

Lecture Transcript:

The Curse of the Black Eggplant: Reconstructing Occult Economies in Late Ottoman Egypt by Taylor Moore Saturday, October 31, 2020

Louise Bertini:

Hello, everyone, and I want to wish you all a very happy Halloween, and welcome to our October public lecture with Dr. Taylor Moore, titled "The Curse of the Black Eggplant: Reconstructing Occult Economies in Late Ottoman Egypt." I'm Dr. Louise Bertini, the Executive Director of ARCE. For those of you who are new to ARCE, we are a private nonprofit organization whose mission is to support research on all aspects of Egyptian history and culture, foster a broader knowledge about Egypt among the general public, and support Egyptian American cultural ties. As a nonprofit, we rely on ARCE members to support our work, so I want to first give a very special welcome to all of our ARCE members who are joining us today. If you are not already a member and are interested in joining, I invite you to visit our website, arce.org, to join online and learn more. We provide a suite of benefits to our members, including our private, member-only lecture series. Our next member-only lecture will be on December 6th at 2 p.m. Eastern Time with Dr. Caroline Ramsey of Carleton University and is titled "Coptic Feminism: Orthodox Songs and Gender Reformation in the North American Diaspora." Our next public lecture will be on November 29th at 1 p.m. Eastern Time and will be a special lecture with the world-renowned Egyptian jeweler and designer Azza Fahmy, along with Dr. Amnea al-Zabar of the Victoria and Albert Museum and is titled "Mamluks Made Modern: When Design Meets History." So with that, I'm now going to introduce our presenter today. Dr. Taylor Moore is a University of California Presidential Postdoctoral fellow in the history department at UC Santa Barbara. Her research lies at the intersections of critical race studies, decolonial ... Postcolonial histories of science and decolonial materiality studies. Her manuscript in preparation, "Superstitious Women: Race, Magic, and Medicine in Egypt," uses modern Egyptian amulets and an archive to reconstruct the magical and vernacular medical life worlds of peasant women healers and their critical role developing medical anthropological expertise in Egypt from 1880 to 1950. Taylor's work is invested in illuminating the occult networks, economies and actors whose bodies and labor are generally rendered invisible in Eurocentric histories of global science. So, with that, Taylor, you can take it away now.

Taylor Moore:

Thank you so much to Louise and the folks at ARCE for giving me the opportunity to share my work, and thanks to all of you out there in the Zoom universe who are attending this talk on Halloween. Woo! So, before I get started with the eggplant talk, which I'm sure everyone's eager to hear about, I'd like to give you more of an idea of the project as a whole, and Louise has introduced by book manuscript in project ... Sorry, my book manuscript in project, "Superstitious Women," and, as she says, the main impetus is using amulets to reconstruct and analyze what I have come to call the political and spiritual economies of healing in Egypt in the late 19th and 20th centuries, and I set my analysis against the shifting backdrop of Egypt's colonial endeavors in its hinterlands of Upper Egypt, Sudan and Nilotic East Africa while really reckoning with Egypt itself as a site of overlapping and competing Imperial projects by the Ottomans, French and British. The project utilizes amulets to reconstruct the magical and vernacular medical life worlds of peasant-women healers and their role in developing medical anthropological expertise in Egypt from the reign of [foreign] to the interwar period, and the first half of the project really explored production of general and racial ideographies of occult knowledge in Egypt's late Ottoman period, and the second half exposes how women healers and their amulets, which were viewed as materials or valuables of ancient Egypt, became entangled in the internationalization of the social sciences. I argue that these wise women, and I have some of these women pictured here, and this mainly from Winifred Blackman's photo archive, who I'm going to talk about in a second, these women were critical producers of scientific knowledge that shaped anthropology, archeology and Egyptology in the 1920s and 1930s. One of my primary object archives is the amulet collection of British anthropologist Winifred Blackman who procured the world's largest collection of 20th century Egyptian magical medical objects, as she called them, during over 20 years of fieldwork. These amulets, which ranged from copper fear cups to animal teeth to plant matter were agentive technological conduits that blurred what envirotech historians have termed, "the illusory boundary between humanity and nature," as well as the material world and the realm of the unseen. Egyptian amulets are a crystal ball of sorts, which allow historians to partially reconstruct the complex constellation of objects, practitioners and laborers that made up what I have termed the political and spiritual cognitive feeling in late Ottoman and interwar Egypt. My work pushes powerfully against historiography that argues that the metaphysical powers of objects and otherworldly beings was replaced by those of the modern state as well as the scientific knowledge it produced. Using the methodology that I'm calling decolonial materialism, my work utilizes objects like amulets that are relegated to the dark holdings of museum storage rooms as archives of the actors and economies whose bodies and labor are generally rendered invisible in

Eurocentric histories of global science. To be more precise, this method allows me to reconstitute and analyze these objects' stories, or as I call them, amulet tales. For the purpose of my talk today, we'll be reading not only the amulets themselves but the archives created around them, namely the flimsy note cards, as they're called, that detailed where the amulets procured ... Sorry, where the amulets were procured, who they were procured from, and sometimes the value of the item. I'm going to use this information to put forth two intertwined arguments about Egypt's economy in the late Ottoman period. The first of these is that what I call the occult economy was an aspect, if not a simple aspect, to Egyptian political economy. Economic centers such as village souks, urban bazaars, attarine shops and even neighborhood grocers, or the *ela* were all locations in which economic exchanges of occult goods and services took place. In the medieval and early modern periods, occult practices and their practitioners, whether they were musicians, attarine, mukhtars, et cetera, they participated in society as legitimate, albeit lowly, occupations. Some, such as soothsayers and magicians, enjoyed protection by guilds into the late 19th century, along with the more noble professions of druggists and physicians. However, several factors in the 19th century provoked a reappraisal of these occupations as immoral and consigned them to more informal economies, and some of these factors, I'm definitely going to talk today, and others we can talk about in the Q and A, but on a more abstract scale, I want us to question this idea that the Egyptian economy, or the concept of the economy itself, was ever disenchanted to begin with, and I'm working to redescribe the nature and the purpose of the physical and conceptual marketplace to highlight the occult economy of Egypt and to underscore what economic anthropologist Julia Elyachar called its folkness. Second, I hope to reorient scholarship about Egyptian political economy and its history and its actors. I want to shift our focus from the male-dominated cash crop economies, such as cotton and sugar, which have long been the staple economies of interest for political economists and historians of capital in Egypt, to occult economies that were produced and controlled by working-class people, women and African migrants. In the late 19th century, occult economies came to be inextricably associated with female ignorance and an African propensity for trickery and superstition. However, in my research I try to turn these stereotypes on their head to show that women, whether they were engaged in occult work or seeking out the services of occult worker, were a dominant force in these occult economies, and a physical presence in the marketplace itself. In other words, I hope to recast these women, who were generally understood and referred to in my sources as superstitious, charlatans, [foreign], [foreign], by many Egyptian elites and her so-called gullible or [foreign] female victims as uncanny businesswomen and conscientious consumers contributing to the Egyptian economy. To conclude, we will get up close and personal with one of my favorite

