

the book and the imposition of an outsider's cultural perspective. We hope that our model and personal story will support readers in examining books by asking whether authors and illustrators have represented an insider's or outsider's cultural perspective.

Building from our personal experience and examining numerous photographs, we noticed that camels appear on four different pages in the book but nowhere in photos taken on the streets of Islamic Cairo (the district portrayed

**Those who do not have complex internal knowledge or deep understanding of the culture will not be capable of fully representing the insider's perspective.**

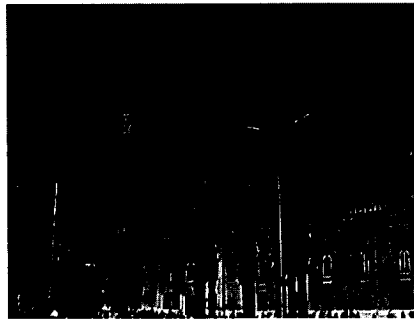
in the book). Historically, camels have not been in the streets of Islamic Cairo for at least the past fifty years, if not longer. At the Near East Schools Association Conference held in Cairo in 1997, Ted Lewin said that he was in Cairo for the first time, yet the book had then been in print for several years. Since Lewin talked about his process of creating illustrations from slides, we can only assume that someone else had provided him with slides to create his illustrations for the book.

The authors mention that camels exist "in the city." This was true. Until 2000, camels could be found in Imbaba where there was a long established camel market. This market has now been moved well outside city limits. The camels were brought from the Sudan along the Darb El Arbain (Forty Days Road) and sold for a variety of purposes. However, we suspect that the illustrator made the decision to include camels in the pictures of Islamic Cairo without knowing that camels were seen only in specific sections of the city. Islamic Cairo was not one of those sections. Finding camels in the illustra-

tions of Islamic Cairo helped bring to the surface the questionable act of using camels as stereotypical icons of the Arab world. This use of stereotyped images also raises the question of the role that these images play in this picture book. What socio-cultural myths do these images create or perpetuate? Are they at all accurate based on the evidence or lack of evidence provided by the photographs of Islamic Cairo? What does the inclusion of camels in pictures reveal about the artist's decision-making process?

At another point in the book, Ahmed is seen passing a street corner on which a bread carrier is placing bread into a basket. In the background of this illustration, there is a long building with a spire attached to the right corner of the build-

ing. Opposite this picture we placed the following image of El Hussein mosque, considered one of the seven holy sites of Islam.



El Hussein Mosque

An analysis of the differences in these two images revealed that the building was reversed in its directional orientation. At first, this seemed non-problematic until we reminded ourselves of the importance of direction in any mosque's architectural plan. Within mosques, it is required that the *mihrab*, a niche, be positioned so that it points the direction toward the *Kabbah*, a shrine located in Mecca at

the heart of the Moslem world. All prayers must be oriented toward the *mihrab* and consequently toward the *Kabbah* at Mecca. We realized that the building had been oriented 180 degrees in the opposite direction, fully away from Mecca. What were the implications of positioning a building with such religious importance in an oppositional direction relative to the mandate of the religion? Was this a question of artistic license? If it were, should artistic license hold precedence over sensitive religious norms? Was the artist even aware of these religious architectural norms for mosques?

The photographs that we used in our conversation did not always point to issues in the illustrations alone. At times they pointed to issues in the printed text as well. For example, our photographs clearly provided evidence that population density in Cairo is high. With approximately twenty million people living in Cairo, noise is a common feature in daily life. Thus, when Ahmed begins his day and mentions that the streets are crowded and the people are making "such a noise of it," he is representing a cultural outsider's perspective. Due to the constancy of noise, Cairenes would be more likely to comment about silence than noise.

While the initial thrust of our conversation was to reveal only incongruities, we need to point out that we also examined instances where the photographs corroborated the authenticity of the images in the book. The most obvious of these images is that of the building and street scene on the cover. The building and street depicted in the cover illustration actually exist. This building is a *sabil kuttab*. It was built by Abd Al Rahman Kathuda in 1744 AD. A *sabil kuttab* holds religious and secular importance simultaneously. The ground floor of the building provides drinking water for the body while the floors above are used for teaching the Holy Koran, providing sweet water for the soul.