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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# Islamic Propaganda by the French During the Occupation of Egypt (1798-1801)

**Halil İbrahim Erol** [1]

**Abstract**
This article examines the propaganda put forth by the French during their invasion of Egypt between 1798 and 1801. The French occupation and control of Egypt was realized through two important elements, invasion/war (military control/hard power) and propaganda (textual control/soft power). Military and textual strategies should be viewed as not only complementary but also integral parts of each other. The French constantly and persistently issued proclamations from the first day of the invasion to the last moment. They primarily sought to set the stage for what they aimed with forthcoming propaganda. Their propaganda had political and religious aspects. The political propaganda was seemingly created in the context of the French rivalry with the Mamluks. The religious propaganda, on the other hand, was based on the claim that the French were the best friends of Egyptian Muslims, whom the French insistently tried to persuade. Their friendship with Muslims gradually developed to a point that some Frenchmen appeared to have converted to Islam. The propaganda apparatus in terms of its practice had visual and textual aspects that the French applied simultaneously. Opposite to what had been claimed, this paper asserts that their propaganda had absolutely nothing to do with the Enlightenment or the ideas of the French Revolution. This research also argues the primary impetus of the invasion to have been the global capitalist rivalry between the British and the French.
**Keywords:** Propaganda • Muslim French • French Occupation • Napoleon Bonaparte • Egypt • Azhar Ulama

1 **Correspondence to:** Halil İbrahim Erol (Res. Asst. PhD), Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Kırklareli University, Kırklareli Turkiye. Email: halilibrahimerol@gmail.com ORCID: 0000-0001-8331-8441
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The French occupation of Egypt lasted three years. The occupation started on July 1, 1798 and ended on September 2, 1801. As the attack had been made on a territory considered to be the heart of the Islamic lands, it had great repercussions for both the Ottoman and Islamic world. Although the occupation of Egypt may appear to have been regional, it was the site of a scramble originating from a more global colonial struggle between France and Britain. In fact, France's main aim was to attack England. However, they could not achieve this due to England's naval superiority. Instead of a direct attack, they necessarily preferred an expedition to Egypt as one of the trading routes leading to the British Indian colonies. Despite its vitality, Egypt's agricultural and economic value itself can be seen as subsidiary in terms of the French challenge to British global imperialism. As such, the actual goal was to reach India or to damage Indian trade. The destruction of the French fleet by British naval forces at Abu Qir Bay and the British aid to the Ottoman army during the evacuation of French forces from Egypt confirm this. Whatever the real reason was, the truth is that Egypt had been occupied by the French. The French occupation of Muslim lands was neither the first nor the last.

Muslim lands have been occupied at various times throughout the history of Islam. These can generally be evaluated in two categories as permanent or temporary occupations. If remembered chronologically, the Crusades, the Mongolian invasions, and the fall of Andalusia came at the beginning of the traumatic periods Muslim states experienced in the pre-modern era. In these periods, Muslim peoples had begun to live under non-Muslim rule temporarily in the first two instances and permanently in the third.

In these periods of occupation, Muslims developed different reactions against the occupying forces that were of course undoubtedly directly related to their beliefs. One of these was the view that Muslims should not live under the rule of those from another religion and that they should migrate to lands where the Muslim legal system was present. For example, Ibn Rushd (Averroes) had laid down the necessity of hijra for the Andalusian Muslims (Lewis, 1993, pp. 51–54). The main point, however, is how the Islamic scholars, the ulama, perceived these occupations. In general, the ulama argued that, even if it were corrupt and bad, the existent administration should be obeyed, claiming that any order was better than no order. The absence of state or political authority was considered equal to social disorder and anarchy (Lapidus, 2002, p. 217). In other words, according to general Islamic political thought, "an ordered land is unimaginable without a ruler, just as an ordered universe is unimaginable without God" (Lapidus, 2002, p. 154).

In the occupation of Egypt as well, the Azhar ulama, shaykhs, notables, and Egyptian Muslims showed different reactions to the occupation. Some of them migrated out of Cairo. Some preferred to take part in the diwan (council of administration) established

by the French. Others continued to live in Cairo but stayed away from the invaders. In general terms, the French administration seemed to have been tacitly accepted. If analyzed chronologically, the ulama, acting as a mediator, dispatched a delegation to the French occupation army for negotiation. The delegation was sent after the Mamluk army had been defeated by the French. And more importantly, the Ottoman army was not yet in sight and would not be for a long time. Thus, the Egyptian people who remained completely defenseless militarily were at the mercy of the French soldiers. For this reason, the negotiation was apparently the last resort for Egyptians' safety. The French authorities would seize this opportunity, being in line with their policies as well. The occupation can be divided into three distinct categories: the Napoleonic, Kleber, and Menou periods. Each period had different characteristics, stemming from both the personalities of the commanders as well as the political and military conjuncture. Therefore, focusing on the differences within themself, as well as evaluating the occupation period entirely, may yield better results for understanding the process. However, looking first at how the occupation was interpreted by historians would be more accurate.

**Orientalizing the Invasion**

Scholars have had different interpretations of the French invasion of Egypt. Generally speaking, the occupation has been exposed to extreme interpretations. Some who've dominated the discussions about the French campaign claim conveniently that the invasion was an important channel for transferring revolutionary ideas to Egypt. They apparently underlined the interaction that had taken place during the invasion without providing proofs, falling far from historical facts. The historical sources and historians of the period suggest a different picture. Therefore, discussing the issue within the historical context by applying it to the primary sources of the period is vital. Talking briefly about the claims first would be useful here.

Abu Lughod argued French proclamations to have been a significant channel for the introduction of many European ideas and concepts. Immediately afterward, he put forward that the other proclamations did not have as significant an impact on the transfer of ideas as the first one had (Abu Lughod, 1963, p. 12). Most researchers who overemphasize the first proclamation seem to get a wrong impression about the French policies. The first proclamation was certainly very important (I shall discuss the proclamations in detail below). In the same manner, Vatikiotis asserted that the French invasion of Egypt had introduced educated Egyptians to the ideas of the French Revolution, despite its secular ideology being alien and abhorrent to Muslim society (Vatikiotis, 1969, p. 37). For Vatikiotis (1969, p. 44), the establishment of the *Institut d'Égypte* (hereafter the Institute) and the diwan were two embodied examples of revolutionary ideas. In fact, the Institute, being a scientific center with its own agenda,

substantially isolated from the Egyptian people, and publishing its investigations in French for the French audience, was basically founded to study Egypt. Therefore, mentioning that it had contact with the Muslim society or even the ulama would appear difficult. On the other hand, the diwan was not the invention of the French. Conversely, the diwan as an administrative unit with a similar purpose had existed during the Mamluk period, and the Ottomans maintained it (Erol, 2021, p. 246). Whatever the fact is, the establishment of a diwan consisting of Azhar ulama, shaykhs, and notables in this form and integrated to the invasion regime to gain the loyalty of Egyptian Muslims was somehow a new application. However, relating the diwan to the revolutionary ideas appears quite difficult.

Meanwhile, to Stanford Shaw (1964, p. 23), the expedition had revolutionized Egypt from the administrative to the social levels. Bernard Lewis (2010, p. 51) similarly claimed that the French Revolution had imposed itself directly and forcefully once France invaded Egypt. He also asserted that the French expedition to Egypt, in 1798 had had considerable impact on that country (Lewis, 1993, p. 22) and that the Ottoman government had embarked on "ideological warfare" to refute "revolutionary doctrines" (Lewis, 1968, p. 67). With this interpretation, however, Lewis implied that the French had sought to spread revolutionary doctrines. In fact, the leaflets allegedly distributed by the Ottomans just emphasized France's disbelief. But unfortunately, such interpretations are not limited to these historians. Another example is Shmuel Moreh. He was a historian who performed important studies on the Egyptian historian, Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (d. 1825), an Azhari scholar. He worked on al-Jabarti's books for over thirty years. Moreh's interest in al-Jabarti began during his MA studies. He edited and translated al-Jabarti's chronicle, *Tārīkh muddat al-faransīs bi-miṣr* with the book he published in 1975. Moreh's lifework is a critical edition of the monumental *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār fi'l-tarājim wa'l-akhbār*, al-Jabarti's magnum opus, which was published in 2013 in 5 volumes (Milson & Bar-Asher, 2021, pp. 21–22). But despite his long-term endeavor, Moreh took the opposite direction when interpreting al-Jabarti's historical works.