amulets, the Black Eggplant, and here I'll tell an amulet tale to demonstrate how I read this comestible charm as an archive of the intellectual and physical labor of the various populations of late 19th century Egypt. In the case of the black eggplant, I unearthed an occult agricultural economy rooted in the intertwined histories of limited production, esoteric commerce and counter-colonial gardening. So, now that I've laid out a sort of road map for you all, let's start by talking a bit about this magical marketplace that I described. Hold on, sorry. All right, we're staying here. So the concept of the economy and free market, both globally and in Egypt, were intimately connected to the realm of the unseen since their inception in the 18th century. Most notably, Scottish economist Adam Smith invoked the metaphor of an invisible hand. Scholars of political economy in the Middle East revisited Adam's concept of the invisible hand to illuminate both the imagined and folk, or enchanted, nature of the economy as a concept while also analyzing its material impact on the daily lives of Egyptians. Economic anthropologist Julia Elyachar provincializes Adam Smith's concept of the invisible hand. She describes the concept as a folk concept that was always embedded in a particularly European superstition. In her ethnography of craftsmen guilds in Cairo's [foreign] in the 1990s, Elyachar revisits Smith's writing to show that his theories of the economy were heavily influenced by writings of witches, demons and fairies. The invisible hand, as such, as she says, "descends from the sky as a divine predicament," and by destabilizing the scientific foundations of the theory, Elyachar really challenges the separation of certain markets and laborers into proper or modern, like that of the agricultural economy, from those marked as backwards or traditional, like the work of petty craftsmen. In my work, I follow Elyachar's lead and extend her conceptualization of the economy to include occult work. For Egyptians of the peasantry and working class, the physical marketplace was as magical as the metaphorical marketplace, and by this I mean that one could procure objects and services as well as potentially have a supernatural experience. Individuals that engaged in occult work, like Sudanese geomancers, bibliomancers, and fortune-tellers, were common sights in the marketplaces of Egyptian villages and urban centers. In his 1878 travel account, "Upper Egypt: Its People and Its Products," German physician Carl Klunzinger notes that these quote, "Half naked prophets could be seen in the marketplaces of Upper Egypt squatting on the ground, marking holes and lines in the sand, throwing upon these few stones and dice and predicting the future joys and sorrows of the people for a few coppers." Many licit businesses like attarine, greengrocers and silversmiths also contributed to the occult economy as they sold items that were essential to particular kinds of occult work. For instance, in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, Jewish silversmiths were well-known for crafting and selling silver [foreign] ornaments, which were necessary for women afflicted by mischievous spirits. In

the same vein, vendors and Cairo's [foreign] sold raw ingredients used in "Tibb al-Rukka," or "Old Wives Medicine," like rhinoceros horns, crocodile penis as well as items such as incense, amulets, potions and powder prescription. In some cases, the marketplace itself was the site of otherworldly economic encounters. In [foreign] the [foreign] told tales of a yearly market for djinn that took place at the foot of an ancient granite obelisk in the fields on the outskirts of town. Although the exact date of this market could never be known or predicted by humans, supposedly on a bright, moonlit night an open-air market is established around the obelisk, which I have depicted here, and disappeared at the first light of dawn. The market is said to be filled with a congregation of djinn who peddle [foreign] and bestow supernatural riches to the lucky humans who have the good fortune of stumbling upon this spectral bazaar, and according to the [foreign] and [foreign], if humans purchased the legumes from a djinn hawker's stand, they would find their seeds changed into gold the next morning, and this is just another picture of the obelisk. If the occult is such a central factor in this concept of the market and an ever-present specter haunting Egypt's integration into the world economy, why has it eluded the attention of scholars and political ... Sorry, scholars of political economies, histories of capitalism and labor in the modern Middle East? The answer to this is twofold. The first lies in the occult nature of the market economy itself, namely its metaphysical ability to make certain markets visible and invisible or licit and illicit. This results in the creation of spaces on the margins of the market, otherwise known by economic historians as informal markets, the black market or illegal commerce. However, scholars have shown that the marginal markets were not marginal at all but integral to the survival of the economic, which it was never able to quite get rid of them completely. Some occult practitioners were literally forced to the margins of the market as their work transitioned from lowly guild-protected laborers to a racialized public safety issue. In the wake of urban migration, [foreign] issued the 1880s [foreign] law, a set of legal procedures that tasked Cairo's police force with maintaining public order and safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable subjects, like female widowers, pregnant women, the weak and the elderly from the unruly [foreign] of the city's swiftly overcrowding streets. These populations, believed to be troublemakers, received harsh punishment as a result the Ottoman Egyptian government's extreme interpretation of the revised Ottoman penal code as a part of the larger parts of that reform that swept through the Ottoman Empire starting in 1839. The Arabic term [foreign] is usually translated by historians as loiterers or wanton individuals from the root [foreign]. It generally describes several kinds of people who populated the city's back alleyways like prostitutes, urban poor, drunkards as well as other peasants and gangs of bandits from Upper Egypt. Yet the law primarily targeted practitioners of magic and the occult, Upper Egyptian, African, Bedouin migrants ... Sorry, Upper

Egyptian, African and Bedouin migrants, who worked in Cairo's various occult economy as geomancers, [foreign] and fortune-tellers, were seen as particularly undesirable, and fortune-tellers, as we all know, [foreign] in Ottoman-Turkish [foreign]. So the fact that these practitioners were also known as [foreign] raises the question of whether the term is related to the word and practice of [foreign] or fortune-telling. This more magical etymology gestures towards the highly racialized and entangled histories of magic, the magical market, public health and contests over urban space in late-Ottoman Cairo. The second reason lies in the way that these limitations have come to affect how scholars study the economy and labor and how they've established what bodies and activities are deemed under the purview of political economic studies, or history of capitalism. The bodies particularly ... Sorry, the bodies participating in occult work as generally rendered as non-economic or non-laboring, and this is especially true for women. Women workers, including women migrant workers and formerly enslaved women, who engaged in occult work have been doubly rendered invisible in this history because of this spacial myth that surrounds their sex and because of their participation in domestic work and the illicit marketplace. Women waged workers were a constant presence, albeit a minority, in factories, mines, core day labor and, later, in department stores. They were also a constant presence in the occult economy. Throughout the 19th and first half of the 20th century, magical enterprises provided economic opportunities for women of all classes in Egypt's rural and urban areas. Women participated in the licit and illicit marketplace, and the occult economy in particular as we see at bazaars and local markets. Lower class urban and rural women were no strangers to work. They labored in fields and factories as Egypt flexed its industrial muscle in cotton and textile production in the north and later sugarcane in Upper Egypt to the south. Many women also performed intimate services in the homes of others, like domestic servitude, midwifery and soothsaying. Scholars and historical figures claim that women in late Ottoman Egypt or other respectable women would never have been spotted in the crowded bazaar, both as a buyer or a seller. For instance, Klunzinger, who I referenced before, noted during his visit in the largely [Indistinct] market in the 1870s that the only women there were the wives of vegetable sellers, or the quote, "Solitary old peasant woman who has lost all of her charms," end quote, and wandered around veiled in the market, and he said that if a woman, however closely veiled, should ever dare set foot in any part of the public market, she could lose her good name forever, and while I initially wanted to write this off as just a German guy saying whatever, it turns out that he's not exaggerating the risks for women who entered the marketplace. A woman who worked in the market could easily lose her reputation in society in addition to being grounds for her husband to divorce her and take custody of her children. Two such cases can be found in the [foreign] or

