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Doctoral Dissertations, 2011-2026 Religion

2021

REVOLUTIONARY RELIGION: YOUTH AND ISLAM IN POST-2011 EGYPT

Amin, Nareman

Princeton, NJ : Princeton University

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REVOLUTIONARY RELIGION

YOUTH AND ISLAM IN POST-2011 EGYPT

NAREMAN EHAB AMIN

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE BY

THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

Adviser: Muhammad Qasim Zaman

April 2021

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how political participation in a revolution changed the landscape of religious discourse and practice. In particular, I explore how Muslim youth partaking in the 2011 Egyptian uprising affectively responded to the promise and ultimate demise of a revolution. Based on an in-depth analysis of 60 interviews with young middle-class Muslim Egyptians in 2018 and 2019 and of traditional and social media, my project shows that, for many youth, revolutionary affects and emotions, notably hope, disappointment, disillusionment, shock and anger, shifted their understanding of what it means to be a pious Muslim. This resulted in a fluidity with regards to how one reaches moral and religious perfection.

Before the revolution, most of my interlocutors found themselves in structures of culturally agreed-upon forms of religiosity. They were raised during what scholars call the "Islamic Awakening" of the late twentieth century, i.e. laypeople in the Middle East became pious both internally and visibly. In the wake of the 2011 uprising and its failure, however, my interlocutors broke free of many of these structural conceptions of Islam. They no longer trusted the religious authorities whom they believed violated the religious teachings they had preached for years prior to the uprising. Likewise, the Islamic politicians, who for the first time in modern Egyptian history were allowed to participate freely in politics, betrayed the country and failed to live up to the moral standards many of the youth associated with their political project.

These youth now believe that there are many paths to gaining God's favor. Some of them have turned to Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, while others have stopped believing in Islam or God altogether. These shifts in religious understanding are what I call "revolutionary religion," an epistemological mode in which Egyptian youth independently questioned the

Islamic tradition they grew up learning, as a result of the affects and emotions they experienced in the wake of a defeated revolution.

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Acknowledgments

My favorite part of any scholarly work has always been the acknowledgements section. But as I sit here to pen my own, I realize how difficult it is to find the right words to express my gratitude to the many generous people in my life who made this work possible.

I still remember the day I discovered Muhammad Q. Zaman's groundbreaking book, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*. While poring over its pages as a master's student, I never dreamed that the author of the eloquently written and insightful scholarly work would one day oversee and devote so much time and thought to my own research. I am always in awe of Prof. Zaman's humility, devotion to his work, and his ability to make time for anyone regardless of how hectic his schedule may be. I was also honored to work with Satyel Larson as I struggled to find and articulate my contribution to the anthropology of Islam. I am grateful to her for thinking of me whenever an academic opportunity arose and for her guidance throughout this process. It was in Max Weiss's class that I had an epiphanic moment about the scope of my research. Conversations with Prof. Weiss made me think more deeply about the historical and theoretical ramifications of my findings. Amaney Jamal welcomed me to campus as soon as I arrived and her gentle presence throughout the writing of this dissertation has meant a lot to me. Shaun Marmon has always been a champion of my work. From her wonderfully worded acceptance email to her thoughtful comments at every workshop meeting, Prof. Marmon's support of and belief in my work kept me going. Tehseen Thaver has been an amazing mentor. I will never forget the day she called me all the way from her field site abroad to prepare me for a job talk. Her devotion to her students is heartwarming and inspiring. I join the multitude of scholars who thank Michael Cook for his meticulousness and thought-provoking comments, both of which

sharpened my writing and editorial skills. His Winnie the Pooh reference was the highlight of my dissertation prospectus defense.

From grade school to graduate school, I have been blessed with passionate, conscientious teachers who taught me the true value of knowledge and instilled in me a love for seeking it. It was during my time as an undergraduate student of History at the American University in Cairo that I fell in love with academia. The professors made students feel appreciated and often involved us in their research projects, which was immensely fruitful. I am grateful to David Blanks, Khaled Fahmy, Richard Gauvain, Pascale Ghazaleh, Heather Keaney, Hanan Kholoussy, Patrick Mason, Sherene Seikaly and Mate N. Tokić. Michael J. Reimer took me under his wing ever since I took his "Quest for the Historical Jesus" class as a freshman and continues to guide, mentor and encourage me to this day. Sherine Emad and Nevien Samir made the department feel like home away from home.

My professors and friends in the Political Science Department at the University of South Florida would become a beacon of hope in unexpected ways. I was honored to study under and work with Mark Amen, James Cavendish, Peter Funke, Sarah Pemberton, Bernd Reiter, Scott Solomon and Steven Tauber. I am eternally grateful to Emaan Abdallah, Sam Bowden, Linda Boyette, Meryem and Patrick M. Casey, Sara Chahbandar, Rahi Dayerizadeh, Mona Elhout, Iman Elkadi, Jim D. Fry, Adam Golob, Maria Gonzalez Malabet, Eric Hart, Kara Hermann, Latahyana Hudson, Sajjad Hussein, Nazek Jawad, Ehsan Kashfi, Ben Luongo, Radha Moorthy-Clink, Dragana Mrvoš, Lindsay Ortega, Mariam and Sara Osman, Mureed Partaw, Maryam and Sumaya Saleh, Stephen Strenges, and Marissa Wyant for their support, wisdom and friendship.

The journey to Princeton was difficult, and I am forever indebted to all who saw me through it. Sohaib Sultan and Arshe Ahmed graciously welcomed me into the beautiful

community that they fostered and nourished my soul with their unconditional care and kindness. I was fortunate to have two of the most amazing neighbors in Lawrence, Dallas and Matthew Schumann. I enjoyed our spiritual gatherings often accompanied by delicious tagine and delightful *darija*. Eliza Abola, Huda Akef, Melissa Bennett, Michal Goldman, Sumaya Al-Hajebi and Margarita Rosario were among my first and frequent visitors and always filled my apartment with joy.

I benefitted greatly from presenting parts of this work at venues at Princeton University and beyond. I presented at the Princeton Islamic Studies Colloquium the first month I came to campus, and it provided exactly the intellectual stimulation and confidence that I needed going forward. As I was writing most of my chapters, I often heard in my head the helpful voices of my friends in the Islamic Studies workshop—Rebecca Faulkner, Usman Khan, Nura S. Liepsner, Faiza Masood, Emily Silkaitis, Chapman Sklar, Emma Thompson and Raissa Von Doetinchem de Rande. I was taken by their meticulousness and conscientiousness as they examined my work as closely as they did their own. I am also grateful to my colleagues at the Center for the Study of Religion (CSR) and Robert Wuthnow, Jenny W. Legath and Anita Kline for the supportive and generous community they cultivated at 5 Ivy Lane. 2019 was the year of conferences for me. I presented forms of chapters two and five at the Middle East Studies Association (generously funded in full by CSR), the American Academy of Religion (funded by the Religion Department and the Dean's Travel Fund) and the Union Theological Seminary's Political Theology Network.

The professors in our department have been heartwarmingly supportive of and invested in their graduate students. At any function for graduate development, I noticed that there were almost always as many professors as there were students. My thanks are due to Leora Batnitzky, Wallace Best, Andrew Chignell, Gabriel Citron, Eddie Glaude, Jonathan Gold, Eric Gregory,

AnneMarie Luijendijk, Seth Perry and Judith Weisenfeld. I also cherish the support, warmth and resilience of and fun coffee-side chats with Mary Kay Bodnar, Patty Bogdziewicz, Lorraine Fuhrmann, Jeffrey Guest and Kerry Smith. I appreciate the hard work of James LaRegina, Tammy Fortson and all the friendly Near Eastern Studies staff.

I am so grateful for the guidance I received from several mentors on and off campus. Jessey Choo, Salua Fawzi, Emily Goshey, Saarah Jappie, Eva Kiesele, Meghana Joshi, Susanne Killian, Hadi Khoshnevis, Dana Lee, Emma Ljung, N. A. Mansour, Laura Murray, Maria-Magdalena Pruß, Aaron Rock-Singer, Sarah Schwartz, Wasim Shiliwala and Lindsey Stephenson offered me helpful advice about how-to PhD, publishing, presenting at conferences, teaching and the daunting job market.

In these precarious times, I find myself thinking about the many wonderful men and women who keep the campus running: the bus drivers, the custodians, the employees of what once was Panera Bread on Nassau St. and the conductors on the Dinky. I pray that they are safe and well provided for.

The pages of this dissertation are filled with the painful memories of interlocutors to whom I will forever be indebted. For their safety, I left out some of the details they told me but I hope that I have done their stories justice. They were not only generous with their time and emotions, but they almost always insisted on treating *me* to something during our interviews, reflecting the true nature of Egyptian hospitality and kindness. This work would not have been possible without their trust and openness.

This journey has also blessed me with amazing friends who were vital to the completion of this work. I was fortunate to have an amazing cohort: Toni Alimi, Eden Consenstein, Elena Dugan, Nyle Fort, Madeleine Mark, Emily Silkaitis, Minhao Zhai and Pascal Wenz. Before the

pandemic, Zeinab Bailoun, Serra Yuksek, Nada El-Kouny and I explored different coffeehouses and libraries around NYC where we worked and often picked each other's brains about our projects. I cherish my regular study time and chats with Edith Chen, Judah Isseroff and Andrew Walker-Cornetta at Dear Mama Coffee. The final leg of this journey would not have been possible without our online "Quarantine Study Buddy" group: Huda Akef, Hadeel Assali, Lorenzo Bond, Ibrahim El Houdaiby, Nada El-Kouny, Mohammed Ezzeldin, Ilona Gerbakher, Rawan Hammoud, Meghana Joshi, Heba M. Khalil, Yanzhen Kuang, Laura and Julia Leisinger, Nadeem Mansour, Khadiga Omar, Sarah Rifky, Deborah Schlein and Serra Yuksek. We've worked every weekday since May. Together, we experienced loss during a pandemic, fasted Ramadan, mourned the state of racial injustice in the US, and followed closely the 2020 election and the horrifying insurrection at the Capitol. I cannot imagine what my state of mind would have been without their dedication and support. I am particularly indebted to Heba M. Khalil who scooped me up out of the throes of despair in more than one way. Her daily online presence was one of the silver linings of the pandemic.

Last but not least, my family. My parents Ehab and Hanan instilled in my sister and me a God-consciousness that makes us strive to be sincere, conscientious and humble in everything we do, and to have compassion for everything and everyone around us. I can only pray that they are proud of and pleased with me and that God "have mercy on them as they raised me when I was small" (Qur'an 17:24). Nermin, my little sister, is my rock and I cannot imagine my life without her sweet, innocent presence. Even though she is a cancer researcher (a fact I always share proudly), she proofread this entire dissertation and provided helpful feedback. And Ahmed… He manages to make me laugh when I don't think it's possible and pushes me to not take everything too seriously. I admire his bravery and work ethic, especially when he did not

back down from the war on COVID even during its deadliest days. I know he will think this is cheesy, but he is my healthcare hero, and there is no one else with whom I would rather quarantine.

For all the loved ones we lost this year.

Timeline

April 6, 2008	Egyptian General/Mahalla Workers' Strike
June 6, 2010	Khalid Sa'id was killed by plainclothes police officers. His death sparked the online antiregime campaign, "We Are All Khalid Sa'id"
December 17, 2010	Muhammad Bu 'Azizi set himself on fire, and sparked the Tunisian Revolution
January 1, 2011	Two Saints' Church Bombing in Alexandria, Egypt
January 5, 2011	Sayyid Bilal was accused of carrying out the Two Saints' Church Bombing and was tortured and killed
January 14, 2011	Former Tunisian President, Zayn al-'Abidin Bin 'Ali, was ousted following a month of popular protests
January 25, 2011	The Egyptian Revolution began
January 28, 2011	"Friday of Rage"/ The day Muslim Brotherhood joins the protests
February 2, 2011	"Battle of the Camel"
February 11, 2011	Mubarak steps down ("Friday of Departure") and the military assumes power
March 19, 2011	The first constitutional referendum
October 2011	The Maspero Massacre
November 2011	Muhammad Mahmud Street clashes
December 16, 2011	Cabinet of Ministers (*Majlis al-Wuzara*) sit-in

November 2011– January 2012	Muslim Brotherhood members and Salafis won 70% of parliamentary seats
February 2012	Port Said Massacre
April 2012	First Constituent Assembly dissolved
May 2012	First round of presidential elections
June 2012	Supreme Constitutional Court dissolved parliament
June 30, 2012	Muhammad Mursi became president
August 12, 2012	‘Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi becomes Minister of Defense
November 21, 2012	Mursi’s constitutional declaration
December 2012	Presidential Palace clashes
December 2012	New constitution passed by referendum
April 2013	Launch of *Tamrrud* Campaign against Mursi
June 30, 2013	Mass anti-Mursi protests
July 3, 2013	Military ousted Mursi and placed him under house arrest
July 8, 2013	Clashes at Republican Guard Headquarters
August 14, 2013	Rabi‘a Massacre of anti-coup demonstrators
November 2013	Anti-protest law passed
May 2014	Al-Sisi elected president

Introduction

The date and time were set. "Meet him in front of al-Husayn Mosque after the evening prayer," my relative Amina texted me. I did not know who "he" was and whether "he" knew what I wanted to talk to him about. I had never prayed inside al-Husayn Mosque before but had been to the area many times to visit Khan al-Khalili, the grand bazaar with meandering alleyways populated by merchants selling colorful trinkets to tourists in the tourists' native tongue. Across the street is the equally renowned al-Azhar Mosque, which I had also visited many times, including once in 2011 to attend the funeral of 'Imad 'Iffat, an Azhari scholar (*'alim*, pl. *'ulama*) who became a revolutionary symbol. But in January 2019, I went to the historic al-Husayn Mosque[1] and unknowingly walked into an interview I worried was going to get me arrested.

I arrived in time for the evening (*maghrib*) prayer, so I decided to walk to the north entrance of the mosque which led to the tight praying quarters designated for women. At least a hundred other women were inside the small chamber. I gingerly nestled myself into a space on the damp floor between two women and behind an elderly woman perched on a foldable chair. The call to prayer was made, but the leader of the prayer (*imam*) decided to give a short sermon first. I was getting anxious as the women continued to make their way into the cramped space and children used our heads as handrails, hopping through whatever sliver of space there was between congregants. I tried to listen to the sermon, while the other women chatted away. Ten minutes later, we got up to pray. As I was leaving the mosque, I noticed that the door to the

[1] Al-Husayn was the son of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth Rashidun Caliph, and Fatima, the Prophet's daughter. After 'Ali was assassinated (d. 661), a group of people urged al-Husayn to take the title after his father. Al-Husayn was killed by political opponents in Karbala, Iraq in 680. Some Shi'i Muslims believe that al-Husayn's head was brought to Cairo and subsequently buried in a shrine built for it inside the mosque. Shi'is consider al-Husayn their third imam. Caroline Williams, *Islamic Monuments in Cairo: The Practical Guide* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2004), 217-8.

shrine was open, and women began to make their way into another small chamber to pay their respects to al-Husayn. Curious, I, too, walked over to the heavy wooden doors and tiptoed to take a peek at the ornate, elevated tomb. It was too crowded to get any closer, and since I did not want to keep my mystery interlocutor waiting, I found a way out of the huddled masses and into the crowded corridor in which street peddlers had set up little stands on which they sold incense, necklaces engraved in filigreed Arabic and glittering belly dancing outfits.

Eventually, I found myself in front of the men's entrance and into yet another steady stream of people, the florescent lights atop the mosque giving us all an eerie, neon-green hue. I found a cement block off to the side and leaned on it as I waited for my interlocutor.[2] Half an hour passed before my phone rang: Walid. I told him where I was, and ten minutes later, I was approached by a skinny, tan young man in a slightly wrinkled, dark beige *jalabiyya* (traditional long dress). He quickly led me out of the crowd, away from the barracks filled with bored police officers, toward an unknown destination. We walked for five minutes, exchanging amicable banter, before arriving at a café that resembled the spaces frequented by Egyptian men after a long day's work. I already felt out of place.

Walid made his way through all the empty wooden tables and chairs and, much to my shock, headed toward a table that was already occupied. A dark-haired young woman looked at me inquisitively, and I tried to stay composed. It quickly became apparent that Walid did not know why we were meeting. Walid fashioned himself as a Sufi master, teaching pupils/followers (*muridun*), like the woman sitting at the table, the intricacies of the Islamic mystical path. He thought that I was a Muslim living in the US who wanted to learn more about Islamic mysticism

[2] I use the word "interlocutor" as opposed to "informant," because I believe, as Amira Mittermaier astutely points out, that the conversations we have with our interlocutors and our relationships with them are "more dialogical than one-sidedly informative." Amira Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 22-23.

and voluntarily gave me a primer on the history of Sufism. When I told him that I had hoped to ask a few personal questions, he became agitated, thinking that he had been misled about the purpose of our meeting. Somehow, however, I managed to slip in a question about the "revolution," and I immediately regretted it. "Do you call what happened in 2011 a revolution?! It was a rebellion against the ruler (*khuruj 'ala al-hakim*), and everyone involved was a traitor," he said as he shifted forward in his seat, and his student nodded vigorously.[3]

I hesitated for a moment, as my mind quickly tried to find the right words to backpedal out of the uncomfortable situation. I looked outside the floor-to-ceiling window of the café and immediately spotted al-Azhar Mosque across the street. "Well," I replied, "I was one of those who actually hesitated to join the movement, because leaders at al-Azhar said it was forbidden to protest against the ruler." This answer seemed to satisfy Walid. He sat back in his seat and fiddled with the prayer beads around his wrist, while looking at me probingly. In that moment, I was very worried that he or his student would inform the police outside that there was an American spy in their midst.[4] For an hour and a half, as I waited for my relative to come pick me up, I sat at the table quietly and let Walid and the young woman continue delegitimating the 2011 protests and those who took part in them. Two days later, Walid called me, as he would any of his Sufi pupils, to offer me unsolicited personal advice for half an hour. He gave me tips on how to be a better Muslim and tried to convince me that my unborn children should not be raised in a "non-Muslim country." I thanked him, hung up and quickly thanked God that the next day, I would be on a plane back to New York, hopefully never to see or hear from Walid again.

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[3] The legality of social justice movements, such as the 2011 protests, in Islamic law was in fact the spark that ignited my interest in conducting this research.

[4] Sherine Hamdy and Mittermaier both experienced suspicion, even as "insiders." Hamdy writes, while conducting fieldwork for her project about the Islamic legal status of and public attitudes toward organ transplants in Egypt, people told her that they did not want to talk to anyone "from America," despite the fact that Hamdy has Egyptian origins. Sherine Hamdy, *Our Bodies Belong to God* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), xxii. See also Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter*, 22.

The meeting with Walid was by far one of the two most uncomfortable encounters I had while conducting fieldwork for this dissertation, but it was an eye-opener. It made me realize my own biases when it came to the 2011 uprising and its aftermath (which I discuss later).[5] More importantly, the new religious space I had to be a part of, i.e. al-Husayn Mosque, showed me that "popular religion" was still alive and well in Egypt, at least for a specific class of Egyptians.[6] The encounter with Walid and with the women (and children) at the mosque painted a picture that was different from the one I had constructed in my mind after speaking to middle and upper-middle class Egyptian youth, most of whom took part in the 2011 protests, or at least supported them.

My dissertation specifically asks: How did Muslim Egyptian youth who took part in the protests affectively and emotionally respond to the promise and ultimate demise of a revolution? I argue that after the "defeated" revolution,[7] the youth became more lenient about how one reaches moral perfection and God's pleasure. Religiously-inclined youth came to believe that rituals were less central to their religious identities and that one's relationship with and consciousness of God (*taqwa*)[8] were more important than outward manifestations of belief.

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[5] For example, I had been taking it for granted that the 2011 movement was a revolution ("*thawra*") and that everyone referred to it as such. Most of my interlocutors, who were supporters of the protests, certainly called it so, even after the movement was defeated.

[6] Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec argue against the use of "popular religion," since, historically, it has been used to denote a hierarchy in religious practice. They opt instead for the use of "everyday religion." Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec, "Introduction" in *Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes: An Anthropology of Everyday Religion*, eds. Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 2-6. My use of "popular religion" is not meant to suggest that the practices of the congregants at the mosque, i.e. veneration of the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*) and Muslim saints, are less than practices preached by religious authorities. They are a form of religious practice that is socially accepted and, well, popular.

[7] I follow Elizabeth Nugent in describing the 2011 movement as a "defeated" rather than "failed" revolution. Nugent argues that the movement's goals were not achieved, not because of any failure on the participants' part, but because the political system actively undermined the revolution and ultimately defeated it. Elizabeth Nugent, "A Dream Deferred: Activism in Exile," Paper presented at the *Middle East Studies Association*, *Zoom*, October 8, 2020.

[8] Saba Mahmood famously translated *taqwa* as piety. She writes, "Unlike some other religious traditions (such as English Puritanism) wherein 'piety' refers primarily to inward spiritual states, the mosque participants' use of the Arabic term *taqwa* (which may be translated as 'piety') suggests both an inward orientation or disposition and a manner of practical conduct." Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*

Based on fieldwork and on content analysis of traditional and social media, I show that, for many youth, revolutionary affects and emotions—notably hope, disappointment, disillusionment, shock and anger—shifted their understanding of what it means to identify as a pious Muslim.

Anthropologists of Islam emphasize the importance of embodiment, as explicated by the Islamic tradition, to the formation of a pious, ethical Muslim self, especially at a time of social and religious change. In the wake of the 2011 uprising and its defeat, my interlocutors broke free of many of the structural conceptions of Islam and began to practice and understand Islam in new ways. Young Egyptian Muslims no longer trusted or listened to the religious authorities whom they believed violated the same religious teachings they had preached for years prior to the uprising.[9] Likewise, they believed that the Islamists, who for the first time in modern Egyptian history were allowed to freely participate in politics, betrayed the country and failed to live up to the moral standards many of the religious youth associated with their political project.

The religious youth now believe that there are many paths to gaining God's favor. Some argue that cultivating the interior (*batin*), e.g. being modest or being mindful of God, can be achieved without the embodiment, without carrying out bodily acts (*zawahir*) that are believed to foster those qualities, such as veiling or praying regularly. These youth, however, do not self-identify as secular. They believe that their new understanding of Islam, i.e. that piety is not cultivated mainly through ritual and orthopraxis, does not preclude them from being religious Muslims. Some of these youth have turned to Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, expanding a market that was already there and giving way to the rise of younger Sufi teachers, like Walid.

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 4 (n7). See also Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, chapter four; and Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam and Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 90.

[9] Muhammad Qasim Zaman defines religious authority is "the aspiration, effort, and ability to shape people's belief and practice on recognizably 'religious' grounds." What "religious" signifies differs depending on the context and the practitioner, but Zaman argues, building on Asad, "discussion of religious authority does not require a shared definition of it." Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in A Radical Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 29.

Others still have stopped believing in Islam or God altogether.[10] These trends are not new to Egypt, but the scope and rapidity with which they spread among young middle-class Egyptians in such a short amount of time is striking and worth examining. These shifts in religious understanding are part of what I call "revolutionary religion," an epistemological mode in which Egyptian youth now feel comfortable to independently engage with and question the Islamic tradition they grew up learning, as a result of the affects and emotions they experienced in the wake of a defeated revolution.

Beyond Theorizations of the "Islamic Awakening"

In 1986, Talal Asad published his seminal article, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam."[11] Since then, a growing group of anthropologists of Islam followed Asad (who builds on Alasdair MacIntyre and Michel Foucault) in his bid to break away the study of Islam and Muslim societies from the cultural (particularly symbolic and ritualistic) lens through which earlier anthropologists, like Clifford Geertz and Ernest Gellner, had examined it.[12] Rather than being

[10] In January 2019, al-Jazeera produced "In Seven Years," a documentary that follows five Egyptian youth who, after the revolution, either turned to "atheism" or joined militant resistance groups in Syria. The youth all talked about the disappointment they felt after the defeat of the revolution and how they felt that various factions of society, including religious scholars and other religious figures they had looked up to, betrayed them. For the militants, the failure to bring about change through peaceful political means (epitomized by the Muslim Brotherhood's violent overthrow after free and fair elections brought them to power) made them believe that armed rebellion was the only solution. "Al-Film al-watha'iqi 'Fi sab' sinin' – In Seven Years", YouTube video, January 27, 2019, 59:21, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tTdlSzIANo, accessed January 30, 2019. Within a few days of its release, the documentary got hundreds of thousands of views. As of December 2020, it has more than 800,000 views and over 6,000 comments. Several public figures made commentaries of the video on YouTube, garnering millions of additional views and eliciting thousands of online comments that either expressed sympathy for the youth or called on God to guide people to and keep them on the path of Islam. See, for instance, with over two million views: "Abd Allah al-Sharif | Halaqa 32 | Fi sab' sinin | Al-Musim al-thani," YouTube video, January 31, 2019, 9:12, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avxTZXIGnq0, accessed February 10, 2019; "Baqi al-ta'liq 'ala film fi sab' sinin wa munaqashat dawrat al-waqaya min al-ilhad," YouTube video, January 31, 2019, 36:46, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wu13Kcr1RrQ, accessed February 10, 2019; and "Taghtiya li-rudud al-fi'l 'ala al-film al-watha'iqi 'Fi sab' sinin," YouTube video, January 29, 2019, 1:01:55, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-4xsalB5pQ, accessed February 10, 2019.

[11] Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle*, 17:2 (2009): 1-30.

[12] See, for example, Hussain Agrama, *Questioning Secularism: Islam, Sovereignty and the Rule of Law in Modern Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Sherine Hafez, *An Islam of Her Own: Reconsidering Religion*

seen as an object of study unto itself, Islam was compared to aspects of Christianity and understood through the terms with which researchers and their readers were familiar. It is with all of this in mind that Asad and other anthropologists challenged the then-dominant frames of research on Islam. They called into question the obsession with the close, hermeneutic study of scripture but also the delineation between what some scholars called the Great and Little Traditions, i.e. that which the scholarly class (*'ulama*) of Muslims know and do and that which the laypeople know and do (or "popular religion"). These scholars began to look at Islam not as a "religion" (a term Asad claims has Christian underpinnings)[13] but as a "discursive tradition"[14] built on interpretation of the foundational Islamic texts, i.e. the Qur'an and Prophetic sayings (*hadith*) and that "connects variously with the formation of moral selves, the manipulation of populations (or resistance to it), and the production of appropriate knowledges."[15]

This discursive tradition does not, however, encompass everything that Muslims say or do nor is it necessarily an echo of an Islam of times past, though it is "oriented to a conception of the past."[16] To Asad, a practice is Islamic because it is "authorized by the discursive traditions of Islam, and is so taught to Muslims whether by an 'alim [religious scholar], a khatib [preacher], a Sufi shaykh, or an untutored parent."[17] In this way, it would seem, Asad is arguing for an orthodoxy in Islam which is explicated by authorities with religious knowledge. These authorities, however, cannot determine orthodoxy as they please; what they claim to be orthodox

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and Secularism in Women's Islamic Movement (New York: New York University Press, 2011); and Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*. For a historical overview of the sociological and anthropological study of religion, see Robert Wuthnow, *What Happens when We Practice Religion? Textures of Devotion in Everyday Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), introduction and chapter one.

[13] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

[14] Asad defines tradition as "discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history." Asad, "The Idea," 19.

[15] Asad, "The Idea", 10.

[16] Asad, "The Idea", 21.

[17] Asad, "The Idea", 20- 21.

must make sense to the public who listens and thus must be rooted in the past yet speak to the present.[18] The powers that establish this orthodoxy can be opposed or resisted by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and by social, cultural and historical forces. All of this can be included in the anthropological study of Islam. Like any discursive tradition, practitioners of the Islamic tradition will try to achieve coherence, but it probably will not happen. The factors that lead to this incoherence and the struggles inherent in the negotiation of the tradition, of orthodoxy, over time are all topics of concern for anthropologists of Islam.[19]

Shahab Ahmed, in his book *What Is Islam?*, problematizes these issues further and takes up the question of orthodoxy, arguing that the debate about what is Islam/Islamic is far from being resolved.[20] Unlike Asad, he refrains from giving religious authorities the exclusive ability to determine what is and is not Islamic. To Ahmed, the focus on orthodoxy and law is dangerous and could be used as a political tool. It is reductionist in that the "totalizing 'legal-supremacist conceptualization of Islam as law" makes it seem that Muslims are "subjects who are defined and constituted by and in a cult of regulation, restriction and control."[21] This outlook puts us in a bind, especially when "it comes to pass that scholars, laymen and believers alike conceive of Islamic law as constitutive of and con-substantive with normative Islam." Once confronted with ideas or practices that deviate from the legal norm, scholars and laymen alike "find themselves at an analytical loss."[22] To rectify this, Ahmed proposes that we see Islam

[18] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 210. See also John Bowen, *A New Anthropology of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4; and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[19] Asad writes, "Wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust correct practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace incorrect ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy." Asad, "The Idea," 22-23.
[20] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 9. Asad himself argues that Muslims do not agree on what is orthodox and what is not. See Asad, *Genealogies of* Religion, 210.
[21] Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 120.
[22] Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 120.

> as meaning-making for the self in terms of hermeneutical engagement with Revelation to Muhammad as Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text—that is, with the entire phenomenon and matrix of Revelation, rather than just the Text of Revelation—we are able, once and for all, conceptually to account for, accommodate and understand the relationship between variety and unity in human and historical Islam—and thus to conceptualize Islam in terms of coherent contradiction.[23]

Ahmed asks us to examine Islam as: Pre-Text, like universal truths (such as nature and reason), that existed prior to the Revelation to the Prophet; Text, the actual revelation as received by the Prophet Muhammad; and Con-Text, or the historical, political, biographical, sociological, etc. conditions under which hermeneutical engagement occurs and informs the interpreter's understanding.

Ahmed thus takes power away from the authorities and places it in the hands of any and all Muslims. I appreciate what Ahmed is doing, but I agree with Asad on the importance of orthodoxy, not just in a legal sense but in what it means to the laity themselves and how it ties many of them to the *'ulama*. Certainly, there is a power dynamic, but there is a give-and-take between the laity and the religious scholars. Asad, like Ahmed, sees that there is an inherent contradiction within the Islamic tradition and its practice, but the tradition, he argues, aspires to coherence. Through fieldwork for this dissertation, it became clear to me that even if people disagree with what the *'ulama* and their teachers have to say, knowledge of the tradition and thus conceptions of orthodoxy come from them, not the laity. Products of the times they live in, too, *'ulama* and their views constantly shift; thus, the tradition they teach "has had to be constantly imagined, reconstructed, argued over, defended, and modified"[24] to be heeded. Subscription to the *'ulama*'s notions of orthodoxy is contingent on various factors, including questions of legitimacy and reliability, as I demonstrate later.

[23] Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 405.
[24] Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 10.

Embodying Virtue

Whereas in his earlier writings Asad focuses on discourses, practices and texts of religious authorities and practitioners, in his later writings, he also emphasizes the importance of bodily practice and the embodiment of the morality that the tradition teaches practicing Muslims to cultivate.[25] In his piece critiquing Wilfred Cantwell Smith's book *The Meaning and End of Religion*, in which Smith proposes we talk about "faith" rather than "religion," Asad contends that faith alone is not enough, that faith in Islam needs to be cultivated through bodily practice: *iman*, or faith, "is the virtue of faithfulness toward God, an unquestioning habit of obedience that God requires of those faithful to him (*mu'minin*), a disposition that has to be cultivated like any other, and which links one through mutual responsibility and trust to others who are faithful."[26] This added another dimension to anthropological studies about Muslims that appears in works like those of Saba Mahmood, Lara Deeb and Charles Hirschkind,[27] one of ascribing Islamic practices, like prayer, fasting, and wearing the veil, to practitioners' expressed desires to be "better Muslims, to achieve certain goods in this life and the hereafter."[28] This orientation ushered in the "piety turn"[29] in Western scholarship, which emphasizes the practitioners' agency and will to be religious and their practicing in and despite an increasingly "secular", "liberal" world.

[25] Nada Moumtaz, "Refiguring Islam" in *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Middle East*, ed. Soraya Altorki (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 128.
[26] Asad, "Reading a Modern Classic: W. C. Smith's 'The Meaning and End of Religion," *History of Religions*, 40:3 (2001), 218-9. See also David Scott and Charles Hirschkind, "Introduction" in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors*, eds. David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 8.
[27] Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
[28] Moumtaz, "Refiguring Islam", 133.
[29] Paola Abenante and Daniele Cantini, "Life-Worlds and Religious Commitment: Ethnographic Perspectives on Subjectivity and Islam," *La Ricerca Folklorica*, 69 (2014): 1-18.

These works aim to theorize the "Islamic Awakening" or "Islamic Revival" (*al-sahwa al-Islamiyya*),[30] an expression used by both Western scholars and the Egyptian public to denote a time in recent Egyptian history, beginning in the 1970s,[31] when increased emphasis was placed on the embodiment of Islam in the public sphere both from the top-down (the state) and from the bottom-up (the laity).[32] The state actively cultivated a national identity with religious overtones. Then President Anwar Sadat (d. 1981) called himself "the Believer President" (*al-ra'is al-mu'min*). Simultaneously, among the people, there was a rise in "a religious ethos or sensibility that… manifest[ed] in the vast proliferation of neighborhood mosques and other institutions of Islamic learning and social welfare, in … attendance of mosque by both men and women, and in marked displays of religious sociability."[33] People became more knowledgeable about and aware of these Islamic precepts through various media,[34] and the onus was on them to heed the call to embody and "cultivate a pious selfhood."[35] This does not mean that all of these phenomena were not already manifest in Egypt prior to the 1970s, but the authority to teach and interpret Islam shifted from being solely in the hands of the *'ulama* to middle-class professionals and intellectuals who began to claim for themselves a "religious authority that was once dominated

[30] Aaron Rock-Singer argues that it is not clear in recent scholarship when the term Islamic Revival came to be used by lay Egyptians. He traces the genealogical root of the concept in his book *Practicing Islam in Egypt.* Aaron Rock-Singer, *Practicing Islam in Egypt: Print Media and Islamic Revival* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 27-28.
[31] Lila Abu-Lughod attributes this "Islamization" of Egyptian society to Anwar Sadat's economic Open-Door policy (*Infitah*). Lila Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 135-6.
[32] Rock-Singer, *Practicing Islam in Egypt,* 10-12.
[33] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 3. See also Rock-Singer, *Practicing Islam in Egypt*, 10-12.
[34] See, for instance, Dale Eickelman and Jon Anderson, eds., *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*; and Yasmin Moll, "Islamic Televangelism: Religion, Media and Visuality in Contemporary Egypt," *Arab Media & Society* http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=732, accessed November 20, 2018.
[35] Emilio Spadola, *The Calls of Islam: Sufis, Islamists, and Mass Mediation in Urban Morocco* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 127-9.

by scholars with traditional training."[36] The Awakening, as Aaron Rock-Singer writes, "was quickly becoming a project of mass mobilization with signature practices. Yet the significance of these practices lay not in their emergence – all had existed, to varying degrees, prior to the 1970s – but in their decided association with the Islamic Revival."[37]

Before the 1970s, political Islamic movements (commonly known as Islamism),[38] such as the Muslim Brotherhood (est. 1928), had a suppressed but still palpable presence in Egypt. Under President Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir (d. 1970), the Brotherhood had made several attempts at entering the political arena but failed and was persecuted repeatedly by the regime. Around this time, many Egyptians had gone to the Arabian Gulf states for work and returned to Egypt in the 1980s and 1990s "affected by the Wahhabi and conservative lifestyle and worldview they encountered and experienced."[39] This conservative (sometimes literalist) Salafi influence is also considered part of the Islamic Awakening and ushered in its own corporeal practices that set adherents apart from other practicing Muslim Egyptians: short ankle-length, white traditional dress (*jalabiyya*) and long beards (usually without moustaches) for men, the face veil (*niqab*) for

[36] Hamdy, *Our Bodies*, 5-6. See also Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*; Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*; and Rock-Singer, *Practicing Islam*.
[37] Rock-Singer, *Practicing Islam,* 48.
[38] Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman write, "Islamists may be characterized as explicitly and intentionally political and as engaging in multifaceted critiques of all those people, institutions, practices, and orientations that do not meet their standards of this divinely mandated political engagement. Using Max Weber's terminology, Islamism is not defined by an 'other-worldly' orientation in which salvation requires withdrawal from worldly affairs but rather is defined as a movement in which salvation is possible only through participation in the world or, more precisely, 'within the institutions of the world, but in opposition to them." Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Introduction" in Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden, eds. Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 4-6. Pascal Ménoret credits Voltaire with coining the word "*Islamisme*" in the nineteenth century before it went out of vogue and reemerged in 1979, when the Iranian Revolution began. Ménoret, however, refrains from using "Islamist," because, in the West, the term is used to refer to "those we want to frame as exotic criminals, prone to violence and mired in medieval ways of thinking." Ménoret argues that the Islamic activists he worked with should be "understood and respected," not used to propagate Western stereotypes about them. Pascal Ménoret, *Graveyard of Clerics: Everyday Activism in Saudi Arabia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 8.
[39] Khalil al-Anani, "Unpacking the Sacred Canopy: Egypt's Salafis between Religion and Politics" in *Salafism After the Arab Awakening- Contending with People's Power*, eds. Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), 31.

women, and normalization of gender segregation in the workplace.[40] Both Sadat and his successor Husni Mubarak (d. 2020) allowed Salafis to preach and do charitable works freely as a counterbalance to the Muslim Brotherhood. Usually (though not always) politically quietist, the Salafis presented a favorable alternative to the state: they would "challenge the Muslim Brotherhood's religiosity while 'keeping quiet,' according to doctrinal tradition, when it came to the political structures in place."[41]

The effects of the Islamic Awakening continued into the new millennium, when yet another religious trend emerged, that of the "televangelists" (*du'ah al-judud*). Young, charismatic men with no extensive religious training, the *du'ah* utilize, as Yasmin Moll puts it, "an easy-going yet energetic performance that is in colloquial Egyptian, the linguistic register of everyday life and conversation, and that makes frequent rhetorical use of allusions to popular culture and contemporary issues among youth."[42] Well-groomed, with short, trimmed beards and Western-style clothing, the *du'ah*, such as 'Amr Khalid, Mustafa Husni, and Moez Masoud, appealed mostly to the young (teens and people in their twenties) and used emotion and storytelling to move the audience and guide viewers toward "a more virtuous life." The *du'ah* were relatable by often showing that they, too, struggle to be good Muslims. This relatability, according to Moll, and not traditional religious training, was where the *du'ah* derived their authority. Listening to and watching the *du'ah* is a choice; people consciously chose "to watch

[40] Hafiz Diyab, *Al-Salafiyyun wa-l-siyasa* (Cairo: Al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Amma li-l-Kutub, 2014), 194; Aaron Rock-Singer, "Leading with a Fist: A History of the Salafi Beard in the 20th-Century Middle East," *Islamic Law and Society*, 26 (2019): 1-28; Aaron Rock-Singer, "The Salafi Mystique: The Rise of Gender Segregation in 1970s Egypt," *Islamic Law and Society*, 23:3 (June 2016): 279–305; and Samuli Schielke, "I want to be committed: Short-lived trajectories of Salafi activism in Egypt", *La Ricerca Folklorica*, 69 (2015): 39-53. See also Aaron Rock-Singer, "Prayer and the Islamic Revival: A Timely Challenge," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 48.2 (2016): 293–312.
[41] Al-Anani, "Unpacking the Sacred Canopy," 30.
[42] Moll, "Islamic Televangelism," n.p.

an Islamically correct media and accrue the virtuous benefits such a choice brings."[43] This medium, however, was not meant for everyone. The *du'ah* mainly appealed to the well-to-do, offering a form of Islam that is "easily reconciled with a modern consumerist lifestyle," and focuses on self-improvement and ethical behavior.[44] For middle-class youth, the *du'ah* are an alternative to the less tech-savvy, sometimes stern style of preaching of the *'ulama*.[45]

The influence of all of the religious authorities noted above, i.e. the traditionally trained *'ulama*, the Salafis and Muslim Brotherhood, lay preachers in mosques, and the young *du'ah*, has waned in the aftermath of the 2011, especially within the social class to which my interlocutors belong. The piety studies mentioned above do not help explain fully why these shifts took place. I contend that my interlocutors' affective responses to the promise of a successful social justice movement and its ultimate demise, along with the disappointments they incurred from religious figures along the way, led them to reevaluate what it means to be a pious, moral Muslim.

Totalizing Piety

The unidimensional nature of many of the piety projects has garnered scholarly criticism over the years. Anthropologists like Samuli Schielke believe that there is "too much Islam in the anthropology of Islam."[46] Muslims, he believes, are not always occupied with questions of morality, ethics and self-discipline and have ambitions and emotions that are not (immediately) tied to their religious beliefs and practices. He points out that in focusing mainly on these

[43] Moll, "Islamic Televangelism," n.p. See also Yasmin Moll, "Television is Not Radio: Theologies of Mediation in the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology*, 33.2 (2018): 233–265; Aaron Rock, "Amr Khaled: From Daʿwa to Political and Religious Authority," *British Journal of Middle East Studies*, 37:1 (2010): 15–37; and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, "In Defense of Muhammad: 'Ulama', Da'iya and the New Islamic Internationalism" in *Guardians of Faith in Modern Times: Ulama' in the Middle East*, ed. Meir Hatina (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 291-310.
[44] Skovgaard-Petersen, "In Defense of Muhammad," 298-9.
[45] Skovgaard-Petersen, "In Defense of Muhammad," 299.
[46] Samuli Schielke, "Second Thoughts about the Anthropology of Islam", *Working Papers*, 2 (2010), 1-2.

aspects, the piety project may leave people out, including nonbelieving Muslims.[47] According to Robert W. Hefner, scholars who agree with Schielke emphasize that "Muslim subjects live their lives not according to a single, finished script called Islam, but by navigating and integrating the multiplicity of ethical registers and aspirational schemes operative in their social worlds."[48] Schielke urges scholars to focus not only on the "different moral registers" that "go perfectly together" but on those that do not. When faced with moral contradictions while studying Muslim subjects, anthropologists should resist the urge "to analytically resolve all contradictions as only apparent ones."[49] Sometimes, Muslim subjects will try to "negotiate," i.e. find ways by which "to live 'in between' different demands and expectations," including moral expectations. But Muslims do not always make an attempt to "reconcil[e] things to make them fit." Sometimes they are "ambivalent" about practices that might not be "moral," according to any one of the moral registers to which they subscribe.[50] Schielke continues, "In practice, they more often than not live a life of many ambiguities, shifting between at times opposed moments and outlooks of life, being firmly something at one time and strictly something else at another time, rather than

[47] See, for instance, Samuli Schielke, "Being a Nonbeliever in a Time of Islamic Revival: Trajectories of Doubt and Certainty in Contemporary Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 44.2 (2012): 301-20; and Samuli Schielke, *Egypt in the Future Tense: Hope, Frustration and Ambivalence before and after 2011* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 21-25. Mittermaier also emphasizes that piety and ethical self-fashioning are but two interconnected aspects among many in a Muslim's life and being. She believes that Muslims are not in a constant state of self-cultivation and that forces beyond these can act upon them, too, as in the case of visitational and divinely-inspired dreams. She differs from Schielke, however, in that she believes that there is "too little attention to different, coexisting forms of being Muslim" like being acted upon by an "Elsewhere." See Amira Mittermaier, *"*Dreams from Elsewhere: Muslim Subjectivities beyond the Trope of Self-Cultivation," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological* Institute, 18:2 (2012), 247; and Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter*.
[48] Robert W. Hefner, "Reading and Remembering Saba Mahmood: Islam, Ethics, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition," *Contemporary Islam* 13 (2019), 143.
[49] Schielke, *Egypt in the Future Tense*, 57.
[50] Schielke, *Egypt in the Future Tense*, 57. Lara Deeb and Mona Harb refer to "multiple moral rubrics": religious, social and political-sectarian. Lara Deeb and Mona Harb, *Leisurely Islam: Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi'ite South Beirut* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 15-24 and chapter one.

looking for compromises."[51] Schielke complicates the notion of ethics as being located "within," in an "inner state," both reflecting and refracting the external, the embodiment of morality.[52]

Despite his criticism of the piety turn, however, Schielke makes use of the theoretical toolbox offered by this school of thought and emphasizes the importance of piety and "being committed" (to Islam, i.e. *iltizam*) among his interlocutors. In his article "Ambivalent Commitments," however, Schielke asks researchers to question why we take "the will to be pious" as a given. He finds that in a world of uncertainties, "being committed" offers his interlocutors "a promise of hope, happiness and clarity."[53] Yet he argues that despite aspiring toward coherence, a form of clarity, moral registers often are not coherent, and people's commitments to the registers are inconsistent, since their "character, life experience and expectations remain complex and [also] inconsistent." But somehow, people are able to "shift between contradictory sets of views without being troubled by them."[54] Schielke thus demonstrates that "sustainable formation of virtuous selves," advocated by scholars such as Mahmood and Hirschkind, is not entirely feasible; the practice of piety, he writes, "is often characterized more by fragile day-by-day self-suggestion, which, by its nature, is a troubled and usually incomplete process."[55]

David Kloos complicates Schielke's claim that Muslims are sometimes ambivalent about their moral shortcomings. In his work on Muslims in Aceh, Indonesia, Kloos examines the

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[51] Schielke, *Egypt in the Future Tense*, 57. Schielke gives the example of young men sexually harassing women in the street. In that moment, Schielke argues, the young men "were definitely not acting piously … [but] that does not mean that they would not be pious at all." He does not view this act of indiscretion as a way to completely write off the young men's commitment to being pious Muslims, despite knowing that what they did in that moment was morally unacceptable. Schielke, "Ambivalent Commitments," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 39:2 (2009), 161-5.
[52] Schielke, *Egypt in the Future Tense*, 58.
[53] If religious commitment (especially to the Salafi way) fails to make one happy, hopeful or provide certainty, it is understood that it is the person's fault and not religion's that she/he was not able to attain this fulfillment. Schielke, "Ambivalent Commitments," 175-8.
[54] Schielke, "Ambivalent Commitments," 166.
[55] Schielke, "Ambivalent Commitments," 181.

effects of perceived moral failings on his Indonesian interlocutors' journeys toward being "good Muslims," especially in the context of state-instituted concepts of religiosity and in the wake of political and environmental calamities. Like Schielke, Kloos notes that his interlocutors do not always act piously, but when they do not do so, they either feel guilty or believe that their failings and subsequent repentance will bring them closer to God and make them "better Muslims." Habitually, whenever his interlocutors err, they "critically reflect on morally defined choices, decisions, and dilemmas" and oftentimes repent afterward.[56] This is a form of "religious agency" that is a "part of a personal project of ethical improvement."[57] For this reason, Kloos urges scholars to "recognize perceptions of moral failure as a central aspect of ethical formation."[58] In this way, he departs from Schielke in that he does not view "ambivalences, contradictions, and inconsistencies" as divorced from ethical self-fashioning. Upon reflection, his interlocutors realize that their perceived moral shortcomings are "conducive rather than detrimental to their personal religious development."[59]

Kloos finds a way to reconcile the "totalizing" discourse of the piety studies with the discourse of studies about "everyday" or "ordinary" Islam.[60] In my own fieldwork, however, my interlocutors came to new understandings of what constitutes piety after they independently engaged with the foundational Islamic texts and the discursive tradition that explicates these texts. Some of these understandings depart notably from the moral registers that have existed within society and within the discursive tradition, especially throughout the Islamic Awakening. However, my interlocutors did not feel guilt for holding these new views. The 2011 uprising

[56] David Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims: Religious Authority and Ethical Improvement in Aceh, Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 5, 131 and 162.
[57] Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims*, 5 and 160.
[58] Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims*, 12.
[59] Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims*, 13.
[60] Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims*, 12.

afforded the Egyptian youth the freedom to question moral and religious givens that they grew up learning and challenge the religious authorities who taught them these givens. The movement's ultimate demise and the disappointments my interlocutors experienced throughout the revolution and the events that followed gave them the agency to reevaluate their understanding of Islam and what it takes to be a pious Muslim; it meant, in some ways, cutting their ties with the past towards which, Asad contends, the Islamic tradition is oriented. Even those who no longer believe in Islam and/or God had to contend with the Islamic tradition, which they later came to renounce.[61]

The Effect of Affect on Morality

Shari'a, which is commonly translated as "Islamic law," *is* a "total" discourse, one in which "all kinds of institutions are given expression at one and the same time - religious, juridical, and moral."[62] Shari'a governs almost all aspects of a believing, practicing Muslim's life, including how to lead an ethical life. It offers the base for what Sudipta Kaviraj calls "thick religion," which includes

> metaphysical beliefs about the nature of existence, the nature of God and his relation to the created world, epistemological theories about the nature, limits and trustworthiness of human cognition, sociological perceptions about the basis and boundaries of community,

[61] Interestingly, Merve Kütük-Kuris discovered similar trends among young Turkish women, especially under Recep Tayyip Erdogan's administration. Women who de-veiled (a trend that was noticeable in the 1990s when the Turkish government had banned headscarves on university campuses) cited the following reasons for doing so: They did not want "to represent Islam;" others judged their actions, if they ran contrary to the ideals embodied by the veil (such as drinking alcohol or being in an extramarital relationship); they did not want to be associated with Erdogan's government; they did not want secularists to criticize them. Some of the women stopped believing in Islam and/or God but hid their nonbelief from their parents and society. Others began questioning the Islamic tradition, especially the texts that deal with the status of Muslim women and what is expected of them. Merve Kütük-Kuris, "The Changing Meanings of Female Piety and The Issue of Nonbelief in Turkey: The Case of De-Veiling," Paper presented at the *Middle East Studies Association*, *Zoom*, October 15, 2020.