Moreh argued that the French had brought ideas and concepts that were considered revolutionary among other European nations to Egypt, which had been stagnant for years, and that Napoleon had wanted to destroy Egypt's socio-economic structure and establish a new system based on the most up-to-date European model. He also stated that the Egyptians, on the other hand, had been able to understand the Crusaders carrying the cross in their hands, because this war had been between two competing religions, but the French occupation was different from this and something which the Egyptians could not comprehend. The French soldiers did not have crosses in their hands but had brought Western secular civilization through the scholars and Orientalists accompanying them (al-Jabarti, 1975, p. 24). In the final analysis, Moreh's (2006, p.

199) extreme interpretations dragged him to claim that the French occupation had been the beginning of the true Arab renaissance. Frankly speaking, Moreh's unwarranted enthusiasm seems rather difficult to place into any historical context. Even if the French did not bring anything evoking Christianity, the Egyptian people had a general idea who the French were before the occupation. The French merchants, who are said to have been persecuted by the Mamluks, were the most vivid and concrete examples of this experience.

Despite Moreh having worked on Arabic primary sources of the period and knowing them well, he implied that the idea of supremacy of mind with the emphasis on equality was in the first proclamation issued by the French, as if it had been included in all the proclamations and that they had built their policies on that idea. However, the statements which might evoke some revolutionary principles were included only in the first proclamation, which did mention freedom and equality. Contrary to what has been claimed, the French did not bring the ideas of Enlightenment or the principles of the French Revolution to Egypt. In fact, they created the frameworks of propaganda by inheriting the legacy of the Eastern Islamic perception that had been transformed and fermented in the Western idea of Enlightenment during the eighteenth century. As Philip pointed out well, "The proclamations were first and foremost political statements of the French occupational forces and not scholarly treatises on the French Revolution," and the real aim of the French was to enforce political and military control over Egyptian society (Philipp, 1990, pp. 135, 138). For Hourani, too, the words in the text of the proclamation have the purpose of political propaganda (Hourani, 1991, p. 15).

**Propaganda, the French Revolution, and Bonaparte**

Propaganda is generally accepted as being a phenomenon of the modern world. It emerged in the modern technological society, which tends to be a completely integrated society. Modern society is a mass society consisting of individuals. Modern propaganda uses a modern technique. As a modern technique, the printing press has been a strategic medium for propaganda. Printing presses mean speed and power of control in publication, as well as the ability to reach out to a wider audience. Thus, propaganda can monopolize the flow of information through the printing press. Even though it has strategic influence, it is surely not enough to dominate the whole process alone. The above definitional framework of propaganda is explanatory but incomplete. As is known well, the kingdoms of Sumer, Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt, and others in ancient times all implemented propaganda (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2012, p. 53). In terms of persuasion techniques, the history of propaganda activities parallels the existence of society. Since human beings first started to live in organized communities the leaders of societies have resorted to the methods of propaganda to acquire wider social support (Qualter, 1962, p. 5). Namely, propaganda transcends modern society as a sociological phenomenon by its nature. Even

if mass society and the mass media were incomparable to the conditions of the past, this would not fully justify putting a limit on propaganda as a modern phenomenon, because people throughout history have somehow lived as communal entities. Alongside this historical reality, opinions, ideas, cultural patterns, beliefs, prejudices and so forth are well known to have always taken shape within society. This takes us to the sociological dimension of the individual and to seeing human beings as part of a single whole. For Because humans are social beings, they can be understood best through their own existential or otherwise sociological basis. Because those who study propaganda accept it as a modern phenomenon, they have inevitably limited their studies to mass society and the modern individual. Despite its psychological dimensions, propaganda can be said to be a sociological phenomenon. This sociological phenomenon should be taken into consideration regardless of whether a society is modern or not. In fact, propaganda refers to the interaction of people with any information circulating in society. In that case, regardless of the period in history, any individual who is a member of any society, whether it be traditional or modern, might be willingly or unwillingly subjected to propaganda. In our case, even though Egyptian society can be considered as traditional, it did somewhat temporarily experience dramatic changes and exposure to modern developments for three years. Propaganda should be listed as the most significant of these.

French society had been introduced to propaganda culture before they invaded Egypt. According to Domenach, political propaganda began after the French Revolution. The leaders of the revolution had resorted to a massive propaganda campaign whose purpose was to disseminate new ideas with the potential to alter the traditional structure of French society (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2012, p. 88). Officials and their propaganda speeches were hard at work. In 1793, an attempt was made to spread revolutionary ideas by establishing a union in Alsace under the name of propaganda (Domenach, 1995, p. 26). Propaganda during the revolution undoubtedly made the French authorities familiar with this culture. However, propaganda in Egypt had an almost entirely different basis from that in France. The French would propagandize what they really believed in the former and what they tacitly wanted to convince in the latter.

When the French landed in Egypt, as soon as they had captured Alexandria, they prepared and printed a declaration, and sent copies of it to each city toward where they were advancing to remove the Egyptians' doubts and fears. The first two announcements have common features and indicate that the French had a good idea of whom they would encounter and what situation they were in. The first one was addressed by Napoleon to the troops on board on July 4, 1798 as follows:

Soldiers, you are about to undertake a conquest the effects of which on civilization and commerce are incalculable. The blow you are about to give to England will be the best aimed, and the most sensibly felt, she can receive until the time arrive[s] when you

can give her her deathblow. We must make some fatiguing marches; we must fight several battles; we shall succeed in all we undertake. The destinies are with us. The Mamluk Beys, who favor exclusively English commerce, whose extortions oppress our merchants, and who tyrannize over the unfortunate inhabitants of the Nile, a few days after our arrival will no longer exist. The people amongst whom we are going to live are Mahometans. The first article of their faith is this: "There is no God but God, and Mahomet is His prophet." Do not contradict them. Behave to[ward] them as you have behaved to[ward] the Jews- to[ward] the Italians. Pay respect to their muftis, and their Imaums, as you did to the rabbis and the bishops. Extend to the ceremonies prescribed by the Koran and to the mosques the same toleration which you showed to the synagogues, to the religion of Moses and of Jesus Christ. The Roman legions protected all religions. You will find here customs different from those of Europe. You must accommodate yourselves to them. The people amongst whom we are to mix differ from us in the treatment of women; but in all countries he who violates is a monster. Pillage enriches only a small number of men; it dishonors us; it destroys our resources; it converts into enemies of the people whom it is our interest to have for friends. The first town we shall come to was built by Alexander. At every step we shall meet with grand recollections, worthy of exciting the emulation of Frenchmen (Bourrienne, 1836, pp. 133–134).

The second was addressed to the Egyptian society. The text is as follows:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. There is no God but God. He had no son and no companion in his sovereignty. On behalf of France, which was built on the foundations of freedom and equality- the commander in chief of the French armies, Bonaparte, informs the inhabitants of Egypt that the sancaks [mamluks], who hold sway over the land of Egypt, have for a long time treated the rights of the French nation with disgrace and contempt. They oppressed her merchants with all sorts of injury and offense. Now, the hour of their punishment has come…. However, the Lord of this world and the hereafter, the Almighty, has already decreed the end of their rule. Egyptians! They may tell you I came here solely to abolish your religion, but this is a patent lie: do not believe it. Tell these slanderers that I came to you only to restore your rights from the hand of oppressors, and that I am more a servant of God – may He be praised and exulted – than the mamluks, that I venerate His Prophet and the great Koran. Tell them also that all men are equal before God, that what differentiates them from each other is intellect, virtues, and knowledge alone…. Tell your nation that the French, too, are sincere Muslims…. Furthermore, the French have always been sincere friends of his Majesty the Ottoman sultan and enemies of his enemies – may God perpetuate his rule!... May God perpetuate the glory of the Ottoman sultan. May God perpetuate the glory of the French army. May he curse the mamluks and improve the condition of the Egyptian nation (al-Jabarti, 1994, pp. 4–5).