the 1881 compilation of Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abbasi Mahi who served as Grand Mufti of al-Azhar under Ibrahim Pasha from 1847 to 1886. In the section on custody and child-rearing, two women lost custody of their children due to their work in the marketplace. In a fatwa issued on the 5th of [foreign] in 1849, there was a case regarding the custody of a 6-year-old girl with parents that were divorced. The mother wanted custody of the child. However, the father contested this on the grounds that his ex-wife was a business owner that bought and sold goods in the marketplace and would presumably not be home to take care of the child if she was given sole custody. The mufti ruled against the mother in this case, and historian Judith Tucker has shown that 19th century judges often created and enforced laws that supported traditional family structures and failed to reflect the demands of changing societal structures in which more and more women had to work outside of the family home to support their children and their household. In many cases, they were divorced, had husbands who were unemployed, or away from home due to conscription and corby labor. The family remained the basic economic unit until the beginning of the 19th century, but by the turn of the 20th century, the peasant family was disposed of land, impoverished and forced into migration to urban centers in the delta. Many women were forced to work to support their families outside of the home, and although agricultural labor was traditionally equally divided, the rise of military conscription and forced corby labor under the Mehmed Ali regime resulted in many men leaving the village and later relocating permanently to urban centers in the delta. Women who worked outside of agricultural labor generally worked on the margins of the family unit of production and on the margins of the market. Being economically independent loosened some of these women from the traditional family structure, and, moreover, women with ties to the marketplace acquired skills that made them better able to protect their property and their rights. The flimsy note card archive of British anthropologist Winifred Blackman provides detailed information that places women in the marketplace as well as the kinds of occult objects and services they sold. These note cards are the institutional paper trail of the magical medical objects, as she called them, that she purchased in weekly markets across Middle and Upper Egypt between 1924 and 1928. She also purchased objects from individuals who acted as neo-proprietors in occult work. There's several kinds of information we can glean from this unique anthropological archive as the form of the note card allows entry options for the description of the object, who the object was purchased from and its value. Blackman created the archive to document the provenance and authenticity of objects that she collected as they became a part of a museum collection at the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum in London, but the note cards also detailed the presence and range of occult objects circulating in the marketplace. For instance, Blackman purchased a number of occult objects

from the [foreign] and [foreign] markets into this place as well as the [foreign] and [foreign] markets in [foreign] , which she presented in her 1927 collection to the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum. One such purchase, labeled A60829, was a red, heart-shaped pendant mounted in silver with silver drops that was meant to be worn by women suffering from spirit possession. Note cards for objects like this, which were presumably purchased from a nondescript shop or seller, only into ... Sorry, only included the market in which they were purchased. In this case, it was the [foreign] market in the [foreign] province, but Blackman usually did not record a value or a purchase price for the item. She purchased other amulets, such as a red stone bead for inflamed eyes and a black glass bead on a string to cure sore throat from the Seribu market in [foreign]. She similarly frequented card shops, blacksmiths, silversmiths and more to get the items that needed to be bought raw or specially prepared for her purposes, such as sulfur or iron anklets to protect children against the evil eye. The marketplace was, similarly, a fertile environment to meet people with occult objects of their own who, although not usually in the business of selling these items, could be persuaded to sell them for a small fee or give them away for free, and this is just an example of one of the many amulets that she's collected, and so you can see how these entries kind of look on the digital collection of the archive. For instance, Blackman obtained a small cotton charm case measuring 3 inches by 2.5 inches that contained a small written headache charm from an old man who was just passing through the market to return the successfully used charm to the tomb of a certain Sheikh Metwalli in Cairo. Once there, he intended to hang it on the tomb as a vote of offering. The description of the object ... In the description of the object, Blackman notes quote, "That the person to whom this charm belonged obtained the charm probably from some sheikh or magician, then went and prayed to Sheikh Metwalli, whose tomb is in Cairo, to be cured. The cure was effected and this charm was being taken to be placed on the tomb of the sheikh as a vote of offering," end quote. Most importantly for our purposes today, though, Blackman's note card archive demonstrates that women were present both in the marketplace and at its margins, selling their occult services and wares. Women continued to run their own small businesses and entrepreneurial endeavors well into the interwar period, even if their business activities were considered illicit. For example, Blackman bought numerous charms from a young Arab wisewoman in Cairo. One such charm was a lump of incense that is burned at a bazaar for someone possessed by an ifrit [foreign]. This occult economy was as raced as it was gendered. Occult work became outlawed and racialized as African in Egypt in the late 19th century. Laws like the [foreign] law of 1880 specifically targeted Sudanese, West African and Upper Egyptians who practiced geomancy, bibliomancy and [foreign] on the streets of Cairo as a public-facing issue. Blackman's flimsy note card archive

allows us to mark the presence of these women occult workers from racialized groups in Cairo and other urban centers in Egypt in the interwar period. For instance, Sudanese woman provided her with over 20 specimens of occult objects for her second collection with the Wellcome. One such object was a stone for women whose children have been killed by [foreign], which she obtained from an old Sudanese woman traveling about Egypt selling charms. She similarly collected a number of charms from a Sudanese woman working in Cairo ... Sorry, in the Cairo neighborhood of Imbaba. She also gained ... Got a lot from [foreign] occult practitioner, and one of those was a [foreign] which she purchased from a Moore living near the Hussain Mosque. The kind of customers who usually sought occult practices were also gendered and raced where Egyptian laws and elites pointed out Sudanese, the [foreign] and Upper Egyptian women as charlatans and tricksters who sold their silver ... Sorry, stole their silver [foreign] these individuals being swindled out of their money were usually represented as innocent but gullible Egyptian women, usually from the middle and upper class. The sources, my sources use a range of words to describe these weak women who ... Sorry, who procured the services of these women who usually were called [foreign] or the old wives, so they called them [foreign] foolish, shameless, gullible, simple. Elite Egyptians feminists and women's right activists, like [Indistinct], Huda Sha'arawi, used the threat of women and girls being beguiled by superstitions as a justification for women's access to proper schooling and higher education. The discursive framing of the female actors in the occult economy as charlatans or gullible girls reflected their denigrated and dangerous status outside licit economic life in the eyes of elite Egyptian, Ottoman, French and British men and women. Such language underscored that the stakes were substantial in producing a rhetorical but wholly imaginary division between the licit and the illicit, the occult and the economic and the male and the female. Occult objects, occult knowledge and occult practices were, indeed, exceptionally costly and valuable in ways that transcended such divisions, and this female-controlled economy was central to and deeply entwined with what historical actors in the past, and far too many scholars since then, have designated as the domain of the economy. Sorry. Regulating women's fertility and reproduction were important imperatives of the Egyptian state and its vision of the modern nation. This, too, was connected to the female-controlled occult economy. The use of eggplants as fertility amulets provides one way to approach this economy. Amulets as occult physical objects have important stories to teach and tell us about women's economic and occult activities. Let us now turn to one of my favorite amulets: An unsuspectedly powerful plant substance known as the black eggplant. I came across this amulet in medical Abd al-Rahman Ismail's 1892 study depicted here, "Tibb al-Rukka," or "Old Wives Medicine." The book provides thick descriptions of over 50 different treatments