[62] Brinkley Messick adds "political" to Mauss's list. Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3; and Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge, 2002), 3. Zaman contends that Islamic historiography and the intellectual scholarly debates surrounding interpretations of Shari'a are discursive traditions in their own right. Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 6-7.

> ritual observances in practical situations of worship, minutely detailed paraphernalia about everyday religious practice – how to determine the days of worship, to decorate the place, what to offer to the deity, physical comportment in prayer, the exact chants specific to occasions, and even where to place holy objects like a coconut, a mass of flowers or a banana plant. This religion is thick in the sense that its internal contents are a vast, but not disorderly, catalogue of beliefs about large and small things, but all of them are crucial to the practice of this particular faith.[63]

Muslim societies' relations to and interpretations of the Shari'a, however, differ depending on the historical and social contexts.[64]

Because it is not law in the positive law sense, many aspects of Shari'a are followed voluntarily, and not because of threat of punishment. For pious believers, Asad writes, "punishment in the life to come for violating norms is more important than its worldly consequences."[65] Shari'a norms (exemplified in and explicated by the discursive tradition) become essential in that they "articulate the care of the soul."[66] The tradition focuses "not on the definition of meanings but, in an important sense, on the behavioral customs and the sensibilities they teach and regulate in the process of disciplining the soul."[67] According to Cheryl Mattingly, Foucault's care of the self "entails putting oneself in the care of experts who will guide that care."[68] Those with knowledge of the Islamic tradition are often the ones sought to guide one to

[63] Sudipta Kaviraj, "On Thick and Thin Religion: Some Critical Reflections on Secularisation Theory" in *Religion and the Political Imagination*, ed. Ira Katznelson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 345-6.
[64] See, for instance, Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, 4; and Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, chapter one.
[65] Talal Asad, *Secular Translations: Nation-State, Modern Self, and Calculative Reason* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 93-94.
[66] Asad, *Secular Translations*, 93-94.
[67] Asad, *Secular Translations*, 94. According to Hamid Reza Alavi, the famous Sufi theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazali defined morality as "a stable state of the soul by which it is possible for a person to do good works easily and immediately." For al-Ghazali, one's intention and sincerity when doing a moral act are more important than the act itself. He divides morality into: philosophical morality (moral virtues, such as wisdom, justice, etc.), religious morality ("virtues directly prescribed by religion"), and mystical morality (which emerges from one's devotion and desire to become closer to God out of love and awe rather than fear). Hamid Reza Alavi, "Al-Ghazāli on moral education," *Journal of Moral Education*, 36.3 (2007), 313.
[68] Cheryl Mattingly, "Two Virtue Ethics and the Anthropology of Morality," *Anthropological Theory*, 12.2 (2012), 172. On the limits of Bourdieu's notion of religious capital, see Bradford Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu," *Sociological Theory*, 21.2 (2016): 150 -174.

what is moral and good for the soul.[69] This once again highlights Asad's argument that the internal dynamics within the self and the external means of embodying what is within are inextricable and both play a role in the formation of an ethical, cared-after self, as understood from the dictates of the Shari'a. What becomes of understandings of this normative discursive tradition when the authorities who preach the tradition and claim to live according to its principles (and in the footsteps of the Prophet) betray its most basic, moral tenets?

In the years following the 2011 uprising, many of my interlocutors began to engage with and negotiate the tradition on their own terms, because of the freedom they were afforded to do so. But their disappointments in their religious teachers, in Islamists they supported and even in their parents led them to question the applicability of certain precepts within the tradition. Many of the shaykhs they followed, for example, argued that revolting against a ruler, even if unjust, is forbidden, according to the tradition (chapter two). When Islamists came to power, taking over the first post-revolutionary parliament (2011), and later, the presidency (2012), many of my interlocutors noticed that these politicians and their supporters did not live by the moral codes ("registers," "rubrics," etc.) of the Shari'a they claimed to want to implement. Some Islamist MPs, for instance, lied. Others legitimated then President Muhammad Mursi's rule by comparing Mursi to the Prophet himself. Others still used offensive language against political opponents, especially the "secularist and liberals" (chapters three and four). Even more shockingly, some Muslim scholars justified a massacre which took the lives of at least a thousand Muslim Brotherhood supporters (chapter four). When religious figures who claim to aspire to moral excellence as found in the Islamic texts and in the example of the Prophet Muhammad failed to do so, people's respect for them waned, and their perception of the Islamic discursive tradition

[69] Hussein Ali Agrama, "Ethics, Tradition, Authority: Toward an Anthropology of the Fatwa," *American Ethnologist*, 37.1 (2010): 2-18.

shifted. These moral dissonances and the emotions they evoked within my interlocutors also led the youth to reexamine their attitudes toward political Islam and who, if anyone at all, they should learn from about correct Islamic practice and belief.

Affect and Morality

Mattingly convincingly argues that poststructural theoretical frameworks, including those inspired by Foucault, are "not a good point of departure for an anthropology of morality," because they do not account for "the complexities of motive, of moral deliberation and moral creativity, especially as elements of ordinary life."[70] Foucauldian self-care presupposes a *telos* toward the production of a self that reproduces "predefined ethical modes of life" which ultimately produces an "ethical subject."[71] This presupposition precludes scholars from understanding "transformation that is humanly propelled – both at personal and political levels," and from understanding social change.[72] While Mattingly urges scholars to treat the "ordinary practical life" more seriously and not view it as "tacit enactment or reproduction of cultural norms," i.e. as "a codified system embedded in an established habitus,"[73] my dissertation examines a moment of historical rupture: a revolution, its demise and the shifts in notions of religiosity and morality in its wake.[74] I argue that affects, moods and emotions can affect what one views as ethical and pious.

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[70] In this essay, Mattingly, distinguishes between Neo-Aristotelean and poststructuralist (especially Foucauldian) notions of morality and ethical self-fashioning. Mattingly, "Two Virtue Ethics," 177.
[71] Mattingly, "Two Virtue Ethics," 172.
[72] Mattingly, "Two Virtue Ethics," 177.
[73] Mattingly, "Two Virtue Ethics," 177. See also Matt J. Rossano, "The Moral Faculty: Does Religion Promote 'Moral Expertise'?" *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 18:3, (2008): 169-194.
[74] I hesitate to call what my interlocutors felt "trauma," especially when they themselves did not use the word. But in her work, Vivienne Matthies-Boon concludes that what the young Egyptian activists she interviewed in 2013 and 2014, especially those who were tortured, experienced in the aftermath of the defeated revolution was traumatic. Their worlds and their existence within those worlds were "shattered." Vivienne Matthies-Boon, "Shattered worlds: political trauma amongst young activists in post-revolutionary Egypt," *The Journal of North African Studies*, 22.4 (2017): 620-644. See also Vivienne Matthies-Boon and Naomi Head, "Trauma as Counterrevolutionary Colonisation: Narratives from (Post) Revolutionary Egypt," *Journal of International Political Theory*, 14.3 (2018):

Affects, Nermin Allam writes, "are the 'things that one feels in our encounter with the world, with ourselves, and with others."[75] Emotions and moods fall under affect, which refers to "any evaluative (positive or negative) orientation toward an object" or a person.[76] Allam studies Egyptian female activists' will to continue fighting for their rights despite their disappointment after the defeat of the revolution. Affect becomes important here as it allows the researcher to investigate what lies "in-between" and outside of the binaries, such as the binary of repression and liberation, in studies about activism. Thinking within these dualisms "ignores the complexity inherited in any political project for change and blinds our analysis to the small changes taking place on the ground."[77] A focus on affect, however, "draws our attention to these middle ranges of agency and to the creative forms of activism that emerged following the uprising."[78] Similarly, for the purposes of my study, affect is a helpful way of analyzing a transitory agentive moment within my interlocutors' religious trajectories after a paradigmatic experience, such as a revolution.

Moods and emotions are also useful analytical tools for my research. Affect manifests in "a sudden burst of anger in response to someone cutting us off in traffic, a flush of shame in the wake of being caught in the act of lying to a friend,"[79] or even in changes in facial expressions during an interview. These moments are often intense but brief and may not "have the same reflexive potential as other less intense or less emotionally laden moments."[80] Emotions are

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258-279. On the nuances of trauma, see Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 9 and 80.

[75] Nermin Allam, "Affective Encounters: Women, Hope, and Activism in Egypt" in *Arab Spring: Modernity, Identity and Change*, eds. Eid Mohamed and Dalia Fahmy (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 138.

[76] Dawn T. Robinson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and Allison K. Wisecup, "Affect Control Theory" in *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*, eds. Jan E. Stets and Jonathan H. Turner (New York: Springer, 2006), 181. So also Allam, "Affective Encounters," 138.

[77] Allam, "Affective Encounters," 145-6.

[78] Allam, "Affective Encounters," 145-6.

[79] C. Jason Throop, "Moral Moods," *Ethos*, 42.1 (2014), 71.

[80] Throop, "Moral Moods, 71.

labels that "are applied to the ways that we feel after an event has occurred" and indicate that something outside the norm of the "stable affective meanings that are usually associated with our self-identity" has happened.[81] Emotions lead one to reflect, to "think carefully about one's past acts, to weigh the pros and cons of a particular set of options, to make deliberate decisions about what to do to rectify one's current or future situation" and thus solidify one's moral perspective on any given issue, even if this is not followed by an action. But that state of contemplation may not have the same "transformational purchase [as] more intense and emotionally mediated forms of being." Moods, on the other hand, are temporally evasive, sneaking up on us out of nowhere and lingering long after the issue has passed and are thus "a lasting emotional state."[82] They are not bound by temporal considerations: "moods implicate moral concerns that are linked to residues of past experience and yet are still open to subjunctive possibilities for future transformation."[83] To be in a mood is to "inhabit a vague and diffuse orientation toward the world that suffuses our every perception, action, and reaction to it. In short, mood is our being, being affected and attuned."[84]

My interlocutors experienced several positive and negative emotively charged moments in the years immediately following the 2011 uprising, which affected their view of what is moral. In his work on morality in Moscow, Jarrett Zigon argues (against virtue ethicists) that his interlocutors consider themselves moral beings whether or not they consciously aim to be moral. Morality is not a state of being that we have to think about and deliberately inhabit. Zigon writes, "The need to consciously consider or reason about what one must do only arises in moments that

[81] Robinson, Smith-Lovin, and Wisecup, "Affect Control Theory," 182.
[82] Robinson, Smith-Lovin, and Wisecup, "Affect Control Theory," 182; and Throop, "Moral Moods," 71.
[83] Throop, "Moral Moods," 71.
[84] C. Jason Throop, "Ambivalent Happiness and Virtuous Suffering," *Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 5.3 (2015), 59.

shake one out of the everydayness of being moral," or during what he calls a "moral breakdown."[85]

When faced with a moral breakdown, one must find ways to go back to a state of being unconsciously, "unreflectively" moral again. Zigon explains that we both constitute and are constituted by the political, historical, cultural world we inhabit. The world one finds oneself in, however, is never inhabited just by oneself but rather is shared with others. While inhabiting this world and being shaped by it, one is an "involved" actor rather than a passive observer. "But this involvement is rarely intentional, mentalistic, or rational," Zigon continues. It takes on the mode of comportment, i.e. "the unreflective, non-intentional dispositions of acting, speaking, thinking and so on, that constitute everydayness."[86] Morality is our unintentional way of being and acting in the world:

> Morality can best be analytically thought of as those bodily dispositions enacted in the world non-intentionally and unreflectively. To be moral is to inhabit a bodily disposition, one might even say inhabit a soul, that is familiar to oneself and most others with whom one comes into contact. It is in this familiar sharedness of morality that one can speak of the good, or more appropriately, being good. Thus, if the moral dispositions of everyday life, or what we might call morality, are understood in this way, it is hardly different from the ways in which many anthropologists today speak of an embodied culture.[87]

People in the same context share a common understanding of morality. One is inundated by the moral, and inadvertently acts in accordance with what is accepted as such. This is not the same, Zigon posits, as Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus, which suggests a being acted-upon rather than

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[85] Jarrett Zigon, "Moral breakdown and the ethical demand: A theoretical framework for an anthropology of moralities," *Anthropological Theory*, 7.2 (2007),135.

[86] Zigon, "Moral breakdown," 135. Mood is essential to our being human, according to Heidegger. He holds that "our capacity to have moods is constitutive of human existence. We are who we are … not only because we are rational, social, or practical beings, but also because we are affective, and specifically, mooded beings: that is, beings who experience moods … [I]t is because we are mooded that the world is disclosed to us and that we find ourselves amidst worldly projects and social situations that already matter to us and that emotionally affect us." Andreas Elpidorou and Lauren Freeman, "Affectivity in Heidegger I: Moods and Emotions in Being and Time," *Philosophy Compass*, 10.10 (2015), 661.

[87] Zigon, "Moral breakdown," 135.

a dual presence: we are always in and of the world with someone else, but even in the absence of another person, we still find ourselves unconsciously being moral.[88]

Morality, Zigon continues, is the "unreflective mode of being-in-the-world," while ethics is more deliberate and contemplative. When a moral breakdown occurs, we are forced to confront and reevaluate the moral expectations and dispositions we once held immediately, and in the process, "perform ethics." Our moral everyday being-in-the-world is questioned. When a breakdown does occur, we must escape the ethical limbo right away. Ethics then is "the process of once again returning to the unreflective mode of everyday moral dispositions."[89] This process is informed by one's own personal inclinations as well as "the socio-historic-cultural possibilities for thinking and acting in such situations."[90] After undergoing this ethical process as a result of the moral breakdown, however, individuals do not return to their previous moral state or disposition; their unreflective morality shifts after they made a deliberate effort to change their way of being in the world.

The revolution and its aftermath presented several ethical dilemmas, i.e. moral breakdowns, to almost all of my interlocutors, which they tried to resolve. One of the moral breakdowns many of my religious interlocutors experienced, for example, was the possibility of having a civilian leader with an "Islamic reference" (*marji'iyya diniyya*), but after having seen how Islam was "harmed" during the political process, they questioned the viability of the Islamist

[88] Zigon argues, "Because being-in-the-world, then, is a relationship of being-with and not embodied –although it is made manifest in bodily dispositions or comportments – it is a mode of being that is always open to the world and never statically and permanently encapsulated, as one reading of Bourdieu's notion of habitus suggests." Zigon, "Moral breakdown," 135-6.
[89] Zigon, "Moral breakdown," 138.
[90] Zigon, "Moral breakdown," 138-9. See also Didier Fassin, "On Resentment and Ressentiment: The Politics and Ethics of Moral Emotions," *Current Anthropology*, 54. 3 (2013): 249-67.

project.[91] Therefore, when my interlocutors talked to me about the lost political potential in post-2011 Egypt, they were often in a lingering mood of despair but one that usually was accompanied by a new understanding of "being" in the world ethically.

Secularization?

As stated earlier, my interlocutors became more lenient in their views about the centrality of the habitual and deliberate embodiment of virtue. Being God-conscious and acting morally are more important than physical manifestations of religiosity, such as praying, wearing the veil or sporting a beard, etc. And, inversely, rituals do not have to be performed in order for one to become inculcated with a certain virtue, such as constant remembrance of God or modesty. Does this shift in understanding signal a move to secularization? I do not believe so.

Scholars like Sherine Hafez and Jessica Winegar take issue with the secular-religious binary and problematize it in their work. In *An Islam of Her Own*, Hafez notes that although the female Muslim activists she worked with (who considered themselves "modern") often made a distinction between their "secular" and "religious" daily activities, she argues that this "demarcation and separation" of "two selves"—the secular and the religious—is not accurate. The separation is predicated on "internalized modern assumptions that histories of modernizing state agendas have rendered normative in their populations."[92] The "religious subject" is almost always viewed as the "antithesis of the modern subject, through which the principles of rationality, responsibility, and freedom are epitomized."[93] Thus the secular is viewed more favorably in a liberal, modernist context. Winegar concurs, arguing that the term "secular" is

[91] Former President Mubarak who was ousted in 2011 did not claim to represent Islam. Hence, when he took part in morally questionable actions such as engaging in nepotism and corruption, the "image of Islam" was not hurt in the process, unlike when authoritative Muslim figures made political mistakes in post-2011 Egypt.
[92] Hafez, *An Islam of Her Own*, 19.
[93] Hafez, *An Islam of Her Own*, 27.

"always tied to a normative framework" and "occludes major complexities of social life, institutional power formation, and global discourse circulation."[94]

I, too, hesitate to call my interlocutors secular. For one, most of them do not self-identify as such. Kaviraj writes that religion, which is often viewed as the inverse of secularism, "refers to a whole range of distinct institutional fields – an ethical order, a social order, philosophical systems, political institutions."[95] The attitudes of my interlocutors who still consider themselves "religious" Muslims about the role Islam, and more specifically Shari'a, should play in these various fields have changed to varying degrees. Most of my interlocutors still believe that the Shari'a provides an ethical (and moral) order, and, in fact, this field has become the aspect of Islam that is most important to them. The social order that an Egyptianized Islam (chapter one) provides has become suspect. Many of my interlocutors question or even reject the labels and ideals set by Egyptian society to determine one's religiosity. One of the most important of these are physical markers of piety. Likewise, in the aftermath of an unsuccessful bid for power by the Islamists and as a result of how some of them "misused" the Islamic tradition and religious symbolism in pursuit of politics, my interlocutors became wary of endowing political institutions with religious legitimation.[96] Most of my interlocutors believe that they have come to a new understanding of Islam, one that departs from the teachings that were passed onto them over the years, in light of an emotionally turbulent moment, but they do not believe that they have become secular.

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[94] Jessica Winegar, "Civilizing Muslim Youth: Egyptian State Culture Programs and Islamic Television Preachers," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 20.3 (2014), 447-8.
[95] Kaviraj, "On Thick and Thin Religion," 339.
[96] On secularism as "civic power," see Samuli Schielke, "Being a Nonbeliever in a Time of Islamic Revival: Trajectories of Doubt and Certainty in Contemporary Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 44.2 (2012), 315-6.

On Positionality

As a Muslim Egyptian-American talking to Muslim (and ex-Muslim) Egyptians, I was affected in many ways by what my interlocutors told me. As Zareena Grewal astutely notes, participant-observation, the bread and butter of classical anthropology, involves "a double move of intimation and distancing: immerse yourself among them and then, once the grant money runs out, come back home, translate all you saw and heard." But the intellectual journey does not end there: "I never expected to be able to simply dust myself off and leave the subjects of this study behind me because the conversations that constitute this ethnography, and all ethnography, are ongoing and unfinished."[97] I could not help but sympathize with my interlocutors as they told me about their heartbreak and disappointment. I could no longer afford to be "ambivalent" about issues toward which I had previously been ambivalent. I was often swayed by what my informants told me but also felt their pain, because I, too, had experienced some of the things they talked to me about.[98] All of this made me an insider, a fact they kept pointing out to me in our interviews, which were often sprinkled with, "If you remember…"s, and "I do not know if you were in Egypt when…"s.

Inadvertently, these conversations shifted my own conceptions of what being a good Muslim entails. I first learned about Islam from my parents who taught me that being a good person and following the rules (correct comportment and embodiment of beliefs and virtues) would ultimately lead to God's pleasure—and to the ultimate prize: paradise. Those, along with my parents' approval, were what I sought after most of my life until early adulthood. God's pleasure and my parents' approval are, of course, still pivotal, but my concept of the hereafter

[97] Zareena Grewal, *Islam Is A Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 17.
[98] On sympathizing with interlocutors, see C. Jason Throop, "Moral Sentiments" in *A Companion to Moral Anthropology*, ed. Didier Fassin (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 164.

has shifted slightly. Doing good, I have started to believe, should be done for the sake of doing good and to gain God's pleasure. The reward is just an added consolation prize, one that God awards us not a result of a mathematical equation that calculates our righteousness but out of His mercy.[99]



Figure 1: Little girl in Tahrir on February 11, 2011. Photo by author.

I credit this realization, at least in part, to my experience in Egypt during and after the 2011 uprisings. I was in Egypt in 2011, completing my undergraduate degree at the American University in Cairo, when the revolution broke out. Several friends sent me an "invite" to the January 25th uprising "event" on Facebook, but I hesitated and did not click "Accept." Not only did the protests seem dangerous, but also religious scholars from al-Azhar, whom I deeply respected, urged protesters to go home and said that protesting was Islamically forbidden (*haram*). I resolved on doing behind-the-scenes work: volunteering at charitable organizations to pack food for the poor, who were most affected by the nationwide shutdown during the protests; donating blood; sweeping the streets of my neighborhood, etc. But I could not bring myself to join out of fear that if I did and died in Tahrir Square, I would go straight to hell. I ended up only joining the initial protests with my mother and little sister on February 11, just before Mubarak stepped down. We walked around Tahrir Square, where we ran

[99] Having witnessed the devastation many of my Egyptian friends underwent, the personal hurt and injury they endured in a few short years, led me to be more understanding of the different ways in which people have come to understand being (Muslim) in the world. I have become more "politically correct" on matters of religion, no longer giving unsolicited advice about correct religious practice, even though we were told from a young age that giving advice (*nasiha*) is a duty toward other Muslims. I have resigned myself to believing that religion is something between the believer and her God and that God is more forgiving than we care to admit.

into friends and family and made new friends. We then headed briefly to another site of protest near the Presidential Palace. We were in a cab on our way home when we heard the announcement that Mubarak had resigned. We could barely believe our ears. The city erupted in red, white and black as people young and old waved Egyptian flags as far as the eye could see. It was a good day, but I was still conflicted.

The months following Mubarak's resignation were full of cautious optimism, as Egyptians got their first taste of democracy. They were also full of divisive moments and mounting mistrust, as tensions grew between various political factions, Islamist and otherwise. All the while, I still hesitated about joining any other protests, though I did vote in almost every referendum and election held in 2011 and 2012. December 2011, however, was a turning point for me. Reports began to surface about an Azhar shaykh, 'Imad 'Iffat, who was shot and killed while taking part in one of the many protests against the military, which was in power during the interim period. I had never heard of 'Iffat before, but many of my friends were his students and deeply respected him. They knew of his activism and often followed his example in fighting for social justice. I went to 'Iffat's funeral, which was held at al-Azhar Mosque. Then Mufti of Egypt, 'Ali Jum'a, led the service. He first started by praising 'Iffat, who was his pupil, but then began telling the congregants—mostly youth—to stop protesting against the military, and let the country move forward. At this, the congregants began shouting, *Allahu akbar!* (God is greatest) to drown out Jum'a's calls for stability. Dozens of men then went to carry 'Iffat's coffin and began the procession to the burial grounds where 'Iffat was laid to rest. It was in that moment, while sitting teary-eyed in the mosque's open courtyard that I came to realize that al-Azhar is not a monolith and that many Islamic juristic opinions can exist on any given matter, political or otherwise. As if a weight had been lifted, I finally felt at ease to join the protests I believed in.

The following months and years, as will be demonstrated in this project, were full of hopes that were dashed and of disillusionment and disappointment. I often think that I made it out of Egypt intact, because I left the country with my family in 2012, just as things seemed to be getting worse for people politically, morally and spiritually. We were in Egypt in the summer of 2013, when the Egyptian military overthrew Muhammad Mursi (d. 2019), the first president elected after the 2011 uprisings, who was also a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and massacred hundreds of people who were protesting his deposition. I witnessed families being torn apart as some sided with the military, which for some represented stability and order, or with the Muslim Brotherhood and Mursi, whose (political, social and even physical) termination symbolized the end of the democratic experiment for others. I heard people cheering, as the military gunned down unarmed protesters in public squares. The revolution was no more. People I know who stayed in Egypt got the full brunt of all of the above. The pages of this dissertation are filled with their hopes, dreams and disappointments, many of which I was affected by personally both at the time of the revolution and again, several years later, as an ethnographer.

Methods

A large part of this dissertation focuses on the ways in which the Islamic discursive tradition was used in politics in post-2011 Egypt. In order to do so, I examine YouTube videos of public pronouncements from various figures in Egypt who claim to have religious authority, like the heads of al-Azhar, Salafi preachers and Muslim Brotherhood leadership. Additionally, I consulted official websites, such as those of al-Azhar, Dar al-Ifta[100] and the Muslim Brotherhood

[100] Dar al-Ifta is an institution under the Ministry of Justice, which issues religious opinions (*fatwa*s) for laypeople and the government.

(particularly, Ikhwanweb). Finding sources and accurately dating them is difficult.[101] I thus cite Egyptian newspapers, which I then cross-reference with non-Egyptian sources (due to bias and, at times, inaccuracy).

More importantly, I wanted to understand what effect these pronouncements had on young Egyptians' political participation and attitudes toward Islam. I interviewed sixty-one middle to upper-middle class Muslim Egyptians, most of whom were in their early- to mid-twenties when the uprising began.[102] For security reasons,[103] I spoke to people I know and then used the snowball effect to recruit more people but did not speak to anyone who was more than two degrees outside my circle.[104] As stated earlier, I myself had witnessed many of the events I spoke to my interlocutors about, since I was in Egypt from 2007 to 2012 and every summer thereafter. My interlocutors knew this, and almost all of them (with the exception of Walid and two women who did not want to talk about politics) spoke to me about their experience and feelings candidly.[105] In some instances, our discussion generated tears, and I often found myself at a loss for words.

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[101] For an institution like al-Azhar, for example, digitization of select materials only began in 2013.
[102] Unless stated otherwise, all interviews were conducted in Arabic.
[103] I mostly met my interlocutors in public cafes in Cairo, and several times, we had to relocate to a different table or space, because we sensed someone was listening in on our conversation. Some interlocutors used codenames for the current and former presidents, for example. A few asked to skip the political questions altogether.
[104] To get a better sense of the attitudes of the general public, I also analyze comments on social media posts and blogs. Due to safety concerns, I unfortunately was not able to speak to people from other classes and age groups. Anecdotally, however, I believe that the religious understandings and practices of the older generation (those who were in their forties and fifties when the uprising began) have not changed significantly. What I gleaned also from having taught an undergraduate course at the American University in Cairo in the summer of 2020 was that many of my students did not remember the names of the most influential religious figures to whom my interlocutors once used to respect, such as former Mufti 'Ali Jum'a and the younger preacher, Moez Masoud. When I assigned them a few pages from one of Saba Mahmood's least theoretical chapters about the women's mosque movement, they said they had trouble understanding the dynamics within the mosque, suggesting that perhaps they do not inhabit the spaces that Mahmood described in *Politics of Piety*. I cannot gauge for certain what became of Islamic teachings and practices in the lower class. But (again) anecdotally, I have been taking the subway in Cairo every year from 2007 to 2019 and have noted the visible signs of religiosity among women in the car designated for females only. The scene (at least externally) has not changed over the course of twelve years. Almost all of the women continue to wear a headscarf or face veil.
[105] All names are pseudonyms, and I am cautious about describing my interlocutors to preserve their anonymity. Only four interlocutors asked to not be recorded. Only two read the consent form, while others said they "trusted"

In my interviews, I focused on memory and emotion. Richard B. Miller writes, "[M]emory is one of our most intimate cognitive and affective activities and provides occasions for deep and intense experiences of our own intrasubjective alterities. It is central to moral psychology given its connection to personal identity and self-assessment, and it is informed and modified by cultural processes that embody tradition and heritage."[106] Similarly, Serguei Alex Oushakine argues that "memorial linking" of the past with the present "implies a double operation of *selecting* things, images, and affects of the past, on one hand, and *combining* them in the present, on the other…Remembering, then, is an act of filling up gaps in one's own history and one's own story."[107] I wanted to tap into those experiences around which memories coalesced, experiences that affectively moved my interlocutors rather than a detached recounting of the historical facts they knew. For this reason, I did not tell my interlocutors what I planned to ask them before the interview to prevent them from looking through diaries and social media posts.[108] In fact, I often reassured my interlocutors that whatever they could not recollect when I asked about a specific event was not formative to their emotional experience and was thus not analytically useful.

The attention to emotion and sensitive topics like religion and politics, however, made our conversations feel like therapy sessions.[109] Oftentimes, I felt a pang of guilt when my line of

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me to not betray them. I was surprised also by my interlocutors' candor. Some men, for example, openly talked to me about extramarital sex and doing drugs. Likewise, several women talked to me off the record about their personal relationships and unrequited love.

[106] Richard B. Miller defines memory as "the recollection of the past so that it continues, in some degree or fashion, in the present." Richard B. Miller, *Friends and Other Strangers: Studies in Religion, Ethics, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 229.

[107] Serguei Alex Oushakine, "Remembering in Public: On the Affective Management of History," *Ab Imperio*, 1 (2013), 283.

[108] A few interlocutors cited Facebook "memories," posts from the past which served as a digital memory booster and archive that made them relive the hope and pain of revolution year after year.

[109] Many of my interlocutors openly told me that they had started seeing a therapist or doing group therapy after 2011.

questioning made a female interlocutor cry. One interlocutor told me that she had locked away all memories of the revolution and started weeping. She had been diagnosed recently with borderline personality disorder and said that the disorder is often accompanied by "a blackhole of memories:" "Today, as I am telling you these things, I'm not as distant as I used to be. I am remembering things with you, and I get goosebumps. This is the first time this ever happened to me [sniffles] ... Because the revolution or 2011 is a very blurry year for me. So thank you."[110] I got up and hugged her. Likewise, there were moments when my male interlocutors were visibly upset, and I could not do anything to console them except give them a moment to reflect silently. The only thing that brought me some solace was that my interlocutors often told me that our conversations were cathartic, especially given that politics had become such a polarizing issue that they could not speak to anyone about it without being judged or getting into a heated argument. Even when I suggested we end the interview when I could see that the person I was speaking to was distraught, she pressed on, keen on sharing her whole story, her whole truth, with me.

Chapter Overview

This project traces the "religious" (and sometimes, areligious) journeys of my interlocutors in post-2011 Egypt. Chapter one gives a broad overview of my interlocutors' upbringing and religious socialization. Almost all of them learned about correct Islamic practice and belief from their parents (and grandparents), schoolteachers, preachers on television and friends in college. As children, they were taught "basic" beliefs and rituals. As they grew older, most of them learned about an "authenticated Islam,"[111] one steeped in the Islamic discursive

[110] Malak, Interview by author, Cairo, January 2019.
[111] Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and chapter one.

tradition and that taught them how and why the internal and the external aspects of Islam are imbricated.

Chapter two delves into the first eighteen days of the 2011 uprising which led to Mubarak's downfall. I map the discourse used by religious scholars and Muslim Brotherhood leaders to either encourage people to or dissuade them from demonstrating against Mubarak and evaluate the effect this discourse had on Muslim Egyptian youth. I found that most of the youth ignored statements that discouraged them from joining what they believed was a just cause. This is when disappointment in religious leadership began.

Chapters three and four examine the rise and fall of the Islamists. People still had immense hope as they voted in several referenda and participated in elections. Islamists were allowed to run openly for parliament and for the presidency. Slowly, more disappointments set in as Islamists used endorsements from preachers to push for their political agendas. Chapter four traces the presidential elections, Mursi's victory and his ultimate downfall at the hands of the military. The Rabi'a Massare, which took the lives of at least 1,000 people who had staged a sit-in to protest Mursi's removal, and the fact that some important religious scholars condoned the military's use of force in such a way caused most of my interlocutors to lose respect for the religious scholars who had abandoned the sanctity of life and led them to raise questions about theodicy. Moral crises are at the heart of both of these chapters.

Finally, chapter five illuminates the shifts in the perception and practice of Islam since 2013 among Egyptian youth and argues that a transformative, revolutionary understanding of religion is underway in the wake of the uprising and its defeat. My religious interlocutors began questioning the Islamic discursive tradition and even some passages of the Qur'an and Prophetic tradition (*hadith*). Some joined Sufi groups. Others lost faith entirely. The revolution ultimately

gave the youth a chance to question various aspects of their lives, including their faith, which they had never before critically examined.

Chapter 1: Growing up in the Shadow of "Egyptian Islam"

"Egyptians are a religious people by nature" ("*al-sha'b al-Misri sha'b mutadayyin bi-tab'ih*") is a common refrain among Egyptians. Gallup Polls confirm this, showing that, for at least the past two decades, Egypt has ranked among the top twenty "most religious countries in the world," with 97% of respondents saying that religion matters to them in everyday life.[112] This chapter traces the trajectory of the religious understandings of Muslim Egyptian youth raised in this social milieu from childhood to early adulthood. It serves as the mirror to my final chapter in which I illuminate changes in youth religiosity after the 2011 uprising.

This chapter demonstrates that my interlocutors' view of religiosity and understandings of what the word entails shifted as they were exposed to sources of Islamic knowledge outside the home. As children, they learned about faith and "basic" Islamic ritual practice from their parents and shaykhs either at home or in mosques where they attended lectures with community members. In school, most of them learned the state-mandated Islamic studies curriculum, which many of them argued had little to no bearing on their understanding of Islamic faith and practice. Those who went to Islamic schools, some of which were run by Muslim Brotherhood members, argued that their Islamic education there was more formative, even though, in hindsight, they became more critical of that education. As they grew older, many of my interlocutors began to gain a more in-depth knowledge of Islam through peers, the internet and, in college, from direct exposure to some of the Islamic groups in Egypt, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis.

[112] See Oliver Smith, "Mapped: The world's most (and least) religious countries," *The Telegraph*, January 14, 2018, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/maps-and-graphics/most-religious-countries-in-the-world/, accessed August 19, 2019.

"Traditional Egyptian Islam"

Over and again, when I asked my interlocutors how they came to learn about Islam, the answer would almost always be: "My parents are typical, traditional Egyptian Muslims."[113] Some had plenty to say and traced their religious development to the current day. Others needed more prodding. I urged both to complicate their understandings of the categories they often listed, and through this exercise, I was able to map the typical modes through which people learned about the Islamic tradition and what they thought influenced the older generation, i.e. their parents and grandparents, to practice the way they do. I heard stories of parents coming back from Saudi Arabia, where they migrated for work in the late twentieth century, harboring strict interpretations of Islamic law (*fiqh*) and following an austere lifestyle. Other parents did not teach their children anything about Islam at all. Yet others upheld this "traditional Egyptian Islam," one that came from years of living in a country where the call to prayer can be heard in every corner, where Friday is a day off so Muslim men can pray the obligatory Friday prayer at the mosque, and where *al-hamd l-i-llah* (praise be to God) is on people's tongues on every occasion.[114]

What became clear with each interview was that my interlocutors went through transitory phases of religiosity, and this trajectory is what I chart in this dissertation. Initially, they followed the "traditional Egyptian Islam" their parents had passed onto them as children, but they eventually came to outgrow those "basic" understandings and practices to come to what Lara Deeb calls an "authenticated" understanding of Islam. In *An Enchanted Modern*, Deeb explores

[113] The press refers to this as "popular religiosity" or *al-tadayyun al-sha'bi*, a version of Islam that is "unadulterated by the influence of political Islam." See, for example, "Al-tadayyun al-sha'bi' fi Misr yamla 'faragh' al-Islamiyyin wa al-sulta fi Ramadan," *Al-Quds*, May 25, 2018, https://www.alquds.co.uk/التدين-الشعبي-في-مصر-يملأ-فراغ-الإسل/ , accessed October 18, 2019.
[114] Lara Deeb calls the latter "discursive piety." See Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*, 118.

how Shi'i Lebanese women understand their embodied practice of Islam as one that is in itself modern. It is an understanding that came into being through a process of "authentication:" i.e., "[an on-going] process of establishing the true or correct meaning, understanding, or method of various religious and social practices and beliefs."[115] The women believed that the Islamic piety they practiced was different from the one their grandparents practiced in that it was not reliant on "traditions" or culture (Deeb's translation of *taqalid*).[116] The women's understanding of piety relied both on studying the foundational Islamic texts and their interpretations and on using one's rational faculties to decide what makes the most sense to one's being in the world.[117] This phenomenon, that laypeople—rather than specialized religious scholars—use their own rational faculties to decide what of the tradition they believe makes sense to them was new to the community Deeb studied in late 1990s Beirut. There was, however, an unresolved tension in the community about whether one should use one's rational faculties (*'aql*) or rely on the interpretations of an *'alim*.[118]

Some of Deeb's interlocutors, like mine, explained that their parents and grandparents "inherited" religious practices; they performed them because they were taught to do so and not because they had any specialized knowledge of Islam. The women Deeb worked with embodied an Islam they learned about through acquiring a better understanding of the religion and becoming more knowledgeable about its teachings. Embodying those teachings then required repetitive, deliberate practice, as Asad, Mahmood and Hirschkind show in their various works on Muslim ethical self-cultivation. Authenticated belief and understanding of Islam are themselves

[115] Deeb, An Enchanted Modern, 20.
[116] *Taqalid* here is not to be confused with the term used in Islamic jurisprudence to denote adherence to religious rulings established by earlier Muslim jurists.
[117] This is why Deeb refers to an "enchanted" modern, as opposed to Weber's notion that one becomes disenchanted as a result of the rationalization that comes with modernity and secularization.
[118] Deeb, An Enchanted Modern, 20-23.

internal and not visible to those outside of one's person. One can choose to display certain aspects of that internal, "authenticated" understanding of Islam by rendering it "visible through public piety," by publicly dressing and/or speaking a certain way and engaging in certain activities.[119]

Before the 2011 uprising in Egypt, many of my interviewees went through similar phases as those Deeb describes. As children, they obeyed and understood Islam as their parents did prior to embarking on a quest to find an "authenticated" Islam. They were taught about the physical and apparent aspects of Islam (*zawahir*), i.e. uttering the *shahada*,[120] prayer, fasting Ramadan, giving alms, and making the pilgrimage to Makka, and how to properly perform such rituals. In their teenage and early adult years, they began to search outside the home for an Islam that made more sense to them or answered the questions they were asking. Some of them learned from teachers, peers, audio-visual media and the internet that piety has both internal and external components: a habitual, deliberate repetition of religious practice helps one cultivate an ethical self.[121] This phase was a form of searching for an "authenticated" Islam. Unlike for some of Deeb's interlocutors who believed that they did not have to follow the guidance of religious figures,[122] my interlocutors learned from authorities like shaykhs at mosques or religious figures they listened to on cassette tapes, CDs and, later, satellite television and the internet. However, when I spoke to them in 2018 and 2019, just a few years after the revolution they had such high hopes in was defeated, and the figures they used to admire had disappointed them, this phase of understanding Islam had come to a close. In the past few years, many of them have become

[119] Deeb, An Enchanted Modern, 35-36.
[120] To testify that "there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger."
[121] In Mahmood's work, the women told her that piety was the "quality of 'being close to God': a manner of being and acting that suffuses all of one's acts, both religious and worldly in character." See Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 122.
[122] Many continued to follow a *marji'*, a religious scholar with enough authority and understanding of the Islamic texts to be able to issue rulings for people to follow. Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*, 69-70 and 125-7.

averse to the importance placed on displays of public piety, a part of what they called traditional Egyptian Islam. For them, interior aspects of Islam like one's closeness to God and how one treats others became more important than how one dresses.

I began my interviews by asking my interlocutors about their religious upbringing (*tarbiya diniyya*) and what religiosity meant to them. The word used by Egyptians today for religiosity is *tadayyun*, but it has come to mean different things to different people. For almost all of my interlocutors, there was an important appearance-based component, meaning that religious people appear outwardly religious by performing certain rites, by the way they dress, and/or by the way they speak.[123] For many, another important aspect of *tadayyun* is one's relation with and consciousness (*taqwa*) of God. Some also expressed that how one treats others around oneself is a major component of religiosity. Religiosity thus ranged from the ritual and appearance-based aspects to ineffable spiritual experiences. What ultimately makes one a "good" or pious Muslim was up for serious debate among my interlocutors. My self-reflexive interlocutors, as I show later, told me that their own view of the word *tadayyun* shifted with time, for many, as a direct result of the revolution and the events that followed.

For many of them, when they first came to learn about Islam, it was easiest to start off by practicing the physical manifestations of religiosity. 'A'isha, a social scientist who memorized the entire Qur'an by the age of thirteen and studied the Islamic tradition at length, was initially taught that religiosity meant wearing the veil (*hijab*) and "hanging onto rituals that other people may not be following or hanging onto."[124] Religiosity, for her growing up, was a form of distinguishing one's self from others, and to her, this was a superficial way of understanding

[123] There are certain aural markers to which some interlocutors pointed. Examples include verbalizing the standard Arabic "j" sound in everyday parlance as opposed to the colloquial Egyptian "g"; using words like "*akhi*" (brother) or "*ukhti*" (sister); or using not-so-common standard Arabic phrases like *barak Allah fik* (God bless you).
[124] 'A'isha, Interview by author, Cairo, February 2018 (in English).

tadayyun. This mode of being, what some people refer to as "commitment" (*iltizam*), oftentimes has overt ties to Salafism (which I explore in detail later in this chapter). In his article, "I Want to Be Committed," Samuli Schielke explains that being a "committed" Muslim (*multazim*), one who sees Islam as an all-encompassing "guideline of life," is not easy. Salafi preachers often market *iltizam* as simple and straightforward, itemizing all aspects of life into permissible and impermissible actions, leaving no gray areas. The perfection and ease that those who aspire to *iltizam* hope to reach ultimately turn out to be less attainable than advertised.[125] But for 'A'isha, *iltizam* was a way of setting yourself apart from friends and family members, a way to show that "you have an identity and that you have a different understanding of … how [religion] should be practiced."[126]

Du'a, a young British-Egyptian journalist, similarly explained that when she was younger, she was a lot more "literal" in her practice. To her, practicing meant fasting, praying and carrying out the rest of the obligatory commitments of a Muslim (*furud*). This shaped her identity as she grew up in the UK.[127] She continues to wear her *hijab*, pray and fast, but these outward actions are now just one aspect of religiosity to her. One's continuous personal connection to and mindfulness of God are the main components of religiosity for Du'a, now in her early thirties. Being able to see and engage with everything in this life through this prism, through God-consciousness, is the way she tries to understand life.[128] This mode of thinking ultimately speaks to Du'a's commitment to something akin to ethical self-fashioning, which she did not learn about when she was younger.

[125] Schielke, "I Want to Be Committed," 21.
[126] 'A'isha, Interview by author.
[127] She was pursuing her undergraduate degree in Egypt just before the 2011 uprisings began.
[128] Du'a', Interview by author, London, February 2018 (in English).