Both clearly reveal what kind of policy the French would adopt. From a perspective of religion, it sought to present an image as if the French were real Muslims. In his first declaration to the Egyptians, Napoleon attempted to assume the role of the savior of the Egyptians, the friend of Ottoman sultan, the enemy of the Mamluks, and the protector of Islam (Karal, 1938, p. 75); they should not be accepted as colonizers but as liberators.

The proclamations distributed in the following period gradually moved away from the alleged "revolutionary" thought. The fabric of expressions turned into a more Islamic one. The language and style of the texts had "converted to Islam," so to speak. Napoleon claimed to be prophetic, and the battles won by the French army were explained by divine providence with the help of God (Erol, 2021, p. 313). On the other hand, Napoleon politically tried to give an image of pro-Ottoman and anti-mamluk. The French never gave up the propaganda that the French were sincere Muslims until the last moment of the occupation. The "Muslim French" image, so to say, was the constant variable in their propaganda. Their anti-mamluk propaganda repeatedly underlined the point that "we came solely to eliminate the mamluks who treated the French with contempt and scorn and [had] taken the money of the merchants and the sultan" (al-Jabarti, 1994, p. 16). The Mamluk front was carefully located just opposite the Franco-Ottoman mutual interests. Thus, the enemy was neatly presented as if one and the same. The French, who based their discourse on opposition to the Mamluks, at least in the beginning had solely fought with the army consisting of Mamluk soldiers, the only real military force at the time. In the later period in adherence to their anti-Mamluk policy, the French prevented the Mamluks from entering the Hajj caravan returning from the Hejaz to Egypt, even killing the Egyptians who had corresponded with the Mamluks (Erol, 2021, p. 314).

Napoleon's presence at the head of the occupying forces draws attention to the strategy he was following. Bonaparte himself had issued propaganda bulletins carrying out the mission of the newspapers in his wars in continental Europe. Napoleon had widely disseminated leaflets before his invading armies and had presented a promise of French "liberty" to countries such as Italy (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2012, p. 92). As a successor, or rather inventor, of propaganda culture, he almost always very systematically implemented the issuance of bulletins, written in a rhetorical style suited to the public and military taste of his time (Johnston, 1913, p. 46). Despite this being his main strategy, the decisions taken by the Directory before the invasion of Egypt were in the same direction. The fifth article of the invasion plan clearly demonstrates this. Throughout the occupation, "good relations with the Ottoman Sultan and his close subjects should be maintained as much as possible" (Soysal, 1999, p. 189).

Napoleon must be regarded as one of the historical pioneers of propaganda usage (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2012, p. 89). He was able to address his troops, members of the

Institute, and Egyptian Muslims in appropriate and different languages (Domenach, 1995, p. 67). Although Bonaparte never applied the term "propaganda," he was keenly aware of the significance of shaping public opinion (Leith, 2003, p. 260). From the very beginning of the French army's arrival in Egypt, Napoleon had directed his proclaimed policy toward the merchants, notables, and ulama to win their support. Once obtained, the French could more easily win the confidence and obedience of the people thanks to their crucial help. Their policy was to show that the French had no problem with Islam or Egyptian Muslims and that the only real problem the French had was with the cruelty of the Mamluks who had persecuted both the Egyptian people and French merchants (al-Jabarti, n. d., p. 58). As such, the French had two basic allegations to present to the Egyptians. The first was to cleanse Egypt of tyrannical and oppressive Mamluk rule, for they had rebelled against the Sublime Porte. And their second allegation was that the French were not hostile to Islam. The former was to be reshaped over the course of time in accordance with the political and military changes. But despite all developments, the latter interestingly remained stable. Remembering that an unchanging theme is the quality of superior propaganda would be useful here (Domenach, 1995, p. 62). In order to not leave any gaps, it must be consistent and lasting, because successful propaganda occupies every moment of an individual's life (Ellul, 1965, p. 17). The proclamations printed and posted by the French served this purpose in terms of being a source of written and permanent information, because the leaflets, being the only official source of information, were posted in alleys and at crossroads and would stay there for days. People probably grew accustomed to this continuity over time. This information channel, which the Egyptians may initially have been indifferent to, may also have turned into an indispensable source that they monitored as time went by. Parallel with this, the uninterrupted flow of propaganda texts could have impacted the people's perceived reality. The ordinary people may have cared about the flow of information itself as a general curiosity, regardless of the accuracy of the information.

Bonaparte, who had apparently no religious belief in his life, took a very practical perspective of religion, as in all other issues. He considered all religions, including Christianity and Islam, to be respectable and useful (Johnston, 1913, p. 98). As Bourrienne, Bonaparte's private secretary, indicated frankly, Bonaparte's main principle was to consider all religions as the work of men, but to respect them as a powerful engine of government. Wherever the conditions were available, he would draw up proclamations and deliver speeches on this principle, just as he did in Egypt (Bourrienne, 1836, p. 160). When Bonaparte was in exile, he said that nobody could have claimed that the subjugation of all Asia was not worth wearing a turban and a pair of trousers (Burleigh, 2007, p. 79). Even this statement alone is enough to reveal Napoleon's obvious pragmatic relation with religion.

Bonaparte presented himself not an ordinary Muslim but as a distinguished one with supernatural powers: "I am able to expose what is in the hearts of each you, for I know at sight the moods of man and what he conceals, even if I say nothing openly. The time and the day will come when it will be evident to you that all my acts and rulings were by an irrevocable divine decree" (al-Jabarti, 1994, p. 60, n. d., p. 170). After setting the scene, Bonaparte presented his actions as a manifestation of godly wisdom and divine will. In the diwan records, he was named the Sword of God (el-Khashshab, 2003, p. 64). Bonaparte apparently was never going to give up at any point his manipulation of religion. He attributed divine powers to himself. His previous triumphs and thus prestigious personality might have given himself the courage not to care about any restriction in executing religious propaganda. Unfortunately, he would exceed sensitive lines while making religious propaganda. As al-Jabarti depicted accurately, Napoleon claimed Mahdihood and Prophethood, as if receiving a direct revelation from God: "The Creator, who is Praised and Exalted, commanded me to be compassionate and merciful with His servants. I have acted in accordance with His command and have become merciful and compassionate towards you [Egyptians]" (al-Jabarti, 1975, p. 119). The implication was that he (Napoleon) allegedly was to be the one to appear and that no one would come after him as a prophet or Mahdi. He was the last to be divinely sent (al-Turk, 1993, pp. 172–173). In addition to what al-Jabarti recorded, Niqula al-Turk (1993, p. 173) claimed in his book that many Muslims had believed him to be al-Mahdi and had also chronicled that the people would have believed in him if Bonaparte had come in a *farajiyya* (oriental cloak) instead of wearing European clothes. As Moosa Matti (1966, p. 114) rightly pointed out, Napoleon was unable to perceive that what the Egyptian Muslims demanded most at that time was a just ruler, not an assertive prophet or untrustworthy adventurer.