performed by old wives, even as he debunked these practices as unscientific. Works like "Tibb al-Rukka" suggest that Egyptians widely and regularly consulted these vernacular healers, who are included in the realm of occult workers, in my opinion, for medical and spiritual advice despite the supposed superiority of modern medicine. So, in an entry on [foreign] which I have shown here, and which, for the purposes of this talk, we can roughly translate as the spell cast by the eggplant, or the birth of the eggplant, Ismail noted that an encounter with the black eggplant could render a woman infertile. This curse of infertility, he reported, had a simple cure. The afflicted woman only needed to visit a field of eggplants. In an aside, he also tells us that men charged in the service of the garden at Cairo, as well as other towns and villages, kept a special plot of land in enclosures for the growing of black eggplants. These gardeners made extra money from the visits of these women who bribed them to pass through the gates and access the eggplant. Within the magical medical world of the urban poor and rural women from the delta, Upper Egypt and Nubia in particular, the black eggplant was a naturally charmed object that protected or stalled female fertility. It was commonly known as an agent of [foreign] a person or object that is meant to protect a mother during pregnancy, childbirth and confinement. Black eggplants were amuletic objects that had the power to protect or harm fertility, primarily due to their black color. The term [foreign] also referred to the delicate period between the seventh month of pregnancy and the postpartum confinement when women were particularly vulnerable to outside forces that could pollute or terminate their pregnancy. If a woman stumbled upon the vegetable during their [foreign] period, it could breach her bodily boundaries, causing a miscarriage or making her infertile. Such attacks on women's intimate boundaries and reproductive capabilities were known as [foreign]. The many ways a woman could free herself from the state of [foreign] was to figure out how ... Sorry, was to figure out the source of her bodily pollution. Once the pollutant was determined, in this case, the eggplant, the woman could then, usually with the help of a friend or a magical medical healer or health care provider, perform a ritual, or a countercurse, if you will, with the substance itself. This included a variety of actions that ranged from taking a bath with the eggplant and using the eggplant's core as a vaginal suppository to stepping over an eggplant, or, as described in Ismail's entry, visiting a field of black eggplant. I first came across this particular amulet tale, and I was really struck by when I found it especially because of the seeming scarcity of Egyptian eggplant ... Sorry, of eggplant plots available in Egypt at this time. At the time Ismail was writing, eggplants were among Egypt's most popular vegetable, so why did women have to bribe the gatekeepers of these gardens, and also at this time Egypt is well-known for its agricultural prowess, so shouldn't it have been easy to find black eggplants just about anywhere? The agricultural history of the

black eggplant in the late 19th and early 20th century is almost as elusive as the women that sought out its powers. Since the vegetable was neither a major crop for export nor a rare plant worthy of note in botanical tomes, it's difficult to find extensive accounts of eggplant cultivation in Egypt at this time. Scant archival material suggests the following: First, that the cure might have been ... Once been simple to obtain as eggplant was a popular element of peasant gardens during the early modern period. However, with the rise of cash crop cotton in the 1820s and sugarcane farming in the 1860s and the reclaiming of most of the agricultural land to grow them, it is likely that eggplant production was decreased drastically in favor of these crops. Second, sources show that Egyptians rarely used food ... Sorry, rarely used as food the type of eggplant that acted as [foreign]. In the 1910 manual of Egyptian farm crops and vegetables, George Bonaparte, a lecturer at the Cairo School of Agriculture, points out that two kinds of eggplants were grown in Egypt: the [foreign] and the [foreign]. The [foreign] were oblong fruits that came in both white and blackish violet with the white eggplant being in much greater demand than the black. The [foreign] however, were very large, globular and violet in form. He notes that the vegetable was not so popular with locals but was in high demand with Europeans, and this large variety were also known as [foreign] or djinn's testicles, and folk etymology believed that this is the phrase that gave the entire eggplant family its name, [foreign]. Female reproductive imperatives and a presumed limited supply of eggplants match the economic interests of male gatekeepers. Ismail informs us that gatekeepers set aside land for eggplants, not for consumption but to capitalize on their amuletic powers. The 19th century saw a proliferation of cash crop plantations and state-owned gardens in Egypt, all which could ... Sorry, all of which could have easily supported small eggplant plots. The Mehmed Ali dynasty established a number of private botanical gardens for both royal and public use. They similarly encouraged wealthy residents of Egypt to devote portions of their land to horticulture and pleasure gardens. One such garden was that of the Pasha's estate at Shoubra located 3 miles from central Cairo. This was one of the oldest royal estates, and it was established in 1806 on land violently taken from peasants that were unable to pay taxes. In this context, Ottoman Egyptian royal gardens, in tandem with large-scale cash crop agriculture, were a violent Imperial force that misplaced peasant populations and, later in the century would create extreme precarity and the depletion of once plentiful food sources. The famous chronicler al-Jabarti reported that every kind of vegetable grown there and the vegetables produced there became known as the Pasha's Vegetables. The luxurious garden at Shoubra and its lush vegetable patches existed in 1892 when "Tibb al-Rukka" was published and was likely one of the gardens that the author had in mind when writing this entry. By the 1890s, the summer residence of the Pasha was still beautiful and open to American visitors. A map of the gardens here