In *Leisurely Islam*, Lara Deeb and Mona Harb show that among the various "moral rubrics" that govern and inform the lives of Shi'i Lebanese youth are what they call social and religious rubrics. Deeb and Harb caution against viewing Muslim youth as being concerned mainly with pietistic questions but recognize that the youth are "moral subject[s] constantly redefined in relation to multiple moral rubrics."[129] The social-moral rubric is based on "values of social obligation, propriety, hierarchy, manners, and reciprocity," while the religious rubric has to do with "piety and religious commitment, or *iltizam*." The latter comes from what the youth learn from religious authorities but also their own weighing of religious evidence they encounter.[130] Both of these rubrics focus on the outward aspects of Islam. The social, however, can pull from the religious or even muddle it, giving cultural understandings and practices religious coloring.

My interlocutors' parents focused more on the social rather than the religious rubric, without much of an "authenticated" understanding of Islam.[131] Mahmood's piety movement participants, too, argued that facets of Islamic practice had become "custom and folklore (*'ada wa fulklur*)," bearing little religious meaning.[132] Some of my interlocutors shared this sentiment, arguing that their parents sometimes taught them to do certain practices out of respect for social norms, focusing less on what is Islamically permissible (*halal*) and impermissible (*haram*) and more on what is socially acceptable and what is not (*'ayb*).

After the 2011 revolution, many of my interlocutors came to have a more ecumenical and nuanced understanding of religiosity. For those who still viewed themselves as religious,

[129] Deeb and Harb also include a political-sectarian rubric that is not relevant to my case study. Deeb and Harb, *Leisurely Islam*, 18.
[130] Deeb and Harb, *Leisurely Islam*, 19.
[131] This disconnect might also be a result of their parents' trying to make religion easier for their children to digest, especially at an earlier age.
[132] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 44.

tadayyun had to do with faith and treatment of others (*mu'amalat*) rather than with the outward appearance of religiosity, which they said Egyptian society values and judges. "When I was younger," 'Aziza began, religiosity was defined by "how much you adhere to the values that everyone knows about, especially if those values are public like wearing the *hijab* or ritualistic stuff."[133] This is no longer the case for 'Aziza who now lives in the US and is pursuing a doctorate in education. Religiosity is "defining your life in the context of religion or having religion be part of how you determine your value system and becomes a moral filter. It's something that you consult all the time," she said, similarly to Du'a. The more Islam becomes embedded in your everyday actions and interactions, the more religious you are, 'Aziza explained. This is more important to her than "just going to the mosque on Friday" or "how much Qur'an we read, how much Qur'an we memorize, the good deeds we do, how well we dress, etc."[134] Again, she put less emphasis on the social (and outward) religious aspects of Islam and more on the internal, the God-consciousness, and how that outlook should influence most—if not all—aspects of one's life.

In what follows, I offer a survey of how my interlocutors came to learn about Islam from childhood to early adulthood in the social milieu in which they were raised. Their first brush with Islam was almost always at home. Some went to Islamic schools and/or had private Qur'an tutors at home. During their teenage years and early adulthood, my interlocutors learned the intricacies of Islam and more about ethical self-fashioning, from peers, religious preachers like the *du'ah al-*

[133] 'Aziza, Interview by author, Connecticut, February 2018 (in English). 'Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh, former Muslim Brotherhood member and presidential candidate in 2012, told Talal Asad in an interview that religiosity is "a definite fact" in Egypt. He said, "The Egyptian personality includes deep faith and devotion to the sacred, and [a sense of] considerable interpenetration between everyday life and the sacred. But this religiosity is not always accompanied by a social, political, and legal consciousness, and sometimes it is [merely] formal or superficial or ritual." Talal Asad, "Thinking about Tradition, Religion and Politics in Egypt Today," *Critical Inquiry*, 42.1 (2015): 166-214.

[134] 'Aziza, Interview by author.

judud, Salafi or Azhar scholars, or lay preachers like those of the mosque movement. They had a clear sense of what one must believe and practice to become closer to and earn the pleasure of God. There was a deliberateness in listening to religious authorities, a willingness to be moved by their words,[135] and an openness to being told what correct belief and practice were.

Islam in the Home

The first rung of religious education usually comes from parents and school. Psychology studies suggest that parents, peers, and religious education are three major influences on a child's religious development, but family "is the primary agent of religious socialization" with parents serving as "the most important source of religious influence."[136] In *Religious Parenting*, Christian Smith, Bridget Ritz and Michael Rotolo study practices of religious American parents of various faiths who teach their children about religion. The authors argue that all of the middle and upper-middle class parents they spoke to, regardless of religious background and geographic location, wanted their children to have religion as a safe haven, "'a home base' or grounding" for when life gets tough.[137]

Generally, parents said that they practiced the religion they preached, i.e. by modeling the religion rather than simply talking about it. Since children are malleable, the hope was that "children will over time learn, absorb, and embrace their own version of that faith, almost unconsciously." The parents believed that while they teach their young children about religion, it

[135] See, for example, Charles Hirschkind, "Experiments in Devotion Online: The YouTube Khutba," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 44 (2012), 5-21; and Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*.
[136] Pamela Ebstyne King, James L. Furrow and Natalie Roth, "The Influence of Families and Peers on Adolescent Religiousness," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 21.2 (2002), 109. Brenna Moore urges researchers to consider "what happens when we see friendship in particular as a real, if often overlooked, constituting force in the formation of religious sensibilities" alongside "discourse, society, and bodily practice." See Brenna Moore, "Friendship and the Cultivation of Religious Sensibilities," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 83. 2 (2015), 439.
[137] Christian Smith, Bridget Ritz and Michael Rotolo, *Religious Parenting: Transmitting Faith and Values in Contemporary America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 156-7.

should "primarily be a practice-centered process, not chiefly a didactic teaching program." The parents believed that once children become teenagers, "parents must adjust their requirements to allow [the teenagers] as self-directed individuals to make 'informed' religious decisions for themselves."[138] In my own research, I was unable to hear from Egyptian parents, but my interlocutors' reflections on how they were raised point to a similar pattern.

With the exception of a few individuals, almost all of my interviewees said that they were part of an "typical family" (*usra 'adiyya*) that practiced traditional Egyptian Islam.[139] When I asked them to explain what that means, they usually said that their parents "did the basics," and that they did not coerce them into doing anything when it came to religious practice. More often than not, the mother was more practicing than the father. Some parents brought their children Qur'an tutors to help them memorize and recite chapters of the book. Other children went to mosques to study with shaykhs or lay preachers, both female and male. An interesting feature shared by many of my interlocutors' parents and grandparents is their love for Shaykh Muhammad Mitwalli al-Sha'rawi (d. 1998), the late Azhari Qur'an exegete whose lessons are still broadcast on Egyptian national and satellite TV channels every Ramadan and every Friday. Al-Sha'rawi, too, was a quintessential—almost ritualistic—part of the fabric of traditional Egyptian Islam. The first rung of religious education is mostly ritual practice and essentials of the faith, which parents modeled for their children. This notion of growing up in a "traditional," "typically religious family" was ubiquitous, and to illustrate this, I share snippets of various interviews below before examining their implications.

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[138] Smith, Ritz and Rotolo, *Religious Parenting*, 179.

[139] My interlocutors are not referring to *taqlidi*, i.e., the traditionalist scholarly trend of understanding of Islam, which Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905), an Azhari scholar and reformer challenged and urged scholars to reexamine the Islamic texts and independently arrive at religious rulings that suited the time and society in which they found themselves (i.e. conduct *ijtihad*). See Indira Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism: Al-Azhar and the Evolution of Modern Sunni Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

‘Aziza: I grew up partially in Saudi Arabia. I was born there and lived there until I was ten… So it was pretty much your typical conservative, Islamic environment. In Saudi, my mom was a Qur’an teacher and was influenced by how religion was perceived in Saudi … I spent my summers in Egypt, and we used to go to a mosque for [Islamic] lessons … When I moved to Cairo, I went to an Islamic school. There was nothing really special about it except that everyone was veiled, and it was segregated [i.e. not co-ed]. But for religion, we took whatever the governmental curriculum was … I wore hijab when I was eleven, the day after I got my period. Not because I was forced to but because that’s how I was raised. That was the *natural* thing to do. I also had close friends who were from religious families, and that’s what they did… I didn’t have any influences that told me otherwise … I wasn’t bothered by it … The rest of my extended family on my dad’s side, they're *normal*. They are religious in that religion is an important part of their life. The women are veiled. But not in the formally educated way that my mom was. And definitely not Salafi. They're not strict (*mutashaddidin*) at all.[140]

Inas: I come from a traditional Egyptian family. I wouldn’t call it religious. They are traditional in terms of being practicing: they pray, they don’t drink alcohol, they respect the Qur’an and prophets ... They [believe, like] Egyptian society, that modesty is good, premarital sex is not an option and even dating and stuff like that. Modesty is good, but my mother did not wear hijab. I wore it first. [My parents] respect religious people... They might not choose to be close friends with religious people, because people usually stick to those who are more like them … I'm trying to give you material about what I mean by a traditional Egyptian family. We all pray, all fast. But they didn’t, for example, make me learn Qur’an by heart other than what I learned on my own or took at school … Their religious knowledge comes from Shaykh Sha‘rawi and TV ... They definitely are not very comfortable with *niqab*, but they don’t hate or disrespect it.[141]

Mawadda: My mom grew up religious. Her family was always religious—practicing. They grew up praying and fasting. It’s so funny; they used to say that my mom was the first one to wear the veil [*muhajjaba*] in the ‘70s… My mom was born in 1952. So, I think around 1970, she decided to wear the hijab, and they called her the first *muhajjaba* in Egypt [laughs]. Which is not true, but for someone in the middle class, it was. Because no one ever wore the hijab ... So she’s always grown up with an appreciation—there was more of a daily Islam. Versus my dad and his family. They were ultimate seculars, I guess you could say, with their politics and how they view the world, in that religion has no place in the world except in your heart. That’s what I mean by ultimate secular. And so, my dad grew up a completely different lifestyle than my mom.[142]

Bahir: My parents are religious (*mutadayyinin*). My father’s family is actually known for being religious. My grandfather was Azhari. My mother’s family had, what she calls, a “natural instinct” to ask questions about religion (*din*). For example, she was the first in her family to start praying. Her father was embarrassed that she started praying before he did and started to pray. This is what I grew up in … So, you can say that this was

[140] ‘Aziza, Interview by author, Connecticut, February 2018 (in English).
[141] Inas, Interview by author, Cairo, March 2018 (in English).
[142] Mawadda, Interview by author, Cairo, February 2018 (in English).

> moderate Islam (*al-Islam al-wasati*), as they call it in Egypt, meaning: I memorized a good amount of the Qur'an; I went to an Islamic school … but nothing more. You know right from wrong (*sah wa ghalat*), and that's it. I stayed this way, in this range, and it didn't change until the revolution.[143]

My interviewees suggested that the type of Islam their parents practiced was novel to Egypt. This leads me to believe that the patterns they observed in their parents' religious observance came about as a result of the Islamic Awakening of the 1970s. Gregory Starrett's book, *Putting Islam to Work*, analyzes the state's use of religious education in Egyptian schools to shape the mind and culture of the Egyptian citizen. It also offers glimpses into what religious practice of Muslim Egyptians looked like from the 1940s into the early 1990s. One of Starrett's older interviewees, Samia, explained that when she went to school in the 1940s, European influence was heavy in Egypt: "You must understand that in my generation my country was trying to practice European education and European *tarbiya* [upbringing], thinking that this might be the better way to do it, what they called the modern way."[144] The hijab was still a foreign practice to Samia when she was growing up. She continued:

> We would never wear very short dresses, of course, or anything without sleeves, but neither did we think of covering our faces or our hair; this was the time when women were taking off their *higab*, which really refers to the veil over the face, although they now call it *niqab*. In school we learned the Qur'an and Hadiths, and *adab* [manners or how to comport one's self]; that's what they called *tarbiya islamiyya* then. And also at that time, the teacher would tell us that we should cover our heads, but unfortunately nobody heeded her.[145]

The ritual practices of Islam, however, were widely observed and passed down from parents to children, but they were seen as the "only way to raise children." Like my interlocutors, Samia learned about Islam through observing her parents:

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[143] Bahir, Interview by author, Cairo, February 2018.
[144] Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 99.
[145] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 99.

> I grew up in a house where I saw my parents fasting and praying, and I learned from that. My parents were raising me without having to say that it was Islamic education. Now, when I'm raising Nadia [her daughter], I have to be sure that what I'm doing is Islamic. When I was a girl the only alternative [the European way] was new, and was considered a shame, like wearing sleeveless dresses. My parents still talked about things being permitted [*halal*] and forbidden [*haram*]. We weren't allowed to have friendships between men and women.[146]

Samia pointed to the difference between the public domain—i.e. school in 1940s Egypt—that was infiltrated by European practices and ideals and the private domain of the home that focused on Islamic education. For Samia, the latter took the form of "bodily function, disposition, and display," like gender segregation, clothing (modesty but without veiling) and other "outward and visible signs of a socially unobjectified Islam."[147] Samia, a middle class woman, did not come to discover "the spiritual significance of religion" until the 1970s after performing the *hajj*.

These patterns are all true for my interlocutors' parents as well. Unlike Samia, they came of age around the time that the Islamic Awakening began and observed their parents practicing religion more openly and visibly. Some of the parents, as I will show later, traveled to Saudi Arabia in the 1970s and 1980s and came back with strict understandings of Islam—as opposed to the "moderate" (*wasati*) Egyptian Islam—and that influenced how they displayed public piety and how they raised their children.[148] These practices came into stark contrast with what some

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[146] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 99. Samia's delving deeper into Islamic education and her wanting to know what is considered Islamically permissible or not rather than taking the older generation's word for it can be seen as a form of "authentication" as Deeb describes it. Deeb finds a similar pattern among her older interlocutors in Beirut, Lebanon. Deeb writes, "As Hajjeh Khadija noted, 'becoming religious' involved more than faith in the fundaments of religion, and more than the fulfillment of practices like prayer and fasting. It included both social relations and religious understanding and knowledge. The latter was both necessary in order to practice Islam correctly and an essential part of authenticated Islam in its own right. The importance of religious understanding also had to do with pious Shi'i notions of what it means to be a modern person." Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*, 222-3.

[147] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 100.

[148] This is understood as an Islam of moderation, mainly one without coercion and without implementing what some Egyptians might view as practices imported from Saudi Arabia, which was for a long time viewed as religiously conservative—though this seems to be shifting under Muhammad ibn Salman, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. This moderate (*wasati*) understanding is not to confused with the *Wasati* school of legal reform, in which advocates call for a return to the foundational Islamic texts for religious rulings rather than rely on interpretations and opinions of Muslim scholars of the past (*taqlid*). See Aria Nakissa, *The Anthropology of Islamic Law: Education, Ethics, and Legal Interpretation at Egypt's Al-Azhar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), chapter 10.

people like Samia called European influences. Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949), the schoolteacher who founded the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, lamented the licentious aspects of British culture that infiltrated Egypt under the occupation in the 1920s and 1930s. He thus started the Brotherhood to "improv[e] piety and promot[e] the call of Islam and its manifestation in Egyptian society."[149] Al-Banna's vision and project were able to penetrate already existing networks in mosques and in cities and villages. The group also started various welfare projects, broadening its support base in the process. The Brotherhood focused on *da'wa* (calling people—back—to God). For al-Banna, the British brought with them "morally deviant" practices, which Egyptian Muslims adopted, and dangerous ideologies like secularism, which Muslim-majority states like Egypt espoused. Secularism relegates religion to the private realm, "while al-Banna instead sought to encourage Islamic resurgence in all aspects of life, and especially in the public realm."[150]

One can find manifestations of these "European-inspired" behaviors in Egyptian cinema from the 1930s onward, when one would be hard-pressed to find women in hijab or anyone taking a moment to perform their daily prayers on the silver screen. In fact, if there was a religious figure in any film, it was usually an Azhari shaykh officiating a wedding or teaching Arabic. He would be shown speaking awkwardly in standard Arabic that no one could understand and was there usually for comic relief.[151] Likewise, President Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir (r.

[149] Beverley Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Arab Spring and Its Future Face* (London: Routledge, 2016), 15. See also Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), and Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
[150] Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 16-17.
[151] Walter Armbrust argues that this trope of parodying Azhari students and shaykhs was common in Egyptian films from the 1930s to the 1980s. Walter Armbrust, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University press, 1996), 56-57. His findings are interesting in contradistinction to the findings Lila Abu-Lughod presents about the presence and utility of religion in state television in the 1980s and 1990s used to fashion and edify Egyptian citizens. See Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood*, chapter seven.

1956-1970) was known to poke fun at visible signs of religiosity like the veil. In one well-circulated video, he recounted a meeting with a Muslim Brotherhood leader in which the leader asked him to mandate the veil in Egypt. Nasir argued with the man that veiling should be a personal matter to be handled in the privacy of one's home. When the man resisted, Nasir then retorted that the man himself had a daughter who was not veiled. "If you cannot get your one daughter to wear the veil, do you expect me to force ten million women to veil on my own?" Nasir asked rhetorically, as his audience in the large auditorium laughed and cheered loudly.[152]

The Islamic Awakening of the 1970s onward changed many of these attitudes for a great number of Egyptians. It is these changed attitudes that my interlocutors called traditional Egyptian Islam, a term I had not heard before I started conducting my interviews. I was aware that there was an understanding that Egyptians are "a religious people by nature" who practiced moderate Islam, but this particular phrase was new to me. The Islam practiced by the parents of my interlocutors, which they later passed down to their children, was one that was built largely around the first rung of religious education: the ritual, the physical. Traditional Egyptian Islam is synonymous, to my interlocutors, with the basic tenets of Islamic practice and faith. It usually appeared in opposition to an imported, Saudi Arabian Islam that seemed foreign (again, at least initially) to many of the people I spoke to. For example, various interlocutors noted that their parents and extended family appreciated the veil but not the face-veil, with some being openly hostile to the practice.[153] But again, the main idea is that one does the basics and *not* by coercion.

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[152] "Egyptian Leader Gamal Abdel Nasser Laughing at Hijab Requirement in 1958 (Subtitled), YouTube video, December 13, 2015, 2:12, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZIqdrFeFBk, accessed February 14, 2020. See also, Ola Salem, "What Westerners get wrong about the hijab," *The Washington Post*, August 17, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2018/08/17/what-westerners-get-wrong-about-the-hijab/, accessed February 14, 2020.

[153] The face-veil was not imported from Saudi Arabia. We know that upper-class Egyptian women used to wear it and eventually rebelled against it in early twentieth-century Egypt, as Huda Sha'rawi (d. 1947) famously did. See her memoir: Huda Shaarawi, *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924)*, trans. Margot

Al-Azhar's Role

Al-Azhar is a mosque-university complex established by the Fatimids who came to rule Egypt in the tenth century. Since its inception in 972, al-Azhar has held an important social, religious and political role in Egyptian history. Since then, its influence has waxed and waned with the changes in government; its autonomy depends on several factors, including the ruler's attitude toward the *'ulama*, its financial independence from the state and, later, the arrival of Islamist contenders on the political arena. Modernization efforts by Muhammad 'Ali (r.1805 – 1848), the nineteenth-century self-proclaimed Khedive of Egypt, and later by Nasir, dealt a heavy blow to the institution's autonomy. As Malika Zeghal shows, historically, the ruling elites of Egypt looked to al-Azhar for legitimation, but they curbed the institution's influence.[154] Under Nasir, al-Azhar helped legitimize socialism and Arab nationalism.[155] According to Majida Rabi', Nasir's vision for al-Azhar consisted of four functions: to legitimize and give support to the goals of the 1952 Revolution, which he headed; to give credence to Nasir's regime and portray it as non-secular; to mobilize people in support of the regime; and to call for resistance against Israel.[156]

Nasir took drastic measures to curb the autonomy of al-Azhar and other religious institutions like Dar al-Ifta, the state's official source of religious opinions (*fatwa*s), and office of the Mufti. Nasir seized religious endowments (*awqaf*) designated to fund charitable causes (as

Badran (London: Virago, 1986); and Leila Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence from the Middle East to America* (London: Yale University Press, 2011).

[154] Malika Zeghal, "Religion and Politics in Egypt: The Ulema of al-Azhar, Radical Islam and the State (1952–94)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31:3 (1999), 371–99. See also Gesink, *Islamic Reform*; and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: Muftis and Fatwas and Dār al-Iftā'* (New York: Brill, 1997).

[155] Tamir Moustafa, "Conflict and Cooperation between the State and Religious Institutions in Contemporary Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 32 (2000), 7.

[156] Majida 'Ali Salih Rabi', *Al-dawr al-siyasi li al-Azhar, 1952-1981* (Cairo: Markaz al-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya, 1992), 114.

Muhammad ‘Ali had done more than a century before him),[157] personally appointed the head of al-Azhar, eliminated Shari‘a courts, turned Azhari scholars into salaried employees who depended on the state for their livelihood, and passed a law that reformed al-Azhar in a way that stripped it of what little independence it had left.[158] More importantly, Nasir nationalized al-Azhar itself in 1961, making it an arm of the state and effectively confirming the “circumscription of the authority of the Shaykh al-Azhar.”[159] Sadat who came to power after Nasir did not try to overturn these reforms since he stood to benefit from them.[160] He was known as the Believer President (*al-Ra’is al-Mu’min*), and he used this image to his advantage.[161] Like Nasir, he used al-Azhar to legitimize his rule, call for the opposition to Israel and spread the values of Islam. He also managed to secure *fatwa*s that justified overturning Nasir’s land-reform policies, while legitimating his own economic liberalization policies that neutralized leftist remnants of the Nasir regime.[162] Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen shows that the *‘ulama* of al-Azhar inevitably became part of the bureaucracy of the state and were “charged with the task of defending it,” and their ability to express opposition became limited. Due to the increasing institutionalization of al-Azhar, the scholars therein could no longer claim “neutrality or stand aloof”; both the government and the Islamists, according to Skovgaard-Petersen, forced them “into the government’s camp.”[163]

[157] Moustafa, “Conflict and Cooperation,” 5.
[158] Rabi‘, *Al-dawr al-siyasi*, 167-8. See also chapter 6 in Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam*; and Zeghal, “Religion and Politics,” 373.
[159] Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam*, 186.
[160] Rabi‘, *Al-dawr al-siyasi*, 167-8; and Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam*, 199.
[161] Zeghal demonstrates that Sadat used the ulama to isolate his leftist opponents left over from the Nasir era. See Zeghal, “Religion and Politics,” 381; and Malika Zeghal, *Gardiens de l’Islam: les oulémas d’al-Azhar dans l’Egypte contemporaine* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1996).
[162] Moustafa, “Conflict and Cooperation,” 7.
[163] Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam*, 225.

Zeghal writes that the modernization policies of Nasir and Sadat had unintended consequences: instead of weakening al-Azhar, the reforms ironically strengthened it. Although the modernization policies were supposed to be accompanied by secularization, they ultimately encouraged scholars to "re-emerge on the political and social scene."[164] Nasir created a state-controlled monopoly over religion, which rendered Azhari scholars submissive, but it also planted the seeds for the *'ulama*'s political involvement in the 1970s. The political and economic liberalization that came about as a result of Sadat's Open-Door Policy (*Infitah*) allowed for new and old Islamist movements (like the Brotherhood) to appear on the political scene, some of them espousing violence as a means of overthrowing the government.[165] This political vision differed from the historically submissive character of Azhari officials and "pushed the religious institution into the political arena, to take part in the public debates raised by this new kind of political behavior."[166] However, Zeghal notes that Azhari *'ulama* split with regards to politics: those who played a role in politics in an official capacity (like Shaykh al-Azhar and the Mufti), and the "peripheral *'ulama*" who distanced themselves from the official actions and pronouncements of al-Azhar, like Shaykh al-Sha'rawi, who I turn to shortly. The officials like Shaykh al-Azhar were surrounded by other Azhari employees who also usually complied with state policy. The periphery, which emerged in the 1980s, was much more diverse. Though peripheral *'ulama* usually stuck to preaching, they "generally show[ed] affinities with the ideology of the Muslim Brothers, but they [we]re scattered throughout the structure of the religious institution and [we]re not sociologically homogeneous."[167]

[164] Zeghal, "Religion and Politics," 373.
[165] Such as those who assassinated Sadat on October 6, 1981 during a military parade. See Zeghal, "Religion and Politics," 382.
[166] Zeghal, "Religion and Politics," 382.
[167] Zeghal, "Religion and Politics," 386.

Under Mubarak in the 1990s, al-Azhar was more autonomous than it had been in previous decades. Scholars hypothesize that because of increasing religious violence, Mubarak needed al-Azhar to counterbalance the Islamists who sought to overthrow the government through violent means. Al-Azhar bolstered its influence and won concessions from the government "by forming loose alliances with state officials sympathetic" to its interests.[168] Al-Azhar was able to condemn "radical Islam in exchange for more power."[169] By that time, however, it was too late; al-Azhar's history of subservience had already done its damage to the institution's reputation.[170] Al-Azhar's loss of autonomy came at a price: loss of legitimacy with some of the Egyptian populace.[171] People knew, however, that scholars at al-Azhar were and are not all of one mind and that the institution is not a monolith, so some people still respected the peripheral *'ulama* rather than the officials.

Muhammad Mitwalli al-Sha'rawi (d. 1998) is one such peripheral *'alim* who is a symbol of Egyptian Muslim piety and a staple in almost every religious household in Egypt. For decades, his Qur'anic exegesis shows have played on television every Friday and every day during Ramadan. His style of preaching is iconic. Sitting cross-legged on a simple chair in a large mosque in his long traditional dress (*jalabiyya*) and white skullcap, al-Sha'rawi preached to hundreds of followers who often finished his sentences for him, and who often were moved to glorify God whenever he said something that touched them. Zeghal writes, "Sha'rawi is a comedian in his charming way. He laughs, grimaces, moves around, shifts intonations, speaks in

[168] Moustafa, "Conflict and Cooperation," 3. See also Zeghal, *Gardiens de l'Islam*; and Zeghal, "Religion and Politics."
[169] Zeghal, "Religion and Politics,"396.
[170] Moustafa, "Conflict and Cooperation," 10.
[171] The state then turned to the more moderate Brotherhood to counterbalance the extremists. The Brotherhood renounced violence and "pledged to work within the political system for moderate Islamic reform." In return, the government allowed the group to run for and acquire seats in parliament. See Moustafa, "Conflict and Cooperation," 16.

a colloquial dialect. He involves his audience, which confirms what he says by making affirmative exclamations or by repeating what he says."[172] His popularity, Sherine Hamdy notes, lies in his ability to "connect with the 'common people." She writes:

> He has been perceived as one who would 'reawaken the people' to the call to Islam and reinvigorate society with a devotion to faith that would cure all contemporary ills: corruption, crime, dishonesty, greed, the disintegration of the family, godlessness, political instability. To these ills, Sha'rawi consistently offered exceedingly simple solutions: turn to the Qur'an, devote yourself to God, follow the teachings of the Prophet.[173]

Apart from al-Sha'rawi's ability to make the Qur'an more intelligible and relevant to his listeners, he is often remembered for speaking out against those in power, particularly his opposition to Nasir and Mubarak. In fact, when he opposed Nasir on certain issues, he was sent into exile. Sadat, however, brought him back to Egypt and appointed him minister of religious endowments (*awqaf*).[174] Hamdy further argues that al-Sha'rawi's "devotees often contrasted him with state-appointed muftis, whom they described as government employees who went so far as to 'sell the religion' in order to facilitate the aims of the government."[175]

This is a sentiment most of my interlocutors and their parents shared. Inas, a social scientist and mother of three, for example, told me that Sha'rawi specifically "was not a contested fellow." Even as a child and teenager, Inas understood that "there's a lot of politics related to al-Azhar, that Shaykh al-Azhar might not be able to conflict with the government in terms of financial *fatwa*s related to interest or *fatwa*s that have any political implications … But we used to have a lot more consensus [about the *'ulama*] than we have now." People like Inas's

[172] Zeghal, *Gardiens de l'Islam*, 205.
[173] Hamdy, *Our Bodies Belong to God*, 117.
[174] Hamdy, *Our Bodies Belong to God*, 116. Zeghal does not say that Sha'rawi went into exile. She mentions that he went to Saudi Arabia and Algeria to help develop the countries' Arabic curricula. Zeghal, *Gardiens de l'Islam*, 204-5.
[175] Hamdy, *Our Bodies Belong to God*, 117. Many also credit him with inspiring Egyptian female actresses, dancers and singers to "give up their arts, repent and don the hijab." Zeghal, *Gardiens de l'Islam*, 210.

father remember when al-Sha'rawi stood on stage next to Mubarak and told him to rule his people justly.[176] "This made people feel safe," Inas recounted. Al-Sha'rawi had "a sort of independence, and his credibility comes from him being truthful and sincere and not just a government follower."[177] Many of my interlocutors, as will be seen in later chapters, used this terminology of "sellers of religion" (*tujjar al-din*) for preachers and shaykhs who disappointed them by siding with the government in the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings. Al-Sha'rawi was not one of them.

The people I worked with explained that they understood the fraught political history of al-Azhar but realized that the scholars within it were not all of one mind. Shaykh al-Sha'rawi was a household name in Egypt for his simplicity and ability to reach the masses but also for not succumbing to the dictates of the Egyptian state. Later, after witnessing how some Azhari officials used their religious authority and pulled evidence from the Qur'an and *sunna* to support the Egyptian state's stance during the 2011 uprisings, many of my interlocutors told me that they now ask for *fatwa*s from al-Azhar only on every day social and ritual matters but not on political issues. To show the extent of his disappointment in religious figures, in fact, one of my interlocutors told me, "I used to believe in al-Sha'rawi, but even this was shaken. I started to see him as a TV personality." What would al-Sha'rawi have done, how would he have reacted, if he was alive to witness the 2011 uprising? Kinan asked me.[178]

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[176] In 1995, after Mubarak was almost assassinated during a trip to Ethiopia, a large group of religious leaders came together to celebrate Mubarak's narrow escape, but al-Sha'rawi stood on stage next to him and gave a short speech about Allah being the ultimate King who gives and takes power to and from whomever He wills. He then laid a hand on Mubarak's shoulder while leaning on his staff with the other hand, and said to Mubarak, "If you are our [the Egyptian people's] fate, then may Allah grant you success. And if we are your fate, then may Allah help you bear it." "Al sharawi & Hosni Mubarak in Egypt," YouTube video, January 31, 2011, 3:16, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ySK_Tmm-bQ, accessed December 31, 2019; and Bradley Hope, "Mubarak Told to Go Now or They Will Kill You," *The National*, February 10, 2013.
[177] Inas, Interview by author.
[178] Kinan, Interview by author, Cairo, March 2018.

Islam in School

The first place many of these young people came across institutionalized Islam was in school. Some of them went to gender-segregated Islamic schools, where girls had veil at a certain age and students had to memorize more Qur'an than their counterparts in other schools.

Lin was the only one I spoke to who had a traditional Azhari education all her life. She ended up working at the institution as a translator for al-Azhar's international outreach programs. Her Azhari education left a profound mark on her understanding of Islam. "School gave us the complete, pure source of information that is not tainted by custom or culture or *'ayb* and *haram*," categories that she said her parents conflated to get her and her siblings to act in line with social norms and mores (i.e. according to the social-moral rather than the religious rubric). "My siblings and I stood up to my parents when it came to *'ayb* [socially unacceptable] and *haram* [Islamically forbidden] and what the difference between the two is. So our religious education came from our studies."[179]

I got a glimpse into what it means to be enrolled in an Azhar school in Cairo from Lin.[180] Like others who were enrolled in Islamic schools, Lin and her classmates primarily learned more Qur'an than their counterparts in public Egyptian schools. Additionally, the veil became part of the uniform for female students by fourth grade, but this did not affect Lin's decision to wear the veil. "When we went home, we would take it off and go run in the streets and play. All summer long, we wore whatever we wanted." Once her friends started to reach the age of puberty, Lin recalled, their parents often forced them to wear the veil in and outside of school, thus reinforcing the rules of the Azhari school in their children's everyday lives. Lin's parents never pressured her to wear it, though they did encourage her to. And so she did, even if begrudgingly:

[179] Lin, Interview by author, Cairo, April 2018 (in English).
[180] For an ethnography of Azhar classes for adults, see Nakissa, *The Anthropology of Islamic Law.*

> My parents let me do whatever I wanted, but my mom pressured me a bit and told me that she really wanted me to veil and gradually pulled me toward that. She told me to first start wearing short sleeves and no swimsuit or swimsuit with shorts or pants then something over the swimsuit [laughs], long sleeves. Then I found that it's all downhill from here, so I decided to just wear it [laughs]. Either way I am not wearing what I want to.[181]

"So that was my hijab story," Lin concluded, even though I did not ask her for a hijab story. This is again representative of the widely held perception that the veil is central to and a demarcation of Muslim female religious subjectivity. I argue later in the dissertation that this is no longer what many of my interlocutors believe today. In fact, many of Lin's friends who were forced to veil by their parents are now taking it off or continue to wear it "but are no longer religious."[182]

I heard a similar story from Iman, an elementary school teacher who lives in an upscale Cairene neighborhood, who, as a child, attended and now teaches at a school established by members of the Muslim Brotherhood. As mentioned earlier, al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, sought to call Muslims "back" to God, especially in the wake of the British occupation. He and his followers did this through various networks: mosques, charity organizations and schools. Al-Banna, himself an educator, believed that his Islamist project had to start gradually (from the bottom-up) with education. He was a critic of the national schooling system, which he believed was established by the British and French occupations and did not foster a love of or loyalty for fellow Muslims and the Muslim nation (*umma*). To that end, al-Banna devised an educational method that not only taught students the Qur'an and *sunna* but taught them to let what they learned inform how they acted and interacted with everything in the world around them.[183] Some Brotherhood members sought to establish a political party, but al-

[181] Lin, Interview by author.
[182] Lin, Interview by author.
[183] 'Ali 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud, *Wasa'il al-tarbiya 'ind al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (Mansura: Dar al-Wafa, 1990), 52-53. See also Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 63.

Banna was not amenable to the idea (nor was he entirely against it), because he worried that the focus on *da'wa* would be muddled or overshadowed by political ambition.[184]

The organization's social project to mold the minds of young and old alike, however, played a role in the lives of some of my interlocutors. When I spoke to Iman in an upscale café in the outskirts of Cairo, she was too afraid of talking about politics. She instead reflected on the methods used by the Brotherhood-leaning school she taught at and on how its methods were emblematic of how the Brotherhood understands *da'wa*.[185] She argued that the Brotherhood puts more emphasis on making *da'wa*, i.e. teaching others any cursory fact one knows, than on studying something in depth. Originally, she explained, the term referred to proselytizing those outside the faith. It was the Brotherhood that came up with the idea that one could make *da'wa* to another Muslim, she claimed. And they did this in school, especially by focusing on appearance and by painting obedience to God (*ta'a*) as something that Muslims do happily especially when it is difficult. Encouraging young girls to wear the veil is one such thing. They throw "hijab parties" for those who wear the veil and use slogans like, "In your hijab, you are a queen (*bi-hijabik anti malika*)," and "In your hijab, you are free (*bi-hijabik anti hurra*)." These phrases are problematic, Iman ultimately argued.

The young women were not free or happy but were taught to think that way because of the notion that seeking God's pleasure makes one happy. The Brotherhood used peer pressure to

[184] Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 19.

[185] Beginning in 2013, after Mursi's overthrow, the Egyptian government clamped down on schools with alleged ties to the Brotherhood. Newspaper articles listed the schools by name across governorates. See, for instance, "Al-Dustur fi madaris al-Ikhwan: 'Tahya Misr' tahzim 'Quwwa.. 'azima.. iman," *Al-Dustur*, December 31, 2017, https://www.dostor.org/2007676, accessed December 23, 2019; "Nanshur qa'ima bi-asma al-87 madrasa al-tabi'a li-jama'at al-Ikhwan al-mutahaffaz 'alayha.. Wa Abu al-Nasr yu'akkid 'azl mudiriha 'al-Ikhwan," *Al-Ahram*, December 31, 2013, http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/437404.aspx, accessed December 23, 2019; Rasha al-Tahtawi, "Ba'd riqabat 'al-ta'lim': Madaris al-Ikhwan… 'Am min 'al-ishraf 'ala waraq' (Tahqiq)," *Al-Masry al-Youm*, January 10, 2015, https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/626218, accessed December 23, 2019. See also Steven Brooke, "Egypt," in *Rethinking Political Islam*, eds. Shadi Hamid and William McCants (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 24-25.

reinforce this way of thinking, Iman continued. They teach people to lean on others to be obedient to God collectively—i.e. by being part of a *suhba*. This type of reliance on community is precarious and can have consequences on one's psyche if one falls out of the group, which is what happened to many youth after the uprisings.[186] Iman explained:

> They say to you, 'I need to recharge myself, and in order to do so, I have to sit with people…' But the idea is that everyone around you is like you, so you do this because everyone is doing it. It is not that you have strong principles that you cling to, that if you leave the community you will not be affected. I saw people like this. In appearance, they dressed a certain way and as soon as they left [the group], they took it [hijab] off.[187]

The focus on appearance and groupness, Iman laments, rather than on conviction and understanding of rites and deeds done for God are a flaw in the way Brotherhood loyalists teach Islam to the students in the schools they run. She also criticized the Brotherhood for failing to teach an "authenticated" Islam based on specialized knowledge of the religion and its teachings.

Habiba experienced this Brotherhood-style *da'wa* at home, as a member of a "Muslim Brotherhood family" (*'a'ila Ikhwaniyya*). At home, almost all of their discussions were about matters of religion. They prayed together and discussed the verses that were read during prayer. A shaykh came to their home to teach the Qur'an to Habiba and her brothers. Like Iman, Habiba learned growing up that "hijab is something that is taken for granted, that all of us, at a certain age will have to wear it."[188] Her parents posted accountability charts on the wall, and each time she and her siblings prayed or did a good deed, they got a smiley face. "So one always held one's self accountable," she said. Her parents taught her and her siblings that their entire lives should revolve around God's pleasure, but they never forced their children to do something they did not

[186] In chapter five, I relay the story of Zaynab al-Mahdi who was a supporter of the Brotherhood. She became depressed after the 2013 Rabi'a Massacre and took off the veil, began asking existential questions, grew distant from the group, and eventually committed suicide when no one in the group offered her support.
[187] Iman, Interview by author, Cairo, January 2019.
[188] Habiba, Interview by author, Cairo, April 2018.

want to. But religion was the only way Habiba connected with her parents, particularly her father, a self-educated religious speaker. Her brothers clashed with their parents on theological matters, and all the while, Habiba said, "I wholeheartedly believed that my parents were right. I idealized my parents."

Eventually, however, Habiba, too, came to disagree with her father on certain matters that he discussed during his well-attended Islamic courses. Habiba had attended these courses for many years to the point where she "practically memorized" their contents. "At some point," she recalled, "all the things he said became total nonsense to me. And this shook me and my relationship with him." Because the foundation of her connection to her father was religion, this shocked her father as well. "So, when I was no longer convinced by his thought, he felt that I no longer liked him as a person. This is a crisis for me now."[189]

For years, her parents' understanding of Islam shaped Habiba's worldview, but now that this connection is being challenged, Habiba is having a difficult time discerning what her relationship to her parents has become. Although her parents never forced her to live a certain way, they used the same type of parental and peer pressure that Iman argued is used by Brotherhood-run schools, i.e. "emotional pressure" (*daght nafsi*). For example, Habiba explained that her parents said things like, "I do not agree, but ok; you are free to do whatever, but God will not be pleased with you. Or bless you." Fear of disappointing her parents and/or God pushed her to take certain actions like wearing the veil. "My father always made comments about what I wore," Habiba told me. "He always felt that my clothes—I dressed modestly, not lengthy dresses [Saudi-Arabian-style black '*abaya*], but, well—I dressed modestly. But my father always commented if something got a bit shorter or pants got whatever, and this really choked me

[189] Habiba, Interview by author.

[*khanaqani*]."[190] Her family made appearance-based "judgments," and before Habiba began to question the Islam her parents taught her growing up, she, too, used to partake in passing judgments about people who did not conform to her family's understanding of what it meant to be a practicing Muslim.[191] "Now, in family gatherings," Habiba confessed, "I cannot do it, because it is centered around talking about people who are falling out of religion or facing trials in life [*fitna*] and learning from what is happening to them … [This kind of talk] pushes me further away." This change in her understanding of Islam has caused a sizable rift between Habiba and her family today and has shaped how she thinks about raising her own daughter.

As illustrated above, al-Banna's vision for religious education is implemented by Muslim Brotherhood families and schools, but a few of my interlocutors also talked about how they willingly worked toward becoming members of the group themselves, whether through its programs at mosques or student movements and social activities on college campuses. Tamir, a political scientist, grew up learning the Qur'an with a shaykh at home, but once he became a teenager, he felt that he outgrew the shaykh and began searching for another source of religious knowledge. This is when he joined a Qur'an study circle at a mosque and eventually found out that the leader of the group was a member of the Brotherhood. And so began his journey into the tiered rungs of Brotherhood membership, which he carefully walked me through.[192] Part of the allure of the organization for him was its political activism, and it was when Tamir disagreed with the Brotherhood on political issues after the 2011 uprising that he left it.[193]

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[190] Habiba, Interview by author. Interestingly, Iman used the same language when describing the young women at school as being "choked" by all the rules.

[191] One interlocutor who was once close to the Muslim Brotherhood told me that the organization has a list of good attributes that a devout Muslim should have.

[192] On the levels of membership in the Brotherhood, see Carrie Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 184-5.

[193] "The biggest unsettlement came with the revolution," Tamir explained. "It raised serious questions: What do these people [i.e. religious authorities] have to say about the revolution? Even the Muslim Brotherhood? So all

Prior to 2011, however, Tamir constantly—and sometimes inadvertently—came into contact with the Brotherhood; its members were everywhere he turned:

> Most of the activities I did growing up—I remember I wanted to do charity work when I was in middle and high school—most of the people I kept bumping into were Brotherhood [*Ikhwan*]. I had the feeling that whatever door I knocked on, the *Ikhwan* would open it. This was fate. There was a charity organization near where I live, and I found out that those in charge of it were *Ikhwan*. When I went to swim practice, the coach was *Ikhwan*. When I joined the boy scouts, the leader was *Ikhwan*. So there was a sector of the middle class that was religiously conservative, and the circles around it revolved around the *Ikhwan*.[194]

During his time at Cairo University, where he studied political science, Tamir also saw how politically active Brotherhood members were on campus, especially during the years when the Palestine crisis came into sharper focus with the Intifada and attacks on Gaza. It was political activism, not rituals, that shaped Tamir's relationship to Islam. "I like to pray and fast, but I don't like rituals all that much," he admitted. "The Islamic component in me has more to do with politics than ritual."

He shunned any religious group on campus that did not take an active role in social change. So, at the time, the Brotherhood fit the bill when it came to Tamir's political interests. In terms of religious knowledge, however, he, like Iman, believed that Muslim Brotherhood members and preachers did not have a deep understanding of the Islamic sciences. They did not even read the teachings of al-Banna, he said with a hint of surprise in his voice. They did not engage with the bigger questions in life and focused more on carrying out rituals and on matters of the heart. Their Islamic lessons eventually stopped affecting him personally, so he decided he had had enough. "I listened to the Friday sermon [every week], and it was the same stuff I heard growing up. It affected me when I was little, so why are you repeating it?" he asked rhetorically,

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traditional forms of religiosity were done to me. The revolution showed how these people, for 10-15 years, had been conning us in different ways."

[194] Tamir, Interview by author, Cairo, March 2018.

as he banged his fist on the desk that sat between us. He ultimately became bored of hearing the Brotherhood's rhetoric and that of other Islamic preachers. "I no longer felt things. Before, when I was younger, in middle and high school, I was moved. In college, there was boredom."[195] Emotionally and affectively, religious discourse stopped moving him, because he heard it repeated in so many contexts. The words lost their potency each time he heard them. He reached emotional fatigue as he became inundated with the same religious discourse over the years, and it stopped carrying any value for him eventually.

Tamir did not climb the rungs of the Brotherhood membership ladder and never cared to. There are five steps to becoming a full-fledged member, he explained, but he never got past the first one. Soon after the 2011 uprisings, he left the organization altogether. It was then, he said, sounding rather amused, that "I realized that I was not even a member. So nice of them [laughs]. I told them, okay, people, I no longer want to be here ... They told me, you are not a member anyway, so go ahead. We do not know you. I swear [laughs]. You come to break up with them and find there was no relationship to begin with."[196] Membership in the Brotherhood is either through lineage—if one wishes to remain a part of it—or by willingly joining it and going through the rungs of membership, which, as Tamir demonstrated, is no easy feat.

Coming into Their Own

As children grow older, they spend less time with family and more with friends who ultimately play "an increasingly important role in adolescent development," but one that is still subordinate to the family's influence, especially if it is "strongly religious."[197] The nature of the

[195] Tamir, Interview by author.
[196] Tamir, Interview by author.
[197] King, Furrow and Roth, "The Influence of Families," 110. See also Smith, Ritz and Rotolo, *Religious Parenting*, 6-7.

roles these two parties (family and friends) play on the adolescent's religiosity and notion of God, however, "is not clearly understood," though it is significant.[198] When they become emerging adults (between the ages of 18 and 25), youth "tend to question religiosity as they embark upon a deeper exploration of their spirituality in an inquisitive manner, and as a result, are likely to develop a more complex understanding of themselves and their beliefs."[199] Biologically, cognitively and psychologically more mature, young adults during college are more likely to think about larger and more abstract questions like the existence of God and of evil. At this age, they are able to connect emotionally to religious teachings and find solace in them during times of crisis.[200] Belief and faith remain intact, but studies suggest that "religious practices decline during emerging adulthood."[201] This is also when the influence of peers surpasses the influence of parents and other adults.

It was during their teenage and early adult years that my interlocutors began to learn about Islam on their own or from friends. At this age, they learned from preachers of various backgrounds like the *du'ah al-judud*, Salafis and Islamist groups like the Brotherhood. Those whose parents already taught them about religion started searching for an "authenticated" Islam, one that emphasized both the internal and external aspects of the religion.

