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RAMI GINAT

**Amin, Qasim Mohammed** (1863–1908), Egyptian social activist and writer, was born in Alexandria on 1 December 1863 to an Ottoman-Kurdish father, who served as an administrator in Kurdistan before working in the Egyptian army, and an Upper Egyptian mother, the daughter of Ahmed Bek Khattab, who belonged to a prestigious family in Egypt. Amin attended Ra'as Al Tin primary school in Alexandria and high school in Cairo, after which he studied at the School of Law and Administration in Cairo and was there granted his BA degree in 1881. Four years later, he received another degree in Law from the University of Montpellier in France. He worked as a lawyer shortly after his graduation and then traveled on a scholarship to France, where he enrolled in the University of Montpellier. In 1885, he completed his four-year study in law with distinction; upon returning to Egypt, he worked in the judiciary. He married Zeinab Amin Tawfik and had two daughters, Zeinab and Jelsen.

Amin was one of the most notable social reformers in Egypt. His writings, lectures, intellectual battles, and social activities were mainly dedicated to

defending the rights of women in education, work, and public affairs; his work in this area was extremely influential in Egyptian society over the twentieth century, so much so that his pen names included the "woman liberator" and "Luther of the East."

Amin bore the burden of refuting the popular and deeply entrenched Egyptian belief that established women as inferior to men. He attempted to counter the passive image of women in Egyptian society that was based on historical and religious information. He advocated getting rid of the symbolic isolation symbolized by the al-Niqab (an article of clothing with which a woman covers every inch of her body, including her hands and face) and replacing it with al-Hijab (an article of clothing that allows a woman to uncover her hands and face) and breaking with the customary isolation of women in their homes through opening education and careers to them.

To accomplish his goals, Amin wrote two books that received broad attention in Egyptian society in the twentieth century. The first, which was published in 1899, is *Tahrir al mar'ah* (The Liberation of Women). According to Amin, this book had two objectives: first, to reform the traditions of society regarding women and the ways they should be treated and raised; and second, to invite Muslim scholars to take into account the needs of the nation concerning women. The publication of the book produced widespread intellectual debates; books, essays, and chapters in books were written to refute the ideas expressed in it. Islamists and conservatives, on one hand, considered Amin's ideas a break from the traditions of society and a departure from the teachings of Islam; they saw them as nothing but a blind imitation of the West. On the other hand, many intellectuals looked upon Amin's project as indispensable for modernizing Egypt. Controversy was raised regarding the authorship of some of the book's chapters, particularly those that tackled the religious perspectives of the liberation of women. Indeed, some researchers (Imarah, 1989) attributed those chapters to Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849–1905).

Amin's second book, *Al-Mar'ah al-jadida* (The New Woman; 1900), included Amin's response to the criticism leveled against *The Liberation of Women*. The book is almost a cultural comparison between the status of Western women and Egyptian women (and Eastern women in general) in terms of education, work, participation in public affairs, personal status, and family life. The book, moreover, enthusiastically argues that imitating some of the habits, laws, and manners of the West that do

not conflict with the overall principles of Islam (not only those related to women, but to other aspects of society and individual conduct as well), is the only means to elevate Egyptian society and pull it out of its cultural crisis.

Amin wrote many articles that were published in the newspaper *al-Moa'yed*, which criticized the defects of Egyptian society. In 1894, he published *Les Egyptiens* in French, as a response to *L'Egypte et les Egyptiens* by C.-F.-M. d'Harcourt (1893), in which he criticized the habits, morals, and social lives of Egyptians in the late nineteenth century. In *Les Egyptiens*, Amin analyzes social phenomena and relates them to their economic and political origins. This work was not translated into Arabic until the mid-1970s.

Amin did not engage in politics directly. However, he is said to have belonged to the gradual reform movement that rejected military resistance to the British occupation, but rather called for cultural resistance, by bringing up a new generation of Egyptians armed with knowledge and awareness. From this came his great interest in pedagogical and educational charity projects, such as the Islamic Charitable Society (al-Jam'iyah al-Khayriyah al-Islamiyah), which attempted to constrict British occupation in a number of compulsory schools throughout Egypt, close several high schools, and to exert great efforts to establish the Civil University (now Cairo University), which was opened after Amin's death. He also was one of the most prominent advocates for establishing a legislative parliamentary assembly that could reduce the polarization of authority between the British and the Khedive and allow Egyptians to participate in the formulation of the policies that governed their country.

Qasim Mohammed Amin died on 23 April 1908.

[See also 'Abduh, Muhammad.]

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EMAD ABDUL-LATIF

**Amin, Samir** (1931– ), Egyptian economic theorist, was born in Egypt to an Egyptian father and a French mother, both of whom were medical doctors. Amin had his early schooling at Port Said and then proceeded to France, where he obtained degrees in political science and statistics before finally earning a doctorate in economics from the University of Paris in 1957. He joined the French Communist Party (FCP) but later broke away and eventually became involved with Maoist organizations. After his studies in France, Amin returned to Egypt to work for the government, but eventually had to leave the country for his antigovernment stance. He then worked for the Ministry of Planning in Mali between 1960 and 1963. Amin was later offered a research position at the Institut Africain de Développement Économique et de Planification (IDEP). In addition, he held professorships in Poitiers, Dakar, and Paris. In 1970, he was appointed director of the IDEP; he remained in this position until 1980, when he left to establish the Forum du Tiers Monde (Third World Forum; FTM).

Amin's work at the Third World Forum has been particularly influential. The organization eventually grew to one thousand members, with three hundred each from the continents of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. He served as the co-coordinator of organization for many years, during which time the focus of the organization gradually changed from a tri-regional one to a more global one. Amin's contributions at the FTM have been quite remarkable. At the level of both action and high-level scholarship, he has succeeded in breaking out of the usual insularity that marks Africa as a geographical space, and also in focusing on the world as a central site of reflection. Amin's scholarship is not merely concerned with the widespread effects of African underdevelopment. He argues that the causes of African and third-world underdevelopment generally can be traced to entrenched structural and historical conditions which continue to have a global impact. The Third World Forum also provides an avenue for engaging critiques of global capitalism. The organization eventually formed partnerships with similar-minded forces in the North.

Accordingly, and in conjunction with such forces, the World Forum for Alternatives (WFA) was established in Cairo in 1997. The Third World Forum became a member of the new organization, which has other partners in Europe such as the Centre d'Etudes Anti-Imperialistes (Center for the Study of and Initiatives in International Solidarity; CEDETIM), based in France.