; we have papyrus; our museums (and museums of the world) are filled with Egyptian artifacts--what happened to the spoken word?

The spoken language has left traces that ran through Coptic Egyptian and emerged disguised in the spoken Arabic all around us. Interestingly, much of the vocabulary used in addressing infants and children can be traced back to the Ancient Egyptians, and even the most recent slang vernacular includes some terms from Pharaoh's time. Following are some examples:

<i>mum--</i>	to eat	<i>kahkah--</i>	old person
<i>embou--</i>	to drink	<i>batat--</i>	to flatten
<i>kokha--</i>	dirty	<i>eddiy--</i>	give
<i>bo'bo'--</i>	ghost	<i>hawssa--</i>	high pitch--
<i>nounou--</i>	baby	<i>sitt--</i>	woman (lady of the house)
<i>bah--</i>	finished	<i>eysh--</i>	bread
<i>medames--</i>	buried (cooking food in the ground)	<i>k hamm--</i>	to deceive
<i>shebsheb --</i>	Slippers	<i>tannesh--</i>	not responding

Though languages, like psyches, come from a parent, they are to a great extent formed by the experience they live through: climates, arts, religion, wars, invasions, travel, literacy, science, politics, social interactions, status norms, and many other human conditions. In small imperceptible increments, borrowings and intrusions mark the progress of a language's evolution. It may be ultimately foolish to criticize one or another way of saying something just because it is not familiar to us. Diversity only enriches a language.

--Faiza Shereen

See Mike Sharobim's website: www.sharobim.com, Egyptian language origins unlocked-1.pps (933KB). Sharobim references works by Dr. Abdel hakim Nurredin and Dr. Gamal Abdel Razak.

Also on the subject is the Societe d' Archeologie Copte publications: *Common Words in the Spoken Arabic of Egypt, of Greek or Coptic Origin* by Prof. Dr. Georgy Sobhy Bey, 1950.