Amani, an Egyptian artist based in New York, described a clear hierarchy of religious practice, especially in juxtaposition with the way she was raised. Her parents were traditional and not religious. They "practice what they inherited" from *their* parents. For Amani, true religiosity

[198] The article outlines two general ways of thinking about parental and peer influence on adolescents: social and communal ties and interactions (religious social capital approach) and "the effect of an individual's religiousness on another" (religious human capital approach). King, Furrow and Roth, "The Influence of Families," 110-6.
[199] Carolyn McNamara Barry, Larry Nelson, Sahar Davarya, and Shirene Urry, "Religiosity and Spirituality during the Transition to Adulthood," *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 34.4 (2010), 312.
[200] Barry et al., "Religiosity and Spirituality, 312.
[201] Barry et al., "Religiosity and Spirituality, 314.

is "a complete package with values."[202] When I pushed her to explain, she said that rituals and knowledge of the Islamic law (*fiqh*) that governs them are important aspects of being Muslim, again suggesting that one needs a deeper understanding of the rationale behind the teachings one follows. However, "one also has to work on one's self internally (*tasawwuf*)—i.e. [having] values and not lying, but at the same time, you do not hold grudges against people." Religiosity for Amani is both a purification of the self internally and a reflection of that purification onto the external world in how one deals with others. Developing the internal alone, however, is not enough. She explained: "You [must] spread the message and turn words into action one way or another. You can do good or develop your country, for example ... You must have a goal, a reason for being."[203] In her definition, a higher form of religiosity entails both working on ethically cultivating the self and towards the greater good of the community in which you find yourself.[204] Religiosity is about finding a place of belonging and putting your faith into practice in your everyday life.

Since her parents did not teach her about Islam, Amani learned from a friend at school. It was in middle school that her friend taught her how to pray. "I prayed, but I just prayed without understanding, without knowing why," Amani explained. "I prayed because we had to pray." Her decision to wear the veil was not influenced by her parents either. She was not convinced by the idea, but she liked the way she looked in the *hijab*.[205] "I wore it every Ramadan. So, one Ramadan, a friend and I decided that we were going to wear it and not take it off. And we did

[202] Amani, Interview by author, New York, February 2018.
[203] Amani, Interview by author.
[204] In the section about the *du'ah*, I explain how it was people like 'Amr Khalid and Moez Masoud who preached three goals for the worshipper, which Amani draws upon: Worshipping God, civilization-building, and purifying the self ('*ibadat Allah*, '*imarat al-ard*, *tazkiyat al-nafs*.)
[205] Amani took the veil off a few years before we met for this interview, but she did not bring it up or explain why, even though she talked about her reasons for veiling.

everything bad we wanted to do before *hijab*, because we [felt we] cannot do it after [laughs]."[206] Her understanding of the veil, at this point, was not steeped in the Islamic tradition yet—she was more concerned with peer pressure by copying her friend. However, she made a connection that echoes Mahmood's arguments about the imbrication of the internal and the external: for Amani, wearing the veil entailed not only covering her body but refraining from anything that she deemed sinful. Wearing the cloth around her head was not enough; she needed to embody the virtues that the *hijab* represented.

In my interviews, I never asked about the *hijab*, but it came up often for both men and women but especially for women.[207] Hadil's parents also did not teach her much about Islam. In fact, her upper-middle class Alexandrian family associated religion with the "lower class" and worried when Hadil became "religious or practicing." Wearing the latest fashions was a big deal to her family: "If you dress in an Islamic dress code, it's not socially acceptable... That reflected on their social image and status. So there was a lot of discouragement from observing religious dress codes when I was a teen, which I started doing when I was maybe fifteen."[208] Interestingly, it was during her time at a Catholic school in Alexandria that she sought to learn more about Islam, despite her family's opposition to her doing so.[209] At the school, her girl scout group felt that their school picked on anyone who was a practicing Muslim. The nuns cracked down on any girl who veiled or prayed in groups, which was a contradiction, Hadil reasoned, since the school

[206] Amani, Interview by author.
[207] This could be because of my own appearance, that since I am veiled, my interlocutors felt they needed to address the phenomenon of which my presence reminded them. Only one person brought up my veil and asked me about my motivations for wearing it which was uncomfortable for reasons I discuss later.
[208] Hadil, Interview by author, New York City, January 2018 (in English).
[209] On the history of Catholic schools in Cairo and Alexandria, see Frédéric Abécassis, "L'enseignement du français en Egypte dans les années 1920: une nébuleuse à plusieurs degrés de francité," *Documents pour l'histoire du français langue étrangère ou seconde,* 27 (2001): 1-13; Frédéric Abecassis, "Alexandrie, 1929," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée,* 67 (2003): 201-24; and Doha Chiha, "La francophonie en Egypte. Aperçu historique," *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études francaises*, 56 (2004), 69.

was all about discipline and teaching socially conservative habits. Praying together and dressing modestly, Hadil continued, were in line with the school's mission, "but it was leading to something else [i.e. Islam], so the school freaked out about it." Hadil and the group she was a part of ultimately felt responsible to "protect religion" in any way they could. For Hadil, this was an act of defiance against both her school and her parents.[210]

'A'isha wore the veil of her own accord when she was a teenager. This was the time (in the early 2000s) when she listened to new religious authorities like the *du'ah*. 'Amr Khalid had not yet reached celebrity status when she began listening to him. He was still preaching in middle and upper-middle class homes in 'A'isha's neighborhood and had not yet started appearing on TV. "He used to tell stories, talk about morals, etc.," but he did not issue religious edicts (*fatwa*s) or give listeners a grand plan for how to live their lives. At the same time, 'A'isha also listened to cassette tapes of lessons by Salafi shaykhs like Muhammad Hassan and Ishaq al-Huwayni, but still did not find the Islam she was looking for. "Al-Huwayni, I didn't like at all, because I felt he was too narrow-minded. His position on women in general was something that annoyed me. I felt also that he was—the audience he was addressing were [*sic*] also limited in their [*sic*] understanding of things, from a particular socioeconomic class that I couldn't relate to."[211] 'A'isha, in this brief statement, tied Salafism to a lower socioeconomic class that she could not understand. Her qualms with Salafism were thus not about the Salafi program (*manhaj*) of gaining Islamic knowledge (which I explore later) but with the off-the-cuff remarks some Salafi figures made about women's place in Islam and how these figures responded to crises, political or otherwise, that took place in the world around them.

[210] Hadil, Interview by author (in English).
[211] 'A'isha, Interview by author (in English).

‘A’isha thought deeply about political issues, and how religious scholars reacted to them. Again, religiosity in terms of individualistic faith and practice, i.e. purifying the heart internally and going through ritualistic motions, was not enough; one had to play a role in fixing the world around one’s self. Global politics mattered to ‘A’isha, and it was important to her that the religious figures she listened to champion the downtrodden and care about the same issues she did, especially in the early 2000s “[when] there was the [Palestinian] Intifada, 9/11, and the war on Iraq and Afghanistan.” ‘A’isha saw a disconnect between what the preachers taught people and the events on the ground: “They talked about things that have nothing to do with current events, with human values, with justice, with our roles as Muslims in what’s happening, the idea of *jihad*, and so on. So, for me, this discredited them, because I felt that you cannot be a scholar, and I could not see you as a role model (*qudwa*) … if you are not addressing these issues that are close to my heart.”[212] ‘A’isha decided to turn to the internet to seek answers, and the internet became “a way of learning about religion … from a different angle.”[213] In 2006, she enrolled in an elite Western university in Cairo, and this, she said, “opened up a new world” to her.[214]

Hasan, an entrepreneur, too, was exposed to various groups during college. He went in thinking that all Muslim Brothers “had beards and were terrorists, as they were portrayed in films,” he said, smiling. It was, in fact, the Salafis who sported long beards and not members of the Brotherhood.[215] He also noticed that charity work done on campus was used as a way of

[212] ‘A’isha, Interview by author.
[213] The traditional ways (through a religious institution and its scholars) of obtaining a *fatwa* are no longer the only means by which people can obtain a ruling. This online platform is successful since “there is a new audience for alternative Islamic opinion and interpretation, as well as the traditional articulation of religious values and understandings.” Al-Azhar itself and Dar al-Ifta, the Islamic arm of the Ministry of Justice in Egypt that produces *fatwa*s, now have online forums in which they answer people’s questions. Dar al-Ifta has a YouTube Channel with video responses to frequently asked questions. See Gary R. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (N.p.: Pluto Press, 2003), 135.
[214] ‘A’isha, Interview by author.
[215] In Egyptian cinema, beginning the 1980s, conservative Muslims were portrayed stereotypically as terrorists who sported large beards. Dale F. Eickelman, “Communication and control in the Middle East” in *New media in the*

drawing people into one Islamic group or another. These groups still focused on the minutiae of Islamic practice, and Hasan got roped into that for a period of time during college, "leaning toward the Salafi way."[216] During his last year in college, he learned of a group that found a middle path: it valued the charity work that the Brotherhood was known for but also held onto the importance of having knowledge of the Islamic sciences (*'ilm shar'i*), which Hasan said is important to Salafis. They were not stringent (*mutashaddidin*) or too lenient in their understanding of Islam. Hasan remembered it was particularly difficult for the group to meet while Mubarak was still in power. They had to meet in a different group member's home each time and had contingency plans:

> In case the security forces were watching, we would plan: what if someone gets caught? What will we say? We do not want them to think we are part of any group. Some people were picked up [by the police]. What should we do? We decided to take a few precautions. Hide this book, do this, that. All of this was before the revolution. When the revolution began, people started saying that the world will be their oyster, and Islamic work will be easier to do.[217]

Hasan and his group had hopes that they could meet in broad daylight "and release all that was suppressed all those years [under Mubarak]" after the uprising began in 2011. And for a couple of years, they could.[218]

Those who were already religiously inclined before they enrolled in universities, Western or otherwise, found likeminded people on campus and continued to be practicing Muslims. However, some people were exposed to controversial elements of Islamic political history, and this fostered some doubts. Hind, a marketing consultant for a pharmaceutical company, for

Muslim world, eds. Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 38. For Salafi debates on the length of the beard, see Rock-Singer, "Leading with a Fist."

[216] Hasan, Interview by author, Cairo, January 2019 (in Arabic).

[217] Hasan, Interview by author.

[218] Hasan, Interview by author.

example, told me that she started having doubts in college.[219] During a core curriculum class about the Arab and Islamic world she took at an elite Western university in Cairo, she came across views that challenged the beliefs she grew up internalizing: "You grew up all your life believing this is the right thing, and you don't get exposed to anything that challenges this, given that our society is more or less homogenous when it comes to faith. Getting exposed to a different view, that created an initial shock that got me to read more about Islam and the opposing views."[220] Her doubts continued to grow:

> There was a point in time when I wasn't sure if this is the path I wanted to pursue, that this is the faith I wanted to have and practice. And [laughs] I don't usually say this to other people, because there might not be acceptance, but I did take some time off [laughs], if I can put it this way. Basically, I didn't want to be Muslim just because I was born into a Muslim family. If I was going to be a Muslim, I just wanted to be sure that this is what I wanted and truly believed in. I took some time off to do some research, and eventually I went back to being a practicing Muslim.[221]

Hind's exposure to conflicting evidence in college is not a unique one. One of the core arguments made by my interlocutors is that for most of their lives, they were sheltered by their parents from many discomforting thoughts and realities, and that the revolution caused all of those to rise to the surface. But Hind and others like her were exposed in the universities they attended to some things that challenged their beliefs. Hind maintained that faith in general is not a positivistic science you can prove or disprove but a reality you live once you "get a taste of faith through some sort of experience. And when you feel that, that's your proof, and it's not something that you can easily explain."[222] Hind ultimately returned to Islam, not by means of rational proof but because she had a feeling, an internal need to be close to the divine. She did

[219] Hind, Interview by author, Cairo, July 2018 (in English).
[220] Hind, Interview by author.
[221] Hind, Interview by author.
[222] Hind, Interview by author.

not tell me how she reconciled the dissonance she felt between the early Islamic history that troubled her in college and the teachings of Islam in which she continued to believe.

Spirituality and closeness to God, the more abstract concepts that go beyond physical practice, are aspects of Islam that my interlocutors began to learn in their teenage and early adult years. Those youth who were already religiously inclined—either due to their own convictions or because of how they were socialized—found people like them who taught them an "authenticated" Islam that emphasized both the spiritual and ritual aspects of the faith. For some, college made them ask difficult questions about their faith, but for most, college was not a phase of rebellion but one of exploration of religious belief and practice that went beyond what their parents taught them. As I show in the following section, the young *du'ah* also played a role in propagating ideas about the interconnectedness of embodiment and ethical self-cultivation. They were influential to many of my interlocutors during this phase of their lives.

The Du'ah

Religious scholars like al-Sha'rawi have been sharing the religious spotlight with other preachers, since religious authority has been more diffuse in the past few decades in Egypt. Laypeople with little or no traditional religious training have begun preaching to fellow laypeople at mosques and private residences, through books, cassette tapes, pamphlets and, later, satellite television and social media.[223] The "exclusive interpretive authority of local, state-based 'ulama," Starrett argues, "has been permanently broken,"[224] since the 1990s, ushering in what Charles Hirschkind calls the "counterpublic." People elected to engage in "ethical listening" to alternative forms of religious knowledge—through radio and tape cassettes—as a way of

[223] For instance, see Dale F. Eickelman, "Communication and Control"; Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 231-3; and Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam.*
[224] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 232.

"individual self-fashioning."[225] These mass mediums were meant to ethically entertain and move the listeners to become more pious, virtuous versions of themselves. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the *du'ah al-judud* ("new preachers," i.e. Muslim "televangelists") also used mass media to teach people, especially youth, correct Islamic practice and belief.

'Amr Khalid was the best known of these *du'ah* at first. Some of his students, like Moez Masoud and Mustafa Hosni, also became *du'ah*,[226] speaking in a (colloquial) Egyptian Arabic that appealed to the masses and to a younger demographic that traditional scholars sometimes failed to reach. Aaron Rock-Singer argues that preachers like Khalid benefitted from the rise in satellite television channels and the Internet.[227] He observes that since Arab governments "historically maintained their own power by limiting access to information and by granting their partisans a privileged pulpit, the rise of satellite television and the Internet upsets this system of influence and changes the balance of ideas in 'circulation."[228] These preachers were able to finance themselves, therefore maintaining their independence from the government.[229] This movement ultimately challenged the government's monopoly over what is broadcast and who has the right to speak.[230] Khalid was one of those who used this platform earlier on. Masoud

[225] Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*, 55 and 74. See also Moll, "Television Is Not Radio," 239.
[226] Rock, "Amr Khaled," 21. Masoud got his big break with his show *al-Tariq al-Sah* (The Correct Path), in which he argues that a life devoid of religion and God leads to misery. As of December 2020, he has over eight million followers on Facebook. Mustafa Hosni also has over thirty-three million followers on the platform. Their influence has, however, taken a dive in recent years, as I argue in chapter five.
[227] Rock, "Amr Khaled," 36. The Egyptian government prevented Khalid from preaching in Egypt for a few years during which he recorded his lectures in the UK and broadcast them on satellite channels. Traditionally trained preachers, like Azhari Yusuf al-Qaradawi, also benefitted from satellite channels and reached global audiences. See Jacquelene G. Brinton, *Preaching Islamic Revival: Religious Authority and Media in Contemporary Egypt* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 70-71; and Lindsey Wise, "Words from the Heart': New Forms of Islamic Preaching in Egypt." MPhil thesis, Oxford University, 2003, 10-11.
[228] Rock, "Amr Khaled," 34-37.
[229] Rock, "Amr Khaled," 35-36. See also "Muslim Televangelists," *PBS*. May 16, 2008. https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2008/05/16/may-16-2008-muslim-televangelists/67/, accessed May 1, 2016.
[230] The state's monopoly has been challenged but not done away with. The Egyptian government, for example, can take satellite television channels down as it did forcibly without a court order in July 2013 with Salafi channels *al-Nas* and fourteen other religious channels. See 'Abd al-Rahman Abu al-Ghayt, "'Awdat qanat al-Nas al-Misriyya.. Hudur Sufi wa ghiyab Salafi," *Al-Jazeera*. April 16, 2016.

followed shortly with his show *Parables in the Qur'an*.[231] Yasmin Moll argues that Khalid paved the way for "televangelist" shows that are infused with elements of pop culture (often featuring downloadable Islamic songs performed by well-known Egyptian singers) and also have the feel of an "American therapeutic talk-show."[232]

Another important aspect of the *du'ah al-judud*'s ability to appeal to their audience (mainly middle and upper-middle class youth) is their relatability. Aside from speaking in the colloquial Egyptian dialect, these preachers show their audience that they are ordinary people like them, on a journey, having made many mistakes along the way. In their attempt to capture their audience's attention, the preachers rely on storytelling.[233] Masoud, for example, frequently told his own story of converting from lax religiosity to piety. The young Masoud came from a well-to-do family and attended Western schools in Egypt and Kuwait but was not an observant Muslim.[234] This changed, however, when three of his friends died, one while driving under the influence. He talks about how, prior to his becoming a practicing Muslim, he did not know how to correctly read the Qur'an in Arabic. By exposing himself in this way, he showed that anyone can achieve piety, that "piety is an ordinary condition of human life, not an extraordinary state open to a select few."[235]

The act of voluntarily listening to and willingness to be moved by the affective discursive power of such media to cultivate more pious selves is one that I argue has decreased among many of my interlocutors. During their teenage and early adult years, many of them listened to these figures and sought to weld together the religious knowledge they learned with active

[231] Moll, "Islamic Televangelism.
[232] Moll, "Islamic Televangelism.
[233] Yasmin Moll, "Storytelling, Sincerity, and Islamic Televangelism in Egypt" in *Global and Local Televangelism,* eds. Pradip Ninan Thomas and Philip Lee (London: Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 24.
[234] Moll, "Islamic Televangelism."
[235] Moll, "Islamic Televangelism."

embodiment of that knowledge. The *du'ah* promoted the idea that interiorized feelings of closeness to God or of faith were not enough on their own; they must be accompanied by the "embodied discipline that religion demands."[236] The *du'ah* believed that the way they preached to the youth was different from the Salafis who emphasized ritual practice but failed "to grasp what the virtues cultivated by such practice entail in terms of social interaction and individual transformation."[237] The *du'ah* sought to "reconstruct religiosity," and their use of televisual media—much to the chagrin of their Salafi counterparts—was key to making this happen. The *du'ah* and their teams innovated when it came to their shows' content, unlike the Salafis, who "treated television as if it were radio," and failed to incorporate elements that appealed to the senses. To lure in young middle and upper-middle class viewers, the *du'ah*'s programs had to be "hip," "dazzling," attention-grabbing and aesthetically pleasing. They offered an alternative media form that, to the *du'ah* and their producers, was "a theological imperative oriented both toward this-worldly flourishing and otherworldly salvation."[238] Like the cassette tapes, the programs were meant to *affectively move* viewers and push them to lead more ethical, pious Muslim lives.

There are, however, many people—aside from the Salafis—who were critical of the *du'ah*. Egyptian journalists, for example, often called them "merchants of religion" (*tujjar al-din*). Their project was seen as part of a neoliberal movement, as one Egyptian journalist put it, "a capitalistic venture in which [they] used religious rhetoric to make the youth feel socially responsible to start human development projects that make up for the infrastructural failures of

[236] Moll, "Television Is Not Radio," 235.
[237] Moll, "Television Is Not Radio," 235.
[238] Moll, "Television Is Not Radio," 239-42.

the state."[239] For some of my interlocutors, the *du'ah* were nothing more than life coaches who plagiarized content from self-help books and added religious flavoring to make their rhetoric palatable to their Muslim audiences.

Some also accused them of marketing a "lite" version of Islam. Salafis often accused them of being "secret Sufis," bent on "creating what they called a 'fake American Islam' that promoted secular norms."[240] Silim, who used to be a member of a local Salafi group in Cairo, said that his Salafi brethren taught him never to respect the young preachers. A young man who now no longer knows whether he is still a believer, Silim still spoke with disdain as he talked about how the *du'ah* "beautify religion" (*jammilu al-din*) and water it down too much:

> To me, it is not rational for them to—it does not matter to me much anymore—but I might think that [it is fine for] a girl and a boy to like each other and date, even though they are religious. But for the *du'ah* to talk about this and say, yes, 'love is normal' and so on, it does not really work for me. I feel like they try to please everyone (*yatalawwanu*, lit. change colors)… But in my understanding of religion, you [*du'ah*] are not depicting religion accurately. You make [the youth] feel like they do not have to change anything about their lives to be good Muslims. You just need to pray. No, let us be realistic. Religion asks us for certain things and asks you to make sacrifices in life … They focus on things like, the Prophet told an Arab man who came to him and asked, 'If I pray the five prayers and [say] the *shahada*, etc., will I go to heaven?' [The Prophet] said, 'Yes.' 'No *sunna*?' 'Yes'... Okay, this is true, but I believe it is your duty as a *da'iya* to talk about religion as a whole. You should not make it lighter for people.[241]

Silim's former Salafi persuasion still colored the way he viewed the *du'ah*. Dating is an issue that touches the lives of many Muslim youth in Egypt. For Silim, the preachers were selling out in order to appease the conscience of their listeners who are keen on being ethical Muslims but struggle to conform to Islamic teachings. Making light of what (Salafi) Silim believed to be wrong was hypocritical of the *du'ah* who, for him, teach that the bare minimum is enough to get

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[239] See, for example, Wa'il Lutfi, *Du'ah al-supermarket: al-judhur al-amrikiyya li-l-du'ah al-judud* (Cairo: Dar al-'Ayn li-l-Nashr, 2019), 24. See also Moll, "Television Is Not Radio," 239; and Winegar, "Civilizing Muslim Youth," 446.
[240] Moll, "Television Is Not Radio," 251.
[241] Silim, Interview by author, Cairo, January 2019.

one into heaven. This is in sharp contrast to what many of my other interlocutors who once depended on the *du'ah* for religious guidance said about the *du'ah*'s teaching, i.e. that religion is an all-encompassing way of life. After the 2011 revolution, many youth lost respect for the preachers, who they felt did not live up to the moral and ethical teachings that they had preached to the youth for years prior to the uprising.

Before then, however, Hamza, an Egyptian-American doctoral student based in the US, said that he understood the appeal of the *du'ah* and argued that they improved "people's religious literacy and familiarity with *hadith*, Qur'an and history. Even if in a very basic or romanticized sense." They also pushed people to live an ethical life in "an unjust society."[242] Most of my female interlocutors who veiled did so in the early 2000s and in fact credited this to preachers like 'Amr Khalid. But for Amani, the encounter with one of the young preachers was akin to a spiritual experience. I talked to her in her art studio in New York, where we were surrounded by paintings that reflected the painful experiences Amani had been through since the 2011 uprising. In high school, she had many questions especially about the status of women in Islam. She listened to the *du'ah* in passing but did not pay much attention to them. One day, she said, sounding excited, she visited Moez Masoud's website. She scrolled through the episodes and found two about women. "I clicked on [the episodes], and this was the moment of change." How so? I pressed. She became animated and excited:

> I understood how women are represented in the Qur'an and in religion, and I felt that we downplay [women's importance] if we remove Islam… Everything that was said or written in the Qur'an brought me comfort. I felt, oh, I want this. Oh, this is how we should be. It was something that was missing, and I found it. At this time, I felt, 'Guys, God is present! No, not just present; he's here!' [Laughs] The episodes really touched me. At that time [while I was listening], I felt there was a blackout, and I could not hear anything except my heartbeat, and all I could feel was, God is present. [Inhales deeply, cups her arms as if embracing the air in front of her], yes [inhales]. That is how it was. I

[242] Hamza, Interview by author, Cairo, February 2018 (in English).

> felt I was submerged in water and [inhales deeply], oh, there is another world up there that we did not know.[243]

Amani could not help but recount the knee-jerk reaction she had while listening to Masoud explain clearly and affectively an issue she had trouble understanding for so long. Through that short, one-way interaction, through the clarity his preaching brought her, she felt God's presence. Masoud's simple explanation of Qur'anic precepts gave new meaning to Amani's understanding of God and worship. She was *moved* by his words to cultivate a more ethical self. His discourse was new; it explained a concept to Amani that she did not get from traditionally trained 'ulama. Her openness to being moved by his words ultimately breathed new life into her religious understanding.

She watched all of his episodes to the point where it became an "obsession." The more she learned, the more she became skeptical about how she was going about her life. Step by step, she made changes in her lifestyle:

> At first, I only listened and was in awe all the time. Then I started taking action. Actual action. I left my boyfriend, for example. It was a serious relationship, and our parents knew. But for me, oh, we're boyfriend/girlfriend. That relationship is forbidden [laughs]. My understanding was, of course, still wrong. I did not understand things completely. But for me, we were in a relationship, and God does not like this, so I will leave you. Like that... I loved him and everything. But that was it. The same with other things. The way I dressed changed.[244]

Throughout her four years in college, Amani continued to be inspired by the *du'ah*, even taking part in charity work with groups on campus to fulfill one of the three duties the *du'ah* popularized: Worshipping God, civilization-building and doing good for others, and purifying the self ('*ibadat Allah*, '*imarat al-ard*, *tazkiyat al-nafs*). She was already worshipping God and purifying her self by making lifestyle changes, but she also wanted to do good for others and did

[243] Amani, interview by author.
[244] Amani, interview by author.

not care who she worked with to achieve this. She was unaware then that the groups on campus that she was a part of were Muslim Brotherhood or Salafi-leaning. She graduated in 2011 soon after the uprising began, and "then embarked on the journey of disappointments,"[245] which I explore in later chapters.

Salafis

As I have demonstrated so far, young Muslim Egyptians had many religious influences from whom they learned. Many of the youth willingly listened to religious authorities and heeded their advice. They often held these influencers to high moral standards, and this is why it became difficult for the youth to respect these figures when they began contradicting what they preached over the years in the wake of the 2011 revolution. Before this mistrust developed, however, there was yet another group that some of my interlocutors were influenced by during early adulthood: the Salafis.

The intellectual roots of the movement lie in the thought of the eighteenth-century Arabian thinker Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d.1791). A man of little traditional religious training, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab nonetheless sought to rectify what he perceived to be the unlawful accretions to Islamic practice that he observed in his people in what is today Saudi Arabia. He wanted to put an end to the practice of venerating saints and sought to place *tawhid* (the belief in Allah's oneness) at the center of Islamic belief. Any actions that were deemed antithetical to this or were seen as an innovation (*bid'a*) were to be condemned and eliminated.[246]

But the term Salafism is a tricky one. Scholars like Henri Lauzière explain that there are two usages for the term. Although modernist religious scholars like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d.

[245] Amani, interview by author.
[246] Jacob Høigilt and Frida Nome, "Egyptian Salafism in Revolution," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 25:1 (2014), 34; and Hassan Mneimneh, "The Spring of a New Political Salafism?" *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, 12 (2011), 27-28.

1897) and Muhammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905) did not call themselves Salafi, they are credited often with having spearheaded the movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These “Modernist Salafis,” as Lauzière calls them, strove to “rearticulate their religion in terms that were more relevant to contemporary realities and more intelligible and appealing to the rational minds of the educated elite.”[247] Like Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, they viewed the immediate followers of Muhammad (*al-salaf al-salih*) as the exemplars of pious Islam. They were thus committed to the example of the *salaf* and to the text but did not believe that this should be a hindrance on their ability to adapt aspects of the law to help the Muslim nation (*umma*) move forward in the ever-changing, modernizing world.[248]

“Purist Salafis,” on the other hand, are exclusionary in that they believe that theirs is the only form of Islam that could lead to salvation. It is the pure Islam of the *salaf*, “unsullied by any innovation, deviation or accretion and uncontaminated by exogenous influences” that should be followed by all.[249] Lauzière argues, however, that, in the beginning, Purist Salafism did not reject religious compromise completely. Between the 1920s and 1950s, leading Salafi activists “modified their understanding of Islamic reform…mainly to accommodate political considerations and to increase the likelihood of achieving political independence from colonial powers.”[250] They constructed a rigorist form of Salafism that emphasized purity but sought to unite and gain a following throughout Muslim-majority countries. Post-independence, however, Purist Salafis no longer had to downplay their exclusionary vision of Islam. This form of Salafism “responded to the challenge of modernity by escaping to the secure haven of the text,

[247] It was journalists who later called them Salafis. Henri Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 5.
[248] Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism* 5.
[249] Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism*, 6. See also Bernard Haykel, “On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action,” in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 33.
[250] Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism*, 24.

but it treated rational moral insight as fundamentally corrupting of the purity of the Islamic message," stunting its growth and ability to respond to modern needs and inquiries.[251] Despite this, it was the purists who continued to thrive, while modernists, having played their part during the colonial period, fell by the wayside.[252]

Like other scholars, Bernard Haykel traces the intellectual roots of this (purist) movement to medieval theologian Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and explains that there are three constitutive elements to Salafism: "theology, which is encapsulated by the concept of *tawhid*; law, which is centred on the question of *ijtihad* and whether one should adhere to the teachings of a particular school of law; and politics, which is determined by the particular *manhaj* or way Salafis choose to engage in the world."[253] Those who espouse Salafism are just as diverse as those who study at al-Azhar. With regards to theology, however, all Salafis are in agreement over the centrality of *tawhid*, an emphasis that God should be worshipped alone, with no one and nothing associated with him and that He should not be anthropomorphized.[254] Following Ibn Taymiyya, who sought to purge Islamic belief "of what he considers to be accumulated heresies," the Salafis of today "continue the effort of purging the Sunni tradition of non-Salafi traces and influences as well as repeating, in abridged form, the arguments made by Ibn Taymiyya."[255] To Salafis, falling outside these theological parameters is dangerous, since there is only one correct theology, and the group sometimes uses this to excommunicate other Muslims.[256]

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[251] Abou El Fadl, 202. See also Nabil Mouline, *The Clerics of Islam: Religious Authority and Political Power in Saudi Arabia*. trans. Ethan S. Rundell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 52.
[252] Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism*, 25.
[253] Haykel, "On the Nature," 51.
[254] Haykel, "On the Nature," 38-39.
[255] Haykel, "On the Nature," 39-40. On Ibn Taymiyya, see also Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought: the Taymiyyan Moment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[256] Haykel, "On the Nature," 41-42.

These theological considerations are constants within the Salafi trend, but there is less consensus among Salafis regarding legal theory and practice. Salafis agree that the Qur'an, the *sunna* and the consensus of the "pious ancestors" are the "only valid sources of authority," and they rely solely on them.[257] Being able to claim that any opinion they reach is ultimately based on foundational texts implicitly says that "to deny Salafi views is to deny the probative value of the texts of revelation…a position that represents a quick and slippery slope to exclusion from the community of believers and to damnation,"[258] though it is understood that there is a margin for error when engaging in *ijtihad*. Salafis are divided when it comes to legal practice: they differ in the degree to which they adhere to the four jurisprudential schools (*madhhabs*) or in what role *ijtihad* plays in legal matters. Wahhabis, for example, follow the Hanbali *madhhab*, whereas other Salafis completely reject *madhhab*s and the "imitation" (*taqlid*) they believe *madhhab*s lead to, opting instead to engage with the text anew whenever an issue arises.[259]

Salafism is relatively new in Egypt, making its way into the country most notably around the 1980s and 1990s, especially as Egyptians who traveled to the Arabian Gulf region for work in the 1970s onward trickled back home. Egyptian sociologist Hafiz Diyab points out that there are notable signs of Salafism throughout Egypt. In the public sphere, Islamic symbolism is used in everyday speech; apartment buildings have Islamic names; scholars appear on television and demonize anyone they believe is committing *bid'a*; stickers in public transportation command women to veil or remind commuters to repent to Allah. On the individual level, men grow out their beard and wear white, short *jalabiyyas*,[260] while women wear *niqab* (face veil). Diyab estimates that Salafis own about a tenth of Egypt's mosques and prayer nooks (*zawaya*). They

[257] Haykel, "On the Nature," 36-39.
[258] Haykel, "On the Nature," 36.
[259] Haykel, "On the Nature," 42. See also Diyab, *Al-Salafiyyun wa-l-Siyasa*, 35-36.
[260] See Rock-Singer, "Leading with a Fist."

also have dozens of satellite channels, some of which are financed by a few states in the Arabian Gulf.[261]

Salafi culture and teachings seeped into the larger Egyptian social fabric. Faris and his family, for example, were influenced by the movement after a short stint in Saudi Arabia. I met Faris at an upscale restaurant overlooking the Nile in the posh Cairene island of Zamalek. He told his story as if he had told it a million times before: he was the strict-Salafi-turned-strict "nonbeliever" ("*mish mu'min*"). He began by telling me about his mother, the "religious one" in the family. His father was "typical" (*'adi*). His mother wore the veil to school against her family's wishes when it was still unpopular to do so. She eventually went to Saudi Arabia where she stayed for almost two decades and "became conservative." She already had the "Wahhabi chakra," Faris told me with a laugh. She read many Islamic books while she was in Saudi Arabia and preached to other women, even during the *hajj* (the obligatory pilgrimage) and *'umra* (the lesser pilgrimage). When she went back to Egypt, she taught her siblings, parents, and, later, her children what she had learned in Saudi Arabia.

"Then my siblings and I grew up," Faris continued. "We were all religious [*mutadayyinin*]. To this day my sisters wear the *niqab*, and I have a brother who preaches at a mosque and has a big beard."[262] Faris stayed a "typical" Muslim like his father for a while, but then under his mother's influence and after an accident in which he almost died, he felt that he "needed to get closer to God." Right before and during college, Faris became *mutadayyin*: "I started to pray on time, not listen to music, not smoke, not do any of the bad things I was doing before," he began. "In college, I wore the Salafi skullcap [*ta'iyya*], short pants[263] and wide t-

[261] Diyab, *Al-Salafiyyun wa-l-siyasa*, 194-5.
[262] Faris, Interview by author, Cairo, March 2018.
[263] Like the long beard, short pants are a visible marker of adherence to the Salafi school in Egypt and elsewhere in Muslim communities. Salafis use this hadith as proof for this practice: "The part of the *izar* [lower garment] that

shirts," showing his need to look the (Salafi) part as well. He read just as widely as his mother ("anything from Mawdudi to Ghazali to Nietzsche") and memorized half of the Qur'an by heart. For almost two years, he devoted his life to studying the Islamic sciences. He attended lectures on *tafsir* (exegesis), hadith, *fiqh* (Islamic law) and theology. It was his mother who brought him into the Salafi fold, but once his doubts about Islam and the existence of God began to surface, she could not help him. He ultimately decided that he was no longer Muslim and no longer believed in the existence of a God.

Ayman, an Alexandrian photojournalist now based in the US, was another interlocutor who once identified as Salafi but began having doubts about Islam soon after the 2011 uprising began. His parents "barely prayed," so at some point he decided to go to a Salafi mosque and become "religious full-time." At the mosque, he memorized most of the Qur'an, learned *fiqh* and other Islamic sciences before eventually being recruited to teach the younger congregants. The peak of his religiosity, as he described it, was during high school. But he had issues with the group and eventually left it. Being tied to Salafis or any religious group during the Mubarak era was dangerous, and for Ayman, this meant being picked up by national security officers and tortured. The first time that this happened to him (of nine total), Ayman was fifteen years old. Years later, he found out that one of his Salafi teachers at the mosque was informing on him, when Ayman had become politically active.

Going to college opened Ayman's eyes about things from which being Salafi had shielded him. "When I was in school," Ayman began, "I left the Salafis but was still Salafi. I left the organization, but I did *da'wa* on my own. I always listened to music and liked art and theater.

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comes below the ankles is in hellfire." Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers, 1997), Vol. 7, Hadith no. 5787, 374-5.

I believed that the Salafis' isolationist approach was their way of controlling their followers. And I do not want to be a follower… My college education and political awareness made me leave the Salafis."[264] Here, college was a defining moment in Ayman's understanding of who he is as a Muslim.[265] Salafism was a safety net for Ayman that helped him figure out what form of *iltizam* (religious commitment) he should cultivate. Some aspects of the movement were less appealing to him, like some Salafis' eschewal of politics and their rules about music and art. Salafi commitment was a phase in Ayman's life, as it was for some of my other interlocutors. Its teachings seemed direct. Exposure to other forms of religiosity that espoused the values that my interlocutors cared about, like seeking social justice, sometimes encouraged them to turn to other religious influences.

'A'isha's siblings influenced her notions of religiosity, and at some point, she, too, became Salafi-leaning. But she was always critical of the Salafi shaykhs and did not take everything they said at face value. Specific topics they discussed like "their interpretation of women-related issues [were] a reflection of their socioeconomic background, of their level of education, of their environment." She thus did not practice what they preached: "For example, I never believed that the *niqab* was obligatory (*fard*). I never believed that TV is forbidden. Things that were 'trademark Salafism,' I never used to believe in them. They are very superficial things, all on the level of appearance."[266] Most Egyptian Salafi scholars did not receive traditional Islamic training like the traditionalists at al-Azhar; they are mostly self-taught.[267] Salafis believe that "all individuals should strive to follow the scriptural texts without the mediation of

[264] At this point, he said that he was "radical" in his Salafi thought and that he actually admired jihadists as the "only ones who can fight imperialism." This was what he heard at the mosques he frequented, but he ultimately came to "hate [both] Salafis and jihadists."
[265] Ayman, Interview by author, New York, October 2018.
[266] 'A'isha, Interview by author (in English).
[267] According to Nakissa, the four main Salafi scholars in Alexandria, "the foremost stronghold of Salafism in Egypt" are all trained as medical doctors. See Nakissa, *The Anthropology of Islamic Law*, 261.

scholars," but until they are able to do so, they may seek a shaykh's guidance, though he is expected to provide the evidence (*dalil*) for his opinion.[268] The Salafis' *manhaj*, or "the path or method they live and implement their beliefs [theological, political, etc.] and 'call' (*da'wa*)," [269] however, appealed to 'A'isha. Salafis commonly say that they derive their understanding from "the Qur'an and the *sunna* based on the understanding of the pious predecessors of the umma (*al-Qur'an wa-l-sunna bi-fihm salaf al-umma*)."[270] Their evidence for their arguments all lies in the foundational texts.

One oft-cited reason for the relative ease with which one can be a practicing Salafi is that it portrays Islam as black and white.[271] One aspect of Islam that Salafis cannot reconcile with is Sufism. Aria Nakissa writes that for Salafis, "Islam is simply a matter of texts."[272] Unlike Sufism, it does not require an "acquisition of dispositions," which Sufism teaches one can learn only at the hands of a shaykh. This becomes suspect to Salafis:

> Habitus acquisition from living exemplars has no essential place. As a result, claims that one must pass one's life reverently clinging to a *shaykh* and serving him appear bizarre and theologically suspect. If there is no rationally intelligible ethical or intellectual benefit from spending time with *shaykhs*, then it seems to follow that those who engage in such behavior have ulterior motives, like worshipping *shaykhs* as gods. Consequently, Salafis habitually portray Sufism as similar to polytheism.[273]

This tension between Salafism and Sufism could be felt in 'A'isha's home. She explained that when she and her siblings acquired Salafi sensibilities, her parents, who were both Sufi-leaning,

[268] Nakissa, *The Anthropology of Islamic Law*, 264.
[269] Haykel, "On the Nature," 44.
[270] 'A'isha, Interview by author.
[271] Schielke argues that his interlocutors who sought to live out this Salafism that requires "ritual and moral rigour" and perfection did not find it so easy to be "committed." See Schielke, "I Want to Be Committed," 21.
[272] Nakissa, *The Anthropology of Islamic Law*, 265.
[273] Nakissa, *The Anthropology of Islamic Law*, 265. Some scholars like Simon Wolfgang Fuchs have shown that there may not be as sharp a contrast between Sufi and Salafi practice. Simon Wolfgang Fuchs, *In a Pure Muslim Land: Shi'ism between Pakistan and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

were "shocked." Eventually they met "halfway." Prior to that, however, "Sufism was not an option for me at all," 'A'isha explained.

> I mean, from 'Amr Khalid talking about *akhlaq* (virtue and morality) and stories of the *sahaba* and such to Salafism which was more about *manhajiyya 'ilmiyya* and self-control (*indibat*) to Salafi jihadism that is more concerned about Muslims around the world and minorities and such—all of this made Sufism out of the question. It was not something I could relate to at the moment. And somehow it was the complete opposite of my worldview at the time.[274]

I asked 'A'isha if, in her opinion, this meant that Sufism and Salafism cannot be reconciled. She laughed and said that at a younger age, she used to say that she was Sufi with a Salafi reference (*Sufiyya bi-marji'iyya Salafiyya*), and people would tell her that there is no such thing, since the two are viewed as opposites. "Now, I do not identify with either, but I see more the merit of Sufism in terms of its core, its general concepts. Not the practice, the tariqas (paths), the *dhikr*…, the disciplining (*murabbi*) shaykh, and all that relates to this, but Sufism as a philosophical concept that I can relate to." The aspects of closeness to God and purification of the heart that Sufism preaches appealed to 'A'isha but not much else.

Inas, one of my interlocutors who was recruited by the Muslim Brotherhood during college, frequented Sufi circles, especially after the 2011 uprising. There, she came into contact with those who call themselves traditionalists (*turathiyyun*) who are trained in the Islamic sciences, mainly at al-Azhar. Interestingly, these traditionalists believe that the Salafis' programmatic approach to the study of Islam is in itself an innovation. For the traditionalists, Islam is based on the fact that there are *madhhab*s one has to follow and that, theologically, Muslims should be either Ash'ari or Maturdi. Turning the tables on Salafis, the traditionalist scholars Inas described believe that whoever criticizes Sufi ways and teachings or tries to do away with *madhhab*s is committing *bid'a* (innovation), the charge Salafis level against anyone

[274] 'A'isha, Interview by author.

they feel makes accretions Islamic practice and belief without textual foundation. This understanding colored Inas's own understanding of Salafism, which she viewed as "more procedural than spiritual," while she was in college.[275]

Muslim in Name Only

So far, I have written about young Muslims who were socialized into being Muslim and the various figures they learned from growing up, but there is also a segment of Egyptian society that does not socialize its children into becoming practicing and/or believing Muslims. Writing in 2012, Schielke argued that "nonreligiosity" is not a phenomenon that is unique to the secular West and indeed takes on its own life and meaning in Muslim-majority countries like Egypt.[276] For him, "nonbelievers" (who were born Muslim) in contemporary Egypt take Islamic discourse and the ethical claims it makes seriously but feel that the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet "fail to deliver what they promise not because of the contingency of historical practice but because they are inherently in error."[277] These individuals can be decidedly atheist (*mulhid/a*), i.e. do not believe in God, agnostic, i.e. suspend judgment about the existence of God, or deist, i.e. believe in God without believing in religion, all categories which Schielke collectively refers to as "nonbelief," as I do in this dissertation. What makes someone a nonbeliever in contemporary Egypt, Schielke writes, is an active questioning of the foundations of Muslim belief, or belief in God and Prophet Muhammad. This definition necessarily excludes those who

[275] Inas, Interview by author.
[276] See, for example, the works of well-known physician and philosopher Mustafa Mahmud (d. 2009) who, it is fabled, turned to atheism for a few years before returning to Islam. He had a television program and wrote various works about his journey in hopes of convincing others that atheism is not an answer to doubts. Mustafa Mahmud, *Hiwar ma'a sadiqi al-mulhid* (Beirut: Dar al-Mutawassit, 1986), and Mustafa Mahmud, *Rihlati min al-shakk ila al-yaqin* (Beirut: Dar al-'Awda, 1970).
[277] Schielke, "Being a Nonbeliever," 302.

still believe in God and the Prophet but do not actively embody or practice the teachings of Islam, perhaps leading an "impious" life.[278]

I only spoke to two people who told me that they were not raised to believe in Islam or Allah. I asked Maryam about her religious upbringing, but she laughed and said she did not have one. "That is why I do not know if I would be helpful to you," she said. "My parents do not believe (*mish mu'minin*) … I was raised to be a nonbeliever (*ghayr mu'mina*)." Her grandparents and extended family, however, are religious. One of her aunts even teaches Qur'an and religion classes. "There was a lot of fighting within the family." I asked if she learned about Islam at school, and she said that she went to a Christian school where they took the state-mandated religion course, but she knew that "school was one thing, and home was another." Even as a child, she knew that when she went to school, she could not say anything about her parents' nonbelief. Despite this, I went ahead and asked her the same questions I asked all of my other interlocutors about the various religious groups in Egypt: al-Azhar, Salafis, Sufis, the Brotherhood and her impression of them, but she genuinely did not have any thoughts on them prior to the 2011 uprising. "I never paid attention to religion, to be honest," she replied. It was, in fact, in the aftermath of the revolution that she learned more about the various groups.[279]

Yasin, a Cairene human rights activist who identifies as atheist, had a different experience with Islam after the 2011 uprisings began. Before then, he "wasn't brought up religiously in any sense of the word." His grandfather taught him the opening chapter of the Qur'an (*al-Fatiha*), and he learned religion at school but "no more than that." His family was on the whole "not religious." Officially, he said, "I'm Muslim, but I wasn't exactly Muslim at the time, other than the social things. Since I was eleven or so, I identified as atheist. More or less up

[278] Schielke, "Being a Nonbeliever," 305.
[279] Maryam, Interview by author, New Jersey, December 2018 (Arabic with some English).

to the uprising."[280] I then asked Yasin what religiosity means to him, and he answered that it has a practical and spiritual component. When I asked him to describe spirituality, he gave me a humanist answer:

> It's something basic in a person. A person has to deal with the unseen in one way or another. Not everyone can deal with it in a direct way or in the same way. But it is important when it comes to human relations and a person's relationship with one's self and meaning of life, etc. And the main religions are divine practices toward this. They show the way for people en masse to express or deal with the unseen and spirituality in general.

He then told me about his short journey to religiosity after the revolution began. People pushed him to "just try" to be religious. After the revolution, he said, "I tried to identify as a Muslim. I tried to practice." Why Islam? he asked rhetorically. "Because it's what's common in the region. A person follows the religiosity around him. I didn't have much of an option. In my national ID, I am Muslim. I tried a bit. On and off for two or three years." He tried to perform various acts of worship like fasting, praying and reciting formulaic praises of God (*tasbih*) intermittently. Praying and fasting were the most difficult. "I tried a few times, but I don't even know how to pray. I learned what's said, and I tried a few times—not a few times. I tried one time every other day or so." He liked *tasbih* and usually carried prayer beads (*sibha* or *masbaha*) around with him. "I eventually stopped, however, and went back to my belief before that these are divine, but I won't practice."[281]

Even those who were not socialized into being Muslim felt the pressures of living in a largely Muslim society. For Yasin, his only option was to be Muslim when he decided to become spiritual. Likewise, Maryam did not feel comfortable disclosing her household's lack of belief at school, since she was told that it was socially unacceptable to be anything other than Muslim or

[280] Yasin, Interview by author, New York, January 2018 (English and Arabic).
[281] Yasin, Interview by author.