"Bonaparte was keenly aware of the need to win 'the hearts and the minds' of the Muslims and tried in words and deeds to project himself as a friend of the Muslims if not as a Muslim himself," at least in the beginning of the invasion (Philipp, 1990, p. 135). One of the announcements also indicated Napoleon Bonaparte to love Islam, revere the Prophet, and respect the Koran, parts of which he carefully reads every day. His intention was to construct for Muslims a huge mosque in Cairo that had no peer in Egypt and to enter the religion of the chosen Prophet (al-Jabarti, 1994, p. 113). Napoleon's intention to build a mosque would be emphasized once more in the last session of the diwan just before their evacuation of Egypt (al-Jabarti, 1994, p. 285; el-Khashshab, 2003, p. 137). Afterwards, Bonaparte for the first time openly articulated that "I am a monotheistic Muslim, I glorify the Prophet Muhammad [sic], and I love Muslims." Contradictory statements are found even in this claim, as is easily understood. If he really had became a Muslim, he would have said "our prophet" instead of "the prophet." Moreover, the rest of the passage becomes complicated and even more contradictory: "I love the Prophet Muhammad because he is a hero like me. His

emergence resembles mine. I am even higher than him because I fought harder than he did" (al-Turk, 1993, p. 183). In later parts of the text, Napoleon threatened the members of the diwan with his conversion to Christianity again. All these comparisons and efforts to equate Napoleon with the prophet of Islam easily justify al-Jabarti's reactions and doubts about the French claims of Islam. It invalidated the religious propaganda that the French had been trying to make with great effort.

As in the Italian campaign, he always cared about handling tactfully the people he was to capture (Soysal, 1999, p. 220). Yet distinguishing Napoleon's real plans from his fantasies is sometimes rather difficult. One can grasp well from the quoted passage: "In Egypt, I found myself freed from the obstacles of an irksome civilization. I was full of dreams... I saw myself founding a religion, marching into Asia, riding an elephant, a turban on my head and in my hand the new Koran that I would have composed to suit my needs" (Herold, 1962, p. 3). Whatever he had really imagined when expressing his thoughts was not as much important as his hidden agenda of manipulating religion (i.e., Islam) into his colonialist plans.

No propaganda can be possible unless it rests on reality. It must build on a foundation already present in society. The need to base propaganda on what already exists does not prevent a propagandist from going further. Thus, Napoleon could create something completely new from the "raw material" (Ellul, 1965, pp. 36–37). Napoleonic propaganda, especially in relation to war news, rests heavily on disinformation, which means false, incomplete, or misleading information. It embraces a kernel of truth surrounded by a fabric of lies (Welch, 2003, pp. 104, 106). Those who propagandize must first recognize as certainly as possible the terrain on which they will operate. They must know the sentiments, ideas, and the current tendencies among the people they are trying to reach. Any direct attack on an established, reasonable idea, durable judgment, accepted cliché, or fixed pattern can bring about the propagandist's abject failure (Ellul, 1965, pp. 33–34).

Some propagandas inevitably weaken once revealed as a lie (Domenach, 1995, p. 100). In our case, the French had declared themselves as Ottoman allies as soon as the army set foot in Egypt. The misleading impression regarding the Ottoman-France alliance, that the French had initially portrayed was cleared with the declaration published by the Sublime Porte (Soysal, 1999, pp. 239–240). However, this declaration reached Egypt through the Mamluk beys, which French authorities could easily deny and manipulate (al-Jabarti, n. d., p. 146). For this reason, they would continue to distort the facts for a while up until the Ottoman army arrived in Egypt and the truth was completely revealed. The declaration undoubtedly provides an excellent example of counterpropaganda corresponding to some facts. Therefore, saying that it had no effect on the Egyptian Muslims would be difficult.

Propaganda works on a pre-existing basis and tries to use the conscious and unconscious emotions in people's souls (Domenach, 1995, pp. 67–68). Bonaparte had established his language and system of propaganda based on preliminary information and Orientalist literature, including travel accounts about the people in Egypt. At this juncture, Volney's travel account (*Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte, pendant les années 1783, 1784 et 1785*, published in 1787) was a guide to the French that did not mislead them in Egypt (Hentsch, 2008, p. 176). Volney's travelogue was one of the books Bonaparte had taken with him to Egypt and read carefully (Hourani, 1980, p. 82). Of course, Volney's observations were useful but insufficient. The perpetual guidance of the scientists and intellectuals who accompanied Bonaparte's military campaign was also a strategic support and source of knowledge for propaganda. They provided any necessary information and translated the proclamations written in French. Jean-Michel de Venture de Paradis, a French Orientalist, was one of the well prominent members of the Institut, served as military interpreter, and died during the siege of Acre. He did not translate Napoleon's expressions verbatim but interpreted them to their fullest strategic intent (Tageldin, 2011, p. 33). For this reason, his precious contributions to the Islamic propaganda should not be denied.

Propaganda cannot deny itself. It remains silent regarding its weak points (Domenach, 1995, p. 66). In this context, Menou and his period deserve to be analyzed from a closer perspective. The developments show that the French had completely lost their ability to act cautiously with respect to propaganda in the period of Menou. They appeared to have difficulty maintaining a coherent language of propaganda. Although Menou claimed to be at least an ostensible Muslim, his dialogues on Islamic issues were quite paradoxical. The style of questions he posed to the ulama when a legal or moral problem arose are interesting. When he wanted to know whether a deed was religiously appropriate, he would ask the ulama, "Is this permissible in your faith?" While asking this question, Menou was trying to show himself as acting in accordance with the orders of Islam. But without realizing, he had asked the question from the perspective of an outsider, a non-Muslim. Menou also considered the French law as equivalent to Islamic principles and saw no problem expressing that: "French law could not be opposed, just as among you your glorious Koran cannot be opposed" (al-Jabarti, 1994, p. 246). His expressions contradicted what he had claimed before about his embracing Islam. However, such contradictory statements were not limited to Menou. Another dialogue between the members of the diwan and the French expressed that "Egypt has definitely become a French possession. You must become conscious of that, and firmly embed it in your minds, just as you believe in the oneness of the Almighty God" (al-Jabarti, 1994, p. 277). This is a marked characteristic of the period. The French authorities constantly tried to draw analogies with Islamic elements to justify and strengthen their own claims. In doing so, they seemed not to realize that they were actually falsifying their own claims. Any propaganda that makes false promises inevitably turns against its practitioner

(Ellul, 1965, p. 22). In the final analysis, their argumentation is oxymoronic. To sum up, propaganda activities during the Menou period also remained limited to the members of the diwan and far removed from aiming at society. Therefore, their effectiveness is open to debate. I think the French might not really have cared about it anymore due to the complicated conditions in which they were currently stuck in the period just before the evacuation of Egypt, whether military or political. Their only desire was to leave the country as soon as possible.

The announcements and correspondence during the Menou period were generally addressed not to the Egyptian society but just to the members of the diwan. Therefore, neither the Kleber nor Menou period can be compared to that of Napoleon in terms of mass propaganda. Even though he had articulated some contradictory words, he did continue to make Islamic propaganda without interruption:

> I [Abdallah Jacques Menou] have known that the Koran, that exalted scripture, includes only wise and true principles. Yet these would be neither wise nor true if they omitted instruction and study of the sciences whose application is of such great advantage to the welfare of people united in society. Nor can the Koran but commend order, as without order everything in this world is merely disaster and destruction… The best order for organizing this world entirely is the one that pays heed and follows completely the order emanating from the wisdom of God Most High. (You know) that the land and regions considered successful, happy, and prosperous are so only because its habitants are highly guided by the principles of sharia and laws that emanate from men of astuteness and understanding and are prepared for the path of justice and equity (al-Jabarti, 1994, pp. 225–226).

In the Menou period, the main emphasis in the correspondence with the members of the diwan was social stability. That's why Menou, sometimes kindly, sometimes threateningly, would constantly ask the shaykhs and the ulama to keep the Egyptians under control. In fact, such correspondence may have stemmed from Menou's residence being in Rosetta. The diwan apparently must have assumed more responsibility for maintaining social order due to Menou's absence as the central authority in Cairo. As a direct result, the diwan members remained as the target audience of the announcements. The textual structure of their propaganda shifted necessarily from manipulation to adhering to the truth. However, this does not mean that they had completely abandoned the propaganda. The last session of the diwan saw Menou's plans to dispatch the pilgrimage to Mecca and inaugurate a visit to Tanta to maintain the mausoleum of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi would be declared to the members of the diwan (al-Jabarti, 1994, p. 286; el-Khashshab, 2003, p. 140).