shows that, just as Ismail suggests, the vegetable patches, or [foreign], were found at the farthest south-facing corner of the gardens, and I indicated it with the red circle. This section was small in comparison to the large vineyards and orchards that the place boasted, and, interestingly enough, the map shows that it would have been easy to sneak one's way through the vegetable patches once entering the main gate of the garden as the two areas were connected by a long, straight path. Perhaps this is the road that many women hurriedly strolled down if they needed ... Sorry, if they indeed took so direct a route with the hopes of ending the curse of their fertility. The gardeners and gatekeepers were not the only individuals to capitalize from these economies. So, too, did female magical practitioners, particularly those who engaged in forms of healing in the living rooms of private homes, both lower class and elite, in graveyards and ancient temples and holy sites, and, as we have seen, royal gardens, and as I have hoped to stress here magical enterprises provided economic opportunities for women of all classes in Egypt rural and urban areas, and also in this context, the amulet telling of the black eggplant exposes not only a robust occult economy that existed alongside and in spite of cash crop agriculture and lavish Ottoman Egyptian Imperial aesthetics, it also revealed an anti- colonial practice of gardening, which a term art historian Joe Cassatt adopts from bell hooks' "Diasporic Landscapes of Longing" to tease out the possibilities for gardening to enable the growth of new subjectivities and a different sense of the political. By the gatekeepers using royal gardens, and, particularly, the eggplant patches for their own financial gain, and Egyptian women paying handsomely to access these spaces as a part of reclaiming their own productivity through women-centric ethnogynecological rituals, we can argue that these actors poached power from the colonial landscape machine on the master's own terrain, as Cassett says, much like rural communities and enslaved populations in the Caribbean. In general, I think that the amuletes of the black eggplant, the black eggplant is only one really great example of how occult objects and occult economies can give us these very cool windows and snippets into the lives of marginalized actors that are usually not included in these big histories of political economy, and I am done, and I can't wait to hear what everyone has to say in the Q and A. Thank you so much for listening.

Louise Bertini:

Wow, thank you so much, Taylor. I'm trying to move my screen back to my other screen. If anybody has questions, and I am opening up the Q and A, I do want to direct your attention to the Q and A button. We do have our first question from Lena: "Was there an amulet to help male infertility?"

Taylor Moore:

Hi, Lena. Thank you so much for your question. Yes, there were a lot, and, again, the term amulet is very capacious, but you could go to the [foreign] and find all kinds of things. So, I think I mentioned earlier crocodile penis, and one of the things like that. A lot of animal parts and certain kinds of botanical teas and things could be used for male infertility, and usually they went to these women specialists, who sometimes incensed them, gave them the general parts of certain kinds of animals, whether it was crocodiles, sometimes it could be things like that, but, yes, there's lots, and it seems like there's a huge array of amulets that are specifically for fertility and infertility, both for women and men.

Louise Bertini:

A question from Virginia, "Was the black eggplant representative of the cervix and womb for its shape?"

Taylor Moore:

That's a great question, and I can say that what I know about the black eggplant and its use in the fertility amulet, it really comes from two sources. One of them is Marcia Inhorn's, the "Quest for Conception," and she has a whole table of how eggplants, tomatoes, and other nightshades are used as a part of kabsa mushahara rituals. And there's another scholar who worked on fertility talismans in Nubia, and they don't really talk about the womb at all. Usually, they're references to eggplants being similar to jinn testicles. So, I don't know, but it's definitely a possibility. And if anyone out there in Zoom land has any suggestions or might know any more about this, I would love to hear about it.

Louise Bertini:

Thanks. Question from Jacob: "Is badinjan still used as an amulet?"

Taylor Moore:

As far as I know, yes. But I also was hoping that maybe somebody would come into the chat and say, "Oh, I know about this," because a lot of the sources that I found that talk about this are at least from the 1990s. So it's possible that it's still being used, but I would love to know more and to think about these things historically, because although sometimes the uses are continuous, they change based on a lot of factors, right? So it would be interesting to find that out.

Louise Bertini:

Actually, Jacob does later state, "In spoken Arabic, badinjan is associated with madness." So ...

Taylor Moore:

Yes.

Louise Bertini:

... if there's any reason.

Taylor Moore:

Yes. So, the eggplant and the nightshade family in and of itself is very interesting because well into the ... as early as the Medieval Period, and I think very early Medieval Period, nightshades, whether it's mandrake root, tomato, eggplant, are considered to be not only poisonous, but to impact madness. And it's something about the qualities of them. And, again, the eggplant and nightshades in general tend to ... They're believed to be associated with the jinn. There's a spoke etymology around that. So I think that's the reason, but what I hope to do is to dig more into medieval sources to see if people are giving particular reasons about the properties of eggplants that would make you turn mad, outside of it being potentially poisonous.

Louise Bertini:

We have a question. "So was the occult practice largely a function of social class?"

Taylor Moore:

Thank you. I definitely don't think that occult practice was a function of social class, as far as I'm able to see. Egyptians or people living in Egypt, whether they were Egyptian, British, French, Ottoman, et cetera, all engaged into various ranges of occult work, but there were only particular kinds of occult work that were rendered immoral or ignorant or African. So you could consider things like spiritualism to be occult practice, right? And so there are lots of salons and things happening where elite Egyptian women and elite French women would do tarot, invite magicians to their homes, and things like that. So in general, I think that occult practice is very widespread, but when it comes to outlawing certain practices, it's really the working class and the peasantry that are targeted to be the ones who are using this are seeking out or are furthering these practices.

Louise Bertini:

A question from Daisy, "Have you found evidence of black eggplants in ancient Egyptian amulets or paintings?"

Taylor Moore:

I have not, but I actually haven't checked, so that could be an avenue. I'm sure there are some Egyptologists in the chat, so maybe we can crowdsource that, but it would be interesting to see if black eggplants were used, whether as contraception or as fertility amulets, and that this is a longer tradition than I am aware of.

Louise Bertini:

Would be interesting to look into. I'm interested in that now, too. From Joseph, "What can this tell us about," another ancient Egyptian question, "about ancient Egyptian life and practices?"

Taylor Moore:

Yeah, well, I'm not sure. And part of trying to do this work for me, actually, was trying to find a way to disentangle this idea of the Egyptian peasantry and of Egyptians in general being these continuous ancestors of ancient Egypt, and I thought it was interesting how a place where amulets are superstitions that are seen to be kind of a direct connection between the magical and the medical practices of ancient Egyptians, A, actually weren't, and to find a nuanced way to talk about continuous practices without being anachronistic. So the answer is, I'm not sure, and I don't think that it should have to tell us anything. But, yeah, I'm sure there's always connections.

Louise Bertini:

Actually, I do want to thank Salima Ikram in the chat. I was hoping she might be on and know the answer to that, so she did just state, "No eggplants, as far as one knows, from ancient Egypt."

Taylor Moore:

Okay.

Louise Bertini:

So, thanks, Salima. I have a question from Solange, "Could you speak a bit more about the midwifery services provided by the wise women? I would love to hear more about the Sudanese wise women and any associated amulets used by them." I think that's a fabulous question.