Christian in Egypt.[282] After 2011, there was a sense of moral panic in Egypt about a perceived increase in atheism (*ilhad*). As I have shown, there *were* nonbelievers in Egypt even before the revolution, but after the uprising, there was a notable increase in the number of young people who became vocal about their lack of belief in a god or religion.[283]

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the fluidity with which young Muslim Egyptians understood Islam. Religion, for them, did not have a fixed definition. Their conception of what it means to be a pious Muslim shifted with time but also with circumstance. There are definable elements of what Islam entails: practices, like rituals, such as prayer, fasting, etc., and beliefs, like believing in Allah, His messengers, His books, etc. Understandings of these are based on a discursive tradition, as Asad tells us, i.e. elaborations over the years by Muslims on what the foundational Islamic texts mean, how they are meant to inform Muslims' everyday life and help them become pious selves. But understandings of piety, like understandings of what makes a person religious, are fluid. What I argue in my dissertation is that emotion and affect—such as hope, disappointment, disillusionment, shock, anger—ultimately influence and shift notions of piety. My interlocutors, for most of their early lives, found themselves in a structure of culturally agreed-upon forms of religiosity, but in the wake of the 2011 uprising and its failure, they broke free of many of these structural conceptions of Islam, partly because of the agency the revolution

[282] On religious identity of minorities in Egypt, see Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).
[283] After the 2011 uprisings, the advocacy group, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, held several public forums in which they openly discussed challenges against religious freedom in Egypt, including one's ability to identify as nonreligious without being harassed. For example, see EIPR Team, "Who stands against our freedom to be non-believing citizens? A discussion with Egyptian atheists and agnostics activities," August 15, 2017, https://eipr.org/en/blog/eipr-team/2017/08/who-stands-against-our-freedom-be-non-believing-citizens-discussion-egyptian, accessed April 9, 2020.

afforded them but also because of the turbulent emotional toll the process of a defeated revolution had on them.

In order to show this rupture, in this chapter, I mapped out the trajectory of my interlocutors' religious upbringing and socialization as well as their understandings of religion growing up. As children, most of my interlocutors were socialized into becoming believing, practicing Muslims, and as they grew older, they came to their own understanding of what Islam is, sometimes departing from or building on the teachings they received as children. At first, my interlocutors learned about the "basics" of Islam and the appearance-based aspects without much knowledge about the evidence and reasoning behind such practices. Later, as they left the comfort of their homes and came into contact with other influences, they learned about alternative modes of being Muslim and alternate definitions of religiosity. Most of them worked toward a more "authenticated" understanding of Islam. All the while, religious figures continued to play an important role in these young people's religious instruction. At this stage, for many of my interlocutors, internal faith had to be expressed outwardly, through bodily, ritual practices. They relied on various teachers to help them learn a more "authenticated Islam," one steeped in the Islamic discursive tradition and that taught them how and why to imbricate the internal and the external aspects of Islam, as Mahmood and Deeb demonstrate in their respective works.

Chapter 2: Fatwas in the Fog: Revolting against the Ruler in 2011 Egypt

When people started taking to the streets of Egypt in protest of their government in January 2011, reactions to the protests differed widely. This time in Egyptian history was a perplexing moment for many within the country and abroad. Researchers were surprised at the apparent success of the movement and the extent to which it spread. Consequently, a plethora of scholarly works investigates the political aspects of the movement: what motivated people to join; what grievances led to the participation of so many Egyptians in these protests; what led to the apparent downfall of an authoritarian regime like that of Egypt; and what historical continuities allowed for this uprising to happen.[284] The implications these events had on the attitudes of the laity towards religion and on the religious landscape in Egypt, however, are missing from these works.

In this chapter, I map the religious discourse[285] used by *'ulama* and Brotherhood leaders during the first eighteen days of the Egyptian protest (January 25 to February 11, 2011), which led to then President Mubarak's deposition, and evaluate the effect this discourse had on Muslim Egyptian youth. The eighteen days were confusing, fast and sometimes violent. They were unprecedented in modern Egyptian history, so it was difficult for many people, including religious authorities, to come to terms with the events or explain what course of action to take. Because of this confusion, religious scholars oftentimes gave contradicting *fatwa*s (non-binding responsa on

[284] See, for example: Ahmed Tohamy Abdelhay, *Youth Activism in Egypt: Islamism, Political Protest and Revolution* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016); Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Performative Revolution in Egypt: An Essay in Cultural Power* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011); Mark R. Beissinger, Amaney Jamal and Kevin Mazur, "Explaining Divergent Revolutionary Coalitions: Regime Strategies and the Structuring of Participation in the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions," *Comparative Politics*, 48.1 (2015): 1-21; Killian Clarke, "Unexpected Brokers of Mobilization: Contingency and Networks in the 2011 Egyptian Uprising," *Comparative Politics.* 46.4 (2014): 379-397; and Bernard Rougier and Stéphane Lacroix, eds., *Egypt's Revolutions: Politics, Religion, and Social Movements,* Trans. Cynthia Schoch, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), to name a few.

[285] Namely, how they referenced the foundational religious texts (the Qur'an and hadith).

legal matters in Islam) about the permissibility of protest, leading some youth to question the scholars' authority.

This chapter ultimately shows how religious scholars like those of al-Azhar or the Salafi school in Egypt differed from the Brotherhood (a political organization, in this instance) in how they reacted and responded to the January 25 revolution.[286] During the eighteen days, scholars were given the opportunity to outline their stances in short soundbites on both state- and privately-owned television channels in the form of breaking news, without offering explanation of the worrying specialized terms they used to describe the protests, like civil strife and chaos (*fitna*), corruption on earth (*fasad fi al-ard*), and rebellion against the ruler (*khuruj 'ala al-hakim*). Although the scholars were not all of one mind with regards to the legality of the protests, they all cited *nusus* (religious texts, namely from the Qur'an and *sunna*;[287] sing. *nass*) to support their various positions. After the eighteen days, they had more room to explain, and sometimes reevaluate, their stances in full.

Many of my interviewees became critical of the scholars, arguing that some of them, or at least those who held official positions, served the interests of the state and overlooked the values that the Prophet taught by example. Many of the youth I spoke to engaged in their own reasoning with the *nusus* and reached their own conclusions that directly conflicted with those of the religious authorities. For the time being, my interlocutors viewed the Brotherhood with favor, even though it joined the revolutionary ranks on January 28, three days after the initial protests

[286] These categories are almost never mutually exclusive. Moreover, although it is analytically helpful to think of these groups as monochromatic blocs, more often than not, there are divisions within and critical differences of opinion. Many Azhari shaykhs, for example, are Sufi, Salafi and/or affiliated with the Brotherhood. Likewise, there are Brotherhood members who are Salafis or Sufis. In fact, al-Banna (d.1949), said that he envisioned the group to be a Salafi call, a Sunni path, a Sufi truth, a political organization and a holistic and close-knit social and economic structure for members. On the last note, see Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 14; Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 18; and Itzchak Weismann, "The Politics of Popular Religion: Sufis, Salafis, and the Muslim Brothers in 20th-Century Hamah," *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 37.1 (2005), 51.

[287] The normative example of the Prophet Muhammad in his sayings, actions and what he approved of.

began. During this time, the Brotherhood downplayed its long-held religious identity and emphasized its national commitments, thus foregrounding its Egyptian-ness to allay both domestic and international concern about a potential Islamist takeover. The organization was respected for its involvement in the revolution and was seen as the most organized and committed group on the ground. To many of my interlocutors, the Muslim Brotherhood gave the revolution the strength in numbers and the push that it sorely needed.

It is important to contextualize the Egyptian uprising, so I first look at the turbulent events that took place in Egypt a few months prior to the demonstrations as well as the Tunisian revolution, which is seen as the catalyst for the "Arab Spring." The chapter then tells the story of the eighteen days of protest, offering insight into the emotions people felt at the time and the reasons people decided to join or not to join. For those who joined or were sympathetic to the uprising, the "eighteen days" marked an idyllic time of national unity in which they came into contact with Egyptians from socioeconomic and political backgrounds outside their own. My interlocutors clearly remember the skirmishes with the police during those fateful days and the collective celebrations in the squares following Mubarak's resignation on February 11. The eighteen days were followed by a brief honeymoon period in which people truly made an effort to clean up (literally and figuratively) and care for the country. Shortly thereafter, people's visions for the new Egypt began to diverge.

The Not-So-Calm before the Storm

On December 17, 2010, Tunisian street vendor Muhammad Bu 'Azizi set himself on fire after members of the police force confiscated the produce he was selling without a permit. His humiliation and subsequent death served as catalysts for the Tunisian uprising that toppled then

President Zayn al-'Abidin Bin 'Ali and reverberated across the Arab world.[288] Egyptian officials, like then Foreign)Minister Ahmad Abu al-Ghayt, supported the Tunisian revolution but did not believe that Egypt would follow suit.[289] However, tensions in Egypt were already high even before Bin 'Ali's ouster on January 14, 2011. In June 2010, young Alexandrian Khalid Sa'id was killed by two plainclothes policemen in an internet café in his hometown. Postmortem pictures of his disfigured face circulated on the internet and inspired small protests in Alexandria and across Egypt.[290] Egypt's parliamentary elections of November 2010 in which Mubarak's party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), won the majority of seats were seen as blatant political corruption. One month later, on New Year's Eve, the Two Saints' Church in Alexandria was attacked as worshippers were leaving mass, killing over twenty people and injuring dozens more.[291] This led to another torture case that circulated widely on social media. State security officers caught, tortured and killed Sayyid Bilal, a member of the Salafi movement in Alexandria. Images of his mangled body, like those of Sa'id, garnered the attention of activists in Egypt.[292] As a result of these incidents and other grievances[293] and the success of the Tunisian revolution, calls to protest in Egypt on National Police Day, January 25, popped up on social

[288] "Tunisian Dies after Setting Himself on Fire in Protest," *Agence France Presse*, January 5, 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/3223/World/Region/Tunisian-dies-after-setting-himself-on-fire-in-pro.aspx, accessed January 12, 2019.
[289] Mahmud al-Nubi, "La makhawif min imtidad ahdath Tunis li-l-Duwal al-'Arabiyya," *Al-Ahram*, January 17, 2011, http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/415/2011/01/17/12/58666/219.aspx, accessed January 20, 2019.
[290] Ben Wedeman, "Demonstrators in Egypt Rail against Brutality, Man's Death," *CNN,* June 25, 2010 http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/africa/06/25/egypt.police.beating/index.html, accessed November 20, 2018. See also Abdelhay, *Youth Activism in Egypt*, 103; and "Egypt: Prosecute Police in Beating Death: Multiple Witnesses and Graphic Photos Belie Police Narrative," *Human Rights Watch*, June 24, 2010, https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/06/24/egypt-prosecute-police-beating-death#, accessed December 5, 2018.
[291] "Egypt Bomb Kills 21 at Alexandria Coptic Church," *BBC*, January 1, 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12101748, accessed December 10, 2018. See also Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 36.
[292] The leaders of the Alexandrian Salafi branch denied any link to the attacks. See Mohamed Abdelfattah, "Alexandria Man Allegedly Tortured to Death over Suspected Links to Church Blast," *Ahram Online*, January 8, 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/3428/Egypt/Politics-/Alexandria-man-allegedly-tortured-to-death-over-su.aspx, accessed November 30, 2018.
[293] Summarized in the revolutionary slogan "Bread, Freedom, Social Justice" (*'Aysh, hurriyya, 'adala ijtima'iyya*).

networking platforms like Facebook and Twitter, and with them, the faces of Khalid Sa'id and Sayyid Bilal. "The day the Tunisian revolution toppled Ben Ali," Asef Bayat writes, "the word 'revolution' entered the popular conversation in Egypt."[294]

Two weeks prior to the January 25 uprising, there were reports of people trying to take their own lives in Egypt, in acts of desperation like that of Bu 'Azizi, prompting religious scholars within and outside of Egypt to warn worshippers about the impermissibility of suicide.[295] By January 20, analysts said that "self-immolation acts in Egypt… seem[ed] to be driven by complaints similar to those that mobilized Tunisians to topple President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali."[296] Several men in different cities in Egypt attempted to shoot themselves in the head, while others set themselves alight.[297] One set himself on fire outside parliament, witnesses said, because he was frustrated that "he could not get his ration coupons from Ismailiya (east of Cairo) to buy subsidized goods." He traveled to Cairo to seek help from someone in parliament to no avail.[298]

The Ministry of *Awqaf* (Religious Endowments)[299] instructed preachers of mosques across Egypt to dedicate the Friday sermons (*khutba*) of January 21 to "the issue of suicide,"

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[294] Asef Bayat, *Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 165.
[295] "Egypt: Another Egyptian Man Sets Himself on Fire," *Reuters*, January 19, 2011, https://reuters.screenocean.com/record/746358, accessed December 4, 2018.
[296] Ahmed El-Beheri, "Friday Sermons to Discuss Religious Prohibition of Suicide," *Egypt Independent*, January 20, 2011, https://ww.egyptindependent.com/friday-sermons-discuss-religious-prohibition-suicide/, accessed December 3, 2018.
[297] One instance, Reuters said, was "blamed on psychological not political issues." See Edmund Blair, "Egyptian Tries to Set Himself Alight," *Reuters*, January 19, 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tunisia-egypt-immolation/egyptian-tries-to-set-himself-alight-idUSTRE70I2PT20110119, accessed January 23, 2019; and Dina Zayed, "Egyptians Set Themselves Ablaze after Tunisia Unrest," *Reuters*, January 18, 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tunisia-egypt-immolation/egyptians-set-themselves-ablaze-after-tunisia-unrest-idUSTRE70H3L720110118, accessed January 2, 2019.
[298] Peter Graff, "Yacoub Ould Dahoud, Self-Immolation Victim, Is Part of Growing Trend," *Reuters.* January 17, 2011, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/middle-east-self-immolation_n_809935, accessed December 5, 2018.
[299] The Ministry administers and maintains mosques and oversees preaching in Egypt. See Patrick D. Gaffney, *The Prophet's Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 108-9.

offering textual proof that killing one's self for any reason is forbidden (*haram*). A senior Azhar scholar, for example, cited a *hadith* (Prophetic saying) which expressly forbids suicide and illustrates its eternal repercussions:[300] "Whosoever jumps off a mountain and kills himself will forever jump off a mountain in hellfire. Whosoever poisons himself and dies will forever have his poison in hand and will drink from it in hellfire. Whosoever kills himself with a piece of iron will forever have a piece of iron in hand and will kill himself with it in hellfire."[301] Former Head of the Fatwa Council, Shaykh 'Abd al-Hamid al-Atrash added that a suicide cannot be considered a martyr (*shahid*) no matter what drove him or her to do so. This person is considered a disbeliever (*kafir*), and it is up to God to punish or forgive him or her for the act.[302]

Some Azhari scholars, however, used this issue as a springboard into another issue: rebellion against the ruler (*al-khuruj 'ala al-hakim*). Even if people face injustice at the hand of their ruler, al-Atrash argued, they are not allowed to take their own lives. He then quoted 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar (d. 693), a companion of the Prophet and son of the second Rashidun Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (r. 634-644), who said, "If the Muslim ruler [*imam*] is just, then he gets a reward from God [*ajr*], and you have to be thankful. If the imam is unjust [*ja'ir*], then he carries the burden (of sin) [*wizr*], and you have to be patient."[303] Taking this further, senior Azhar scholar Ra'fat 'Uthman denounced and condemned calls to revolt against the ruler and to bring about change by force and violence. This, he said, runs contrary to Shari'a. There is consensus

[300] El-Beheri, "Friday Sermons"; and Ahmad 'Abd al-Khaliq, "Ulama al-Azhar: Al-intihar khuruj 'ala al-Islam," *Al-Ahram*, January 20, 2011, http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/33439.aspx, accessed October 30, 2018.
[301] Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Lahore: Kazi, 1983), Vol. 2, Hadith no. 446, 252.
[302] Al-Azhar did not release an official statement about the fate of those who attempted suicide. Then-Azhar spokesperson Muhammad al-Tahtawi explained that al-Azhar did not know what internal conflicts afflicted people who turned to suicide, and it is ultimately up to God to judge them. See Abd al-Khaliq, "Ulama al-Azhar." For al-Qaradawi's stance on this issue, see Muhammad Baghdad, *Al-fitna al-sughra: al-fatwa al-fiqhiyya fi zaman al-thawarat al-'Arabiyya* (Algiers: Dar al-Hikma, 2012), 110-2.
[303] Some books attribute this saying to 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (d. 653), another companion of the Prophet. See Abu Muhammad al-Qutaybah, *'Uyun al-Akhbar* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1997), 55.

(*ijma'*) among all religious scholars across the ages that *khuruj* is haram, unless the ruler publicly leaves the Islamic faith. The reasoning behind this ruling, he explained, is that the civil strife (*fitna*) and bloodshed that occur with revolt are much worse than the status quo ante.[304]

Shaykh al-Atrash was then asked about online *fatwa*s that call for *khuruj* and cite *nusus* as proof for the need to revolt. Some, for example, cite a well-known *hadith* of the Prophet: "Whosoever of you sees an evil, he should change it with his hand; if he is not able to do so, then with his tongue; if he is not able to do so, then with his heart, and that is the weakest of faith."[305] To this, he responded, "Those who cite this hadith do not have knowledge of other *nusus* of shari'a, and when making a religious ruling, one must be aware of all the relevant *nusus* in Qur'an and *hadith*."[306] Even if this hadith tells us to change an evil, there are other texts that tell us that if changing one evil results in a greater evil, then one cannot attempt to change the original evil, al-Atrash explained.[307]

To Join or Not to Join

These jurisprudential questions continued well into the uprising of 2011 and beyond. Aria Nakissa theorizes that at this time, Islamic law (*fiqh*) underwent some changes. With the advent of uprisings across Muslim-majority countries in 2011, religious scholars were asked about the permissibility of anti-government protests.[308] As illustrated earlier in Shaykh al-Atrash's response to the Tunisian uprising, classical Islamic texts had for centuries discussed anti-government movements, largely claiming that Muslims must obey their ruler as long as the ruler

[304] Dissenting opinions exist, he said, among the much-maligned Khawarij, who killed the fourth Caliph 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, and some Shi'i Muslims. Abd al-Khaliq, "'Ulama al-Azhar."
[305] Abu 'Eisa Mohammad Ibn 'Eisa At-Tirmidhi, *English Translation of Jami' At-Tirmidhi*, trans. Abu Khallyl (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), Vol. 4, Hadith no. 2172, 231-2.
[306] Abd al-Khaliq, "'Ulama al-Azhar."
[307] Abd al-Khaliq, "'Ulama al-Azhar."
[308]Aria Nakissa, "The Fiqh of Revolution and the Arab Spring: Secondary Segmentation as a Trend in Islamic Legal Doctrine," *The Muslim World*, 105.3 (2015), 399. He terms these changes "secondary segmentation."

does not openly become an apostate. From his survey of premodern juristic writings about rulings on rebellion (*ahkam al-bugha*), Khaled Abou El Fadl finds that Muslim jurists "affirmed a general principle: those in power must be obeyed."[309] They never advocated lawlessness or anarchy.[310] Throughout the centuries, however, the legal scholars articulated exceptions to this rule.[311] In juristic discourse, there is clear punishment for brigandage (*hiraba*) and apostasy (*irtidad*), but there does not seem to be punishment for rebellion (*baghy*).[312]

However, some jurists argued that *baghy* should be a punishable offense, since it threatens life and property, two of the five values that Islamic law is meant to protect.[313] The fear of *fitna*, an evil that leads to corruption and anarchy, led many scholars to believe that it was the Muslim's duty to refrain from "participating, and to avoid supporting civil turmoil or strife."[314] Abou El Fadl shows, however, that both sides of the debate existed throughout the history of Islam; there were jurists calling for obedience to the ruler,[315] and others who did not rule out the possibility of revolt and supported their arguments with verses from the Qur'an.[316] Abou El Fadl concludes that it took two hundred years to produce coherent legal opinions about rebellion in response to civil wars and constant armed challenges to the Umayyad (r. 660-750) and Abbasid (r. 750-1517) caliphates. The circumstances the jurists wrote under inevitably dictated the rulings they issued. It took yet another few centuries for the field of *ahkam al-bugha* to be better

[309] Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 22.
[310] Law tends to favor order and stability. Divine law itself "does not dictate anarchy." Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 26-27.
[311]Abou El Fadl, Rebellion and Violence, 27.
[312] Abou El Fadl does show that in the earlier days of the debate, *hiraba* and *baghy* were not yet separate, distinct categories, and reports often confused the two. Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 131.
[313] Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 32. According to the Muslim jurists, there are five purposes for shari'a: protection of life, property, lineage, religion and intellect. Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 27.
[314]Abou El Fadl, Rebellion and Violence, 44.
[315] Though there were some scholars who added the condition that in order for a ruler to be obeyed, he must be just. Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 120.
[316] Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 118-9. See Qur'an 9:12, 23:34, and 43:54.

articulated, and it is still undergoing change,[317] as Nakissa shows. Ultimately, Abou El Fadl's response to the question about the permissibility of rebelling is, "It depends." He writes,

> Muslim jurists, for the most part, responded [to this question] by arguing that on the one hand, rulers carry the burden of protecting Islam, but on the other hand, one cannot obey a superior if it means disobeying God. On the one hand, order and stability are necessary, but on the other hand, God commanded justice, and God's law must reign supreme. On the one hand, one should avoid pointless violence, but on the other hand, if the rebels have a reasonable chance of success, then perhaps rebellion would be justified. This results in a balance-of-evils test in which the good is weighed against the harm.[318]

It is ultimately a balancing act between benefit or interest (*maslaha*) and harm (*mafsada*). Such insurrections, even in the case of righting a wrong can lead to an even greater harm, a concern that both premodern and modern scholars contend with. The conditions must be right, or the people involved will face dire consequences.

The classical jurists were not unanimous when it came to quietism, and some of them, too, cited the abovementioned hadith of proactively changing the evil one sees and the Qur'anic duty of commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong (*al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*) but put conditions in place for it. Michael Cook writes that most of the jurists argued (with variations) that in order for one to be obligated to command what is good and forbid what is wrong, one must know: 1. what is legally permissible and impermissible, 2. that the wrong is indeed being committed, 3. that no greater harm will take place once this wrong is put to an end; 4. that speaking out will actually yield results, i.e. the wrong is put to an end; and 5. that speaking out will not bring harm to one's self or property.[319] Speaking out against an unjust ruler can be a tricky ordeal when it comes to these conditions. Preventing a tyrant from committing injustice can saves many lives, but undoubtedly, the person or people who do this

[317]Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 158-9.
[318]Abou El Fadl, Rebellion and Violence, 332.
[319] Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 45-46.

will be put in harm's way, since tyrants imprison, torture or kill those who criticize them.[320] If the criticizer does take action, there should be a guarantee that no further harm will befall those who were already hurt by the action being criticized. If there is a possibility that further harm will befall others, then one should "put the wrong right in his or her heart," i.e. quietly believe that it is wrong, rather than risk the rights, safety and lives of others.[321] Other considerations include advising those in power in private so as not to publicly shame them and using gentle speech to persuade them to change their ways.

Scholars of today are in conversation with these dominant classical views of Islamic jurisprudence. The fiqh of revolution, Nakissa posits, is changing, with scholars forced to address peaceful protest rather than the armed insurrection with which many of the premodern scholars contended. The new legal subfields that emerge with such changes are still steeped in Islamic law and its jurisprudential methods (*usul al-fiqh*) but also take into account the social and historical contexts of the times of the rulings.[322] As will be demonstrated in this chapter, during the eighteen days of initial protest in Egypt, some religious authorities stayed true to the classical view of rebellion, citing the impermissibility of *khuruj* as well as the dangers of *fitna* (like some Azhari and Salafis shaykhs during the early days of the revolution). Others, like Yusuf al-Qaradawi, embraced the new legal subfields to support nonviolent protest.

As will become clear from the interviews I conducted, most of the anti-revolutionary pronouncements fell on deaf ears. Oftentimes, my interlocutors did not care to hear what religious figures had to say at this dire time and chose to follow their hearts on the matter, citing justice and human rights as the reasons for their involvement in the movement. Some recited

[320] Al-Sayyid Muhammad Sayyid et al. (eds.), *Sunan al-Nasa'i bi-sharh al-Imamayn al-Siyuti wa-l-Sindi* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 1999), Vol.4, 94-95.
[321] At-Tirmidhi, *English Translation*, Vol. 4, Hadith no. 2172, 231-2; and Cook, *Forbidding Wrong*, 45-48.
[322] Nakissa, "The Fiqh of Revolution," 400-1.

other *nusus* to justify how they felt that revolting against the ruler was not a sin. Others still were able to see past what leaders of religious institutions said, but had another authority figure they listened to for advice on the matter.

Eighteen Days

Calls for protest on National Police Day, January 25, 2011, circulated widely on social media, especially after Bin 'Ali stepped down eleven days prior. Although hundreds reportedly showed up in Tahrir Square in Cairo that day, it was only on Friday, January 28, that the number of protesters grew to be in the thousands. Eighteen days of protest later, on February 11, 2011, Mubarak stepped down. My interviewees' involvement in this initial uprising (there would be many more protests in the following months) depended on a number of factors. Many of them recounted that although they wanted to join the protests, they could not out of respect for their parents' wishes. Almost every one of them recalled the statement "*al-khuruj 'ala al-hakim*" but could not necessarily remember who had said it. In any case, my interlocutors argued that the statement and the framing of similar pronouncements couched in religious terms were not deterrents to protest.

Although not all of my interviewees were for revolution, those who took part in the protests remember those days fondly. Du'a, a journalist who grew up in Britain, explained how, at least for a short while, the revolution made her feel proud to be Egyptian. She told me that she never felt that she belonged in either Europe or Egypt, where she went back to do her undergraduate studies at an elite university. Then in 2011, all of a sudden, she explained,

> I felt it so strongly. I felt so proud and so connected to Egypt, because there was a reason that was bigger than everything … I remember taking part in the revolution ... It wasn't safe to be there. I was staying with my uncle who was a military man. So the notion of participating [she laughs] was completely off limits. I had to go behind his back and arrange so many things so that I'd be safe in someone's company and make sure that my

> parents [back in Europe] weren't worried… I was afraid. I didn't know what to expect. I felt that it was a huge moment, and I was so happy to be taking part in it.[323]

Hadil, a human rights advocate from Alexandria who lived in Cairo at the time, similarly recalled strong feelings of nationalism and national unity. She saw social barriers break down before her eyes: "People chanted after one another, even if they came from obviously different social paths," she detailed. "You'd see the bougie women in their brands, handbags and sunglasses chanting after an obviously poor man whom they would [walk past] in the street whenever they saw him. In his traditional dress [*jalabiyya*] and such. So, there was that sense of unprecedented unity and egalitarianism. It was utopic."[324]

Jude, entrepreneur and now mother of two, explained that she was so hopeful for a better and just Egypt that she decided to have a baby immediately following the uprisings. With a hint of sarcasm in her voice, she continued, "But *al-hamd li-llah* [thank God], throughout my nine months of pregnancy, I discovered that this was all a big lie. *Al-hamd li-llah*," she said, laughing.[325]

Of course, not everyone thought of the revolution fondly or supported it. Marwa, the daughter of a wealthy Egyptian businessman who belongs to the elite and lives in a gated community in the suburbs of Cairo, disapprovingly noted that what was happening was chaos (*fawda*) and not a revolution. People spread rumors that a revolution of the hungry was afoot. She explained:

> [We were told that] people from the poor areas will attack gated communities, destroy them and rob and kill the people in them... It [the panic] was to the extent that we collected our things, locked up our home and went to stay in a relative's apartment [in the

[323] Du'a, Interview by author (in English).
[324] Hadil, Interview by author, New York, January 2018 (in English). For interviews from February 2011 on this topic, see Nourhan El-Abbassy, "Behind the Doors of Tahrir: Tales of Patriotism, Resistance and Hope," *Ahram Online*, February 11, 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/0/5382/Egypt/-Behind-the-doors-of-Tahrir-Tales-of-patriotism,-r.aspx, accessed December 15, 2020. See also Walter Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters: An Ethnography of the Egyptian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 9-11.
[325] Jude, Interview by author, Cairo, February 2018 (in English).

> city] for about ten days. People were dying and being killed in the streets. Others were looting… For me, I was not against the concept that people felt oppressed and that the country was not great… I was with the idea of negotiating with the government but not with the chaos that [they] caused.[326]

Likewise, my oldest interviewee Bahir, a Cairene who works in commerce, viewed the revolution with disdain. "I saw people dying and did not feel that this was relevant to me," he argued. "I did not see how this would change anything." Because of his work, he continued, "I was aware of where the nodes of power in the country were. I knew that if you remove Mubarak's National Democratic Party, the 'scary' Brotherhood would take its place... And what I predicted happened."[327] Thus, both Marwa and Bahir cited pragmatic, political and economic reasons for not joining, but not religious ones, though they were both aware of the anti-protest pronouncements several religious preachers had made.

Al-Azhar and the Revolution

Leaders from religious institutions and organizations were initially either silent with regards to the uprising or disapproving of it. Azhar officials like the Head of Al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyib and then-Mufti of Egypt 'Ali Jum'a[328] were quiet at first and then condemned the protests and the lawlessness that accompanied them, thus upholding the traditionally conservative views on rebellion[329] as portrayed by Nakissa and Abou El Fadl. Hundreds had initially taken to the streets of Egypt on Tuesday, January 25, protesting unemployment,

[326] Marwa, Interview by author, Cairo, July 2018.
[327] Bahir, Interview by author, Cairo, February 2018.
[328] Technically, Mufti Jum'a was not an Azhari official, since he was the head of Dar al-Ifta, an institution under the Ministry of Justice. For my interlocutors, though, and for almost all Egyptians, the Grand Mufti is seen as part of al-Azhar and is usually an alum of the institution.
[329] Hossam Tammam, "Islamists and the Egyptian Revolution," *Egypt Independent*, February 8, 2011, https://ww.egyptindependent.com/islamists-and-egyptian-revolution/, accessed September 10, 2018; and Husam Tammam and Patrick Haenni, "Egypte: les religieux face à l'insurrection," *Religioscope*, February 10, 2011, https://www.saphirnews.com/Egypte-les-religieux-face-a-l-insurrection_a12226.html, accessed September 20, 2018. See also Masooda Bano "At the Tipping Point? Al-Azhar's Growing Crisis of Moral Authority," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 50 (2018), 721.

corruption and poverty. The numbers grew over the next few days, and opposition groups announced their intentions to launch protests from mosques around Egypt after the obligatory Friday prayers on January 28. In response, the Awqaf Ministry released a statement urging imams of mosques to prevent places of worship from becoming launchpads for demonstration. It said, "The teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah promote freedom of expression as long as it does not lead to chaos or corruption and as long as it respects others including those with opposing views or beliefs."[330] People took to the streets anyway, many of them in throngs from mosques after prayer. This is also when the Brotherhood officially joined the revolutionary fold. Clashes between the police and the protesters escalated in Cairo and other governorates, particularly Suez, garnering the attention of the two scholars, al-Tayyib and Jum'a, who warned against *fitna*.

In a statement televised by Egyptian state and satellite channels, al-Tayyib openly condemned those who "spread corruption on earth" (*mufsidin fi al-ard*), quoting Qur'anic verses to support his disapproval of what was happening:

> Allah tells us that these people could be of the *mufsidin fi al-ard,* those who deserve to be punished in this life and the next… In the Qur'an, we are told: 'And among mankind is he whose talk of the life of this world impresses thee, and he calls God as witness to what is in his heart, though he is the fiercest of adversaries. And when he turns away, he endeavors on the earth to work corruption therein [*li-yufsid fiha*], and to destroy tillage and offspring, but God loves not corruption. And when it is said to him, 'Reverence God,' vainglory seizes him sinfully. Hell suffices him, what an evil place!"[331] I tell our youth: have consciousness and fear [*taqwa*] of Allah in yourselves and in what you have been entrusted with [*amanatikum*]… Regain your consciousness and give up these actions that run contrary to religion, ethics and law.[332]

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[330] "Egypt Warns against Using Mosques for Launching Protests," *Egypt Independent*, January 27, 2011, https://ww.egyptindependent.com/egypt-warns-against-using-mosques-launching-protests/, accessed October 10, 2018.
[331] Qur'an 2:204-6. For translation and interpretation, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al. eds, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: Harper One, 2015), 89-90.
[332] "Cheikh Youssef Al-Qardaoui: 'Je conseille au président Moubarak de partir," YouTube video, January 31, 2011, 10:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oraHyUvnMhs, accessed January 13, 2018.

Al-Tayyib used his authority as Shaykh al-Azhar and quoted evocative verses of the Qur'an in a way as to condemn protesters to hell, calling them "spreaders of corruption on earth," in order to deter people from protesting and participating in the damage some of the protests caused. The implication to the listener is that protesters were engaging in actions that would warrant God's wrath and that jeopardized people's welfare.

Each time Mubarak made a televised speech, addressing the youth and their demands and making concessions to them, and as violence escalated in response to these speeches, both al-Tayyib and Jum'a renewed their calls to urge the youth to retreat.[333] Jum'a (who was more vocal than al-Tayyib and more memorable to my interviewees) also used his religious knowledge and authority to construct simplified frames that resonated with the populace. He did not shy away from using *nusus*, especially *hadith* (even alluding to one that some scholars deem weak or *da'if*) to discourage people from protesting: The "protesters should go back to their homes. The Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded us to do so. He said, 'You should stay at home, cry over your mistakes, and say only that which you know."[334] Portraying the protesters as ungrateful and unruly on national television, he cited another *hadith* and chastised the demonstrators for not cooperating with the "legitimate" ruler (i.e. Mubarak) who was willing to negotiate:

> [The Prophet said,] 'Whoever among you wakes up secure in bed, with a sound body and has food for the day, it is as though the whole world has been brought into his possession.'[335] I am surprised that after all of this, we still rally against legitimacy

[333] Mubarak made three speeches before stepping down. In his first speech on January 29, Mubarak dissolved his cabinet and named 'Umar Sulayman his (first ever) vice president but did not step down. In his second, on February 1, he reassured people that he would not run for another term in office and that he would amend articles of the constitution pertaining to election proceedings. In his final speech on February 10, he reiterated that he would not run for another term and promised more amendments to the constitution, including to the clause about martial law. For a timeline of the revolution, see "Timeline: Egypt's Revolution," *Al-Jazeera,* February 14, 2011, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/01/201112515334871490.html, accessed January 6, 2019.
[334] At-Tirmidhi, *English Translation*, Vol. 4, Hadith No. 2406, 419.
[335] Abu Zakariya Yahya bin Sharaf An-Nawawi, *Riyad us-saliheen*, Trans. Muhammad Amin Abu Usamah Al-Arabi bin Razduq (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2002), Vol. 1, Hadith no. 511, 464.

> [*shar'iyya*[336]—referring to Mubarak]. What remains after we do away with what is legitimate? A deaf, dumb, blind *fitna* will take over. An example of this is Tunisia. Has Tunisia achieved anything from this lawlessness? … Mubarak is open to negotiation, dialogue and change… I salute Mubarak for doing this, and the youth for making political dialogue possible… You all have to retreat. Let *shar'iyya* do its work. Rebelling (*Khuruj*) against what is legitimate (*shar'iyya*) is forbidden, forbidden, forbidden (*haram, haram, haram*)! … It has become clear to the entire world that the people are with Mubarak and so is the *shar'iyya*… This is all summarized in the Prophetic saying: "Fitna lies dormant. God damns he who awakens it."[337] If you are all of the same mind and heart, and one person commits khuruj against this, *then kill him whoever he is*. We do not want to say this about these fitnas because he [the Prophet] also prohibited us from killing ... But we are reminding people, have taqwa towards the country. These protests will only lead us into a dark tunnel with no results.[338]

Jum'a further claimed that those who joined the protest did not have "an atom of faith,"[339] questioning the credibility of those in the square. The protesters knowingly did something Islamically impermissible, i.e. rebelling against Mubarak whom Jum'a deemed the legitimate ruler. If the ruler is deposed and there is a political void, then *fitna* will inevitably follow, Jum'a argued. Those who incite *fitna*, he suggested, can be punished by death,[340] though he did not encourage this course of action. Ultimately, inaction would be better for the protesters, in Jum'a's view.

Despite these statements, which aired on state and satellite channels and radio, protests continued. Reports of Azhar scholars joining the protests notwithstanding their institution's

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[336] When Mursi became president in 2013 and his authority was undermined months after his inauguration, he used this very term to quell dissenters, but it backfired. See chapter 4.

[337] I could not find this *hadith* in any of the *hadith* collections. The only place I found it was in a book by *hadith* scholar Muhammad al-Albani (d. 1999) about hadith *da'if*—"weak" because of a problem with the *isnad* or chain of narration from the Prophet). See Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, *Da'if al-jami' al-saghir wa ziyadatih al-fath al-kabir*, Vol. 1, (N.p.: Al-Maktab al-Islami, n.d), 586, Hadith No. 4024.

[338] "Ali Jum'a: Mubarak huwa al-shar'iyya.. uqtulu al-thuwwar," YouTube video, Oct. 27, 2011, 3:06, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-7sfAoPnQo, accessed October 20, 2018. People continued to comment on this video into 2014, especially after Mursi's deposition. Some agreed with Jum'a, claiming that the *fitna* he predicted did take its course indeed. Others claimed he was a hypocrite, condemning the uprising against Mubarak while supporting the one against Mursi.

[339] "Mawqif shaykh al-Azhar wa-l-mufti wa-l-Qaradawi min al-thawra al-Misriyya". YouTube video, February 15, 2012, 4:03, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGWQls6wKK0, accessed September 23, 2018.

[340] This is based on yet another *hadith*. For variants of the Prophetic saying, see Abu 'Awana al-Isfarayini, *Musnad Abi 'Awana* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rif, 1998), vol. 4: 411-13.

official stance surfaced.[341] On February 3, Muhammad Rifa'a al-Tahtawi,[342] al-Tayyib's official spokesperson, announced his resignation while publicly throwing support behind and joining the protesters.[343] As another Friday approached and calls to protest from mosques were made once more, Jum'a issued a fatwa on live television permitting men to forgo the Friday prayer, if it meant avoiding *fitna*. There is consensus across jurisprudential schools (*madhhab*s), Jum'a posited, that the prayer can be skipped in order to ensure one's safety.[344] A few days later, Jum'a claimed that peaceful protests were a legitimate democratic means of expressing one's demands, but he urged people to find a place (outside of Tahrir Square) where they could express themselves peacefully without causing any more bloodshed, harm to Egypt's economy or loss to people's livelihoods.[345]

As mentioned earlier, al-Azhar is not a monolith, and so scholars therein were divided on the legal status of the protests. There was a notable presence of Azhar shaykhs in their traditional garb in the square, including the aforementioned spokesperson for Shaykh al-Azhar, al-Tahtawi. Likewise, world-renowned Shaykh al-Qaradawi,[346] while in exile in Qatar, was vocal throughout the revolution about his support for the protesters and his disdain of the official position of al-Azhar. Al-Qaradawi argued that protesting against the regime was a religious obligation.[347] He condemned the Azhari officials for saying that the protesters "did not have an atom of faith,"

[341] "Haqiqat mawqif shaykh al-Azhar min thawrat 25 Yanayir", YouTube video, November 4, 2011 8:42, (Link expired), accessed April 15, 2015.
[342] Grandson of Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, the well-known Egyptian scholar and modernist thinker.
[343] Tammam, "Islamists and the Egyptian Revolution"; and "Al-Azhar wa thawrat 25 Yanayir: Rasd tawthiqi wa qira'a mawdu'iyya," *Al-Arabiya*, October 15, 2012, (Link expired), accessed April 15, 2015. Mursi appointed him chief of the presidential office (*ra'is diwan al-ri'asa*) in 2012.
[344] "Mawqif shaykh."
[345] "Jum'a: al-ihtijaj wa-l-tazhahur al-silmi juz' min al-dimuqratiyya 'ala alla tashill harakat al-mujtama'," *Al-Ahram*, February 6, 2011 (Link expired), accessed September 3, 2018.
[346] Al-Qaradawi is deemed "the Global Mufti," for issuing *fatwa*s for Muslims worldwide on his show on al-Jazeera. See Gräf and Skovgaard-Petersen (eds.), *Global Mufti*.
[347] Nakissa, "The Fiqh of Revolution," 406.

arguing that rather than side with the oppressed, al-Tayyib sided with the oppressor. "All that these people are asking for," al-Qaradawi said from his platform on al-Jazeera, "are some of their rights: that they can make an honest living and that they have freedom and dignity." He then made an open call to Azhari scholars to join the protests and make their presence known.[348]

Like al-Tayyib and Jum'a, al-Qaradawi highlighted the twin threats of violence and economic degradation, but unlike them, he did not use these issues as a means of demobilizing protesters but rather to redirect their efforts. "I advised the youth to not clash with security forces," he stated, on al-Jazeera. "You are one," he continued. "Perhaps many of [the policemen] have the same concerns you have or even more serious ones. And maybe, if they got the chance, they would join you. So only do good onto them." To portray the movement as pure and ethical, al-Qaradawi added, "I want to reassure you that the true revolutionaries who staged this *intifada* [literally, shaking off—the term used for Palestinian struggle against Israel] did not loot and plunder. And I warn them again not to destroy any property for this is *haram*, *haram*, *haram*!"[349] Interestingly, in his statements al-Qaradawi relied less on *nusus* than the two Azhar officials did, though he relied on his authority as a religious figure.

Shortly after Mubarak made his last speech as president, al-Tayyib again appealed to the protesters to go home, this time taking a stab at al-Qaradawi[350] and religious leaders who took a similar approach to the protests:

> Today, it is *haram* for you to join the protests because it is *khuruj* against the state and the people… These people unfortunately used religion and betrayed it, using dishonest *fatwa*s for politics and in pursuit of their interests. We warned these people that on the Day of Judgment, God will ask them about what is happening in the country. The Prophet

[348] "Mawqif shaykh". For transcriptions of several television appearances and Friday sermons by al-Qaradawi, see Wasfi 'Ashur Abu Zayd, *Al-Qaradawi… Al-imam al-tha'ir: Dirasa tahliliyya usuliyya…fi ma'alim ijtihadih li-l-thawra al-Misriyya* (Hilliard: Sultan li al-Nashr, 2011). For a transcription of this specific episode, see Abu Zayd, *Al-Qaradawi*, 197-203.
[349] "Cheikh Youssef Al-Qardaoui."
[350] Jum'a also directly criticized al-Qaradawi, saying that he was away from the country for too long to know what was happening and thus was not in a position to issue *fatwa*s about protest. See "Mawqif shaykh".

> warned us about these people, that from the *du'ah* [preachers], there are those who will call to *fitna* and to hellfire.[351] Whoever follows them will be thrown into it [hellfire]… May Allah guide this youth back to what is right.[352]

Here Shaykh al-Azhar warns people that their protesting and the people who condoned such actions could ultimately be punished in the hereafter. The statement also throws into question the legitimacy of the scholars (*du'ah*) who called people to protest.

Al-Tayyib and Jum'a used their authority and legitimacy to back the government and condemn the protests, framing them as an action punishable by God.[353] They used culturally salient references from the Qur'an and *sunna* to appeal to the masses and dissuade them from joining the movement. Their arguments directly clashed with those of social movement instigators. Whereas protesters framed their struggle as one for "bread, freedom, social justice," Jum'a quoted a *hadith* about being content with what one has.[354] By using this *hadith*, it was as if Jum'a was casting the protesters as ungrateful, fear-mongers who only caused division and strife (*fitna*). Finally, both scholars called Mubarak the legitimate ruler, countering the protesters' claims that he was not and that he had to go. While al-Tayyib and Jum'a argued that people had a duty to obey the ruler, the protesters countered that speaking out against an unjust ruler is also the duty of a Muslim.

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[351] He refers loosely to a *hadith* found in Ibn Majah's chapter on self-isolation, especially during *fitna*. Muhammad Bin Yazeed Ibn Majah, *English Translation of Sunan Ibn Mâjah*, ed. Huda Khattab, Vol. 5, (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), Hadith no. 3981, 198.
[352] "Mawqif shaykh".
[353] An Arab Barometer survey carried out in June 2011 found that, when people were asked if religious scholars "should have influence over the decisions [of the] government," 63% of them agreed while 37% disagreed. This lends support to the idea that many in Egypt had trusted religious authorities and approved of their involvement in the political process. See Gamal A. 'Asilah, "The Arab Barometer Project Arab Republic of Egypt June 2011: Public Opinion Report on the Most Important Political and Social Issues in Egypt," Survey conducted by *Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies*, http://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/Egypt_Public_Opinion_Survey_2011.pdf, accessed December 4, 2018.
[354] At-Tirmidhi, Vol. 4, Hadith No. 2346, 374-5.

I asked my interviewees if these pro-government statements resonated with them, and almost all of them said that they did not. Hamza, a doctoral student who has great respect for and studied with a shaykh from al-Azhar, told me that he understood and sympathized with the institution's need to stay true to (part of) the tradition:

> On the one hand, they have this traditionalist approach which is very conservative, quietist, and has a very long history, like even going back to how they lowered the standards for the ruler. They [classical scholars] just kept lowering and lowering to the point where it was that [at least] the guy [ruler] can't be blind … [Azharis] are a part of that tradition … They look at *hadith*, and they take it seriously in terms of not committing *khuruj 'ala al-hakim*. You're not supposed to go out against the ruler. It is a principled stance to a certain degree.[355]

On top of this commitment to tradition, Hamza explained, the institution also worried that with the open, democratic society that would result from the success of the uprising, the market would be open to "Saudi Salafis in terms of books, education, the airwaves and shaykhs at mosques." Al-Azhar feared that it would lose the battle for the hearts and minds of Muslims in Egypt, something that was already underway but would be exacerbated with the newfound freedom. He also noted that Azhari scholars joined the protests, but they clarified that they joined not as representatives of their institution but as themselves.[356]

This again speaks to the fragmentation within al-Azhar. Two of my interlocutors told me how the shaykh they were studying with at the mosque, Shaykh 'Imad 'Iffat (d. 2011) and then-*amin al-fatwa* (assistant to the Grand Mufti 'Ali Jum'a), encouraged them to join the protests and did so himself. Even though he was an Azhari scholar, 'Iffat differed with other scholars, including longtime friend and mentor Jum'a, about the legitimacy of the demonstrations.