## Agents of Propaganda: The Printing Press and the Diwan

Administration or control of information flow is the firmest pillar of propaganda. The Egyptian society first witnessed the printing press during the French invasion of Egypt (1798–1801). The French brought with them printing presses that could print

in Latin and Arabic letters (Erol, 2020, pp. 176–177). At the turn of the 19th century in Egypt, the printing press was the only media of the period and thus a monopoly for publishing anything was gathered in the same hands. In this way, the French dominated the entire communication apparatus. They literally had a monopoly on disseminating and manipulating information. The printing press provided the French with the power of speed to spread information and the ability to control or censor the news according to their desire. Propaganda was launched via the printing press to employ censorship. In fact, propaganda takes over everything that can serve it. Alongside the publishing of two French journals, Marcel's printing house helped to publish texts written by the French for propaganda purposes (Erol, 2020, p. 178). Napoleon stated in his correspondence that they would be able to print 4,000 copies after setting up the printing house (Tageldin, 2011, p. 39). The amount was large enough to be able to reach every corner of the city. They printed propaganda texts there and posted them in the alleys and at crossroads. Traditional methods continued to be used as well. The French authorities occasionally utilized both at the same time. Notices were distributed both in written form and declared orally in public spheres, thus reaching more people. Combined with the printing press, scholars were at work translating French texts into Arabic. The proclamations were apparently written in French first and then translated into Arabic. The distributed pamphlets having error-riddled Arabic readily reveals this fact. The French army's practice of printing proclamations comprised generally of coercive and occasionally of threatening language was unlikely to have inspired awe in the Egyptian Muslims. Moreover, no sign of admiration was present in the chronicle of al-Jabarti toward the printing press (Gregory, 2019, pp. 76–77).

In addition to publishing announcements and notices, the occupation forces printed the letters sent by Muslim leaders to Cairo. For example, Sharif Ghalib, the sharif of Mecca, had sent a letter that was posted in the streets (al-Jabarti, 1998, pp. 128–129). The letter being worth printing emphasized his good economic relations with the French occupation authorities in Egypt.

The value of (dis)information, which has proven to be suitable for the apparatus of propaganda, is more precious than any other tool. As far as the functionality of propaganda, communication can be perpetual only when the message is received by an audience. In a community where nobody reads pamphlets, posting them to the walls of busy streets makes no sense, nor maintaining propaganda via this channel. Insisting on this method throughout the invasion implies that it had worked and convinced the Egyptians. This continues to raise some questions and has yet to completely dispel doubts.

Some political symbolic indicators exist in Islamic societies to demonstrate the state authority to their people. The two most important of these are to read khutbah and to mint coins in the name of the sultan. The French gave particular importance to these

two during the occupation. The coin continued to be minted in the name of the sultan. Likewise, the khutbah was read in the name of the Ottoman sultan (al-Turk, 1993, p. 101). The occupation authorities paid special attention to this policy as a complementary part of their Ottoman-French friendship image. Of course, such symbols can become meaningful when a full-fledged political-administrative structure dominates. It would make no sense otherwise, because such symbols are like a showcase of de facto domination. They necessarily complement each other and are inseparable. As in religious matters, providing the administrative stabilization of the country would favor the French. Political stability means security. The French can be said to have solved the security problem up to a point. The trade routes in the countryside were relatively under control. Health measures such as the imposition of quarantines to prevent the spread of the plague likely provided stability in the country as well. Similarly, a systematic "justice" propaganda was carried out through the trial of Sulayman al-Halabi, who had killed Kleber. Al-Jabarti (2013, pp. 139–158) gives wide coverage to the days-long trial of al-Halabi in his chronicle. At the end, any little sign of order or stability under the control of the French authority probably served the occupiers in presenting a positive image about themselves. One may even argue that such developments were more reasonable to the Egyptians than the Islamic propaganda. On the other hand, the proclamations were not the only thing operating to present the image of friendly French to the Muslims. They provided financial support for the celebration of *mawlid al-Nabī*, which occurred soon after the invasion. As far as is known from the sources of the period, Napoleon Bonaparte had insisted on the festival taking place as usual (Matti, 1966, p. 105). All the French soldiers also attended the festival (al-Jabarti, n. d., pp. 77–78; al-Turk, 1993, p. 112). The following year, a big celebration was organized in which the ulama, shaykhs, and notables attended alongside the French (al-Turk, 1993, p. 186). The French celebrated not only *mawlid al-Nabī*, but also other days important to the Muslims such as religious feasts (al-Turk, 1950, p. 60).

In connection with the policy of setting up good relations with the Egyptian people, the French made two strategic moves to conveniently rule Egyptian society. The first effort was to include a group of religious and political leading figures into the country's administration. Bonaparte had established a diwan soon after the landing on July 25, 1798 chaired by Abdullah Al-Sharqawi, Azhar Shaykh of the time, with the ulama, shaykhs, and notables being appointed as members. They were expected to be intermediaries between the French authorities and the Muslims (el-Khashshab, 2003, p. 82). The diwan would assume a flexible buffer to some extent between the Egyptians and occupation forces, not only as a management apparatus but also by providing legitimacy to the French colonizers. By associating Muslim leading figures with the new regime, Bonaparte's purpose seemingly was to gain advantage from their prestige to promote popular acquiescence to the French presence. Therefore, the diwan would be used as a propaganda apparatus as well as for its political and administrative benefits.

Perhaps it assumed a more vital mission in terms of propaganda. The members of the diwan were considered by the French as men of the French Republic's administration (al-Jabarti, 1994, p. 235). They had already been economically bound to the French authorities. For this reason, the members should behave at will as they'd been provided with regular salaries (al-Turk, 1993, p. 98). Given Egypt's chaotic situation, they must have continued their duty as members of the diwan, albeit reluctantly. The second effort is that the French used the diwan as a communicational channel very actively and effectively, whether to convey the decisions of the diwan regarding the Egyptians or to convey announcements to the public. In fact, this form of government was an important factor that ensured and consolidated French dominance over the Egyptian public as well as increased the effectiveness of the diwan as an administrative apparatus (Erol, 2021, p. 314). After all, the diwan had in practice functioned as a veneer of legality and order to disguise French greed and plunder (Bjorneboe, 2007, p. 131).

**The Essence of Propaganda: Religious Terminology**

The French in the countries they had colonized "had for decades accommodated Islam in order to gain the trust and loyalty of the local populations and thus achieve its end goal of entrenching colonial rule" (Minawi, 2016, p. 72). Egypt chronologically might be registered at the top of their colonial list, if not permanently. The French had constructed their propaganda on two main bases, political and religious. Their flexible politically oriented propaganda had changed over time out of necessity. However, the religious aspect of the propaganda remained constant until the end of the occupation. In most of the proclamations, they mimicked the Quranic style (Tageldin, 2011, p. 14). The religious terminology employed by the French has basic features. The proclamations shared the same characteristics. They generally begin with the Basmala, followed by some advice and then informing the audience about current issues, with the ending accommodating threatening statements. The prayer phrases were also integral part of such notices. The arrangement changed over time, but the mental structure of the texts remained generally stable. Sometimes the advice section would be intertwined with the threats. In all cases, both advice and threats were operated through religious terminology. The French obviously did not refrain from using Hadiths and Quranic verses that would fit well with their propagandist aims. They skillfully exploited religious vocabulary to exert spiritual pressure and keep the Muslim community in obeyance. In one notice, they took recourse to the Hadith "Fitnah (sedition) is asleep; may God curse the one who awakens it" (al-Jabarti, 1998, p. 81). They would warn the people via Islamic advice such as, "Attend to the matters of your religion and to obtaining your livelihood in this world; forgo unrest and evils and do not submit to temptation and passion. It is your duty to be content with divine judgement and show probity in order to be safe from perdition and from things you will regret" or "Be upright servants of God; be content with God's decree; let yourselves be guided

by the judgements of our Lord, who created you and shaped you" (al-Jabarti, 1994, pp. 67, 75).