Taylor Moore:

Awesome. Yeah, it is. Thank you so much, Solange. So while I haven't looked at Sudanese wise women specifically, in upper Egypt, wise women did a range of practices, and I would say that, in terms of midwifery, the practices could go anywhere from providing amulets and services to help you get pregnant, so the

fertility side of things, to helping you break your infertility, to leading you and guiding you up for pre- and post-natal care and so I think there, the history about midwives in Egypt is actually pretty robust. I'm just thinking about turning babies, birthing babies, helping mother prepare for their Sebou, the celebrating the fact that the baby has lived for a week, preparing sustenance for the mother to regain her strength after birthing. So those ... so there are ways that those are pretty typical to the stories that we know about midwifery in other places, but combined with these kind of more robust stories about amulets and occult economies, if that makes sense.

Louise Bertini:

Thanks. A question from Helen, "Do you get the impression that the European colonial collectors were trying to understand the mechanisms or rules or principles behind the amulets they collected as far as you can tell from the note card documentation you've seen, or were they fairly universally dismissed by the collectors as curiosities?"

Taylor Moore:

Thank you, Helen. So, I would say both. From Blackman's perspective and especially collectors and these people who kind of bridged the gap between Egyptology, anthropology, and archaeology, and especially those that focus on superstitions, they were really interested in the rules and the principles, and they were interested in kind of understanding the science of magic, the science of amulets, and understanding why certain kinds of incense is for spirit possession, why certain kinds of incense can be used to cure rheumatoid diseases, things like that. And then, for example, others thought that these were worthless curiosities, and I think a good contrast that we can see there is that Winifred Blackman's employer, Henry Wellcome, was really only interested in these items to have them in his museum and because he thought that they were artifacts to show this continuity of Egyptians from ancient Egypt to modern times. But, in general, he didn't consider it to be one of his most important or best collections, and she had to fight really hard to get funding because he also didn't see them as valuable. So I think it depends on [Indistinct]

Louise Bertini:

Taylor, I think your sound might be cutting off a little bit, or maybe your mic is not ... Okay, I think it's ... I think you're better now. Question from Sid ...

Taylor Moore:

[Indistinct]

Louise Bertini:

Can you hear okay?

Taylor Moore:

Yeah, I can. My ear [Indistinct].

Louise Bertini:

Okay. Question from Sid: "Your research focuses on economic data. Do you see your research expanding into the research of magical beliefs or in spirits into the total population, such beliefs by upper society and so-called educated people?"

Taylor Moore:

Right. So, this particular aspect of the talk definitely, I guess, looks at a certain segment of population, but the book in general, the research in general, shows how this impacted larger, I guess you could say occult beliefs at large. So it looks at questions of medicine, questions of the museum, [Indistinct] around museums and once we've collected these objects and put them in cases, whether it be because they're written about people ...

Louise Bertini:

Taylor, it's hard to hear you. It's hard to hear you.

Taylor Moore:

Okay, hold on. One of my earphones are out. Okay. We should be good now. But, yes, Sid. In general, I think this is a signal to a more robust network of beliefs that I think are not just limited to the working class and peasantry, but are actually impacted or impact all different rungs of society.

Louise Bertini:

Question from Judith: "Was the eggplant represented in stone or metal as a charm to be carried?"

Taylor Moore:

So it wasn't represented at all. It was just the eggplant itself, and you had to ... That's why they were going to the actual patches, right? So it's really the virility and living quality of the eggplant itself that provided the fertility or infertility, and some would say that whenever these women tried to walk through the eggplant patches to either gain fertility or uncurse themselves, that the eggplant patches would wither. And so it was like they were taking their life force from the eggplant

patch. Whether that's true or not, I'm not sure, but it usually was just the vegetable itself.

Louise Bertini:

Another question on if the eggplant was imported from the New World to Egypt.

Taylor Moore:

This is a great question. I have been trying to figure this out. I know that the particular aubergine, the roomy eggplant, this foreign eggplant that I was talking about, I saw sources that said that it was brought to Egypt in the 18th century, but the eggplant in and of itself, the skinny Baladi eggplant, I think that it comes from India, but I'm not sure. But I definitely think that it's an Old World vegetable, but that's something that I am hoping to research further. And, again, if anyone in the chat has any answer to that, I'd love to hear.

Louise Bertini:

Yeah, Salima, if she's still on, might know the answer to that question. Or, somebody said, "No, but it is eggplant entered the Middle East during agricultural revolution from 10th century from Southeast and South Asia." So thank you, Taimoor.

Taylor Moore:

Thank you.

Louise Bertini:

And we have a question from Taimoor: "I appreciate the attempt to recover the role of marginalized women in the occult economy. But, most druggists were probably men, no? Can we tell if there's any difference between occult practices, the recipes, and the amulets provided by one versus the other, women versus male druggists?"

Taylor Moore:

Excellent question. So what I had to compact here, and what is done kind of in a more ... a large scale form in the actual project is that, yes, druggists were definitely men. And what I was trying to show is that there was a network of an occult economy in which women played a large role, but not the only or the most central role, right? And ... "can we tell if there's any difference between the occult practices?" So I'm sure that we can. So if you take Leigh Chipman's work on druggists and medieval Cairo, I would say that one big difference, right, is that one is a trade that, at some point, becomes more written or codified than the other. But I think that the parallel between druggists and women healers is very similar, and I

think that they actually have more of a symbiotic relationship than one would think. You would have to go through a druggist to get certain recipes for things and vice versa, and druggists also sell certain amulets. So you can ... I would imagine that there would be a kind of competitive market of supply and demand where customers are looking to find the best and most effective recipes or amulets, and, at the same time, the producers would be exchanging knowledge or competing knowledge with each other to kind of perfect their product. Instead of thinking of them really as versus or competitors, which they might've been, I was just trying to evoke both of them as nodes in a larger network of an occult economy.

Louise Bertini:

Thanks. By the way, also, I thought I'd just share, thank you, Annie Gall, from also sharing some information on the eggplant. She said that the eggplant is mentioned in medieval Arabic pharmacology texts and is described as a word of Persian origin in those texts.

Taylor Moore:

Okay.

Louise Bertini:

So thought I would share that, as well.

Taylor Moore:

Thank you, Annie.

Louise Bertini:

A question from ... It's an anonymous question: "I'm interested in the publication history of Ismael's text on Tibb Al-Rucca. Who published it, and what was the justification for its publication beyond, as you said, providing that they're anti-scientific? How was it received by professional scientists, physicians, the public, and how might we see it as a sort of accidental institutionalization of the occult sciences?"