Ziyad, a doctoral student, saw 'Iffat as a teacher, mentor and confidante and having someone with his knowledge present in the square gave him great comfort. The uprisings made

[355] Hamza, Interview by author, Cairo, February 2018.
[356] Hamza, Interview by author.

him more aware of his mortality, and this made him worried about the possibility of dying for the wrong reasons:

> There is a moment when a person feels that death is so close, and you feel you need more certainty (*yaqin*) that what you are doing is right. On January 29, someone died in front of me, and I had to carry him. It was just by chance that the bullet hit him and not me. In these moments, one becomes more angry than scared, and you are ready to die. But you want to make sure that it is not all for naught. I mean, if I died, I wanted it to be for the right reason. This was the moment when I saw Shaykh 'Imad. He is not someone you can stand with somewhere and feel that you are doing something wrong.[357]

'Iffat's presence in the square ran contrary to the official position of al-Azhar, and this comforted Ziyad who wanted to take part in what he believed was a call for justice but who also cared to have the blessing of a religious authority whom he trusted. On the precipice of possible death during protest, Ziyad needed reassurance that what he was doing would not lead him straight to hell. Having the shaykh at his side was all the reassurance he needed. Ziyad and many young people like him were disappointed with the religious institution, especially given its role in this important political moment. There were, however, dissenting voices like those of al-Qaradawi, 'Iffat, and others, many of whom were recognized and celebrated.

"Like Driving through A Fog"

The Salafi story is similar to the Azhari one. Most of my interlocutors recalled that religious figures had said that *khuruj* was forbidden but could not remember who made the claim. Some who were of the Salafi persuasion, however, remembered that influential Salafi shaykhs at their mosque or on television admonished people to not join.[358] Like Azhari shaykhs, however, Salafi scholars were not of one mind with regards to the permissibility of the

[357] Ziyad, Interview by author, Cairo, April 2018.
[358] For excerpts of sayings by influential Egyptian Salafi shaykhs about the 2011 uprising, see Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Mahmud ibn 'Abd al-Hamid al-Khuli, *Shubuhat hawla al-khuruj wa-l-thawarat* (Cairo: Dar al-Imam Ahmad, 2012).

protests.[359] Scholars like Mahmud al-Misri, who appeared regularly on al-Nas channel, were featured on national television, urging the youth to leave the square. The influential scholar Abu Ishaq al-Huwayni, who is also the most famous Egyptian student of Muhammad al-Albani (d. 1999), the well-known Syrian-Albanian *hadith* scholar, maintained his silence throughout the eighteen days, explaining afterwards that having to reach a decision about the permissibility of protest was like "driving through a fog." Shaykh Muhammad Hassan, however, yet another Salafi scholar who, along with al-Huwayni and al-Misri, regularly appeared on Salafi channels like al-Nas, al-Rahma and Hafiz[360] was interviewed on (a non-Egyptian) satellite channel near Tahrir Square after January 28, where he commended the youth for their efforts but asked them to protect public and private property. This difference in opinion may not necessarily be a reflection of each of the scholars' political worldview or ideology but, as they explained later, it was a difference in *ijtihad*, the effort expended to come up with a ruling on an issue not directly explicated by the foundational texts.[361] It was with this caveat in mind that Salafi scholars explained their reluctance to condone the protests outright.

The Salafi school prohibits *khuruj*, even if the Muslim ruler is unjust, as long as he does not commit apostasy.[362] Once the uprising began, however, this near consensus on *khuruj* disintegrated: some, like Hassan, supported the revolution; others, like al-Misri, opposed it;

[359] See, for example, Egyptian Salafi Shaykh, Ahmad ibn Ibrahim Abu al-'Aynayn, *Al-kawashif al-jaliyya fi hukm al-thawarat al-'Arabiyya* (Cairo: Dar al-Faruq, 2013).
[360] On the history and influence of Salafi channels, see Khalil al-Anani and Maszlee Malik, "Pious Way to Politics: The Rise of Political Salafism in Post-Mubarak Egypt," *Digest of Middle East Studies*, 22.1 (2013), 60-61. Hafiz Diyab counts 36 Salafi satellite channels. Diyab, *Al-Salafiyyun wa-l-siyasa*, 195.
[361] The jurist uses reasoning to discover "divine intent" regarding the issue, a practice which yields opinions that ultimately may or may not be correct but reflect the scholar's sincere effort to arrive at an answer to the problem at hand. Bernard G. Weiss, *The Spirit of Islamic Law* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 98. See also Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 17.
[362] Al-Anani, "Pious Way to Politics," 62; and Nakissa, "The Fiqh of Revolution," 407. See also Mneimneh, "The Spring of a New Political Salafism?", 32-33.

others still, like al-Huwayni, maintained their silence, neither prohibiting nor encouraging protest.

On Friday, January 28, when demonstrators flooded the streets after the Friday prayers, all forms of communication (especially, cellphones and the internet) except landlines were shut down. With this communications blackout came an interruption of targeted satellite television channels, including Salafi channels. Salafi shaykhs then had to do something they had not been willing to do before: appear on non-religious channels. Mahmud al-Misri, for example, appeared on al-Nil, an Egyptian satellite news channel, and talked about the fear and economic stagnation people felt during the uprising. Like Jum'a and al-Tayyib, he highlighted the economic insecurity. "We need to stop and think," he said, looking straight into the camera. "Young people in the Square, who will benefit from what you are doing? People's interests are stalled, and the economy is in shambles. I swear by the one and only God, each moment that passes like this is a loss for us as individuals and as a nation," he continued. "We have to put a stop to this hemorrhaging of blood and economic loss." He then asked people to stop protesting and start the change from within, urging them to ask themselves: "What obligation have I fallen short on? What can I do to serve my country?"[363] He thus called people to work on themselves internally rather than protest the government. He did not cite any religious text, but the fact that an Egyptian news channel called on him to say a few words arguably attests to the pull people there believed him to have with the masses.

After Mubarak stepped down, al-Misri clarified his stance to his followers. No one knew where all of this would take us, he began. People lost their livelihoods and money. There was an imminent threat that the youth in the squares would be shot on the spot, if it were not for God.

[363] "Al-Shaykh Mahmud al-Misri.flv," YouTube video, February 4, 2011, 2:17, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCYix5QcCh8, accessed November 6, 2018.

"During all of this, I was asked to speak on national television to quell the people," he explained. "I swear they did not tell me what to say. They wanted someone with authority and with the love of the people to talk to them." The argument of uncertainty is a thread throughout al-Misri's explanation as it was for al-Tayyib and al-Huwayni after the eighteen days. Fear that the protests would continue and that the youth would be killed, while the economy took a further nosedive were thoughts that these scholars said they wrestled with. If the youth were killed, al-Misri continued, people would have blamed him if he had urged the youth to stand their ground.

Again, speaking after Mubarak had stepped down and the revolution was viewed as a success, al-Misri was aware that his appearance on Egyptian TV condemning the protests may have damaged his reputation as a scholar: "People said that I was with the regime. I was never with the regime. In all my sermons and books, I never expressed loyalty to the regime. For six years, I have not been allowed to give sermons at mosques because of my large following. I was tortured and electrocuted and saw terrible things." In absolving himself from loyalty to the state, al-Misri hoped to regain some of the clout he had lost during this political episode. Apologizing for his earlier views, he said:

> This was a time of *fitna*, and what we have to do during *fitna* is to remain silent as the *sahaba* [companions of the Prophet] did. But we worried for our youth who were dying, that we would be like Iraq… I said what I said out of fear for the youth and Egypt. I apologize to all… If al-Nas was on air, I would have appeared on it only … I did not chastise those who did tell people to join the protests. [In the end,] I ask for *husn al-zann* [the benefit of the doubt].[364]

Again the danger of *fitna* and not knowing were reason enough for some scholars to fear leading people astray by giving credence to protest.[365]

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[364] "Mawqif al-Shaykh Mahmud al-Misri min al-thawra al-Misriyya al-juz' al-thani," YouTube video, March 19, 2011, 11:07, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMWYjlsR32A, accessed November 6, 2018.

[365] His was not the only apology that people heard in the days following Mubarak's fall; al-Tayyib also said that the uncertainty led him to discourage people from protesting out of fear for their lives.

Muhammad Hassan, however, at least by January 28 (the day remembered as the day Islamists joined the revolution), was fully onboard with the protests. In an impassioned appearance on television, Hassan talked about the injustice people faced in Egypt as a catalyst for protest and commended the youth for their efforts:

> God warns us over and over about injustice. He tells us, 'I have made injustice *haram* for myself, and I have made it *haram* amongst you, so do not commit injustice.'[366] I said in my Friday sermon last week about Tunisia, that if the fire of hunger grows, then both the rich and the poor will be burnt. This is what is happening now; Egypt is burning because of this injustice and because of these bad practices. I speak to the youth now, asking them to keep this country secure… Do not let anyone infiltrate the noble things you have done or [sully] your pure actions to secure your legitimate rights.[367]

He then prayed for Egypt's deliverance from *fitna* and that safety be restored.

Al-Huwayni, on the other hand, maintained his silence throughout the uprising and only explained his stance after Mubarak fell. He held a press conference in a mosque in Cairo with hundreds of followers present. He, too, justified his reluctance to endorse the protests by saying that no one knew where this movement was heading. There was no analogous event to which scholars could allude to make a legal ruling. From a jurisprudential standpoint, he argued that there was an "absence of a 'definitive text" (*nass qat'i*) in Islam that clearly outlaws protest. In the absence of such a direct text, al-Huwayni posited, scholars must weigh the pros and cons of issues such as protest. On matters of *ijtihad*, Khaled Abou El Fadl writes, the base assumption is that no one can discover or claim to have discovered divine will. This is why, he argues, classical scholars rarely used the words *qat'i* or certainty (*yaqin*) and "for the most part spoke in terms of

[366] Abul Hussain Muslim Ibn al-Hajjaj, *English Translation of Sahih Muslim*, Trans. Hafiz Abu Tahir Zubair 'Ali Za'i (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), Vol. 6, Hadith no. 6572, 444-5.
[367] "Thana' Muhammad Hassan 'ala muzhaharat al-thawra al-misriyya… 25 yanayir," YouTube video. 9:34. January 30, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOU6-AdXXFs&list=PL887C1C5696FB3CF2, accessed November 7, 2018.

probabilities or in terms of the preponderance of evidence and belief (*ghalabat al-zann*)."[368] It is for this reason, al-Huwayni argued, Salafis were reluctant to join the protest or condone it.[369] It was like "driving through a fog," without a definitive text to guide scholars to what is closest to divine will.[370]

Scholars must weigh the *maslaha* against the *mafsada*, al-Huwayni continued.[371] Nothing similar happened in Egypt, and when people protested before, they were tortured, jailed or killed. "If I want to give a *fatwa*," he continued, "will I do so on the basis of something settled (*mustaqirr*) or on the basis of something anomalous (*shādhdh*)? As long as [protests] always lead to harm, then no [they are not permissible]."[372] Protesting may be the norm in the West, but it is not in Islamic countries and thus the repercussions are unknown and potentially dangerous, making the harm outweigh the benefit. In that case, al-Huwayni posited, protests are *haram*. Having witnessed the success of the eighteen days and the paradigmatic change in circumstance with regards to freedom of political expression in Egypt, al-Huwayni shifted his position, showing that the ban on protest no longer stands.[373]

Along with this crash course on Islamic jurisprudential methods, al-Huwayni linked the present with the Islamic present by citing one of the most controversial episodes in Islamic

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[368] Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Reasoning with God: Reclaiming Shari'ah in the Modern Age* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), xxxix. See also Wael B Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunnī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 38.
[369] Nakissa, "Fiqh of Revolution, 411.
[370] "Ta'liq al-shaykh al-Huwayni 'ala al-ahdath ba'd thawrat yanayir| 16/3/2011," YouTube video, February 25, 2016, 1:16:04, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLtHhgV5sYI, accessed January 10, 2018.
[371] Weiss, The Spirit of Islamic Law, 78; and Zaman, Modern Islamic Thought, 37.
[372] Nakissa, "Fiqh of Revolution, 411; and "Al-shaykh al-Huwayni bi-masjid al-'Aziz bi-illah wa ra'yuh fi al-thawra al-Misriyya," YouTube video, March 11, 2011, 1:26:55, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncVpXkWPr0o, accessed September 7, 2018.
[373] On the other hand, Nakissa writes, "al-Huwayni does not articulate the view that protests and other forms of political activity constitute a unique field of law governed by a distinct set of juristic principles." Nakissa, "Fiqh of Revolution," 411.

history, the "Battle of the Camel."[374] As exemplars of Islam for Salafis and Muslims more generally, the shock value of an episode in which the Prophet's companions went to battle with one another is strong and meant to be evocative:

> So when there are two factions like this that are firm in belief, sound in religion and mind, and a *fitna* arose between them, what was the result? And these were people like I said, of sound religion and mind, with love for Allah and His Prophet. One cannot talk about an issue when you do not have something to measure it against. One must stay silent on the matter.[375]

Then, using the example of the *Salaf*, he cited the actions of a companion—in this case, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas (d. 674)—who did not side with either party during the battle, and when asked why, he said that there were people who chose one path and people who chose another. Either of them could be wrong. But those who stayed where they were and did not choose either path could not have chosen incorrectly.[376] This was al-Huwayni's attempt to rationalize the sheer confusion in which scholars and laypeople alike found themselves during the early days of the uprising. In any case, al-Huwayni told followers, believers should follow their scholars, because only they have knowledge of the Shari'a.[377] But what if scholars themselves are confused or reluctant, like he was, to give a ruling on a matter? For al-Huwayni, it seems that when in doubt, one should resort to inaction rather than engage in an action the potential consequences of which one cannot predict.

The Muslim Brotherhood and the Revolution

From religious scholars who were divided on the legal status of peaceful protest, we move to the most organized Islamist group at the time of the uprising: the Muslim Brotherhood.

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[374] Protesters called the day when thugs attacked people in Tahrir Square on horse- and camelback (February 2, 2011) "the Battle of the Camel" (*ma'raqat al-jamal*). Yasmine Fathy, "Egypt's 'Battle of the Camel': The day the tide turned," *Al-Ahram Online*, February 2, 2012, http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/33470.aspx, accessed December 16, 2020.
[375] "Ta'liq al-shaykh al-Huwayni."
[376] "Al-shaykh al-Huwayni"; and "Ta'liq al-shaykh al-Huwayni."
[377] "Ta'liq al-shaykh al-Huwayni."

In her book *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Arab Spring and Its Future Face*, Beverley Milton-Edwards gives a thorough overview of the Brotherhood's history and its influence and reach worldwide, especially focusing on the Arab Spring. Under its slogan "Islam is the solution," Milton-Edwards writes, "the Muslim Brotherhood and its ideologues have impacted the political evolution of the Middle East."[378] Although the Brotherhood did not ignite the uprising that took place throughout the Middle East, it was the most organized and experienced opposition group to the contested regimes. It was well poised to take the leadership role in the transitory phase, as it did in Egypt and Tunisia, but it did not win people over and eventually lost all gains it made following the uprisings.

The Brotherhood movement in Egypt did not always have its sights set on political opportunities, however. This question of being a *da'wa* movement versus being a force of political opposition remained a source of tension for the Brotherhood throughout its hundred-year tenure. In *Mobilizing Islam*, Carrie Wichkam shows how the Brotherhood successfully mobilized young people to join the Islamist movement, despite the risks associated with being in opposition to the "authoritarian states" of the second half of the twentieth century.[379] The organization attracted well-educated young people and had a notable presence on college campuses. These young people then grew on to take over various Egyptian professional associations (like the Lawyers' and Engineers' syndicates), and in the process, the movement grew in "credibility as a moderate and responsible opposition in Egyptian society at large," a sentiment that worried the Mubarak government, which eventually cracked down on the group.[380]

[378] Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 3.
[379] Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, 20.
[380] Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, 214-6.

Despite this, the Brotherhood still found a way to be politically active under Mubarak. For parliament, for example, they ran as independent candidates, since religious political parties were illegal.[381] Everyone was surprised when, in 2005, Brotherhood members running as independents won 88 seats in parliament.[382] They ran again in late 2010 but failed to secure a single seat, in what many believed was an election rigged in favor of Mubarak's party, the NDP.[383] During this election, which was held a couple of months before the 2011 uprising, the Brotherhood used religious slogans like "Islam is the solution," much to the chagrin of some Egyptians like scholar and former parliamentarian Amr El Shobaki, who wrote:

> Religious slogans have become commonplace in Egypt's legislative, municipal and syndicate elections, indicating that sectarian ideas and attitudes have taken root in the country and betraying a widespread blindness to the fact that respect for the sanctity of faith is best ensured by keeping religion aloof from the pragmatic considerations of politics. The Muslim Brotherhood's use of the slogan 'Islam is the solution' in their campaigns reflects one of the major dangers in this tendency to fuse religion and politics. This is because the Brotherhood's insistence on the use of this slogan implies a rejection of the idea of respect for the rule of law, even in cases where one might be against aspects of it.[384]

El Shobaki argues that the Brotherhood's use of religion could (and eventually did) give the organization an advantage over its political opponents. Almost premonitorily, El Shobaki also notes the danger in endowing political actors with religious credibility. The article then took an even harsher tone: it claimed that the Brotherhood stoked the fires of sectarianism and extremism and called on the government to "be firm in its attitude towards those who proclaim that 'Islam is

[381] They ran in 1984, 1987, 1990, 2000, 2005, 2010 and after the revolution. Amr El Shobaki, "Countering Sectarian Slogans," *Ahram Online*. November 25, 2010, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/4/276/Opinion/Countering-sectarian-slogans.aspx, accessed January 7, 2019.
[382] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 120.
[383] Clarke, "Unexpected Brokers", 385; and Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 35.
[384] El Shobaki, "Countering Sectarian Slogans."

the solution."[385] If the government manages to curb the Muslim Brotherhood's use of religious rhetoric, El Shobaki argues, it might be able to win back the public.

El Shobaki was not alone in his skepticism of the group's political strategies. Al-Anani wrote about a *fatwa* issued by the group's mufti regarding its participation in the electoral process. The Brotherhood's pursuit of political power, al-Anani writes, is legitimate; the problem comes "when the Muslim Brotherhood feels that it has to issue a religious decree in order to justify its participation in the electoral process."[386] The *fatwa* stated that it was a sin to boycott an election, since it is one's duty to take part in the political process. Arguing that parliamentary activity is a form of enjoining good and forbidding evil, the group's mufti used a Qur'anic verse to justify political participation whether as a candidate in an election or a voter casting a ballot. Doing either, he continued, is a form of jihad needed "to eliminate wrongdoing." This move effectively shifted the Brotherhood's position on politics, transposing "the electoral process, complete with its various types of calculations and practices … from the purely political realm to the religious sphere" while also turning a political action such as voting, on which there is no scholarly consensus on its legality, into a religiously ordained duty.[387] This is a notable shift away from al-Banna's ambivalence toward politics, but it puts the Brotherhood in a difficult position, since it, on occasion, also boycotted previous elections like that of 1990. Like El Shobaki, al-Anani believes that such rhetoric ultimately isolates the Brotherhood from the rest of society and creates schisms within the movement itself.

[385] El Shobaki, "Countering Sectarian Slogans."
[386] Khalil al-Anani, "Brotherhood Reveals Its Colours", *Alarabiya*, December 30, 2010, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php/2013/12/addComment.php?id=27381, accessed December 7, 2018. I unfortunately could not find the original *fatwa* or the name of the mufti at the time. It could have been Muslim Brotherhood Guidance Bureau member and Azhari scholar Muhammad 'Abd Allah al-Khatib.
[387] al-Anani, "Brotherhood Reveals Its Colours."

During the 2011 uprising, however, the Brotherhood toned down its religious rhetoric. The revolution served as the ultimate test for the Brotherhood's fluctuating position on political involvement. As a follow-up to *Mobilizing Islam*, Wickham wrote *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* to trace the history of the group's political activities up to Mursi's election as president in 2013 and shift discourse about the group's position on and relation to democracy and "moderation" in Islam. She argues instead that schisms within the Brotherhood destabilize recent scholarship's monolithic portrayal of the group and that the organization's political and institutional histories are less linear and coherent than previously believed. Ultimately, contradictions in the group's trajectory and rhetoric reflect "the imprint of strategic and ideational processes of change occurring simultaneously" within the organization.[388] The Brotherhood is not a unitary actor, because it holds together competing factions, each with its own view of the role the movement should play in society and politics and in *da'wa* and government.

On the eve of the revolution, Wickham writes, there were three visible factions within the Brotherhood. The "da'wa faction" consisted of the "aging leaders" or the "old guard," members who had been part of the group for decades and survived President Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir's persecution in the 1950s and 1960s. They "favored the continuation of the Brotherhood as a multipurpose organization rather than its conversion into a legal party subject to tighter state control."[389] They were also less amenable to Western notions such as democracy, and on occasion, made statements that were "out of sync with the Brotherhood's alleged commitment to democratic norms."[390] The second faction was the "pragmatic conservatives," those leaders who

[388] Wickham, The Muslim Brotherhood, 2-3.
[389] Wickham, The Muslim Brotherhood, 133.
[390] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 133.

were younger than the old guard, were more flexible and had more experience in the public arena, some as parliamentarians.[391] This group bridged the gap between the more conservative elements of the Brotherhood and the more reformist. They formed a "new mainstream" that was "ideologically more conservative than the reformists but more flexible than the old guard and more experienced in, adept at, and committed to representing the Brotherhood in wider spheres of public life."[392] The final faction, the reformists, was made up of members who joined in the 1970s and 1980s (though there are exceptions to this) and the Brotherhood youth in their twenties and thirties who embraced the agenda of this "middle generation" as their own. This latter group was especially active and well connected when the uprising broke out in January 2011, and utilized its blogs and social media outlets to stay abreast of and organize the events of the revolution with other activists.[393]

The schisms within were well pronounced during the early days of the uprising. The Brotherhood youth (*Shabab al-Ikhwan*) were involved in planning the January 25 protests from the beginning, against the wishes of the Guidance Bureau, the top decision-makers, of the Brotherhood which initially turned down their request to protest. Having suffered years of repression, Milton-Edwards argues, "survival, not confrontation, was the name of the game" for the Brotherhood, which was caught off-guard when the revolution erupted.[394] On January 19, a few days after the deposition of Tunisian President Bin 'Ali, the Brotherhood issued a statement commending the Tunisian people for having "risen up against the oppression, injustice, corruption, the government and the family of the ruler and his corrupted [sic] assistants for a

[391] This group included Khayrat al-Shatir, Muhammad Mursi, Sa'd al-Katatni, etc. Mursi and Katatni headed the Muslim Brotherhood bloc in parliament when it had seats. Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 133-4.
[392] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 137.
[393] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 138-41.
[394] Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 37.

quarter of a century."[395] To prevent Egypt from following suit, the statement continued, reforms must be put into place. The Brotherhood was keen on keeping the country stable, but the government must "take serious actions to combat the spread [of] corruption and bring [about] the desired reform."[396] The statement then listed ten demands, including the abolition of the state of emergency, change in Egyptian foreign policy, amendment of various constitutional articles, an end to political and economic corruption and nepotism, etc. The Brotherhood leadership showed that it favored reform rather than revolution on the eve of the uprising.

The elders maintained neutrality at first, but over the next few days and as the number of protesters in the streets grew, leaders of the Brotherhood realized that it was in their best interest to join the protests, so they ordered members to join the demonstrations after Friday prayer on January 28. Estimates show that as many as one hundred thousand Muslim Brothers joined in that day.[397] The significance of their participation in the protests was not lost on my interlocutors. Many of them remembered well that the leaders of the group had instructed members not to join, but many also remembered the strength in numbers and security that the Brotherhood added to the uprising. Reminiscing, Du'a told me, "I'm not a member of any group," she said, laughing:

> But I do have connections with the Muslim Brotherhood more than [with] the Salafis … I do remember, of course, the Muslim Brotherhood was head-on involved, and it was funny because, from what I remember, on the 25th, I believe, the Muslim Brotherhood as an organization told its members not to participate in the uprisings. Even though that happened, a lot of their younger members—again, it was very much about the youth, this whole thing—the youth were at the forefront of all these things. So, a lot of the younger members defied the orders of the elders. And they were like, 'No, we're going to take part in this.' But by the 28th, I think the group had decided to take part, and some of the people that I joined on that day were members of the Brotherhood. And that gave a huge push to the uprisings, I would have to say to be fair, because the Brotherhood was at that

[395] "MB's Statement on Tunisia's Uprising and the Demands of the Egyptian People", *IkhwanWeb*, January 20, 2011, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=27890, accessed December 8, 2018.
[396] "MB's Statement on Tunisia's Uprising."
[397] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 162. See also Clarke, "Unexpected Brokers", 391.

> time quite significant and organized. When it told its members to take part, they gave the strength to the numbers and that push on the ground. So, the Muslim Brotherhood were definitely very significant. They were there, and they took a lot of the blows.[398]

Yasin explained that organizationally, the Brotherhood was the most committed and reliable group on the ground. "I don't remember being excited that they joined or anything," he told me. "I just thought it was good, because they were supporting the people, and they were the most organized. They were definitely able to support it [the revolution], especially on the days when people were hesitant about staying."[399] I do not know if you would remember this, he said, involving me in his narrative, "but we could at least rely on [the Brotherhood]. Everyone else was spontaneous, not organized or fully committed [to the cause]."[400] To my interlocutors, the Brotherhood's numbers and commitment helped keep the revolution alive and the protesters safe.[401] For this, the people I spoke with were willing to overlook the Brotherhood's reluctance to join earlier on while also acknowledging the *Shabab*'s defiance of the elders.

The Brotherhood did not use its Islamist slogan ("Islam is the solution") while protesting. Members wanted to blend in with the masses. On January 27, the group announced that it would take part officially in the nationwide protests. In a statement, the organization commended the Egyptian youth who protested the state's corruption and injustice and offered its condolences to the fallen, civilian and police alike. The organization then situated itself as part and parcel of the Egyptian social fabric: "The MB is an Islamic collective organization," the statement said, "and

[398] Du'a', Interview by author.
[399] Yasin, Interview by author.
[400] Yasin, Interview by author.
[401] Wickham writes that the Brotherhood with their "beards and calloused foreheads (caused by frequent prayer) and the women in veils, helped run security checkpoints at various entrance points to the square, politely frisking new arrivals and checking their bags for weapons." And on the fateful day of "*mawqi'at al-jamal*," when thugs rode into Tahrir Square wielding knives and other weapons at the protesters, "Brotherhood members manned the frontlines in clashes with those hired by the regime to attack the crowds." Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 167.

its members belong to the Egyptian society."[402] It is a distinct group, but it is still part of the larger whole. As such, the statement continued, Brotherhood members share in the joy and sadness of Egyptian society.[403] The statement urged protesters to demonstrate peacefully without causing any damage to property. To achieve the goals of this movement, all "political and partisan forces" needed to "maintain a unified national stance."[404] As such, the Muslim Brotherhood downplayed its identity as an Islamist organization with Islamist ideals and opted instead to appeal to the people's sense of nationalism in this moment of revolutionary fervor. It called for unity and reiterated its commitment to the people and their demands. Throughout the eighteen days, Brotherhood members who entered the fray refrained from chanting "Islam is the solution," opting instead to chant, "Bread, freedom and social justice" along with their compatriots. Rather than raise their Qur'ans during protests, they waved the Egyptian flag.[405]

On February 6, 2011, a few days into their joining the uprising, however, Brotherhood leaders started negotiating with the military and Mubarak's newly appointed Vice President 'Umar Sulayman who was once head of Egypt's intelligence agency. These meetings, Wickham writes, were "sharply criticized by Brotherhood youth at Tahrir Square, who, together with … other protest leaders, insisted that no negotiations were possible as long as Mubarak remained in power."[406] This criticism was another example of the schism that grew between the Brotherhood's senior leaders and the activist youth, "whose commitment to the goals of the 'revolution' had come to supersede their loyalty to the Brotherhood itself."[407] The Brotherhood youth were not the only people the leadership sought to placate. Once news of their meetings

[402] "MB Statement on January 25, Day of Rage and Its Consequences," *IkhwanWeb*, January 27, 2011. https://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=27937, accessed January 7, 2019.
[403] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 167.
[404] The Muslim Brotherhood, "MB Statement on January 25".
[405] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 167.
[406] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 169.
[407] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 169-70.

with the military reached the public, the Brotherhood released yet another statement explaining its reasons for doing so and reiterating its commitment to the Egyptian people, to the revolution and to the ideals and demands of the movement:

> We emphasize that *we are a part of this great nation of Egypt* … We have accepted to engage in this dialogue to deliver those demands directly to the new officials, testing their seriousness in response to these demands. We also *engaged in this dialogue to spare our people and our country more losses* due to the stubbornness and rigidity of the regime … Our engagement in this dialogue is for the *interest of the revolution, the people and the country* … We are keen on preserving the youth, and popular, political and national unity. Therefore, we have demanded this collective dialogue, that includes *all the national forces*, particularly the youth which have been the leader [sic] of this blessed uprising… We do not have a special agenda; we follow the trends and have often repeated that we are not seeking power or position, and will not nominate anyone to run for the presidency.[408]

Here, the Brotherhood distanced itself from its reformist political ambitions of the recent past, opting instead to show full support for the Egyptian people and their demands.

This is a burden not carried by Azhari or Salafi scholars, who, prior to the uprising, did not have vested political interests as the Brotherhood did. To allay the potential doubts of the masses, the organization promised that its negotiations included all political factions and were for the good of the entire Egyptian nation, which by then had suffered bloodshed and economic loss. It also promised not to use the revolution for political gain if and when the dust settles. In this statement, the Brotherhood promised not to field a presidential candidate once Mubarak steps down.[409] Later, during the transitional period after Mubarak stepped down and the military ruled in the interim, the Brotherhood also promised that its newly formed party *Hizb al-Hurriyya wa-l-ʻAdala* (Freedom and Justice Party) would "not contest more than 50% of the seats in the

[408] Emphasis is mine. "MB Statement on the Dialogue between Youth, Political and National Forces with Egypt's Vice-President," *IkhwanWeb*, February 7, 2011, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=27977, accessed January 20, 2019.
[409] The Muslim Brotherhood, "The MB Statement on the Dialogue." In 2012, the organization fielded not one but two potential candidates. See chapter four.

coming parliamentary elections, with the goal of obtaining a third of the seats."[410] They later reneged on both promises, a contradiction that, for many of my interlocutors, signaled that the Brotherhood was not to be trusted.

Throughout the eighteen days, the Muslim Brotherhood framed its involvement in the uprising as a national duty and downplayed the religious and exclusivist nature of the organization. It built its authority on the fact that the Brotherhood had opposed the government for centuries and always opposed the injustices perpetrated by the various governments of Egypt since 1928. Because members of the organization have this political past with previous Egyptian governments, however, having unofficially held seats in various Egyptian parliaments, they felt they had to clarify to their compatriots and global citizens alike that their intentions were pure. "This is Egypt's revolution, not ours," Mursi wrote in *The Guardian* on February 9, 2011.[411] He highlighted the "corruption, poverty, inequality and insecurity" that were commonplace in Mubarak's Egypt and argued that the Brotherhood, "at the heart of Egyptian society," felt the repercussions of state oppression and was "constantly targeted by some of the most brutal government measures," especially as a "political movement with wide appeal and support."[412]

Mursi then addressed a growing national (and international) concern: the Brotherhood, he promised, was not planning on politically dominating post-Mubarak Egypt. All of the organization's statements, he reminded readers, emphasized that the Muslim Brothers see themselves "as part of the fabric of Egyptian social and political life." As such, they should be given the space, like any other group in Egypt, to promote their "message and solutions." He

[410] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 170.
[411] Mohammad Mursi, "This is Egypt's Revolution, Not Ours," *The Guardian*, February 8, 2011. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/feb/08/egypt-revolution-muslim-brotherhood-democracy, accessed September 3, 2018.
[412] Mursi, "This is Egypt's Revolution."

only briefly mentioned Islam, again, emphasizing the Brotherhood's commitment to the will of the people: "There can be no question that genuine democracy must prevail; and while the Muslim Brotherhood is unequivocal regarding its basis in Islamic thought, it rejects any attempt to enforce any ideological line upon the Egyptian people."[413]

Thus, aware that the international community that monitored the revolutionary developments closely would worry about "another Iran" (just as some Egyptians did), members of the Brotherhood wrote in international newspapers clarifying their commitment to the nation while explaining and downplaying their religious identity. Former "reformist" Brotherhood member 'Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh wrote in the *Washington Post*, urging the White House not to fear a (limited) Brotherhood ascent to power. Abu al-Futuh writes, "Like Egyptians from all walks of life, we in the Muslim Brotherhood are taking part in the popular uprising to depose a repressive dictator."[414] Since he was addressing Washington, however, he referred to the Islamic identity of the group as something not to be feared: "We are mindful, however, as a nonviolent Islamic movement subjected to six decades of repression, that patent falsehoods, fear mongering and propaganda have been concocted against us in Mubarak's palaces the past 30 years and by some of his patrons in Washington."[415] He reassured the American government (just as Brotherhood statements reassured the Egyptian public) that the group would not field a presidential candidate nor would it "attempt to usurp the will of the people."

Anything they do, Abu al-Futuh reiterated, would have to adhere to the will of all Egyptians, even if it means putting the Brotherhood's own "agenda" on hold:

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[413] Mursi, "This is Egypt's Revolution."
[414] Abdel Moneim Abou el-Fotouh, "Democracy Supporters Should Not Fear the Muslim Brotherhood," *The Washington Post*, February 9, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/09/AR2011020905222.html?noredirect=on , accessed December 7, 2018.
[415] Abou el-Fotouh, "Democracy Supporters."

> Because we are an Islamic movement and the vast majority of Egypt is Muslim, some will raise the issue of sharia law. While this is not on anyone's immediate agenda, it is instructive to note that the concept of governance based on sharia is not a theocracy for Sunnis since we have no centralized clergy in Islam. For us, Islam is a way of life adhered to by one-fifth of the world's population. Sharia is a means whereby justice is implemented, life is nurtured, the common welfare is provided for, and liberty and property are safeguarded. In any event, any transition to a sharia-based system will have to garner a consensus in Egyptian society. The people of Egypt will decide their representatives, their form of democratic government and the role of Islam in their lives.[416]

After explaining what Shari'a means to Muslims worldwide, reassuring the West that it is not the draconian system of governance that the media makes it out to be but a way of life that encompasses universal ideals such as justice and freedom, Abu al-Futuh reiterated the groups' commitment to helping the Egyptian people as a whole reach the goals of the revolution. If the populace does not share the Brotherhood's vision for Egypt, the organization would not coerce anyone to adopt it.

The Brotherhood thus did two things: it clearly established that its members are part and parcel of Egyptian society and that Islam is central not only to Brotherhood members but to the whole society as well. In integrating themselves into the larger national unit, they hoped their message would resonate with as many people as possible while preventing feelings of mistrust toward the organization. Like his colleagues Mursi and Abu al-Futuh, 'Isam al-'Iryan (d. 2020) also brought up the group's oppositional and activist past in an op-ed he published in the *New York Times*. Like Abu al-Futuh, al-'Iryan attempted to allay Western anxieties about an Islamist government:

> As our nation heads toward liberty, however, we disagree with the claims that the only options in Egypt are a purely secular, liberal democracy or an authoritarian theocracy … Moving forward, we envision the establishment of a democratic, civil state that draws on universal measures of freedom and justice, which are central Islamic values. We embrace democracy not as a foreign concept that must be reconciled with tradition, but as a set of

[416] Abou el-Fotouh, "Democracy Supporters."

> principles and objectives that are inherently compatible with and reinforce Islamic tenets.[417]

Al-'Iryan drew upon two political theories here which are often depicted as being at odds with one another, namely Islamic governance and Western-style democracy, and reasserted that the two are compatible. The ideals that democracy is built on, like freedom and justice, are also central values in Islam. Commitment to one does not preclude commitment to the other, and the Brotherhood was committed to both.

As a political organization with political interests in the country, the Brotherhood needed to frame its struggle in nationalist rhetoric to fend off opponents who claimed that its members took part in the revolution for their own gain. The organization thus framed its struggle in nationalist rather than Islamic terms when it addressed national and international audiences.

The Aftermath

In the aftermath of the first eighteen days of the 2011 uprising, scholars tried to make sense of this difference of opinion for the laity, since many people expressed concern with the dissonance between *fatwa*s released at this time. Some, like Salafi Shaykh Hassan, remained resolute in their view that the protests were permissible and chastised their fellow Salafis for their hesitancy to condone the uprising from the start. The government-controlled newspaper *al-Ahram* featured an unprecedented interview with Hassan a month after Mubarak's downfall in which he was asked about Salafis' theological and political stances on various issues, including the uprising. When asked about the lack of consensus among Salafi scholars, Hassan acknowledged that Salafis in Egypt had been largely apolitical and lamented that they did not

[417] Essam el-Erian, "What the Muslim Brothers Want," *New York Times*, February 9, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/10/opinion/10erian.html, accessed November 4, 2018.

represent a united front in support of the uprising as the Brotherhood did. He then recounted that he had invited other Salafi scholars to take a stand, because "it is highly impermissible that the youth do not hear from their scholars and their shaykhs during a crisis such as this."[418] Scholars, he argued, cannot stand idly by during a *fitna*; if they do so, how are they any different from the laity?[419]

In an interview, however, Hassan sympathized with the practice and imperfection of *ijtihad*. In *The Spirit of Islamic Law*, Bernard Weiss explains that jurists can either be infallibilists or fallibilists. The former view the possibility of error in interpreting the "mind of God" with regards to the law as "unpalatable" and thus see that any effort a jurist expends in coming to a ruling should be viewed as correct even if it appears to contradict another scholarly opinion.[420] Fallibilists are more stringent in their view, arguing that "A *mujtahid* [one who undertakes *ijtihad*] must be able to say with a clear conscience that he has done all he could possibly do in his investigation of the foundational texts and that he is not aware of any further effort that he might have made. If a *mujtahid* cannot say this, his formulation of the law is without validity."[421] Hassan falls under both categories.

In a conversation with Azhari Shaykh Khalid al-Jindi, al-Jindi asked Hassan about the contradiction in the rulings of various religious scholars, who at times even contradicted themselves. To this, Hassan responded in a fashion not unlike al-Huwayni earlier: "In our tradition, a scholar cannot form an opinion on an issue until he has an understanding of the reality on the ground [*al-waqi'*] and an understanding of what is mandatory [*wajib*] in this

[418] Muhammad 'Ali 'Anz, "Al-Shaykh Muhammad Hassan: lasna hizban aw jama'a", *Al-Ahram*, March 4, 2011, http://www.ahram.org.eg/Archive/461/2011/3/3/41/65630.aspx, accessed December 3, 2018.
[419] Anz, "Al-shaykh Muhammad Hassan."
[420] Weiss, *The Spirit of Islamic Law*, 117.
[421] Weiss, *The Spirit of Islamic Law*, 120.

reality."[422] One cannot simply take evidentiary proof (*dalil*) from the Qur'an and apply it to a reality [*waqi'*] he or she does not understand. Based on a scholar's worldview and understanding of the situation at hand, fatwas issued about any matter can be different, often changing with time and place. Some scholars, he continued, might be more inclined to follow medieval jurist and theologian Ibn al-Qayyim's (d. 1350) maxim when examining the issue of protest: "If denying an evil [*munkar*] calls for an even greater *munkar* that is more abhorrent to Allah and to His Prophet, then [the original *munkar*'s] denial is not justified."[423]

In this interview, there was a relaxed give-and-take between the two scholars unlike during the urgent time of the uprising when a ruling was made in a short soundbite suitable for a quick breaking-news segment. To clarify to the audience watching the show, al-Jindi explained the maxim: "So if denying *munkar* leads to a bigger *munkar*, then this is not in reality changing the *munkar*; it is commanding *munkar*!"[424] The direness and uncertainty of revolution made it difficult for scholars to discern whether the evil of protesting against the ruler, who was seen by some as unjust, is worse than the lawlessness and chaos that can result from the downfall of a regime. Because of the uncertainty of the reality, Hassan argued, people must give the benefit of the doubt to the scholars and *mujtahid*s who exhausted all possible resources and came to different conclusions based on their understanding of the reality. People keep asking, he said, "Why did this scholar or *da'iya* [preacher] not join the protest?" Make an excuse for him, he advised viewers. He likened the choice of some scholars who decided not to join the protests to

[422] "Al-Shaykh Khalid al-Jindi wa-l-shaykh Muhammad Hassan wa-l-ijaba 'an fatawa al-'ulama 'an thawrat 25 Yanayir," YouTube video, March 5, 2011, 6:20, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8xZwUK2t98, accessed October 10, 2018.
[423] For the maxim, see Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr al-Zar'i, *I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in 'an Rabb al-'Alamin*, Vol. 3 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Alamiyya, 1991), 12-13. Hassan phrases the second half of the statement differently: "If denying a *munkar* calls for an even greater *munkar* that is more abhorrent to Allah and his Prophet, then it is *ankar* (more evil) than the [original] *munkar* and a means of *ma'siya* (disobedience to) Allah and His prophet."
[424] "Al-Shaykh Khalid."

the decision of some of the *sahaba* to stay out of the *fitna* that ensued after the assassination of the third Rashidun Caliph ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan. Hassan, however, also exhorted the *‘ulama* to change their *fatwa*s in conjunction with the ever-changing reality. No one, he said, is allowed to question an *‘alim*’s intention (*niyya*) or cast doubt on his sincerity (*ikhlas*).[425] A scholar on either side of the argument exerted all efforts to assess the situation and issued a ruling by weighing the harms and benefits while trying to discern the mind of God and the purpose of the relevant law.

In a press conference held just five days after Mubarak stepped down, al-Tayyib explained al-Azhar’s position during the uprising to the public. He argued that the institution was caught between two fears: a fear of bloodshed and that the nation would be ripped asunder and not knowing right from wrong.[426] Two months later, al-Tayyib sat down for another interview in which he explained the contradictions in al-Azhar’s previous stances. He said, “We were part of that corrupt system, and we could not condemn and demonize it overnight. We were partly responsible for the system that was in place.”[427] All that the leadership at al-Azhar could think about was, “What would have happened if the regime stayed and scores died? Their blood would be on al-Azhar’s hands.”[428] Al-Tayyib’s stance after the fact was the same as during the eighteen days: fear of the unknown, namely the possible threat to security and life, the dread of *fitna*, and the ambiguity in the legal permissibility of undermining the legitimacy of and obedience to the ruler.

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[425] “Al-Shaykh Khalid.”
[426] “Baladna: Al-Azhar: Al-shar‘ yarda ‘an al-hukm alladhi yardah al-nas,” YouTube Video, February 16, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9xRQad4Wuc&feature=plcp&context=C462b256VAvjVQa1PpcFNe4e-VlWXS1Uq20EWCdtBYBI8-vhvOeT4= (Broken link); and “Shaykh al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyib yuwaddih mawqif al-Azhar min al-thawra wa yarudd ‘ala alladhin ittahamu al-Azhar bi al-khiyana,” YouTube video, March 2, 2011, 14:35, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcbQfHkK5ac, accessed December 7, 2018.
[427] “Shaykh al-Azhar ma‘ qanat al-‘Arabiyya”. YouTube Video. March 4, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5haramJlyBxFoFY (Broken link), accessed April 12, 2015.
[428] “Shaykh al-Azhar ma‘ qanat al-‘Arabiyya”.

Unapologetically Pro-Revolution Fatwa

The two examples above demonstrate the hesitancy of the *'ulama* to rule resolutely on the issue of protest and disobedience to the ruler. There were, however, religious leaders who did advocate uncompromisingly for the permissibility to demonstrate, as is made clear by the example of Azhari Shaykh 'Iffat (d. 2011) whom Ziyad mentioned earlier. 'Iffat diverged from the official stance of the very institution he belonged to (he was, in fact, a senior member of Dar al-Ifta), and many of his students respected and revered him for it and for his active participation in the protests.[429] In this instance, for some people his *fatwa*s signaling the permissibility of protest carried precedence over the stance of the Mufti or al-Tayyib. This demonstrates the relational nature of authority, about which Zaman writes: "An institution, person, or idea may therefore be more authoritative for some people, or in some respects, and less so for others. It may carry greater authority at one time or place than it does at another."[430] To some, the scholarly authority vested in 'Iffat was more authentic and reliable at the time than al-Azhar, which was seen, by some, as a tool of the state.

*Fatwa*s are usually elicited, and in this dire time, people looked for answers regarding the permissibility of protesting against the ruler. Typically, with *fatwa*s, a questioner (*mustafti*) has an enquiry and goes (of her own free will) to a mufti who then drafts a response specific to the question (and the questioner). A *fatwa* is not enforceable, unless it is implemented by court or turned into law. After having received the answer, the questioner has the choice to implement what she has learned. *Fatwa*s then are "normative legal proposals that are contingent on essential enabling acts or triggers: the conscientious acceptance of its mandatory authority by a Muslim

[429] He, in fact, died in one of the protests in late 2011 in which people were protesting the interim military rule. I address this further in chapter 3.
[430] Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought*, 32.

practitioner or an official adoption by a proper authority."[431] But people seek fatwas of their own accord and implement them out of a "care of the self." Because a fatwa answers a specific question, it caters to the questioners' needs and takes into consideration their circumstances.[432] During the eighteen days, many people needed to hear the opinion of the *'ulama* on the uprising, but not all who tuned into the TV or radio readily followed the pronouncements they heard. This was due either to the fact that the scholars' opinions were not enforceable or because the people (like many of my interlocutors) did not believe the officials' opinions served as a mode of "care of the self," guiding them toward correct practice.