The emphasis on Islam in the declarations is easily seen to have increased abruptly after the unsuccessful siege of Acre. For the first time, they explicitly quoted verses from the Qur'an: "Follow not the steps of Satan" (Surah Al-Baqarah: 164), "Obey not the commandment of the prodigal, who do corruption in the earth, and set not things aright" (Surah Al-Shu'ara: 151–152), "Surely thy Lord's assault is terrible" (Surah Al-Buruj: 12), and "Surely thy Lord is ever on the watch" (Surah Al-Fajr: 14; as cited in al-Jabarti, 1994, pp. 110–111). As mentioned above, all these religious expressions in the proclamations were designed to win local support for the French army at the beginning against the Mamluks and subsequently the Ottomans. The invading army's main and perhaps only concern was to persuade the Egyptians that the French were real Muslims. Once the French made the Egyptian people believe that they were real Muslims, they would tacitly and automatically make their occupation acceptable, and things would go smoothly. At least their hidden policy was aimed thusly. The insistence of the French to manifest themselves as Muslims would turn into a more professional nature in the future phases of the occupation:

> Truly, God guides armies and grants victory to whomever He wishes. The burnished sword in the hand of His angel marches steadily in front of the French and crushes their foes (al-Jabarti, 1994, p. 233).

Islamic propaganda during the Napoleonic period of the invasion was more intense compared to other two periods (i.e., Kleber and Menou). This situation can be attributed to two reasons: It was beginning of the invasion, and Napoleon had an influential character. Most probably, the French made more effort in the first period because they cared about the first impression of the Muslims of Egypt. Al-Jabarti (1994, p. 125) compared Kleber with Bonaparte, reporting, "They [the Egyptians] did not observe a smile on his face [n]or a happy mien as that of Bonaparte, who had been cheerful and sociable with the gathered people and used to joke with them." The differences in their characters inevitably reflected onto their politics. Although the French army was powerful in terms of both munitions and size, the image of the Muslim French was used again and again as a discourse of propaganda.

The last two periods (i.e., Kleber and Menou) almost completely differed from the first. During the Napoleonic period, the Ottoman army had yet to set foot in Egypt. Therefore, Napoleon only struggled with news or rumors regarding the Ottoman campaign to Egypt to wage war against the French. In other words, Bonaparte had enough empty space to maneuver conveniently. One can easily say that, after the intense propaganda activities of Bonaparte, almost no religious propaganda was made during Kleber's period. Only two short notices exist, and both are about the general

amnesty and penalties regarding the second revolt. These were aimed at the members of the diwan and the leading figures of society who were responsible for paying the amount. Because each was related to specific persons, neither was printed or posted. As can be understood from their brevity, both were written using very formal language, the first beginning with "Victory belongs to God," but accommodating no other religious terminology (al-Jabarti, 1998, p. 187).

Jacque Menou, who was appointed as commander in chief in the third and last phase of the invasion, had a very distinctive character. He had pretended to embrace Islam and married a Muslim Egyptian woman who was unwilling (al-Jabarti, 1998, p. 202; al-Turk, 1993, p. 243). When they had a child, he named him al-Sayyid Sulayman Murad Jacque Menou. His name interestingly evokes the name Sulayman al-Halabi, the assassin of Kleber; Murad also evokes the memory of a major Mamluk leader: Murad was the only one who had made peace with the Frenchmen. Menou's conversion to Islam, taking the name Abdallah, and marriage with a local woman who was the daughter of a bath keeper raised some suspicion. However, European scholars apparently did not question this. When the French evacuated Egypt, he left his wife and son in Egypt. On the other hand, the marriage of Frenchmen with Muslim women was not a rare phenomenon limited to Menou. As al-Jabarti indicated, many Frenchmen were engaged to the daughters of local dignitaries. Their fathers permitted this due to their greed for power. At these weddings, the Frenchmen would pretend to embrace Islam and utter the two formulas of belief (al-Jabarti, 1994, p. 253). In addition to al-Jabarti, some historical sources of the period also stated many French to have converted to Islam during the occupation (al-Turk, 1993, p. 269). This situation probably cannot be evaluated otherwise. In other words, both the French and the Muslims were aware of what was really happening.

On the other hand, the occupation authorities attempted to maintain the relationships between the Muslims and Christians in accordance with the ancient custom. They informed the Christians never to eat or drink in the street or in the view of Muslims during Ramadan (holy month of fasting). For al-Jabarti (1994, pp. 71–72), they did all this to attract the hearts of the Muslims. Niqula al-Turk (1950, p. 60) was of the same opinion. Although they were right in a way, the stability of social order was the main concern for the French. Any activity satisfying people, albeit ostensibly, was done to serve this goal. Namely, what was applied was done for maintaining the political order, whether it rested on Islamic principles or not was less important. At same time, al-Jabarti did not hesitate to chronicle what he saw when he witnessed the French endeavor to adapt to Muslim customs. In this context, the French begun to invite the leading religious figures, shaykhs, and merchants for *iftar* and *suhoor*. They would in turn attend the Muslim meals at the time of *iftar* and witness Islamic rituals and order. To al-Jabarti (1994, p. 75), they displayed a most remarkable adaptation and kindness to the Muslims by so doing.

The French frequently sought to keep their oppressive domination over the Egyptians alive and perpetual through the leaflets they'd distributed since the beginning of the occupation.

Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, a prominent Azhar scholar, seems to have meticulously included the leaflets distributed by the French in his history books. From the first to the last one, he criticized the problem-ridden or contradictory points in the leaflets. However, he did not maintain as long a critic of the others as he had for the first proclamation. In addition, al-Jabarti having reproduced the proclamations in his work by abstracting them from historical contexts prevented him from being able to describe the historical process in a holistic manner or from discussing and evaluating the changing and transforming content and style of the texts (Erol, 2021, p. 311).

**Expanding the Target Audience of Propaganda**

The important thing here is that some notices were deliberately preferred to be written on the authority of the shaykhs as "Advice from all the ulama of Islam in Cairo." This form of speech was regularly repeated throughout the proclamations (al-Jabarti, 1998, pp. 78, 80). Saying that the letters and declarations expressing satisfaction with the French administration as written by the members of the diwan or written on their behalf had not only legitimized the invasion indirectly but also facilitated the embrace of the French presence would not be incorrect. To give a specific example, the letter sent on September 29, 1798 to Ottoman sultan and the sharif of Mecca can be considered as concrete evidence of French exploitation of the diwan and their Muslim members far beyond the borders of Egypt as a regional and even broader apparatus of legitimacy (Erol, 2021, p. 315). Al-Jabarti (1994, p. 34) preferred to give only a summary of the letter:

> They mentioned that the French were the friends of the Ottoman sultan and enemies of his enemies, that coinage and Friday prayers were in his name, that the rites of Islam were kept up as they should, and more to the same effect. They said, too, that they were Muslims respecting the Koran and the Prophet, that they escorted the scattered pilgrims and honored them, giving those who walked mounts to ride, feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty… also that they provided for the Prophet's birthday, spending sums for its organization… They also exert themselves to fulfill the offices connected with the Two Holy Cities.

This letter had two layers. As if the first had reflected the truth, the second one was made with the propaganda used in Egypt. Al-Jabarti (1998, p. 61) clarified that he did not believe the lies the French were telling. As clearly seen, this letter could have only one aim: to show the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul and Mecca that the French were accepted by Egyptian Muslims. Both authorities were important in connection to the current conditions in Egypt, the former as the administrative center and the latter as the religious center.