Taylor Moore:

Awesome question. Thank you so much. So this topic actually is an entire chapter in the book. So the author is a medical doctor who got his degree from [Indistinct], and he conducts what I would call a medical ethnography of sorts. He goes around and he really sits with and observes a bunch of well-known and famous practitioners on different kinds of occult practice or "vernacular medical practices" in Cairo and the delta. And what he'd ... First, it was a serial in Al-Adab magazine,

and it's only later that it got compiled and published. And part of me wants to say that it was initially published by [Indistinct] Press, but I'm not sure. But I do know that the second volume was specifically compiled and published for the purposes of the International Orientalist Congress that was happening that year in 1894. So in terms of who is the audience and what is this trying to say, it gets interesting because initially it's specifically for kind of an Egyptian audience and him using his expertise as a doctor to really tap into what he knows is a very capricious network of practitioners, and he also kind of understands why people are drawn to those practitioners to show them why what they're doing is wrong and potentially very dangerous, and he then provides kind of the modern antidote or remedies for the ailments that these practitioners are solving. So there's an entry on the black eggplant we just saw, an entry on rhinoceros horn, which was supposed to be an antidote for a snake bite, a stomachache. He has entries on jinn, amulets, things like this. And I still haven't been able to figure out how it was received in Egypt at the time, especially its particular ... the first volume iteration. But I know that once he put his work into the network of European Orientalists, they loved it, and it goes on to get translated into English in the 1930s and kind of blows up again. And that's the iteration of it that we see now, and it's cited in Middle East history books, is using the English translation. So it's interesting how something that started off as maybe more of ... It was definitely more of a local critique of this practitioner, but also was a critique of the encroachment of colonial, pharmaceutical and kind of the precursor to Big Pharma. And Egypt became this kind of ... I don't want to say an Orientalist manifesto, but it becomes a text that's really used by Orientalists to understand the superstitions of working class Egyptians and a way to try and actually track these things to collect them before the government is supposed to eradicate them and make them all illegal. Sorry. And, for the last part, it definitely is a sort of accidental institutionalization of the occult sciences, at least in a way that it cements it in history, right? Because, as I said, because of its translation history, this text gets cited a lot to reference to a sort of anti or counter to modern medicine in Egypt, and how it was being dealt with.

Louise Bertini:

All right. I have a question from James: "With the radicalized presentation of these materials in various archives, do you know of any instances in which there existed an informal economy of faking such objects to further romanticize the exotic other?"

Taylor Moore:

Well, if I understand that correctly, there was definitely an economy of faking in that sometimes sellers would know that European collectors are interested in

certain things, and they could sell them items that aren't necessarily real or working or still in use. I think that was very robust, whether it was in the amulet economy or parallel economy, which is the economy of kind of archaeological finds and things. I don't know if I understand the "romanticize the exotic other" part, but I do think we can see a way in which these occult workers, or people who are just hip to this idea that people are coming and paying for these things, especially these white collectors who come and could be persuaded to pay lots of money to take these things out of the country, would try and capitalize on that for their own benefit.

Louise Bertini:

Great, thanks. A question from Jacob: "What is the most important element connected to the singularity of the badinjan; the color, the shape, or the internal aspects, such as the disposition of the seeds?"

Taylor Moore:

Oh, wow. So I wouldn't say there was a most important element, and, again, my information about this really comes from two sources. And maybe, as Annie mentioned earlier, there's keys to this in medieval sources that might talk more about the properties of the eggplant. But definitely the color black was associated with death. It was a color of mourning, so the blackness of the eggplant was important, and that's a similar reason why tomatoes were considered equally as insidious of a vegetable as the badinjan because it was like raw meat or blood. And again, the shape has been likened in this kind of world of folk etymology to jinn testicles. So it seems like that is important, too, in symbolizing a kind of fertility potentially. But I definitely didn't think about the disposition of the seeds, which is super interesting, and that's something I will totally think more about. Thank you.

Louise Bertini:

A question from Jake on, "Do you have an image of the black eggplant amulet?"

Taylor Moore:

Again, so the black eggplant itself is the amulet. There's no special charm or something that's made. It's the actual eggplant that you could see and I guess pick up in the grocery store now, but ... see on the patch. So that's kind of why I had the image of an eggplant patch, as opposed to an actual amulet. And what's actually interesting about whenever Blackman's kind of ... Her collection of botanical amulets is because of the precarity of transferring living plants or seeds and things like that in these trunks that she transported them from, from Egypt to the UK. A lot of the botanical side of her specimens were lost. But, in general, Blackman

doesn't talk about eggplants at all in her work, and this is an entry that I really only got from [Indistinct].

Louise Bertini:

All right. Had to unmute for a second. A question from Acey: "You mentioned a late 19th-century fatwas on custody in your fascinating talk. Does Islamic legal literature, fatwas, treatises, et cetera, of the period shed any light on Egyptian debates about occult practices? Do they help us understand how boundaries between science and occultism are being withdrawn?"

Taylor Moore:

So a shallow answer to this is I definitely think yes, and this is something that I wasn't able to dig really deep into for my dissertation, but I'm hoping to kind of really go through fatwas and things to see more about this. I do know that in the late 19th century, there were ... there was a fatwa about czar practice, and it happened around the time that they were outlawing czar and [Indistinct] and [Indistinct]. And there's also these fatwas happening that are likening jinns to germs. So, again, it's something that I still only have a shallow knowledge about, but I think that, yes, definitely, and I think that if I dig deeper, we dig deeper, there is a lot to say about the boundaries of science and occultism, or how there are actually no boundaries at all between them, are really being negotiated and called into question at this time.

Louise Bertini:

Question from Annie: "How can the history of the radicalization of these occult practices help us understand them today as modern phenomena in semi-colonial Egypt, rather than necessarily remanent of past prior practices?"

Taylor Moore:

Thank you, Annie. That is a great question. So, for me, I think that these practices in and of themselves only become codified to a certain extent because of their linkages to the history of the Trans-Saharan slave trade, and so what I try and argue is that with the abolition of the slave trade, with the [Indistinct] of enslaved populations, and with these mass migrations of people coming from upper Egypt, which in and of itself is an internal colonial project, and a population that's highly racialized for many reasons, but also partially because of their proximity to "black Africa," these practices become highlighted. They become a source of social anxiety for government officials and social reformers in ways that they might not have before, and especially as we start to have anxieties around infant mortality, and especially around reproduction, right, wise women and especially people who

are acting as midwives become highlighted as these charlatan practitioners. And I think that, for me, looking at the amulets and really trying to analyze them in an environmental and a social context is one of the keys to, as you say, trying to break this mythology of them being a continuous practice, something that's easily mapped on directly to ancient Egypt. And this might not have to do with racialization in particular, but, for example, I remember reading a treatise on weeds in sugarcane irrigation fields in the late 19th century that was written by this British agriculturist or agricultural scientist. And he discusses how there's a particular kind of weed that's growing in these irrigation canals that him and these engineers are trying to get rid of. But, at the same time, the [Indistinct] who are working as corvée laborers on this site and working in the field use them as headache medicine. And I was able to find this weed in kind of like a druggist compendium that was compiled in the early ... sorry, the 1930s, and it was still being sold in [Indistinct]. So I think that something like that shows you that how cash crop agriculture directly influenced an abundance of a certain kind of weed. And it seemed like it had not been used before, right? And so in thinking the reverse of that, there's also ways, I'm sure, that certain kinds of environmental decimation or the scarcity of certain kinds of products, the closing of certain kinds of accesses to, for example, South Asia and reorienting towards the Mediterranean and Europe changed ingredients, changed markets, could have even changed the recipes for certain kinds of practices, as well as maybe access to other kinds of occult knowledge. And I also think it opened the spread of particularly Egyptian kinds of occult practice, whether it was codified in book, or whether as amulets to different parts of the Middle East and the late Ottoman world.

