

**Samaa Elimam**, *Harvard University*

For "On Site: Engineering, Empire, and the Geography of the Nile Valley"

Samaa Elimam is recipient of the 2019 SHOT Kranzberg Dissertation Fellowship. Elimam is a Ph.D. candidate in the history of architecture, landscape and urban planning in the Graduate School of Design of Harvard University. She will use the Fellowship to complete her dissertation "On Site: Engineering, Empire, and the Geography of the Nile Valley." Her study explores three ambitious engineering projects that exemplify efforts during the reign of Ottoman viceroy Mehmet Ali to expand and modernize Egypt: the Mahmudiyyah Canal (1816-1843), the Alexandria dockyards (1828-1836), and the administration of the Sudanese Nile (1821-1865). This infrastructure sought to better connect Egypt in the north with the Mediterranean Sea and global markets, and to connect Egypt in the south from Aswan into Sudan and Africa.

In Cairo at the Egyptian National Archives, the Egyptian Geographical Society, and the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, and in Khartoum at the Sudan Library repository at the University of Khartoum, Elimam will study rarely-used Arabic and French language materials: government decrees and correspondence, original design drawings, court records, and surveys, maps and travel journals from the scientific expeditions to Sudan. Her central question is about nascent design disciplines and method—scale, medium, notational system, representational technique. Thus, her research prioritizes evidence of the exact methods used by engineers in Egypt and Sudan to demarcate, construct, and administer these sites.

Her goal is to bring convergence to Egyptian and Sudanese perspectives on engineering challenges unique to the Nile, to balance a historical literature often dominated by the perspectives of European and Ottoman imperialists. Literature on engineering and empire traditionally explores how infrastructure connects vast reaches of some territory while dividing others. Elimam explores the necessity of territorial scale for the creation of the infrastructural. She will show how the geography of the Nile River shaped local engineering knowledge and technical practice, and thereby reflected and mediated the fraught imperial relationship between Egypt and Sudan.