The fact that the ulama and leading figures of Muslim society were on the side of the French occupation could not just be restricted to being a member of the diwan. Napoleon had taken a group of people made up of ulama, merchants, notables, and military class as well as Copts and Syrian Christians with him when he went on his expedition to Syria. These people undoubtedly were taken to provide legitimacy and confidence. Napoleon can be said to have calculated well what kind of idea the Muslim notables accompanying the occupation army would give to the Muslim armies upon encountering them on the war front (Erol, 2021, p. 347). This is also true for the Christians. After all, many Christians were living in the cities along the campaign routes. The aim appears to have been to get the support of the Christian people as well. As in the invasion of Egypt, Napoleon sought to justify the campaign of Acre by claiming that it was for capturing the fleeing Mamluks. He continued his Islamic propaganda during the campaign of Acre along the route. Jazzar Ahmed Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Sidon, was declared as a new enemy alongside the Mamluks. Bonaparte issued decrees addressed to the Muslims in the areas of Gaza, Ramla, and Jaffa. He announced that the French army had come to this region to chase the Mamluks and the soldiers of Jazzar Ahmed (al-Turk, 1993, pp. 151–152). According to the French correspondence, people of the region called him a butcher because he had killed large numbers of people without differentiating between good and bad (p. 170). As the French had done upon setting foot in Egypt, they also tried to separate the people and the ruling class in their campaign of Acre. The rulers were tyrants who treated the people cruelly. The people did not deserve this. The French had come only to save them from this persecution and no other purpose. Their propaganda was constructed to persuade the people to think like them.

The French sought to extend their "Muslim image" beyond Cairo and even Egypt. They permitted and even patronized the Muslim pilgrimage as part of their efforts to appear as supporters of Islam (Dykstra, 1998, p. 135). The French also cared about organizing the process of the Kiswa (the cloth covering the Kaaba) during the Napoleonic period (al-Jabarti, 1994, p. 85). Menou adhered to Napoleon's policy and personally took care of the reparation and restoration of the Kiswa. They sent it to Mecca in order to cover the Kaaba in the name of the French Republic on February 14, 1801. It was an opportunity not to be missed to use their propaganda projecting the image of "Muslim French," one they used to the fullest. It was employed as a symbolic instrument to expand the target audience. Because the pilgrimage was obligatory for wealthy Muslims, the French seized the opportunity to reach all Muslims who'd come to the Kaaba for the pilgrimage from all over the Muslim world. The Surra procession (sending the donations of textile covers and money to the two holy cities, Mecca, and Medina) was an integral part of the Hajj and an old tradition dating back to the Abbasid period. Throughout the history of Islam, rulers of Islamic countries have paid utmost attention to this organization. They attempted to consolidate their

dominance and earn reputation by sending an annual Surra procession during the Hajj season. The Ottomans also followed this prestigious tradition. Over the course of the Ottoman period, Istanbul and Cairo had become two main centers for Surra organizations. Egypt had special importance for al-Kiswa al-Sharifa (Karal, 1938, p. 67). As such, the French had found a chance to assume this task during the occupation. No better opportunity could have been found for expanding the propaganda audience.

**Subsidiary Elements of the Propaganda: British and Russian Hostility**

The French obviously worked their propaganda multifacetedly. They acted flexibly to compose the texts of the proclamations and updated the content of their propaganda according to the course of events (Erol, 2021, pp. 316–317). For instance, they had to modify the image of Ottoman-French friendship in the following period due to changing conditions, as Ottomans were set to wage war against the French and dispatch two armies, one by land and the other by sea. Due to remaining dysfunctional both at the levels of discourse and practice, the claim of alliance was in vain anymore and thus needed to be modified. By adapting to the conditions, they started to make anti-Ottoman propaganda and attempted to manipulate the Russo-Ottoman alliance. The reason was their fleet was arriving to plunder and destroy Egypt by cooperating with the Mamluks and Bedouins. No doubt this was complete disinformation invented by the French. Moreover, they had skillfully diverted the focus to the disbelief of the Muscovites: The Russians openly hate those who confess to the oneness of God and are clearly hostile to those who worship God and believe in His Prophet. The Russians hate Islam; they disrespect the Koran and believe in a trinity of which Allah is the third. As for the French, they by all means believe in the unity of God (al-Jabarti, 1994, p. 119). The Ottomans, acting alongside the Russians, were witnesses to insults against Allah at every moment. A Muslim in this position is in a worse situation than any infidel (al-Turk, 1993, p. 178). The proclamations also made claims indicating that the Russians wanted to capture Istanbul and would turn Hagia Sophia and other mosques into churches (al-Jabarti, n. d., p. 154; al-Turk, 1993, p. 106). As is seen in these texts, the French had increased the intensity of their religious propaganda through anti-Russian discourse and likely expected Muslims to question the Russo-Ottoman alliance. In the final analysis, their real expectation was that the Egyptians would oppose the Ottoman forces. The Egyptians probably did not believe this distortion. However, the French may have hoped that this manipulation would confuse the Muslims and at least initially prevent them from revolting or cooperating with the Ottoman soldiers. Interestingly, the French did not say a word about the British while conducting their anti-Russian propaganda. The actual threat was the British, not the Russians. The French should have been the ones who knew this best. In fact, Napoleon had said in his speech to his soldiers on the ship at the beginning of campaign that they would deal a deathblow to England (Bourrienne, 1836, p. 133). Above all, England was the

ancient enemy of France and thus the real target of her military campaign. Surely, they would also use the threat of England as a propaganda tool.

While the French had applied the rhetoric of the Mamluk tyranny on a local scale, they also employed hostility toward the British on a global scale. In particular, the discourse on Mamluk tyranny had been their underlying theme at the beginning of the occupation. It was a discourse that may have echoed for the Egyptian society more than the British. After getting rid of the Mamluk threat to some extent, they modified their propaganda by introducing a new enemy at the level of discourse, replacing the Mamluks with the British.

Upon taking a closer look at the English phenomenon, a meticulously positioned picture of this occurs as follows: The English were presented as the oppressors of humanity, heretics and thieves sowing enmity and disturbance and only seeking to exploit all the seas and world trade. The propaganda also claimed that, although the French had been in the past and still remained sincere friends of the Ottomans, animosity and hatred had been aroused between the two sides by the English, who were enemies of both the French and Muslims. In addition, the French tried to justify their own claims by asserting that the whole world knew the British to not be friends of the Ottomans (el-Khashshab, 2003, p. 119). With respect to French expectations, the Ottomans would eventually become aware that the French campaign to Egypt had sought only to strengthen the friendship between France and the Ottomans (al-Jabarti, 1994, pp. 233, 239, 277, 287).

**The Echoes of Propaganda**

One cannot investigate the Egyptian society's reactions to the encounters of Egyptian Muslims with the French propaganda of Islam through primary witnesses apart from a few scholars of the period. However, some moments of crisis are able to give an idea of the people's reactions, because propaganda, claims, and deeds are interrelated. Propaganda not backed up by action may be nothing more than empty talk that creates dangerous illusions. In other words, propaganda gains truth through actions, and this is only possible when doubts disappear over a long process of experimentation (Domenach, 1995, p. 36). This is why propaganda demands total coherence. As Ellul (1965, p. 15) pointed out well, "Propaganda of the word and propaganda of the deed are complementary. Talk must correspond to something visible; the visible, active element must be explained by talk. Oral or written propaganda... must be reinforced by propaganda of action... You cannot have one without the other." Both must be used in combination. Of course, all this needs time and, in turn, provides the necessary confidence in the long run.

The claims in the proclamations the French had distributed were not coherent with their attitudes and actions. Although they insistently claimed themselves to be real Muslims,

French soldiers' behaviors, affronts to Islamic tradition, extortions, and violence indicated the exact opposite (Gran, 1979, p. 31). The destruction of mosques can be adduced to the factors that had decreased the impact of their Islamic propaganda. However, their inaccuracy was not just limited to administrative or moral faults. The French lifestyle, eating and drinking habits, cleanliness, and gender relations were also among the factors inevitably able to nullify their Islamic propaganda (Erol, 2021, p. 339). French entertainment activities such as theater and official celebrations such as Revolution Day ceremonies probably disturbed the Muslims of Egypt and can also be given as examples of French culture. In addition to their culture, which was peculiar from the standpoint of the Egyptians, the French had expanded non-Muslims' role in various levels of society, which turned Egypt's social hierarchy upside down (Findley, 2010, p. 27). For instance, they had established close relations with the Copts, appointing them to high level offices. Al-Jabarti (1994, p. 69) chronicled some dramatic changes in detail as follows:

> Another development was the elevation of the lowliest Copts, Syrian and Greek Orthodox Christians, and Jews. They rode horses and adorned themselves with swords because of their service to the French; they strutted around haughtily, openly expressed obscenities, and derided the Muslims.