Louise Bertini:

Another question: "Do we have any historical evidence of social or economic links between the Islamic manuscript tradition and the occult sciences at Al-Azhar and the occult sciences in practice by women in markets, as you wonderfully explain them?"

Taylor Moore:

Yes, yes. I think a great example of this is in Darb al-Atrak, and apparently there are a lot of ... faculty and students at Al-Azhar in the 19th century were known to make extra money by, what do you call it, scribing, copying, copying certain kinds of occult texts, manuscripts. Apparently, they were very high-selling in that area. So, absolutely, but I think that, at this time period, these occult manuscripts and these amulets become a part of potentially competing markets of knowledge, one that's codified in text, and one that is not.

Louise Bertini:

Question from Virginia: "Why is eggplant called a nightshade plant?"

Taylor Moore:

Great question. I defer to any botanist in the chat. I'm not sure.

Louise Bertini:

Well, if anybody knows, please send it in the chat. Another anonymous question: "In the case in your slideshow showing the Egyptian geographical society's amulet collection, there were some items similar to your earrings. Any comments?"

Taylor Moore:

Yeah, they're common. Obviously, [Indistinct] infinity. These I got from the jeweler that I frequent in Cairo, actually, and they're supposed to be modeled off of czar earrings. So, yeah.

Louise Bertini:

That's lovely. Question from James: "I'm fascinated by your description of the use of occult belief amongst feminist pioneers in Egypt. For example, Huda Sha'arawi. In others ways ... or, in what other ways has such suspicious women been brought in, so to speak, into other movements within your research? For example, anti-colonial, nationalistic movements."

Taylor Moore:

Well, I actually think that these women are at the core of these movements. I mean, if we look deeply into texts, whether it's [Indistinct] Mummies, the New Egyptian Woman, like I said, Huda Sha'arawi's work, [Indistinct], and especially once we get into the rise of Pharaonism and nationalist rhetoric, there's always this foil for the modern Egyptian woman to either the gullible woman who will fall prey to someone like a czar, [Indistinct] or a healer, or the ignorant peasant who has nowhere to turn to but these kind of evil midwives, and they base an entire platform of trying to build a modern nation and trying to reform a healthcare system in which women don't need to resort kind of to these practices, these ignorant practitioners to birth their babies. And also becomes connected to questions of abortion and things like that. So I think if we start to peel back the layers, these spiritual and political economies of healing are at the heart of, I would argue, a lot of the things that we consider the movement to make Egypt "modern."

Louise Bertini:

We do have actually ... Somebody helped us out about the nightshade comment in the chat. So, thanks, Vivian, who says the term "nightshade" was probably coined because the plant thrives and grows best in the shade and at night.

Taylor Moore:

Awesome. There we go. And that makes it even creepier, I guess.

Louise Bertini:

Another question of, "I wondered how late 19th-century economies you are discussing might connect to the wider earlier modern circulation of charismatic objects and rugs coming out of and through Egypt. Were these practices now locked down due to the local, or did they persist in wider forms? I think of today's continued illicit global circulation of charismatic commodities."

Taylor Moore:

Thank you so much, anonymous attendee. Absolutely. These practices definitely are not locked down to the local. And as we can see, they're already moving. So, in the larger Ottoman world, there are lots of Egyptian amulets that were being exported to places like Palestine, Syria. Things are moving across north Africa, whether it was actual amulets or types of ingredients for recipes. And, for instance, Blackman's note cards record this, right? She talks to women who claim that they rode all the way from Algeria and Morocco and brought certain things with them. But then, they become linked to these larger, more Eurocentric networks of commodities. This, in part, has to do with them being collected and circulated. And as you said, and you're up there eating, they're eating mummy as a medicinal drug. People are trying to get scarabs because they think they look cool. So it's definitely highly linked to both licit and illicit global circulation. And I think that what I've tried to do is really show how the occult economy is a part of these wider circulations that we've come to know. More broadly, like circulation of items from museums, circulation of medical and medicinal items, whether they're going to start circulating as a part of what we now call pharmaceutical drugs, or just as botanical items. So, yeah, absolutely.

Louise Bertini:

Question from Jean: "Is it possible to have another look at the slide that shows many amulets? If you can, please say a few words about the characteristics of those that are the most common or unusual."

Taylor Moore:

Great. Well, I mean, if we want to look at this one, as you can see ... I mean, I don't know what is more or less common, but I think in terms of collected items, we see what might have been easier to collect or easier to preserve. So, for example, here at the Egyptian Geographical Society, there are a lot of silver star amulets and these kind of iron anklets because you could really easily go and get them from a store kind of reliably. You didn't have to find a hookup or find a person. I mean, obviously, evil eyes are very popular and very common. Same thing with the hamsa. So I think that those could be some of the most common, but, again, there are things not represented in these displays, such as things that might have ... like pepper or anise, or these kinds of botanical ingredients that are also a part of this economy but that we don't always necessarily think of as amuletic or magical.

Louise Bertini:

All right. And we have the last question, who says, "This is so fascinating," and I do agree with that. "If we want to know more about this topic, what other texts would you recommend?"

Taylor Moore:

I think there's a lot. And, I mean, I don't ... if you're insistent on remaining anonymous, maybe there's a way that I can connect with Louise to give you a list of stuff in English, French, Arabic, Turkish. I think it ... There's a lot of runaround, so I think there's a lot of really cool secondary source material right now that's coming out that I would be happy to share the title with. And maybe that's something, if this is going to be posted online, there can be a bibliography or something, if people would think that's useful. But, yeah, definitely happy to share that with you if you want to connect in whatever way.

Louise Bertini:

I think they can ... one option is to send an e-mail to ...

Taylor Moore:

Okay.

Louise Bertini:

... To info@arce.org, and then we're happy to forward that to you. Or, I can give a pitch to your upcoming book and make sure to get a copy of it, and then you'll, of course, have the reference there. So, thank you so much, Taylor, for your wonderful lecture, and thank all of you for joining us today. If you are interested in ARCE's efforts to research and conserve Egypt's past, I urge you to visit ARCE.org and make a contribution today. And, of course, we rely on your support to make all

of our work possible. So thank you, Taylor, again, and thank all of you for joining us today, and we hope to see you at our next public lecture on November 29th. So I hope everybody has a lovely day. Thank you.