

PREFACE

CYNTHIA NELSON AND SHAHNNAZ ROUSE

The idea of this book came into being following a panel on the theme: *Gender Discourse and the Indigenization of Knowledge Debate*, that Nelson organized for the Sixth Congress of the International Association of Middle Eastern Studies held at Bayt al-Ayn University, Mafraq, Jordan April 10-14, 1996. We broadened the theme to encompass issues of globalization and the indigenization of knowledge debates and, in addition to the five original panelists who presented at that conference (Nelson, Rouse, Abaza, Al-Ali, El-Kholy), we invited six additional scholars (Didier, Marfleet, Asdar Ali, Häusermann Fábos, Kuppinger, Tabishat) all with theoretical interest in and research experience on issues of globalization/localization in Egypt. The title *Situating Globalization: Views from Egypt* was chosen precisely to reflect the fact that not only did we all meet each other in Egypt but also because the many dialogues and debates we engaged in with each other catalyzed much of the original research reflected in this book. All authors have written original papers each of which explores a particular dimension of the indigenization of knowledge debate emerging from the intersection of local experience with the broader processes of globalization – one of the most timely and relevant issues that is being debated in both the North and South.

The range of perspectives and original materials dealt with by each author highlights the renewed urgency of the struggle for cultural autonomy and voice within the context of the globalization process. In other words each paper explores how the various processes at both the local and global level intersect to create new discourses and debates around the “indigenization of knowledge”. If a new wind of cultural decolonization is blowing through the Arab Middle East, which is

having profound impact on the lives of men and women, then we should expect a new scholarship to emerge in order to grasp and understand it. This book is a contribution in that direction.

However, we would not have been able to complete this project without the support and commitment of a number of individuals and institutions. First, we would like to acknowledge the generosity of the Social Science Research Council, the Council of American Overseas Research Centers which helped fund the research of Professor Rouse, and Sarah Lawrence College for providing the leave of absence that enabled her to spend the necessary time in Egypt to undertake this project. Second, we would like to extend our deep appreciation to the American University in Cairo for its support to Professor Nelson in the form of conference grants to assemble the first panel in Jordan, research assistance for seminars and open forums and continuous academic encouragement. Thirdly, we would like to offer our special thanks to Rania al-Malky and Nelly El-Zayat, Graduate Merit Fellows, for their many hours of library reference work, editing and typing of first drafts and their continuous communication with all the participants. Last but by no means least, goes our deepest gratitude to Roseline Matalanis and Yvette Faye Isaac, loyal staff in the office of the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences of the American University in Cairo, whose constant readiness and ideal of perfection, were generously devoted to many extra hours assisting the editors in the final preparation of the manuscript.