This close contact the French, who claimed to be Muslims and to love Muslims, had with non-Muslims is a striking matter. As can be seen from al-Jabarti's testimony, predicting that this exceptional change would create a very disturbing situation among the Egyptian Muslims would not be difficult. Surely, occupation forces cooperating with the ethnic, religious, and minority groups that are not dominant in the town upon entering is accepted as a general practice. For example, when the Mongol forces entered Damascus, the Nestorians and Armenians supported the occupation (Lewis, 1993, p. 51). In our case, however, French claims here had obviously contradicted with their actions. That's why it differs somewhat from previous examples of invasion.

The Cairo revolt, which took place on October 21-22, 1798, was a turning point in the relationship between the Egyptian people and the French army and offers a valuable perspective for understanding the ongoing situation. The social upheavals in Cairo had crystallized the situation as a catalyzer. This leaves no doubt that the Azhar ulama did not trust the claims Bonaparte declared in the proclamations. Al-Jabarti's chronicle revealed this fact in all clarity (Tignor, 1993, p. 9). Yet complex political and peculiar factors had occurred that would call the Egyptians into doubt. For example, because the Mamluk beys did not trust the Ottoman authorities, they thought for a while that the French army had come to Egypt with the permission of the Ottoman Empire (Karal, 1938, p. 79). Another factor affecting the propaganda the French tried to make is the letters exposing all the truth about the French. Three letters that had been sent to Mecca, Hallab, Tripoli, and Damascus had also reached Cairo on November 3, 1798, cursing and humiliating the Europeans (*taifat al-afranj*) and drawing attention to their corrupt beliefs, lies, and deceptions (al-Jabarti, 1998, pp. 75–76; Karal, 1938, pp. 107–108).

Meanwhile, al-Turk (1950, p. 100) emphasized that most French soldiers hated Menou because of his claim of being Muslim. Menou had responded to those who criticized his actions by writing, "Do these imbeciles who reproach me perhaps for having married a Muslim woman know that it is politics and the love of my country which directed me?" (Donath, 2012, p. 159). This reaction serves as a reminder to consider the inward echoes of Islamic propaganda among the French army in Egypt. Similar responses emerged in France regarding Napoleon's Islamic propaganda as well. Because of these responses, Bourrienne (1836, pp. 159–160) found himself needing to defend Napoleon's Islamic propaganda:

> He neither learned nor repeated prayer of the Koran, as many persons asserted; neither did he advocate fatalism, polygamy, or any other doctrine of the Koran... He never set foot in a mosque; and only on one occasion... dressed himself in the Mahometan costume... His religious tolerance was the natural consequence of his philosophic spirit… And he found it necessary to act more like a Mussulman than a catholic… In every country he would have drawn up proclamations and delivered addresses on the same principle. In India, he would have been for Ali; at Thibet, for Dalai Lama; and in China, for Confucius.

Napoleon's Islamic propaganda seems to have produced a wide area of influence and confusion within the Ottoman Empire and as well as in Europe. As a matter of fact, Napoleon through the public statements in France sought to clear up this complicated situation he had created himself. After his return to France, he declared his faith in Christ, and made public confession before all peoples, and informed the Ottoman Sultan of all these developments by sending a letter (al-Turk, 1993, p. 246). These statements were arguably made upon a request he'd received.

The thoughts of historians as the living witnesses of the period are also important in terms of understanding how the propaganda had echoed throughout society. Although we cannot be said to be very lucky in this respect, we do have some primary sources. The Muslim Azhari scholar al-Jabarti and the Lebanese Christian Niqula al-Turk were two historians of the period who'd chronicled the events of the occupation. Their records show nobody had been convinced of the Islamic propaganda the French made. Likewise, neither al-Jabarti nor al-Turk believed in the propagandas' claims. Al-Turk in particular appears to have tried showing he was aware of everything. According to him, the French took such a path out of necessity (al-Turk, 1993, p. 111). In the same way, al-Jabarti emphasized his disbelief in Islamic propaganda of the French at every opportunity, albeit from a different point of view.

## Conclusion

Establishing good relations with the Egyptian people was at the center of the French occupation policy. They made great effort to adhere this policy during their stay in Egypt. This policy was embodied in setting up the diwan, an administrative unit made

up of prominent political and religious persons, and in issuing proclamations. These two complementary aspects composed the core of all their politics. All French authorities exploited Islam as a vehicle for controlling, if not colonizing, Egyptian society during the occupation. Napoleon undoubtedly was clearly the most influential figure in Islamic propaganda. His period could easily be distinguished from the rest of the phases of the occupation.

The main target of the occupation forces was political and military control of the society in the face of the potential threats by Ottoman and British intervention. The French continued to employ the diwan as a representative unit and the Islamic propaganda as a buffer of discourse to lessen any potential uprising and thus simultaneously social disorder, regardless of the changing conditions. In this way, the diwan should be considered as a concretely inseparable part of their policy toward religious propaganda. While they ostensibly at least shared some administrative responsibilities, the final decision maker was the French authority. The effectiveness of propaganda through the notables, ulama, and shaykhs was beyond doubt both local and regional. The French exploited their membership of the diwan and sent letters to the sharif of Mecca as if they had been written through the mouths of the ulama. The letters apparently had the specific aim of showing Egyptian Muslims' pleasure with the French's righteous and just administration of their homeland.

Alongside the diwan, the main purpose for executing a policy of Islamic propaganda was to win the people's respect and obedience to the French. They tried to show great respect for the Egyptians' religion and traditions. However, despite all their efforts, the French did not act consistently enough. In particular, the injudicious expressions of both Napoleon and Menou regarding Islam practically nullified the attempts at the time. In this regard, the effort to present an image of the "Muslim French" had no limit. Their exaggeration of Islamic propaganda appeared to have had just the opposite of what the French expected. The excesses that Napoleon performed while executing his well-known propaganda began to make him worthless in the eyes of the public after a certain point. His extreme claims of being the Mahdi and a Prophet would have no meaning in any Islamic society. Perhaps other allegations such as abolishing Mamluk oppression somewhat made sense to the Egyptians. Yet, all they wanted to see was justice and an acceptable stability. Projecting the image of "Muslim French" could have been both more reasonable and supportive by constructing social order and providing security. Instead of focusing on this, the French authorities increased the level of their Islamic propaganda. They worked continuously to present themselves as the best friends of Muslims. The French professionalized constructing a more Islamic language over time. They probably expected a greater application of Islamic expressions to be able to provide more convincing results.

The wide range of texts quoted sufficiently in this study reveal the statements in the proclamations printed and posted by the French to not have had anything to do with Enlightenment thought or the principles of the French Revolution. Contrarily, the French preferred to provide legitimacy for themselves entirely through religious terminology and Islamic propaganda. Of course, some small details did imply the political principles of modern Europe. However, such details as could be found between the lines by no means allowed for making any sensible generalization. Their presence may be linked to the failures the French had with the propaganda language they tried to establish instead of surreptitiously presenting Western thought to the Egyptian Muslims.

Consequently, one cannot argue that the proclamations as a form of seduction had lured Egyptians into thinking what the French had alleged, as Tageldin claimed. Furthermore, most Egyptians appear to have been less seduced by the proclamations that propagandized an image of "Muslim French" than they were worried about both invasion and instability. In this case, a reasonable question that is difficult to answer here is that, even though the Islamic propaganda did not arouse the expected response in the Egyptian society, why then had the French insisted upon it? One can argue that they had made more similar propaganda to reduce the detrimental results of their failures in struggling with crisis during the occupation of Egypt. Nevertheless, this seemingly contradictory situation might make sense only upon establishing a connection with France's future plans for invading Egypt and with the broader colonialist context.

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