Some of 'Iffat's students, as shown earlier, were comforted by the fact that their teacher took part in the uprisings and told them to do so as well. In fact, 'Iffat was shot and killed during a protest in December 2011. His students recounted that when the shaykh who taught them Arabic and *fiqh* at al-Azhar Mosque joined the protests, he wore plain clothes so as not to represent al-Azhar or Dar al-Ifta, and he "did not leverage his religious authority identity." He joined the protests as a concerned citizen and believed that it was his duty as a Muslim to resist injustice. News of his death circulated widely in Egypt, and ʿIffat came to be known as the "Martyr of al-Azhar" and the "Shaykh of the Revolution."[433]

Although I never attended one of 'Iffat's classes at al-Azhar, his students told me about the kind of leader and mufti he was. One of them sent me a recording of a lecture 'Iffat delivered in class immediately following Mubarak's removal. He argued that his students, as Egyptians

[431] Abou El Fadl, *Reasoning with God*, xlv. See also Muhammad Khalid Masud, Brinkley Messick and David S. Powers, "Muftis, Fatwas, and Legal Interpretation" in *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and Their Fatwas*, eds. Muhammad Khalid Masud, Brinkley Messick and David S. Powers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 18-22.
[432] Agrama, "Ethics, Tradition, Authority," 13. See also Masud, Messick and Powers, "Muftis, Fatwas, and Legal Interpretation," 18-22.
[433] H.A. Hellyer, "Shaykh Emad Effat – Shaykh of the Revolution, Martyr of al-Azhar," *Seeker's Guide*, December 16, 2018, https://seekersguidance.org/articles/social-issues/shaykh-emad-effat-revolution-martyr-alazhar/, accessed December 16, 2020.

trained in the Islamic religious sciences, have a responsibility to take a stand. The lecture was not broadcast widely, but for those in the room, the mufti's words carried the normative weight of a *fatwa*, exhorting them to do their part and fight for justice.[434] Moreover, the statement was directed specifically at Egyptians, "for people who find themselves in a particular circumstance at a particular time."[435] The shaykh's words conveyed certainty and confidence. He asked his students to be self-reflexive with regards to the political events and one's role in them. He said:

> Egyptians, especially seekers of [religious] knowledge [*tullab 'ilm*], need to reflect on what happened in the past few days… Why were some students of religion, some of whom stand with us in line for prayer, absent during these days, [blessed] days of Allah [*ayyam Allah*], the Almighty? This is not a call for censure or to make people feel bad… This is just for self-reflexivity... Where was I when these things happened? …Was I armed with enough knowledge or not ...? When the reality and calamity hit, was I lost?[436]

The shaykh argued that his students, as scholars-in-training, should have researched the situation and come to a decision about what action to take. "I would never ask you to take a specific position," he said. "Never. I call on you to do your research, so you will be able to stand in front of Allah and tell Him you did all that you could."[437] He chastised those who did not think for themselves, despite their training in *fiqh*.[438]

The shaykh placed responsibility on his students to fight for what they believed was right. But as a mufti, 'Iffat emphasized the contextuality of his opinion on the protests. Before reaching

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[434] 'Iffat was consulted on various matters related to the protests throughout 2011. In one instance, a police officer asked him if it was permitted to shoot protesters, if ordered to do so by a superior. 'Iffat responded that it was absolutely forbidden for the questioner to comply. When elections were held in 2011 after Mubarak's fall, 'Iffat told his students that voting for a member of the former regime was a "sin outright." Hellyer, "Shaykh."
[435] Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought*, 32.
[436] Shaykh 'Iffat, Unpublished Lecture, February 15, 2011. See also H. A. Hellyer, "Shaykh Emad Effat – Shaykh of the Revolution, Martyr of al-Azhar," December 16, 2018, https://www.seekersguidance.org/articles/general-artices/shaykh-emad-effat-revolution-martyr-alazhar/, accessed December 13, 2018.
[437] 'Iffat's students knew his position. One of his students told me that he cancelled his lectures in al-Azhar Mosque during the eighteen days of protest that brought Mubarak down.
[438] Yusuf ibn *'*Abd Allah, *Jami' bayan al-'ilm wa fadlih* (Dammam: Dar Ibn al-Jawzi, 1994), 145-6.

a conclusion about the legal status of the movement, one must study the context, the reality (*waqi'*) of the situation:

> Did we divorce ourselves from the [political and social] reality (*waqi'*), covering our ears and fooling ourselves into thinking that our only commitment is to the yellowing pages [of books we study]? Is this our message? We must hold ourselves accountable … Allah in His mercy has prolonged our lives. This is an opportunity to reflect and reevaluate. As long as there is air in our lungs, there is room for accountability and repentance … Why did we disregard the *hadith*s and Qur'anic verses that call for *al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar* (commanding the good and forbidding the wrong)? We were lost in the rhetoric of avoiding (*i'tizal*) *fitna*, bloodshed and the end of time.

Those with knowledge, he asserted, must enjoin the good and forbid wrongdoing:

> Students of knowledge (*tullab al-'ilm*) are supposed to be leaders, preachers, and guides... Why did the ignorant [masses] surpass *tullab al-'ilm*? Why did the simple people move intuitively, while those who call themselves *tullab al-'ilm* dragged their feet … ? Truth used for falsehood (*haqq urid bih batil*)! It is baffling when you see someone who does not pray speak in the name of Islam and forbid wrongdoing (*munkar*) … And then you see *tullab al-'ilm* not doing this. We must be self-reflexive... This is true knowledge.[439]

Although his statement was tied to a particular context and addressed specifically to Egyptians, it shows that 'Iffat held that protest was legitimate and even incumbent in such a situation. For him, the fight for justice is a duty that transcends time and space. Mubarak was not a just ruler, and it was incumbent on Muslims to express their dissent in a peaceful manner.

The Laity's Reactions

During the interviews, I asked my interlocutors if they remembered what religious figures (*rijal al-din*) or groups like the Brotherhood said regarding the legal status of the protests. A vast majority remembered clearly that Azhari and Salafi scholars (who appeared on television) said that they were *haram*. The majority also remembered that the Brotherhood had been reluctant to join in initially, but it was an organized force to be reckoned with when it did join the revolutionary ranks. My interlocutors had heard all of these opinions but viewed them as such:

[439] "Waqfa ma'a al-nafs".

opinions that they could take or leave if they did not serve as a "form of the care of self." In our conversation, interlocutors figuratively talked back to Azhari officials, citing *nusus* to prove that protesting was permissible and that standing up for truth and justice are ideals that are quintessentially Islamic. And despite the Brotherhood's initial reluctance to take part, people remembered how vital the movement was in keeping the protest alive and the demonstrators safe.

The interviewees who remembered that Azhari officials were among those who said *khuruj* was impermissible drew a distinction between the religious and political roles al-Azhar plays. Although these interlocutors were not happy with the official position the institution held, they still respected it as a place of knowledge. Minna came from an upper-class family that was associated with the pre-revolutionary regime but had herself become close to the Brotherhood. From a very young age, she told me, she joined initiatives to help educate the poor and make a change at the grassroots level, in hopes of making Egypt a better, more just place for all. Minna had been skeptical, however, that any groundbreaking change would take place: "I remember … when I was in college, we would say that Egypt will never be fixed, because people were silent with regards to the oppression that was taking place."[440] When the protests began, she saw it as an opportune moment for change and was thus disappointed when al-Azhar officials spoke out against the uprising. "When people start trying to fight this oppression," she said, hypothetically addressing 'Ali Jum'a, "do not come out speaking in the name of religion—and we all know that the Mufti is chosen by the president, so the issue is political, not religious—and say that this is *haram* and make it a religious issue when it's a political one." Minna was not surprised that Jum'a took the state's position on this issue. She *was* surprised, she continued, that as a "high

[440] Minna, Interview by author, California, January 2018 (in English).

religious authority," he used religion "for something bad,"[441] i.e. not in support of what she believed was a just cause.

Many people, like Minna, believed al-Azhar is an institution with dual roles: a religious and a political one, viewing the former with respect and the latter with skepticism. But it was precisely because of the institution's religious role that people wanted it to take a moral stance on the political events. Du'a', who was a student at al-Azhar who frequently roamed its halls and learned from its scholars, was particularly invested in this side of the institution but knew it was unlikely that officials would take the revolutionaries' side: "In my mind, al-Azhar wasn't fulfilling its role of actually being that religious authority that told the government how to do its job properly in some respects. So, I wasn't expecting al-Azhar to stand up and say anything."[442] This is why, she explained, Shaykh 'Iffat was so crucial: "He was from that establishment, and he was in a very influential position within it as well."[443] Du'a' explained that 'Iffat gathered around him people of all backgrounds:

> He created this hub where he was … He engaged so profoundly with the youth, with the liberals—and I guess these terms were problematic sometimes. But people labeled themselves 'the liberals' and 'the Islamists.' And he managed to engage with all these different groups. And that was so significant, because I think a lot of times, religious groups … are so exclusivist. That was one of the main issues that people had with something like the Brotherhood.

'Iffat was inclusive and practiced what he preached, despite the official position of the institution from which he hailed. This was a source of comfort for Du'a' and many others like her who wanted a religious authority to tell them that what they were doing was religiously sound. Du'a' was disappointed by al-Azhar, especially because when the uprising toppled Mubarak, al-Azhar

[441] Minna, Interview by author.
[442] Du'a', Interview by author.
[443] 'Ali Jum'a subtly denied that the military had any role to play in 'Iffat's death. See "Al-Imam al-'allama 'Ali Jum'a fi barnamaj Misr tantakhib," YouTube video, December 26, 2011, 2:05:03, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTAv5cj0Tnc, accessed August 31, 2020.

"recognized [the uprising] and celebrated it as a victory and a good thing, which is even worse, because they didn't even have a specific narrative that they stood for. They just switched overnight ... And for me, it made al-Azhar less credible than it already was in my eyes." So, Du'a' concluded, as a religious reference, al-Azhar is significant to her, but "in politicized issues, no, they're not a reference. Is that quite strong?"[444] She, and others like her, are willing to learn from al-Azhar, either in the form of Islamic knowledge offered by its shaykhs or *fatwa*s on quotidian matters but would not heed the advice of Azhar officials on political matters like protest.

After this episode, many of my interlocutors questioned the authority of religious scholars. Maya, a psychologist in her later thirties, became angry when I asked her how she felt about the pro-government pronouncements made by religious officials. She argued that their use of the word *fitna* was subjective:

> In the beginning, some of the shaykhs said that [committing] rebellious acts against the president of the country is forbidden, because this will infuse [*sic*] *fitna* and destroy society. But, of course, these are empty words. Because if you have a dictator or a fascist, and he's throwing people into prison just because they don't like him or his policy..., if I said that this person is not good for the presidency of the country and should leave, and someone who's better should rule, this doesn't make [saying so] forbidden. [Saying that an unjust ruler should leave] doesn't [lead to] *fitna*. *Fitna* is that [sic] I agree that this person should stay or that I keep my mouth shut after seeing all of these bad [actions] and not saying anything… Of course, [the scholars] were [discouraging protest] for political reasons, because they were afraid that if Mubarak didn't go, and they said something against him, they would be punished or thrown in prison. I understand that, but [speaking out] is what's right also.[445]

For some scholars, *fitna* is civil unrest. For Maya, *fitna* is a test, a way for God to see whether a Muslim will speak up when he or she observes an injustice. In Maya's view, the scholars misread the situation, failed the test and blamed the victim rather than the unjust ruler.

[444] Du'a, Interview by author.
[445] Maya, Interview by author, Cairo, March 2018 (in English).

Hind likewise believed that silence in the face of injustice is not permitted, and she used Islamic texts to support this. "*Khuruj* [which she defined as disobedience] is nonsense, to be honest," she told me. "If you open the Qur'an, every now and then, you will find a very nice *aya* [verse] that appears a lot: '*afala yatafakkarun*:"[446] Do they not think? "Religion calls people to use their brains," she continued. "So, it's obvious: this is injustice [*zulm*], so naturally, you must stand against *zulm*. This is Religion 101 [laughs]. That's Life 101, Humanity 101. If there is something wrong, you have to stand up for what is right. You have to change what is around you."[447] The protests, Hind argued further, were peaceful, nonviolent and called for "basic human rights." Whatever happened, she asked, to "*La ta'a fi ma'siyat al-khaliq*?" a *hadith* in which the Prophet exhorts people not to obey anyone in disobeying God.[448] In a time of such uncertainty, Hind concluded, people should not follow opinions that do not sound accurate and should think for themselves.

For Ayman, the effect of the scholars' reluctance to support the protesters was nothing short of devastating. Since he was eleven, he had frequented a Salafi mosque in Alexandria where he grew up and became close to the shaykhs. Over the years, he disagreed with them on several issues like the conservative ways in which they viewed women, their pro-government stance and their "closed-minded" view of art, music, etc. The revolution was *the* turning point for him. A then-aspiring medical student (he is now a photojournalist based in the US), Ayman used to volunteer at one of the make-shift hospitals in a square where people protested in Alexandria. "People died while I treated them," he recounted. "Then I would go home, turn on the television

[446] See Qur'an 6:50, for example. There are many words similar to yatafakkarun in the Qur'an that denote use of the logical and empirical faculties, including *yatadabbarun* (reflect) and *ya'qilun* (reason).
[447] Hind, Interview by author, Cairo, July 2018.
[448] Hind, Interview by author. For the *hadith*, see Muhammad al-Qurtubi, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1998), 225.

and hear [the shaykhs] saying, 'Beat them, break their legs, kill them, imprison them!' These shaykhs whom I used to listen to and was prepared to die for at one point, they were saying these things. This was very disturbing!"[449] Ayman effectively stopped "practicing" that year. He started frequenting bars, took up smoking and shaved off his beard. "I was in so much pain inside… And my parents did not know what was happening. After that, bit by bit, I started hating any religious practice." He started to believe that the religious scholars were not to be trusted and that he no longer needed them: "After that, I stopped going to Friday prayer. I would not listen to the Friday sermon [*khutba*]. I would stand outside the mosque, and then I would pray and leave. I still do this to this day. I cannot stand listening to someone talk about religion." The scholars' words were no longer worthy of Ayman's attention, and their actions led him to rebel. He maintained a belief in religion and in its importance but became more skeptical of organized religion and the authorities that preach it.[450]

The *'ulama*'s authority was not the only thing that constrained some youth from demonstrating. For many of the women I spoke to, there was another authority of religious importance whose advice and warnings they had to heed: their parents. Many of the men, too, expressed concern over what would happen to their parents if they themselves died during protest, but their parents' disapproval did not preclude them from joining as it did for women. There was a lot of resentment in Heidi's voice when she told me how her mother prevented her from joining the protests, even though Heidi believed that it was morally imperative for her to join. For a while, Heidi, a women's rights activist now in her early thirties, blamed her parents

[449] Ayman, Interview by author. Likewise, one of Schielke's interlocutors told him that he was shocked when his Salafi shaykh locked the mosque doors when demonstrators tried to bring a wounded man into the mosque. This man ultimately "turned away from the textual hermeneutics of facts and has instead appropriated a humanistic or Sufi vision of Islam that circles around the idea of a loving God and reading of holy texts as a creative act." Schielke, "I Want to Be Committed," 27.
[450] Ayman, Interview by author.

for not letting her go to Tahrir, but she understood their fears. "If I could turn back time, maybe I would not have waited for their approval," she told me.[451] But it reflected the importance she placed then on obedience to her parents, which she has since reconsidered:

> At the time, my mother said to me—after seeing that I was insisting [on joining]—if you want to go, go, but I will not forgive you. And this sentence, at that moment, was enough to make me not move a muscle. At that time, all I could think was that if I died, I would go to hell, because my mom will not forgive me. What's the point of '*kalimat haqq 'ind sultan ja'ir*' [the Prophetic command to 'speak a word of truth in the face of a tyrant'][452] or jihad or whatever, if the main person whose pleasure is most paramount to pleasing God [i.e. the mother] will not forgive me? *Birr al-walidayn* [kindness and obedience to parents] is important. If I cannot obey my mother, then anything else I do has no meaning.[453]

Both the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition call for obedience to parents with the latter deeming it the second-best deed in the sight of God after offering prayer on time.[454] Thus, Heidi could not overlook religious injunctions of obedience to parents no matter how just she felt the cause was. She even referenced an event during the Prophet's time that she felt was analogous to her situation: "I remembered stories of the time of the Prophet, like when a woman was crying because her son went to war, and he was brought back to her." His obedience and care for his parents were given preference over his engaging in jihad with the Prophet, she elaborated.[455] "These stories affected me. I felt like there was no point to what I was doing." Heidi saw religious and moral merit in both possible scenarios, and if the situation were to arise again, she would choose to stand up for justice rather than follow her mother's wishes.[456]

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[451] Heidi, Interview by author, Cairo, June 2018.
[452] Ibn Majah, Vol. 5, Hadīth no. 4011, 217.
[453] Heidi, Interview by author.
[454] Ibn al-Hajjaj, *English Translation of Sahih Muslim*, Vol. 1, Hadith no. 137, 173; and Qur'an 51:56 and 17:23-24.
[455] Heidi is most probably referring to a *hadith* in *Sunan Abi Dawud*, in which the Prophet asks a young man if he has permission from his parents to fight in battle with him. Abu Dawud Sulaiman bin Ash'ath, *English Translation of Sunan Abu Dawud*, trans. Yaser Qadhi (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2008), Vol. 3, Hadith no. 2530, 222.
[456] Heidi, Interview by author.

New Horizons

Schisms began to appear after the common goal, i.e. Mubarak's ouster, was achieved. On "Victory Friday," February 18, 2011, just a week after Mubarak's fall and amid celebrations in Tahrir Square, al-Qaradawi came back from exile to deliver the Friday sermon and lead hundreds of thousands of people (two million by al-Jazeera's estimate) in the Square in prayer. The makeshift stage from which al-Qaradawi gave the sermon also featured Brotherhood supporters like preacher Safwat Hijazi who held an umbrella over al-Qaradawi to shield him from the sun, and world-renowned Qur'an reciter Muhammad Jibril, who after having made the call to prayer himself, held the microphone up for al-Qaradawi to speak into.[457] For journalist Hassan Abou Taleb, this celebration was a "show of force by the Muslim Brotherhood," in which the organization gathered thousands of its members in the Square and ultimately decided who got a chance to speak onstage. Organizers from other groups, Abou Taleb recounted, began to worry that no one could stand a chance politically against the well-organized Brotherhood. People already worried that Egypt would turn "into another Iran," with some comparing al-Qaradawi's visit to Egypt "to the return of Khomeini to Iran from exile in France following the Iranian Revolution in February 1979."[458]

Al-Qaradawi's Friday sermon comes across as a patriotic and ecumenical victory speech, in which he often equated the protesters with Moses and his followers, and Mubarak with Pharaoh (Fir'awn). He began his sermon by praising God for the victory, addressing and congratulating all Egyptians, both Muslim and Christian. This was a revolution, he said, in which

[457] "Khutba al-Shaykh al-Qaradawi fi maydan al-Tahrir 18 Fibrayir 2011," YouTube video, February 18, 2011, 33:20, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kt21n0ScrfE, accessed February 20, 2019; and "Khutbat al-Jum'a li-l-Qaradawi al-yawm fi Maydan al-Tahrir," YouTube video, February 18, 2011, 1:01:41, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRUYWUBINgs, accessed February 20, 2019.
[458] Hassan Abou Taleb, "A Revolution All of Egypt Must Share," *Ahram Online*, February 25, 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/4/0/6428/Opinion/A-revolution-all-of-Egypt-must-share.aspx, accessed February 10, 2019.

the "moral" youth defeated Mubarak and his corruption and oppression just as Moses had defeated Pharaoh. "Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished,"[459] he declared, quoting a verse in the Qur'an. Egyptians had faith that what they stood for was the truth just as their ancestors, the magicians who stood up to Pharaoh when he wanted them to turn against Moses and worship him instead of Moses' God, had done.[460] The people changed as the Qur'anic verse states: "Truly God does not alter what is in a people until they alter what is in themselves."[461] So, al-Qaradawi argued, God helped Egyptians achieve their goal. "Pharaoh had his guards and armies, and this regime had the National Security Apparatus [*amn al-dawla*], with its snipers and camels and horses, but people were no longer afraid."[462] They made Egypt safe again, just as it had been when Joseph told his parents and brothers, "Enter Egypt in security, if God wills!"[463]

Christians and Muslims came together to overcome the pharaoh; there was no factionalism (*ta'ifiyya*), he continued. Christians protected their Muslim brethren as they prayed in the square. This is the Egyptian spirit, he said. "We are all believers, all of us against corruption."[464] Al-Qaradawi turned his attention to the military, which he thanked for not turning against the people. During the second half of his sermon, he addressed the leaders of other Arab countries: "Times are changing," he told them, "so do not fight your people but listen to them." He then prayed for the liberation of the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem to which the multitude replied loudly: *amin* (amen). Al-Qaradawi concluded the sermon and led the short prayer, after which he called on people to pray for the souls of the martyrs (*shuhada*). As soon as the prayer ended, the protesters, many of whom were congregants, began to chant.[465] Al-Qaradawi, having supported

[459] Qur'an 17:81.
[460] Pharaoh threatened the magicians he would torture and kill them for their belief in Moses' God. Qur'an 7:120-9.
[461] Qur'an 13:11.
[462] "Khutba al-shaykh al-Qaradawi".
[463] Qur'an 12:99.
[464] "Khutba al-shaykh al-Qaradawi".
[465] "Khutba al-shaykh al-Qaradawi".

the revolution from Qatar from the beginning, came back to Egypt to celebrate with his compatriots in an unprecedented way, again demonstrating that—despite their differences of opinion—"the *'ulama* have often continued to be … active and important players in many contemporary Muslim societies."[466]

The following Friday, February 25, 2011, Salafi Shaykh Muhammad Hassan also gave the Friday sermon at a mosque previously not open to Salafi speakers: the Awqaf-controlled al-Nur Mosque in al-Abbasiyya, Cairo. "This is the first time," an article in *al-Ahram* newspaper explained, "that the Awqaf Ministry allows a shaykh who is not affiliated with the ministry [and not an Azhar alum] to give the Friday sermon at one of the biggest mosques under its tutelage."[467] The sheer number of congregants, men in their Azhari garbs, others with long beards, and everyday Egyptians, was astounding. The leader of the Suez resistance against the British, Hafiz Salama (b. 1925) was also in attendance, sitting in the front, close to Hassan. The large mosque was full to capacity. The surrounding streets and parks were also teeming with worshippers, so much so that some men were listening, and later praying, atop cars. Congregants left one lane of the street open, wide enough for a bus to pass but not much else.

Like al-Qaradawi's sermon, Hassan's sermon (which he titled: "Words from the Heart") was nationalistic, highlighting the importance Egypt holds in the Islamic tradition. He began by reminding people that Allah, "the Almighty who created the heavens and earth," was the one

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[466] Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Times*, 189. The revolution brought with it unprecedented firsts like al-Qaradawi's sermon from Tahrir Square. This fact was not lost on YouTube commenters like Abo Aly who praised al-Qaradawi and God who "provides Muslims with *'ulama* like al-Qaradawi." He writes, "Praise be to God who made those who waged jihad [*mujahidin*] and the activist *'ulama* victorious … Who would have dreamt that one day we would see the ever-learned [*al-'allama*] Shaykh al-Qaradawi, our imam, speaking to us from Tahrir Square in Cairo...? The Prophet taught us that knowledge is not stripped away but leaves the earth when the *'ulama* die. The regime has died, never to return, and the *'ulama* remain to teach the *umma*… *Allah akbar* [God is great], and God bless Egypt." Abo Aly-Abo Hassan7, Re: "Khutba al-shaykh al-Qaradawi".

[467] Muhammad 'Ali 'Anz, "Muhammad Hassan yulqi khutbat al-Jum'a bi-masjid al-Nur," *Al-Ahram*, February 24, 2011, http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/42588.aspx, accessed February 20, 2019.

who made this possible.[468] People forget this, he lamented, and we need to be reminded of it: this revolution was a success because God had willed it to be so. "He brings one ruler then removes him and replaces him with another," he said, quoting a Qur'anic verse.[469] At these words and others, exalting the might and power of God, congregants sobbed collectively, some whilst holding up pictures of "Martyrs of the January 25 Revolution." Hassan continued, "God hears the prayers of the oppressed and makes them victorious." Egypt was asleep for a long time but never died, and it has been awakened finally by God's will.[470]

Merging his rousing victory sermon with aspects of national rehabilitation and addressing concerns about security and the economy, Hassan moved on to talk about practical matters: staying united, trusting the police and the military again, getting back to work and being productive, and purifying the self of any and all vices. At a time when people may be vengeful, he called on Egyptians to ensure justice for both those who had wronged and those who had been wronged under Mubarak. This included the police, many of whom were being attacked on the streets during and following the eighteen days. "Stop spreading rumors and fear that tear us apart in this dire time," Hassan advised. "We must rebuild ourselves to rebuild our country and society," he argued. Like al-Qaradawi, Hassan cited the verse: "Truly God does not alter what is in a people until they alter what is in themselves."[471] This change will not happen overnight, he told congregants, so get back to work: "Go back to your factories and be productive and do so with the best manners, with purified hearts."[472] After praying for Egypt's safety, people got up to

[468] "Khutbat al-Shaykh Muhammad Hassan bi-masjid al-Nur bi-l-Abbasiyya," YouTube video, February 26, 2011, 2:05:08, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mew3oqNHhts, accessed February 22, 2019.
[469] "Say, 'O God, Master of Sovereignty. Thou givest sovereignty to whomsoever Thou wilt, and wrestest sovereignty from whomsoever Thou wilt. Thou exaltest whomsoever Thou wilt, and abasest whomsoever Thou wilt. In Thy Hand is the good. Truly Thou art Powerful over everything." See Qur'an 3:26.
[470] "Khutba al-shaykh Muhammad".
[471] Qur'an 13:11.
[472] "Khutba al-Shaykh Muhammad". Comments below an *al-Ahram* newspaper article about Hassan's speech were mixed. Many people commended the shaykh for his support of the state, while others called him a tool of the state.

pray, some having to prostrate on top of the people in front of them because of the crowded spaces, others sobbing upon listening to verses about the mercy of God and His might.[473]

Conclusion

The revolution, Hannah Arendt writes, is "precisely the legendary hiatus between end and beginning, between a no-longer and a not-yet."[474] The eighteen days of protest were "like driving through a fog" with no beginning and no end in sight. No one could predict what the immediate outcome would be or what events would ensue. Of the questions that arose during this uncertainty was the temporality of the *fatwa*: seemingly contradictory scholarly opinions about the permissibility of protesting against the ruler highlighted the fact that *fatwa*s can be context-specific. It also demonstrated that the scholars are not divorced from the reality they live in, that although they all lean on the foundational Islamic texts and analysis of these texts for proof, their "tradition is not a mere inheritance from the past" but one that changes in response to circumstance.[475]

The people I spoke to understood that no *fatwa* is binding, but the difference of opinion between scholars was unsettling for some and predictable, albeit lamentable, for others. The youth no longer felt the need to be followers and now understand that they can examine the tradition themselves and do what they believe is right, even if it runs contrary to what those of religious authority (shaykhs, *du'ah*, parents, etc.) say. Some have remained followers of shaykhs

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Muhammad 'Ali 'Anz, "Muhammad Hassan: Al-'ada bayna al-shurta wa-l-sha'b… li-maslahat man?" *Al-Ahram*, February 26, 2011, http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/43612.aspx, accessed February 20, 2019. Others like commenter Salafi Fahim ("a knowledgeable Salafi") accused Hassan of taking advantage of people's emotions, hinting that it was only because Hassan asked people to trust state institutions that he was given the opportunity to speak at al-Nur Mosque. Salafi Fahim, Re: 'Anz, "Muhammad Hassan," February 27, 2011.

[473] "Khutba al-Shaykh Muhammad".

[474] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 205.

[475] Zaman, *The Ulama,* 10.

but have found new or different mentors to guide them. Others, like those who lost mentors like ‘Iffat, felt like they could not find the guidance that they needed in any other figure today. Others still have lost all faith in religious figures and no longer see the need for a guide at all.

Chapter 3: Much Ado about Article II: Islamism after the Fall of Mubarak

Hope, shock and disappointment. These are the emotions that color my interlocutors' memories about the period between Mubarak's fall and Sisi's rise. The initial eighteen days of protest and the period immediately following Mubarak's resignation brought with them an immense sense of hope. Elections were free and fair, perhaps for the first time in the republic's history. Everyday people dared to dream of becoming members of parliament or even running for president. People stood in line for hours in the blistering Egyptian summer heat to vote on various referenda, for members of parliament and for presidential candidates. Although my interlocutors could not remember specific details about all of the events, they almost always remembered how they felt at the time. They talked to me excitedly about voting on the March 2011 constitutional amendments, even though most of them did not remember what the proposed amendments were. The parliamentary elections of December 2011 were hazier for most people. They could not remember who they voted for specifically but often pointed to the person's religious affiliation, i.e. whether he or she belonged to the Brotherhood or Salafi groups. After asking my interlocutors about each of these voting opportunities, I asked them if they remembered the religious rhetoric used at the time. Most of them remembered specific phrases verbatim, but even when they could not, they still remembered how the use of religion in pursuit of politics often left them disappointed.

My intention in this chapter is not to offer details about the elections and referenda, since many scholarly works have done so already.[476] Nor do I mean to portray the 2011 movement as an Islamic or I revolution. Rather, I map the religious discourse used by various religious figures

[476] See, for instance, Walter Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters: An Ethnography of the Egyptian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Joshua Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy: Egypt's Turbulent Transition* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2020); and Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*.

and Islamic groups, like the Brotherhood and Salafis (both of which were referred to as "the Islamists"), in 2011 and 2012 and examine the affective and emotional responses of the young electorate to their statements. Many of the people I spoke to were hopeful about the I' prospects and were willing to give them a chance.[477] Some were skeptical but hopeful about the overall electoral and political freedom the post-revolutionary climate afforded them. However, just a few months after Mubarak's fall, many people, especially the revolutionaries, resented the political actions of the I, which, many of my interlocutors contended, were harming people's perception of Islam. The disappointment and disillusionment with the I, the religious preachers who supported them, and the political and religious polarization endemic to this liminal stage of the revolution were vital reasons why the revolutionary youth's understanding of what constitutes Islamic piety and what leads to God's pleasure shifted notably after the failure of the movement.

Liminal Moral Moods

Affect and emotion clouded my interviews, especially once we started talking about politics. Oftentimes, my interlocutors confided that talking to me about their experiences was cathartic, and that they no longer had the space to discuss these issues with anyone without being attacked. There were also a handful of people who asked to skip the political portion of the interview altogether or talked to me off the record. Most of these conversations were held in public places in Cairo like cafes and, on a few occasions, social and sporting clubs. As such, there were moments during our conversations when people would speak in hushed voices, especially when they mentioned the Brotherhood, Sisi or Mursi. On the whole, however, the

[477] In the months following Mubarak's fall, people often collapsed the differences between the Brotherhood and Salafis and referred to them collectively as "the Islamists."

people I worked with wanted to talk and trusted that I would protect their anonymity and privacy.

The nature of the conversations verged on the psychological. There were moments when my interlocutors reacted viscerally to my questions and the memories they conjured. Some affectively banged their fists against the table repeatedly in anger. Some cried. Others swore and then apologized. Most carried painful, despairing memories that linger in moods that persist to this day. For this reason, I analyze how affect, mood and emotion influenced my interlocutors' views on the relationship between politics and religion and on their notions of piety in the aftermath of the revolution.

Each stage after Mubarak's fall elicited certain affects, moods and emotions from my interlocutors. In his ethnography of the revolution, Walter Armbrust recounts that his interlocutors viewed the eighteen days of protest as a euphoric moment in Egyptian history. Once Mubarak was removed, however, divisions set in between political players. Egypt was plunged into a "*liminal crisis*—[i.e.] entry into a social and political void, a heterotopic space, from which there is no apparent exit."[478] The normative social order no longer existed, and a new normal had not yet been reached. The country underwent a revolution and was thrown into a temporary state of limbo until a new normal was achieved.[479] The euphoric eighteen days "temporarily dissolve[d] hierarchical distinctions," and no one knew what the future held, but everyone in Tahrir Square was united in their mission to overthrow Mubarak and change the political system. Egyptian protesters' unity during this out-of-the-ordinary, euphoric, transitional state is what Victor Turner calls "communitas."[480] If the liminal phase is prolonged, the unity

[478] Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 1-2.
[479] Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 4-5.
[480] Those who find themselves in a liminal state are like those partaking in a ritual, a space and time existing outside of "normal" space and time. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell

and euphoria of communitas ends, and people break up into groups.[481] Mubarak's fall marked the beginning of the end of communitas.[482] No one knew what the new normal would look like, and a liminal crisis ensued.

My interlocutor, Habiba, expressed similar sentiments about the unity of the early days of revolution and the disharmonious days that followed. Habiba told me that her experiences of the revolution were limited to what her parents allowed her to do. But during the days when she joined, she said, "There were 'golden' hours in the Square … You know, between a chant and the one that follows it, there is this silence that 'takes you high." After Mubarak's resignation, however, "this feeling [poof!] disappeared. It was just during the eighteen days. All of the Friday million-man marches (*millioniyyat*) after that felt very different. Yes, there was the revolutionary vibe, and there was this excitement. But the revolution had this feeling of safety, peacefulness and real unity that disappeared." Once the common goal was achieved, political divisions set in, "religious rhetoric was used widely, and there was harassment in the Square. People started 'riding' (*yirkabu*) the revolution, as they say."[483]

During the initial eighteen days, protesters downplayed or suspended aspects of their identities and their political affiliations in order to achieve a common goal, i.e. ousting Mubarak. From her work on social movements in Brazil in the 1990s, Ann Mische found that this temporary homogeneous political haven, however, is "extremely fragile and fraught with latent conflict." She writes, "Suppressed identities, purposes, and relations do not magically disappear. They are present in a state of latency that always has the potential to break through into public

University Press, 1977), 94-96. See also Victor Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology," *Rice University Studies*, 60.3 (1974), 59-60.

[481] Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York City: PAJ, 1988), 91.

[482] For Armbrust, the revolution began after Mubarak's fall, and the liminal state remained at least until Sisi's rise in 2013. Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 9-11.

[483] Habiba, Interview by author, Cairo, April 2018.

expression."[484] This is what happened with the I after Mubarak's fall. I, like the Brotherhood, downplayed their religious identity during the eighteen days and even while campaigning. Salafis also downplayed their disdain for democracy, which many of them believe is a Western import, in order to take part in the political process. But their religious ideologies became apparent throughout this transitional period.

The initial hopeful, euphoric mood gradually turned into disappointment and, after 2013, despair. People expected, or hoped, that the Salafis and Brotherhood would not be corrupt like the Mubarak regime, but for several reasons, these groups did not meet their expectations. But still, my interlocutors did not harbor crystallized emotions of blame toward the Brotherhood and the Salafis. During the first few months after Mubarak's resignation, many of them still had hope, that if anyone erred or was ineffective, he or she could be held accountable. What they experienced was more of what Jason Throop describes as an "indeterminate, intermediary, transitional, and intersubjective" mood, one which reveals "moral concerns in flux."[485] It was once the protesters' hopes were dashed, first by the inability of I to effectively hold public office and instigate real structural change, and second when the Egyptian military took over the country once more, that this hopeful mood turned into despair after they experienced what Jarrett Zigon calls a "moral breakdown."

Following Martin Heidegger, Jason Throop introduces the concept of the moral mood, an intermediary emotional realm between fleeting, knee-jerk-affective moments and crystallized emotion. A mood is temporally amorphous, capable of coloring past events and shaping how we experience or even envision the future. In his ethnographic work on the lives of the people of the

[484] Ann Mische, "Partisan Performance: The Relational Construction of Brazilian Youth Activist Publics" in *Social Movement Dynamics: New Perspectives on Theory and Research from Latin America*, eds. Federico M. Rossi and Marisa von Bülow (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 54.
[485] Throop, "Moral Moods," 70.

Micronesian Island of Yap, Throop argues that the happiness, nostalgia, regret, suffering and despair that his interlocutors experience as a result of the rapid socioeconomic and political changes Yap is undergoing constitute "moral moods": "temporally complex phenomena that transform through time and yet often entail a durativity that extends beyond the confines of particular morally salient events, narratives, and interactions." They exist ""[h]alfway between moments of explicit ethical reflection and habitual embodied forms of morality."[486] Moral judgment related to moods is less final than those arrived at through emotion and can linger, stretching "well beyond the confines of the present or even the particularities of an ongoing interaction or narrative." They are not the "end point of our reflection" but are conduits for reflection. Moods do not exist only during moments of moral reflection but can also be anticipatory in nature. They are "atmospheric" and color our experiences of an in-between, i.e. before our new thoughts and feelings toward an issue fully form.[487]

Hope is one positive moral mood that ebbs and flows. Hope signals a moment of rupture from the past that one wishes would lead to a better future. The hopeful mood could be turned into happiness, another positive moral mood, if a goal is actualized, or it could be dashed and turned into disappointment and doubt. Hope, like happiness, can be shrouded in a sense of dread of a future going awry or outcomes being less favorable than expected (i.e. unfulfilled expectations). If all hope is lost, then it can turn into a despairing mood, one in which "events, situations, and the world appear as immovable, unchangeable, beyond … reach and control."[488] The future one once imagined for oneself no longer remains possible. My interlocutors all experienced a hopeful mood as they fought for justice during the eighteen days of protest and

[486] Throop, "Moral Moods," 68.
[487] Throop, "Moral Moods," 71.
[488] C. Jason Throop, "Despairing Moods: Worldly Attunements and Permeable Personhood in Yap," *Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology*, 45:2 (2017), 211.

beyond. Over the years, however, their hope turned into a despairing mood that lingers to this day.

The Referendum of March 2011

As early as February 16, 2011, just five days after Mubarak stepped down, people took to the internet to express their worries about an I takeover. Salafi groups held a conference in which figures like Muhammad Hassan asked Salafi shaykhs to reevaluate their positions on Salafi political engagement. Salafis should no longer be bystanders, he argued, and should run for office, even though they had boycotted elections for decades. "We left the [political] arena to those who cannot read a single Qur'anic verse properly or recite a *hadith*."[489] Hassan thus called on Salafis to stand with the revolutionary youth. The conference focused heavily on Article II of the Egyptian Constitution, and attendees chanted *Misr Islamiyya* (Egypt is an Islamic country) throughout the proceedings.[490] Comments on online articles published in the official newspaper *al-Ahram* claimed that Salafis emotionally manipulated "simple" Egyptians into believing that if liberals took over the country, Egypt would no longer be an "Islamic country."[491] People had similar concerns about the Brotherhood, which in mid-February stated that it would establish a political party (the Freedom and Justice Party or FJP).[492] The media stoked fears of sectarian

[489] Muhammad Salih and Shirif al-Dib, "Muhammad Hassan Yad'u al-Salafiyyin li-ibahat al-musharaka fi al-intikhabat al-ri'asiyya," *Al-Youm al-Sabi'*, February 19, 2011, https://www.youm7.com/story/2011/2/19/-محمد-حسان-يدعو-السلفيين-لإباحة-المشاركة-فى-الانتخابات-الرئاسية-والبرلمانية/354465, accessed November 18, 2020.
[490] Salih and al-Dib, "Muhammad Hassan".
[491] Ashraf Sadiq, Re: "Al-mu'tamarat al-Salafiyya.. Da'wa li-shaqq al-sufuf wa ikhtitaf al-thawra," *Al-Ahram*, February 16, 2011.
[492] "Muslim Brotherhood say when popular demand to freely form political parties is achieved they will form their own," *Reuters*, February 15, 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/5643/Egypt/Politics-/Egypts-Muslim-Brotherhood-plans-to-set-up-party.aspx, accessed November 18, 2020.

violence throughout. It often portrayed Salafis as radicals bent on exacting punishment for what they deem sinful behavior and on destroying churches and Sufi shrines.[493]

All of my interlocutors argued that the March 2011 constitutional referendum was an ingenious ploy the army used to divide and conquer the people, following the brief euphoric revolutionary moment. Egyptians were asked to vote on eight amendments to the 1971 Constitution adopted under Sadat. Even before the amendments were drafted, religious leaders like al-Tayyib, head of al-Azhar, warned that Article II of the constitution, which stipulates that Shari'a is *the* source of Egyptian law, should not be altered.[494] Although al-Tayyib (and then Mufti Jum'a) did not disclose his vote to the public "lest it be taken as a *fatwa*,"[495] other religious figures called on Muslims to vote yes in order to preserve Article II and the Islamic identity of

[493] There were reports of a Salafi group cutting off a Christian man's ear in the city of Qina and attacks on stores that sell alcohol. Ahmed Zaki Osman, "Sufis feel pressure as Salafi power grows," April 5, 2011 http://www.egyptindependent.com/sufis-feel-pressure-salafi-power-grows/, accessed November 18, 2020; and Noha El-Hennawy, "Wednesday's papers: Fears of Salafis and calls to divorce religion from politics," *Egypt Independent*, March 30, 2011, https://www.egyptindependent.com/wednesdays-papers-fears-salafis-and-calls-divorce-religion-politics/, accessed November 18, 2020. In early March, sectarian clashes erupted over two Egyptian women who had converted to Islam and reportedly were being held by the church. A love affair between a Coptic young man and a Muslim woman in the city of Atfih became public and led to violence in which a church was burned to the ground. Copts in Cairo launched protests in response, and groups of Salafis "were mobilized to attack the protesting Copts, leading to fierce clashes between the two groups." Some believed that these clashes were instigated by security forces to cause a rift in the unity the revolution brought. Yasmine Fathi, "Activists see state security's hidden hands behind attacks on Egypt's Copts," *Ahram Online*, March 9, 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/7321/Egypt/Politics-/Activists-see-state-securitys-hidden-hands-behind-.aspx, accessed November 18, 2020. One commenter disapproved of the inflammatory language used in the article. She writes, "Deplorable: As a journalist, I cannot believe *Ahram* would publish a badly written piece. It is biased and inflammatory given the prevailing mood in the country. There is no evidence that Salafists are responsible. Facts, and giving both sides of the story, are the foundations of good journalism." Aisha, March 10, 2011, 11:31 a.m., Re: Fathi, "Activists see state." In April, a Salafi group was accused of setting fire to a Sufi shrine in the Qalyubiyya governorate, north of Cairo. Amani Maged, "Salafists' wrath turns violent," *Ahram Online*, April 6, 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/9366/Egypt/Politics-/Salafists-wrath-turns-violent-.aspx, accessed November 18, 2020. For an opinion piece that is critical of the Salafis, see 'Adil Sabri, "Al-Azhar wa-l-Sufiyyun yusqitan al-Salafiyyin," *Al-Ahram*, April 11, 2011. Similar reports of violence by young Salafis surfaced in Tunisia from 2011 to 2014. See Monica Marks, "Tunisia," in *Rethinking Political Islam*, eds. Hamid and McCants, 40-43.

[494] Ahmed Zaki Osman, "Tuesday's Papers: Anxiety of Islamist-Takeover Grows in Wake of Referendum," *Egypt Independent*, March 22, 2011; "Shaykh al-Azhar: Ayy hadith 'an taghyir al-madda al-thaniyya min al-dustur... muthir li-l-fitna," *Al-Ahram*, February 16, 2011, http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/445/2011/2/16/27/63087/219.aspx; and "Azhar Grand Sheikh Again Rejects Modifications to Article II," *Egypt Independent*, March 21, 2011,

[495] Khalid Ahmad al-Mat'ani, "Al-Mufti yad'u li-l-musharaka fi al-istifta' 'ala al-dustur," *Al-Ahram*, March 17, 2011, http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/474/2011/3/16/41/67759/219.aspx.

the state, even though neither was directly mentioned in the proposed amendments.[496] My interlocutors themselves usually did not remember what the amendments entailed. Although all of them were college-educated, many told me that they did not know which way they should vote and asked friends they trusted for their opinions. All of them remembered, however, the polarizing rhetoric used by Islamic preachers, like Muhammad Husayn Ya'qub and others, and how this made them feel.

Agrama argues that the debates prior to the referendum on the constitutional amendments of 2011 "forcefully" reflected "the question of Egypt's secularity or religiosity."[497] Immediately after Mubarak stepped down, the interim military council appointed a committee to draft constitutional amendments to pave the way for a democratic transition. The Egyptian constitution was never directly in question, though it was understood that the constitution would be redrafted in the wake of the revolution. A yes vote meant elections would be held in a few months, giving political groups that were already organized before the revolution, like the Brotherhood and the remnants of the Mubarak regime, an electoral advantage. If elected, these groups would also oversee the drafting of the new constitution. A no vote meant extending the transitional period, and thus interim military rule, but would give budding political groups a chance to better organize themselves and have a say in the drafting of the constitution. For many I, the former option (i.e. a quick electoral process) would increase their chances of winning and ultimately safeguard Article II.[498] They gave speeches and distributed flyers "implying that a

[496] Salafi scholar al-Huwayni, for example, said that he would not vote, but would not blame anyone who voted yes to the constitutional amendments. He argued that the amendments did not make significant improvements to the constitution but were helpful. "Ta'liq al-Shaykh al-Huwayni 'ala al-ahdath ba'd al-thawra 16/3/2011," YouTube video, February 25, 2016, 1:16:04, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLtHhgV5sYI.
[497] Agrama, *Questioning Secularism*, 228.
[498] Agrama, *Questioning Secularism*, 229-30. See also Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 125; Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 68-72; and Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 171-3.

vote against the amendments was a vote against Islam."[499] Those who were anxious about an I takeover worried that "the Brotherhood, acting in concert with conservative rural MPs, would select a constitutional commission likely to produce a document in which the protection of civil and political freedoms would be diluted in the name of preserving the country's Islamic values."[500] They accused I of exploiting religion for political gain, but I retorted that they were simply participating in the democratic process and exercising their freedom of speech.[501]

Like many of my interlocutors, 'Aziza did not remember the specifics of the referendum or even how she voted, but she remembered how it made her feel. As someone who grew up in a Brotherhood family, 'Aziza did not feel like she "was a part of the Muslim Brotherhood organizationally," but she "empathized a lot with it," because no one in the organization had "malicious intent." She was not, however, aware of the Brotherhood's position on the amendments. At the time, she wanted to "make the right decision objectively." She listened to both sides of the debate but was still undecided as she stood in line to cast her vote: "I called someone when I was standing in line …, because I knew he was campaigning for the no vote, and I wanted to hear his point of view. He wasn't a close friend or anything … He made a lot of sense. And I think there's a good chance I said no."[502] In the early days of the revolution, 'Aziza had hopes that her voice mattered. She did not feel obligated to conform to her family's political allegiance and did not want her family history to cloud her political judgment.

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[499] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 172. One of my interlocutors remembered that some Islamists claimed that voting yes—which was indicated by a green checkmark to accommodate illiterate voters—was good "since green is the color of paradise" and voting no—which was in red—was bad since "red is the color of hellfire."
[500] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 172. On the debates surrounding the amendments, see Salma Shukrallah, "Will Egypt Vote 'Yes' or 'No' to Constitutional Amendments?" *Ahram Online*, March 15, 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/7707/Egypt/Politics-/Will-Egypt-vote-Yes-or-No-to-constitutional-amendm.aspx, accessed November 18, 2020.
[501] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 173.
[502] 'Aziza, Interview by author (in English).

‘A’isha remembered clearly how polarizing the constitutional referendum was. She voted no, because “no was the revolutionary vote.”[503] But society was divvied up into two camps, and this confused ‘A’isha. “Unfortunately, no became the secular vote, and yes became the Islamic vote ... We got into the idea of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ and ‘yes’ and ‘no.” As a “religious” person, ‘A’isha wondered what it meant for her to “go against the I current.” “Am I in my own camp?” she asked. “Can I be religious and still be with others who aren’t I? How am I religious but not with the I?” Even though she was a political scientist, this was the first time ‘A’isha had to think about where she stood on the political spectrum.[504] Two moral imperatives presented themselves to her: voting in favor of what would be best for the revolutionary youth and their political prospects or for a political project that promised to rule by the ethics of Islamic governance. Choosing the former made ‘A’isha question her religious (political) identity.

The referendum was held on March 19, 2011 and attracted eighteen million voters. The yes vote won by 77%, taking many people by surprise.[505] Some scholars suggest that the results indicated “a desire for stability and a swift transition to civilian rule, but the impact of the religious campaign in favor of a ‘yes’ vote cannot be discounted.”[506] Articles in private and state-owned newspapers were skeptical of the overwhelming support for the yes vote, many questioning the use of religious rhetoric to influence the masses.[507] And then came one of the

[503] I, too, wanted to vote no because it was “the revolutionary vote,” and political figures I trusted announced that they were voting no. I was so nervous when I was casting my ballot, since it was the first time I ever voted for anything, that I accidentally marked yes instead.
[504] ‘A’isha, Interview by author.
[505] One interviewee remarked that people in Cairo were surprised because they could not see beyond the large cities they reside in, i.e. Cairo and Alexandria, and downplayed the importance of rural communities, almost all of which voted yes.
[506] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 173.
[507] See, for instance, Shukrallah, “Will Egypt Vote,”; Salma Shukrallah and Yassin Gaber, “What was religion doing in the debate on Egypt's Constitutional amendments?” *Ahram Online*, March 22, 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/8267/Egypt/Politics-/What-was-religion-doing-in-the-debate-on-Egypts-Co.aspx, accessed November 18, 2020; “Alexandria human rights group slams Salafists,” *Ahram Online*, March 20, 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/8205/Egypt/Politics-/Alexandria-human-rights-group-slams-Salafists.aspx, accessed November 18, 2020; and “Religious propaganda, vote-buying flourish in Egypt

most memorable statements made in the early days of the revolution. Soon after the results were announced, Muhammad Husayn Ya‘qub, a well-known Salafi preacher, addressed hundreds of followers in a mosque in the upscale neighborhood of Ma‘adi in Cairo:

> My brothers in faith, I received the joyous news of ‘yes.’ *Allah akbar* (God is greatest). And this was a battle, *a battle of the ballot boxes* (*ghazwat al-sanadiq*). The *Salaf* used to tell innovators (*ahl al-bida‘*), ‘Funerals are what lie between you and us.’[508] Meaning, when I die, compare the number of people who follow my funeral procession with those who follow yours. Today, in our time, they tell us, ‘The ballot boxes are what lie between you and us.’ We followed through, and what did the ballot boxes say to religion? [The audience responded in unison:] Yes![509]

Ya‘qub compared his followers and those who voted for the amendments to the righteous forbearers of Islam while likening those who voted against the amendments to the people Salafis disapprove of: *ahl al-bida‘*, i.e. those who add to or change aspects of Islamic practice and belief without proof from religious texts or the example of the Salaf. The shaykh, along with his followers, then praised God as they would on the days of Eid, two of the annual Islamic holidays. This speech immediately went viral, garnering thousands of views online, and was debated on various Egyptian satellite television shows.[510] To this day, people, including almost all of my interlocutors, cite this statement (*wa qalat al-sanadiq li-l-din na‘am*) as an obvious example of how religious rhetoric was used to bolster certain political positions.[511]

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ahead of vote," *Egypt Independent*, March 18, 2011, http://www.egyptindependent.com/religious-propaganda-vote-buying-flourish-egypt-ahead-vote/, accessed November 18, 2020.

[508] This is a saying attributed to Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), a scholar of *hadith* whose work is the foundation for the Hanbali jurisprudential school. For the saying and explanation, see Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Sulami, *Su’alat al-Sulami li-l-Daraqutni* (Riyadh: N.p., 2006), 361.

[509] "Ghazwat al-sanadiq – al-shaykh Muhammad Husayn Ya‘qub," YouTube video, March 22, 2011, 8:52, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoN8miMW_Ho, accessed November 18, 2020.

[510] See, for example, Dream TV Channel, "Sabah Dream Dina ‘Abd al-Rahman Sukaina Fu’ad tasrihat Muhammad Husain Ya‘qub ‘an ma‘rakat al-sanadiq wa rudud al-fi‘l hawl al-tasrihat halqa 23-03-2011," YouTube video, March 23, 2011, 4:59, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbhEKlI6ewo, accessed September 6, 2020; and Islamic Files TV, "Al-‘Awwa: Ghazwat al-Sanadiq ghayr Maqbula wa Ya‘qub yajib an ya‘tadhir," YouTube video, March 29, 2011, 2:19, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYgvVakPdUI, accessed August 17, 2019.

[511] Satirist Bassem Youssef who became famous for poking fun at Egyptian media coverage of the 2011 uprising on YouTube presented an episode about the rhetoric used around the referendum and the resulting polarization. "Bassem Youssef Show al-halqa 7 (mish hatishmat fina ya rayyis) – B+ Episode 7," YouTube video, April 7, 2011, 17:03, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRSQqawnStU, accessed November 18, 2020. In August 2011, ahead of

Many feared that Ya‘qub’s speech and the reactions from his audience signaled a political Salafi presence that would marginalize religious minorities and sideline anyone who disagreed with their political and social visions. The rest of the speech sounded like a direct challenge to secularists. After rousing his audience, Ya‘qub continued, “They [presumably, the liberals] are now asking, ‘Is religion going to be in everything?’ What do we say?” “Yes!” the crowd again cried in unison. “Didn’t you say that the boxes will decide?” Ya‘qub asked, rhetorically addressing political rivals. “Is this not *your* democracy: that the people choose what they want? Well, the people said yes to religion.” Ya‘qub equated the ratification of the amendments with a victory for Islam, believing that Article II of the constitution was now safe. What troubled listeners further was that Ya‘qub seemed to be telling people who disagreed with the yes vote and, by association, with Islamists, that they should leave the country: “And those who say, we do not want religion, fine, you are free to go. [He points to a place far off]. Godspeed. They have visas to the U.S. and Canada. But the country and the people said they want religion.” His followers should not be angry with those who said no, he continued, but this political experiment allowed the people who said no to “know their value” as opposed to “the value of religion.” Everyone who mattered to the shaykh (who he called the people of religion, i.e. *ahl al-din*) said yes. “No exceptions: the Muslim Brotherhood, Tabligh [wa-l-da‘wa], Salafis, Ansar al-Sunnah, everyone. And on the other side, other people. You look bad if you are not on the same side as the shaykhs.” After he promised that he would never run for office or join a

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the parliamentary elections, Youssef hosted ‘Isam Sultan, a member of the Islamist party al-Wasat (“the moderates”), to explain why and how religion is used in politics to promote certain candidates. He also explained that al-Wasat differs from the Brotherhood in that the Brotherhood calls itself both a political and *da‘wa* (proselytizing) group, but al-Wasat portrays itself only as a political party with an Islamic reference. Al-Wasat members, for example, will not give sermons in mosques and tell people who to vote for. This shows that religious rhetoric was being used already by political parties to win people’s votes. See “Al-Bernameg? Ma‘a Bassem Youssef.. 2 Ramadan – 1432 – August 2011,” YouTube video, August 2, 2011, 31:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXx90oTCHiU, accessed November 18, 2020.

political party, Ya‘qub told congregants that they should no longer be worried and that “the country is ours.”[512]

This ten-minute statement made many Egyptians anxious. It was also the butt of many jokes online, where it was shared widely in short soundbites on social media. Because of the criticism, Ya‘qub explained his position the next day on his show on al-Nas TV. He explained that he, like many Egyptian Muslims, was worried that if the no vote won, Article II would be amended. “This was a matter of life and death for us,” he stated. This is why when he heard that 77% of the electorate voted yes, he was overjoyed. He did not mean to scare anyone when he said that people should move to Canada; he was joking.[513] Similarly, Hazim Shuman, another Salafi preacher, achieved notoriety on social media for launching an attack on Mohammed ElBaradei, the Egyptian Nobel Laureate and, later, “liberal” presidential candidate. “Do you know what liberalism is, Baradei?” Shuman asked rhetorically during a televised speech to followers at a mosque in Egypt. “It means that my mother will not be allowed to wear the veil.”[514] This short soundbite, like *ghazwat al-sanadiq*, became immortalized on social media. The rest of Shuman’s speech was less memorable to my interlocutors but illustrates the sharp distinction Salafi preachers already made between themselves and political opponents in early

[512] “Ghazwat al-sanadiq – al-Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Ya‘qub,” YouTube video, March 22, 2011, 8:52, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoN8miMW_Ho, accessed November 18, 2020. Jude remembered the infamous Ya‘qub statement: “There was a man who appeared on al-Nas channel, and he said, ‘the boxes said to religion, yes!’ No, *habibi* (my love) … It was about the constitution. Religion was never in question. People like you have put religion in question. Your presence and the use of [religion in] politics. ‘*Wa qalat al-sanadiq li-l-Islam na‘am*!’ No! No! Why do you have to put it like this?! It was so unfortunate.” At this point in our conversation, Jude was becoming visibly angry, because she felt personally affronted by Ya‘qub’s use of religion to explain a political phenomenon. Jude, Interview by author. Another interlocutor tried to recall Ya‘qub’s name but instead called him “that stupid guy.” He then stopped and laughed and said, “I do not want to go to hell because of your dissertation, but he honestly deserves to be called stupid.” Another interlocutor said she would “never forget that man who said ‘*ghazwat al-sanadiq*.”

[513] “Muhammad Husayn Ya‘qub yanfi ghazwat al-sanadiq,” YouTube video, 13:26, March 23, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WuBlbmY6fQ, accessed November 18, 2020.

[514] “Al-Da‘iya Hazim Shuman yuhajim al-Baradei wa yaqul lahu madaniyya ya‘ni ummak ma tilbissh higab ya ayyuha al-liberali illi bintak mitgawwiza Nasrani kafir,” YouTube video, 3:31, March 28, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f29AmlTFc0w&ab_channel=moustafaElmasry, accessed September 6, 2020.

2011. Shuman attacked ElBaradei personally: "You liberal whose daughter married a Christian disbeliever (Nasrani *kafir*), because she is liberal but not Islamic (*libraliyya wa ghayr Islamiyya*)."[515] Shuman, like Ya'qub, used liberalism as a scare tactic: vote for Islamists, or the liberals will prevent you from practicing your religion. The words of preachers like Shuman and Ya'qub were illustrative of the political and social polarization that formed in early post-Mubarak Egypt.

Yasin, who described himself as a nonbeliever and as someone who never followed religious trends in Egypt, was equally distraught and amused when I asked him about the constitutional referendum. He recalled how he felt about the secular-Islamist divide that crystallized around the debates about the referendum. By this time, the term "Islamists" or "*al-Islamiyyun*" was used to refer to both the Brotherhood and Salafis and political offshoots of the two, collapsing whatever differences existed among the various groups. The Islamists were clearly aligned with the military, Yasin explained. It also felt like the "end of the revolutionary moment (*hala*), of people calling for democracy and against torture … We were not going to win the Islamist-military alliance. Because they had the money and the organization—the Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood. And the infrastructure. And people trusted them." Already there was a clear divide, an "us" and "them," as 'A'isha described it. Two things happened "after the

[515] He also accused ElBaradei of starting the war on Iraq, another Muslim-majority country, to further delegitimize ElBaradei's then-nascent presidential campaign. As former head of the International Atom Energy Association, ElBaradei was the one who reported to the UN that he found no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in 2003. This won him the Nobel Peace Prize. Michael Knigge, "ElBaradei's legacy tied to war in Iraq," *DW,* July 2, 2009, https://www.dw.com/en/elbaradeis-legacy-tied-to-war-in-iraq/a-4447762, accessed October 1, 2020. Although not directly relevant here, Shuman does an interesting (though faulty) comparative analysis of several systems of governance. He frowned upon unfettered democracy and argued instead for something similar to the "American model." In the US, he said, people do not vote on a large number of presidential candidates; the "wise" congresspeople are entrusted with whittling down the pool of candidates to the two most qualified, and then the populace votes for one of the two. This is the same, he continued, with the Knesset "for the Jews" or the People's Assembly (*majlis al-sha'b*) for Egyptians. "They are the most knowledgeable and wisest among people. They know the letter of the law (*shar'*) and the social and political reality (*waqi'*) very well. These are the people who should approve candidates from among the 500 who are asking us to vote for them." "Al-Da'iya Hazim." All of the comments below the YouTube video make fun of Shuman and his logic.

revolution," Yasin continued. After Mubarak's fall, Egyptians came to "know all the strangeness of the strict Salafis." As someone who studied political science in Egypt, Yasin himself did not know much about the Salafis until then. This was the first time that people faced "the Salafis—not just Muslim Brotherhood—head-on with their excommunicating people (*takfir*) and their accusing people of treason (*takhwin*)." When I asked him to explain further, he said he did not care much for the Islamists to follow their news, but he still had plenty to say. "They used strong, inflammatory (*tahrid*) rhetoric, and clearly lied." He noted that Salafis were less preoccupied with *da'wa* and became more concerned with political power "with *ghazwat al-sanadiq* and all that." With all the influence that these religious scholars and Islamists had, Yasin was surprised that the no vote even got 30%. This was good, he said, considering it was "against the military, Muslim Brotherhood, Salafis, and remnants of the old regime (*fulul*)," all forces that, when combined, were unstoppable.[516]

The political significance of the constitutional referendum itself was not important to my interlocutors. What mattered to them was how they felt. They had immense hope in the political process, since this was the first time any of them had cast a ballot. However, they were shocked by and angry at the Islamists' use of their authority and of religious symbols to push the Egyptian populace to vote for what was politically favorable to these groups. This posed a moral dilemma for my interlocutors, many of whom either belonged to these groups or sympathized with them at one point in their lives. Ya'qub's infamous words stayed with almost all of my interlocutors until now, but they would not be the only thing "Islamists" did in 2011 and 2012 that made people disappointed with and eventually come to hate the Brotherhood and Salafis and the political projects for which they stood.

[516] Yasin, Interview by author.

Reformists not Revolutionaries

By the fall of 2011, new political parties had mushroomed, and talk of electoral opportunities excited the still-hopeful masses. Revolutionaries, however, already called on the military to return to the barracks by March 2011, but anti-military sentiment was most palpable in the fall of 2011 after a series of key protests occurred on the streets of Egypt.[517] Since the constitutional amendments passed, parliamentary elections were scheduled for November 2011. People's distrust of the Brotherhood and Salafi figures grew when they refused to join the anti-military protests in favor of letting the political process run its course under the protection of the military.[518] Ya'qub's speech was still fresh in people's minds as Islamist groups began forming political parties. The Brotherhood already had a broad base: their longstanding members and people who benefitted from their social welfare programs. In May 2011, the organization established the Freedom and Justice Party (*al-huriyya wa-l-'adala*). Salafi groups also had broad bases in mosques and through the social services they, too, provided, and formed several political parties, the most popular of which was al-Nur (Light) Party.

The Brotherhood was reformists rather than revolutionary. Bayat argues that one of the reasons the Arab Spring was not effective was that it lacked "the kind of radicalism—in political and economic outlook—that marked most other twentieth-century revolutions."[519] The uprisings of 2011 were concerned with broader issues like human rights and political reform rather than challenging "free market, property relations, and neoliberal rationality."[520] This is partially due

[517] Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 140-1.
[518] It is easy to pit Islamists against non-Islamists (sometimes referred to as the liberals) during this stage, but the reality was more complicated than that. Neither revolutionary camp, Armbrust contends, knew what the ruling military council's intentions were, despite the fact that the military posed as the "protector of the revolution" in the interim period. Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 141; and Lucie Ryzova, "The Battle of Muhammad Mahmoud Street in Cairo: The Politics and Poetics of Urban Violence in Revolutionary Time," *Past and Present*, 247 (May 2020), 281-2.
[519] Bayat, *Revolutions without Revolutionaries*, 11.
[520] Bayat, *Revolutions without Revolutionaries*, 11.

to the structural integrity of neoliberalism; it is so entrenched in every facet of economic and social life that it becomes difficult for anyone to question it. Neoliberal logic necessarily favors those with capital and enables them to produce even more capital; it considers equal distribution of wealth and the institution of social justice as "outmoded legacies of 'failed socialism' and antithetical to individual freedom" of amassing wealth and maximizing self-interest.[521] Bayat posits that Islamists, who stood to benefit from neoliberalism and the political system in which it was entrenched, were neither "revolutionary nor emancipatory."[522] Moreover their Islamist project, which sought to establish "an Islamic order, including a religious state, sharia law, and moral codes, in Muslim societies and communities," views people as "dutiful subjects" rather than "rightful citizens."[523]

"Islamists" were still an enigma to many people even after the eighteen days. As I illustrated in chapter one, people knew generally that there were Islamic groups in Egypt that were involved politically, but some of my interlocutors were not aware that so many groups existed prior to 2011. It was through the referenda and elections that people became better acquainted with the Brotherhood and Salafis, though they could not always tell them apart and

[521] Bayat, *Revolutions without Revolutionaries*, 23.
[522] Bayat, *Revolutions without Revolutionaries*, 71. In *The Impossible State*, Wael Hallaq argues that there is great benefit in the implementation of shari'a, but it is impossible to establish a state based on its precepts under the guise of the modern nation-state in an increasingly globalized, neoliberal world. Wael Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), xi. Noah Salomon challenges Hallaq's claim that an Islamic state is no longer possible by examining the Sudanese Islamic state established in 1989. Noah Salomon, *For Love of the Prophet: An Ethnography of Sudan's Islamic State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 22-26. In 2019, the Sudanese government was toppled through a popular uprising. "Twelve defining moments in Sudan's 12-month uprising," *Al-Jazeera*, December 18, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/18/12-defining-moments-in-sudans-12-month-uprising/?gb=true, accessed September 29, 2020.
[523] Post-Islamism, Bayat clarifies, is neither religious nor secular, but emphasizes people's rights as citizens, and "favors a "secular/civil state but a pious society." Bayat, *Revolutions without Revolutionaries*, 149.

often lumped them together as "the Islamists."[524] Some people had never heard of the Salafis before Ya'qub's speech in March.

Most Salafis in Egypt eschewed politics in favor of preaching (*da'wa*) for years, but this changed with the 2011 uprising.[525] Salafi political parties established after the 2011 uprising were usually single-issue, focused mainly on implementing Shari'a. Others had "produced elaborately detailed political programmes concerning economics, social reforms, supporting the introduction of the minimum wage and allowing for strikes, and accepting politics as a separate field."[526] Oftentimes, however, party members differed on the purpose of the party, "leading to severe tensions and profound ambiguities" in groups like al-Nur Party and in the prominent Alexandrian *Da'wa Salafiyya* movement.[527] This is due partially to the haphazard coalescence of various Salafi groups to form Salafi political parties for the first time in Egypt.

Tasnim, a high school teacher who worked as a journalist in 2011, was one of the people who had never heard of Salafis before the revolution. Her parents, who are both engineers, told her that Brotherhood members headed the Engineers Syndicate for years and "did good things for engineers, provided good healthcare, took them on trips, etc." These Muslim Brothers were "politically active in a good way."[528] Their brand of Islam, Tasnim explained, was similar to the

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[524] Prior to 2011, people noticed that some Egyptian Muslims looked "different:" women in the face veil (*niqab*), women in veils that cover the chest down to the bellybutton (*khimar*), and men with long bushy beards, wearing *jalabiyya*s or shortened trousers. Most people generally referred to them as *Sunniyyin* (Sunni Muslims) rather than members of the Brotherhood or Salafis, despite the fact that most Muslim Egyptians are Sunni. Farha Ghannam explains that the term "Sunni" in Egypt is used "in daily life to refer to Islamic activists who are considered strict followers of the Prophet's traditions or Sunna." Farha Ghannam, "Re-Imagining the Global: Relocation and Local Identities in Cairo," in *The City Cultures Reader*, ed. Malcolm Miles, Tim Hall and Iain Borden (London: Routledge, 2004), 340-2.

[525] Al-Anani, "Unpacking the Sacred Canopy," 28, 35. Other Salafi parties include *al-Islah* (Reform) and *al-Bina wa-l-ta'nmiya* (Building and Development). For a thorough review of Salafi political parties and political strategies, see Stéphane Lacroix and Ahmed Zaghloul Shalata, "The Rise of Revolutionary Salafism in Post-Mubarak Egypt," in *Egypt's Revolutions*: 163-178.

[526] Roel Meijer, "Conclusion" in *Salafism after the Arab Awakening*, 220.

[527] Meijer, "Conclusion," 220. See also Diyab, *Al-Salafiyyun wa-l-siyasa*, 216-7.

[528] Tasnim, Interview by author, New York, February 2018 (in English and Arabic).

Islam everyone else in Egypt practiced. But when she heard of the Salafis, she became worried.[529] "They said things that my brain could not fathom, like microphones are *haram* … Why would someone say this?" She learned about Salafi groups and figures from the news around the time of the elections.[530]

Amani likewise had believed that "Islam in Egypt was one thing," but that belief came tumbling down with the revolution. She was engaged to a young man who was a member of the Brotherhood before and throughout the uprising, but Amani had no idea what the organization was and did not understand why her ex-fiancé was part of it. "This was the beginning of the disappointments," Amani said, laughing. At this time, she also heard that the *du'ah*, who she said had changed her life, were fighting amongst each other about "petty things." "This was a big deal to me," Amani recalled, "but it was silly in comparison with what was to come." She laughed again. "This was nothing [laughs]. We're just warming up. God was warming up. The big things are still coming." At times, I felt that Amani was laughing to mask her pain, which I felt fully from the way she described her experiences. She was one of those people who was very hopeful during the protests and deeply trusted the religious figures who influenced her. Her disappointment in the *du'ah*, however, was mild in comparison with the betrayal she felt from the Brotherhood. She was never a formal member of the organization, but she attended meetings

[529] On the Salafis' sudden political rise and their rhetoric, see David D. Kirkpatrick, "In Egypt, a Conservative Appeal Transcends Religion," *New York Times*, December 10, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/11/world/middleeast/salafis-in-egypt-have-more-than-just-religious-appeal.html, accessed August 7, 2020.
[530] Tasnim, Interview by author. On the 2011 parliamentary elections, see David D. Kirkpatrick, "In a Surprise, Calm Prevails in Egypt's Elections," *New York Times*, November 28, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/29/world/middleeast/egyptians-vote-in-historic-election.html, accessed August 7, 2020. For a detailed breakdown of election results in favor of the Islamists, see Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, chapter nine.

with the leaders along with her fiancé, whom she also trusted.[531] But then the revolution happened, and the disappointments began.

As a revolutionary, Amani's first personal encounters with the Brotherhood during the early days of the uprising were shocking. "I learned more about the Brotherhood and the secret deals they struck behind closed doors." Amani observed that her fiancé was more temperamental and divisive after the revolutionaries' common goal of toppling Mubarak was achieved. "As people grew apart …, he would say, 'You are either with the Islamists or against them. There is nothing in between. They are either with us, or they are enemies." Amani could not understand why it had to be one or the other, and when she tried to reason with him, he "would yell in the street." The revolution showed Amani "how divided people were." She eventually left her fiancé for personal reasons she did not disclose and met people who had become disillusioned with and then defected from the Brotherhood, including a Sufi shaykh who talked to Amani and others about how the Brotherhood meddled in people's personal affairs and broke up families. By the end of 2011, Amani was disillusioned by Islamists, whom she felt colluded with the military against the revolutionaries, and the *du'ah*. This Sufi shaykh would later deal the final blow to Amani's relationship with Islam. At this time, Amani also became disappointed with her family who did not share her revolutionary ideas. The traumatizing personal and political experiences Amani went through during the first few months of the revolution negatively affected her relationship with the authorities (religious and otherwise) whom she trusted and with political Islam.

[531] Amani, Interview by author.

The Battle of Muhammad Mahmud

During the interviews, I asked my interlocutors about two instances in which religious rhetoric was used by Islamists for political gain: the March referendum and the parliamentary elections in November. However, I noticed that my interlocutors often stopped me, and asked, what about all the protests in-between?[532] This usually led to a painful discussion about the Muhammad Mahmud St. protests and the Majlis al-Wuzara (Ministerial Council) sit-in, in which Shaykh 'Iffat and dozens of other protesters lost their lives and limbs.[533] Islamists were careful about their involvement in these protests, leading many, including my interlocutors, to become skeptical of their commitment to the revolution. While people were out on the streets protesting the military, the Brotherhood and Salafis made deals with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and safeguarded their place in post-Mubarak politics. Betrayal was thus another moral mood felt by my interlocutors, who believed that the "Islamists" cared only for their own interests. Extreme polarization "became a fact of life,"[534] and became more pronounced throughout Muhammad Mursi's presidency until his removal in July 2013.

Major civilian-military clashes began with the Maspero Massacre, which took place in October 2011 in front of the Egyptian Television and Radio Building (Maspero). A group of Coptic Christians gathered in front of Maspero to protest the demolition of a church in Upper

[532] Protests took place every Friday in Egypt after Mubarak's fall throughout 2011 and 2012.
[533] The military police had a penchant for shooting protesters in the eyes.
[534] Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 142, 158. Joshua Stacher argues that the referendum was part of the military's plan to create a schism: Egyptians had to "side either with the military or with forces pushing for ongoing street mobilizations." The military believed that the amendments' approval was a sign of people's support for them. Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 70-71. The lines were not as clearly drawn as the media and some scholarly works make them out to be, according to Armbrust. By the end of 2011, there were two camps: those who sided and sympathized with the Brotherhood and "non-Islamists (including many people who considered themselves pious Muslims) and Islamists (mainly Salafis) unsympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood." Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 158.

Egypt, which officials said was built without a permit. Military police shot at the peaceful protesters, killing at least two dozen and injuring many more. According to Armbrust, "The Maspero events foreshadowed the worst violence of the revolution."[535] In the following months, the military again attacked and killed protesters during the Muhammad Mahmud St. demonstrations in November 2011, the Majlis al-Wuzara sit-in in December 2011, the Port Sa'id Massacre in February 2012,[536] and the 2013 massacres.[537]

"Slaughter in Maspero," Armbrust writes, "was a preliminary skirmish to the larger Battle of Muhammad Mahmud Street,"[538] which was by far the most formative—and most devastating—for most of my interlocutors.[539] Muhammad Mahmud is a street leading off of Tahrir toward the Minister of Interior Building in downtown Cairo and was the site of major clashes between civilians and security forces. The battle "lasted for five days and nights, pitting protesters throwing stones and Molotov cocktails against security forces clad in full riot gear,

[535] The Egyptian media fanned the flames of sectarian tension leading up to and following the massacre. Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 149, 156. See also Gaétan Du Roy, "Copts and the Egyptian Revolution: Christian Identity in the Public Sphere," in *Egypt's Revolutions*.

[536] For media coverage of the Maspero protests, see "Albernameg? ma'a Bassem Youssef .. 14 October 2011," YouTube video, 23:06, October 14, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fytQlpoApSI&list=PLFD93F16A202E2EF1&index=34, accessed November 20, 2020. On the Majlis al-Wuzara sit-in, see "Albernameg? ma'a Bassem Youssef .. al-Malal al-thawri – 23 December 2011," YouTube video, 21:16, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPK76v3IfnY&list=PLFD93F16A202E2EF1&index=56, accessed November 20, 2020. Seventy-two young men were killed by thugs during a soccer match between two of Egypt's best-known teams in the city of Port Sa'id. Some people believed that this massacre was the government's response to its symbolic, political defeat during the Muhammad Mahmud protest in November 2011. Ryzova, "The Battle," 309. See also David D. Kirkpatrick, "Egyptian Soccer Riot Kills More Than 70," *The New York Times*, February 1, 2012; and Mohamed Soltan, "Commemorating Port Said Stadium massacre," *Egypt Today*, February 1, 2018, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/8/41675/Commemorating-Port-Said-Stadium-massacre, accessed November 20, 2020.

[537] According to Armbrust, "The sum total of these battles was a vital context for the political work that defeated the revolution, and brought 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi to power." Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 156. Stacher also argues that these were all forms of organized state violence that were more lethal than the tactics usually used by the Mubarak regime. Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, chapter three.

[538] Armbrust, Martyrs and Tricksters, 156.

[539] The Rabi'a Massacre in 2013, which I discuss in chapter four, was another devastating moment for most of my interlocutors.

heavily armed with shotguns, rubber bullets, tear-gas grenades and live ammunition."[540] The clashes left fifty, who were mostly working-class young men, dead and many injured. Whereas most studies focus on the initial eighteen days of protest, Lucie Ryzova argues that the Muhammad Mahmud battle "occupies a very special … place in the memory of the revolutionaries," as a moment in which the movement was "at once doomed and victorious."[541]

Like Armbrust, Ryzova argues that urban battles like the one that took place on and around Muhammad Mahmud St. were part and parcel of the liminality of the revolutionary movement in that moment.[542] By November 2011, one of the protesters' key slogans became, "down, down with military rule" (*yasqut yasqut hukm al-'askar*). The Muhammad Mahmud protests started after two main events: in mid-November, the military released stipulations (the "Silmi declaration") that all political parties must agree to before any constitution can be drafted. One of the stipulations was that there would be no civilian oversight over the military. In response, various political groups staged a "million-man march" to protest these conditions, and some protesters who lost family and friends during military rule continued to camp out in the Square. The military violently dispersed their sit-in the next day and destroyed their informal campsites. News of the dispersal spread on social media, and hundreds of people came to the protesters' aid. Those protesters were attacked as well, and "[v]ideos of soldiers throwing lifeless bodies on trash piles shocked the world."[543] It was these events that led to the violent episode that was the Muhammad Mahmud St. protests.

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[540] Ryzova, "The Battle," 273.
[541] Some of her interlocutors likened Muhammad Mahmud to the storming of the Bastille. Ryzova, "The Battle," 275.
[542] She argues that the Rabi'a Massacre of August 2013 effectively marked the end of the liminal, revolutionary moment. Ryzova, "The Battle," 280.
[543] Ryzova emphasizes that it was lower-income people who mainly populated the Square and were on the frontlines of these urban battles. Ryzova, "The Battle," 286.



Figure 2: The ever-changing mural on Muhammad Mahmud St. (July 2015). Photo by author.

Heidi remembered stepping out of the subway station and onto the scene of the protests: "I could not understand what was happening. Bullets, bullets, bullets flying everywhere! You did not know where they are coming from. I look to my right and see an overturned tank on fire … As soon as we entered Muhmamad Mahmud, we saw a friend of ours being lifted on people's shoulders, wounded. He took a bullet that went right through him." Heidi recalled horrific scenes in the makeshift hospitals set up around the Square and in nearby mosques. She also visited nearby hospitals. "What hurts you the most," she began, "were not the wounded … It was the people who were alive. I went into the hospital looking for my friend and stumbled upon another friend who was shot in the eye. As soon as I went into the hospital, I saw a man on whom they were performing CPR, and his friend collapsed next to him, crying." There was blood everywhere. One man was hooked to an IV. "Every orifice in his body was bleeding. I do not know if this person survived." My heart was pounding as she described these scenes to me, but

her voice was calm—angry, but calm. The hospital that day "looked like a scene from Grey's Anatomy when disaster strikes, and the ER is a mess. Add to that that the hospital had a shortage in medicine and IVs, and people were running around trying to help in any way." After a moment of quiet reflection, Heidi concluded, "Some things just cannot be forgotten." And then this strong woman who firmly believed in the revolution and joined every demonstration she could despite her mother's protests said something I was shocked to hear her say: "I do not know if what we did was right or wrong. Mubarak had to go, but were we supposed to do something differently?"[544] She suddenly questioned the whole movement. I could not answer her. And she would not be the only interviewee to ask me that very question over the course of my research.

My interview with Malak was by far one of the most emotional for me. It was toward the end of my fieldwork, and I was emotionally drained after hearing everyone's heartbreaking stories. Malak was someone I knew from college, and I had not seen her for years. When I met with her in her home in 2019, my heart sank. She looked very tired, with dark circles under her eyes. She must have smoked a whole pack of cigarettes during our two-hour conversation. She confided that she had recently been diagnosed with a mental disorder. I asked her several times if she wanted us to stop the interview, but she insisted on telling her story. One memory she had was especially haunting. She was walking into Muhammad Mahmud St. when a poor little boy who was selling things on the street spotted her and stopped her from going in. Seeing that she was a woman from a social class higher than his, the boy said to her, "Why should you go in? I should be the one to go in. Those like me are expendable, but people like you should not be." At this, Malak started crying. "And he died." Her uncle also took part in these protests and was shot in the eye. "Muhammad Mahmud was so powerful, and the Muslim Brotherhood betrayed us big

[544] Heidi, Interview by author.

time ... This is not to gloat at all, but this came back to them in 2013," she said referring to the Rabi'a Massacre in which the military killed hundreds of Brotherhood supporters. She continued to cry, which made me cry. She got up and hugged me, and we spent a few moments in silence.[545]

Muhammad Mahmud was one of the major turning points for Faris during his journey to "nonbelief." "This was a moment that made me angry at the *du'ah* and the ignorance of religious people (*mutadiyyinin*) in general." He recounted how Hazim Abu Isma'il, one of the Salafi politicians he admired,[546] got up on one of the many makeshift stages erected in Tahrir and told his followers that he would not join the sit-ins against the military. Faris remembered Abu Isma'il saying, "Those who want to stay should stay, and those who want to leave with me can." With dismay in his voice, Faris continued, "So Abu Isma'il left, and of course, the animals (*bahayim*) left with him, the Square became empty, and the police rained down on us." That was when the Muhammad Mahmud episode began for Faris. "By dawn, police began throwing corpses into a pile ... This happened because there weren't as many protesters left in the Square."[547]

[545] Malak, Interview by author, Cairo, January 2019. See also Nawal Sayed, "Analysis: MB's Betrayal of January Revolution Is No Surprise," *Egypt Today*, January 23, 2018, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/40847/Analysis-MB-s-betrayal-of-January-revolution-is-no-surprise, accessed September 30, 2020; Ashraf El-Sherif, "The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Failures," *Carnegie Paper*, https://carnegieendowment.org/2014/07/01/egyptian-muslim-brotherhood-s-failures-pub-56046, accessed September 30, 2020; and Ryzova, "The Battle of Muhammad Mahmoud," 282-9.

[546] Hazim Abu Isma'il is a Salafi lawyer who ran for president in 2012 before being disqualified on a technicality. David D. Kirkpatrick, "Anti-American Egyptian Candidate May Be Tripped Up by Mother's U.S. Ties," *New York Times*, April 4, 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/05/world/middleeast/sheik-hazem-salah-abu-ismail-may-be-disqualified-from-egypt-presidential-race.html, accessed September 4, 2020.

[547] Faris, Interview by author, Cairo, March 2018. Another interlocutor likened the "battle" to what he saw in "videos of Palestine" growing up.

Many of my interlocutors, who were ready to give the Brotherhood the benefit of the doubt, felt betrayed by the group, especially after having seen the carnage. Both the Brotherhood and Salafi groups avoided the protests, but what was even more disturbing to my interlocutors was how Salafi figures, like preacher Khalid ʻAbdallah, condemned the protesters.[548] One particularly disturbing image that circulated widely on social media was a short clip of a young woman being beaten by riot police during a crackdown on the Majlis al-Wuzara sit-in. The video showed a woman, who was wearing a veil and a long black dress (*ʻabaya*), being dragged on the floor, kicked in the torso and, in the process, stripped of her dress to reveal a bright blue bra and jeans underneath. This was one example of the political violence women endured during the protests, and it caused significant public outrage.[549] Rather than denounce the military and police for their violent actions against this woman, however, Khalid ʻAbdallah blamed her for being out on the street and hinted that she was planted at the protests



Figure 3: Amani's artistic portrayal of "The Blue Bra Girl." Photo by author.

[548] Habiba, whose family was part of the Brotherhood, told me that members of the organization silently helped out in the makeshift hospitals around Tahrir by bringing medical supplies and offering their medical expertise. For footage of the "battle" of Muhammad Mahmud, see "Albernameg?.. Bassem Youssef fi midan al-Tahrir wa Muhammad Mahmud," YouTube video, 22:17, November 26, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VB57fuRp5o&list=PLFD93F16A202E2EF1&index=48, accessed August 26, 2020. See also Ryzova, "The Battle of Muhammad Mahmoud," 282-9.

[549] "Mona Eltahawy on the brutality of the Egyptian military & 'Blue Bra Girl," YouTube video, December 19, 2011, 4:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ox54fl9L-W0, accessed July 14, 2020. Protesters more affectionately called her "*sitt al-banat*" (the best of all girls). The military also subjected some female protesters to virginity tests. See Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 77 and 97; and Nermin Allam, "Activism Amid Disappointment: Women's Groups and the Politics of Hope in Egypt," *Middle East Law and Governance*, 10 (2018), 299.

"to make the military look bad." While talking about this incident and the outrage it sparked on his TV show on al-Nas channel, 'Abdallah and his two male guests—one of whom was Nadir Bakkar who later become al-Nur Party's spokesperson—were laughing. 'Abdallah's words, "Why did she even go there," lived on in infamy on social media platforms.[550]

Preachers used their religious authority, Tamir explained, to have control (*haymana*) over people. Eventually, however, people managed to break the control barrier, and the preachers' and Islamists' influence waned. As a result, some of Tamir's friends sought an alternative source of religious guidance, and they found this at al-Azhar, where they met 'Iffat.

> One time, I attended a session around the Prophet's Birthday (*al-Mawlid al-Nabi*), and we collectively recited poetry in his honor. It was on that day that I saw 'Iffat. I did not know what he thought of the revolution. For me, he was a nice shaykh whose lessons I liked to attend with friends. All of a sudden, one of my friends who attended his lessons regularly called me and told me that Shaykh 'Imad was killed at the Majlis al-Wuzara sit-in. I asked, 'Shaykh 'Imad 'Iffat?! What made him go to Majlis al-Wuzara?!' 'He used to join the protests,' my friend replied. 'There was a political side to him that you did not know.'

By this time, my interlocutors felt that Islamists played it safe by not antagonizing the military, so they can make political gains. Meanwhile, this Azhari shaykh had joined the ranks of the revolutionaries quietly, and he became a religious symbol for protest. He "was the revolutionary shaykh (*al-shaykh al-tha'ir*)," Tamir explained. "We were searching for any symbol during a time when anyone you once looked up to for religious reasons ended up being trash (*zibala*). So a symbol emerged—even if this symbol was a martyr."[551]

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[550] Khalid took this opportunity to poke fun at ElBaradei, as Shuman had. ElBaradei condemned the military's use of force against the young woman, so Khalid sarcastically called ElBaradei, "Ya wad ya mu'min" (you little believer, you). This phrase, too, is now used in everyday Egyptian to put into question someone's claim to religiosity. "Al-Shaykh Khalid 'Abdallah yaskhar min ta'riyat al-muntaqiba fi al-Tahrir," YouTube video, December 18, 2011, 1:17, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gskGjtZMC_s, accessed July 14, 2020. "Why did she even go there?" became a popular refrain in Egyptian discourse, especially to make fun of people who blame the victim in sexual harassment cases. See "Albernameg? ma'a Bassem Youssef .. 30 December 2011, YouTube video, 30:59, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAOPmlwymns&list=PLFD93F16A202E2EF1&index=59.

[551] Tamir, Interview by author, Cairo, March 2018.

The "Revolutionary" Parliament

Clashes continued between security forces and the demonstrators, but the military council decided to hold the parliamentary elections in December 2011 and January 2012 anyway. Millions of Egyptians voted during the first parliamentary elections after Mubarak's fall. Immense hope and a sense of freedom colored these elections, as people genuinely did not know who would win the elections. "People left the mosques in throngs to vote," Tamir recalled. People voted in record numbers with over half of the electorate casting its ballot. Voters chose candidates from an unprecedented fifty registered parties. In what Milton-Edwards claims was "the freest and fairest [election] since [Egypt's] independence in 1952," the Muslim Brotherhood's FJP and the Salafis' al-Nur Party together won almost seventy percent of the seats in parliament, and the "revolutionary" candidates only secured one percent of the vote.[552] Both Islamist political parties gained control of the parliament's legislative committees, and Sa'd al-Katatni, one of the Brotherhood's senior members and secretary general of the FJP, was elected Speaker of the People's Assembly.[553]

The Islamists, especially the Brotherhood, took these electoral victories as an indication of their popularity among the people. But with each successive election, they won with fewer votes. Armbrust suggests that many non-Islamists voted for the Brotherhood in the earlier

[552] Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 43, and Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 75. 'Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh argued that the Brotherhood should not establish a political party, and should remain a *da'wa* organization. Only the Prophet Muhammad, he said, had the "right to fuse religious and political authority." Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 176-7.

[553] Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 44. On why "secular" parties were unsuccessful politically from 2011 to 2013, see Michele Dunne and Amr Hamzawy, "Egypt's Secular Political Parties: A Struggle for Identity and Independence," *Carnegie*, March 31, 2017, https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/03/31/egypt-s-secular-political-parties-struggle-for-identity-and-independence-pub-68482. Stéphane Lacroix argues that al-Nur should not be described as an Islamist party but "as the lobbying arm of a religious organization whose goal fundamentally remains changing society from below, not from above," particularly after 2013. Stéphane Lacroix, "Egypt's Pragmatic Salafis: The Politics of Hizb Al-Nour." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016.

elections, assuming that the organization was more competent and less corrupt than the Mubarak regime. The Brotherhood, however, failed to make allies and appeared insular and exclusionary.[554]

Some of my interlocutors criticized the campaigning strategies of Islamist candidates. Tamir, fir example, cited Marxian theory as an explanation for the phenomenon:

> If you read a couple of things by Marx, even if you do not understand him, you will see how religion is the opiate of the masses. Give people oil and bread [snaps fingers repeatedly], a bus will come and transport people to the polls to vote for the Salafis or Brotherhood ... Cheapness (*rukhs*) … This was an affront to Islam (*ihana li-l-Islam*). Even if you were not a religious person (*mutadayyin*), you felt that Islam was insulted.[555]

The Islamists' use of religious rhetoric, their authority and the money of their organizations to influence people's votes were "cheap" tactics. Islam itself, Tamir and many of my interlocutors argued, was hurt in the process.[556]

Likewise, Tasnim was particularly upset by the two groups' use of religion to support their political ambitions. Using religion in such a way posed a moral dilemma:

> The problem is when politics is mixed with religion. If I came and told you, 'I will rule this country, because I believe that my ideas about the economy will improve this country,' you can come and tell me, 'No, I believe that your economic ideas are a failure, and I will protest against you' ... But two things, if mixed with politics, it becomes a whole other battle ... If I came and told you, 'I will rule this country, because God told me that I must rule it,' when you come to tell me, 'No, you are not good enough to rule

[554] Some non-Islamists even argued that the reason many people voted for the Brotherhood was because of the Brotherhood's status as an organization that provides social services and charity. Some even accused the Brotherhood of bribing voters with "sugar and oil" (*sukkar wa zayt*). Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 141-2. According to Marie Vannetzel, people in poor neighborhoods began to question the Brotherhood's motives for doing good. Marie Vannetzel, "Confronting the Transition to Legality," in *Egypt's Revolutions*: 41-59.

[555] Tamir, Interview by author, Cairo, March 2018.

[556] Tamir ended this discussion with a theological claim: In the end, making sure that no one is hungry, and that social justice prevails matters more in the sight of God than "whether or not you pray." On the tactics of some of the Islamist candidates, see "Albernameg? ma'a Bassem Youssef .. 15 Yanayir 2012, YouTube video, January 15, 2012, 27:44, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbzU4m36Cyk&list=PLFD93F16A202E2EF1&index=66. Female candidates from the al-Nur Party did not appear on posters; they were either represented by a red rose or the logo of the party. David D. Kirkpatrick, "In Egypt, No Alliance With Ultraconservatives, Islamist Party Says," *The New York Times*, December 1, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/02/world/middleeast/egypts-muslim-brotherhood-keeps-distance-from-salafis.html, accessed August 31, 2020.

> this country,' I will retort, 'Why not? Don't you believe in God?' At that point, our argument is no longer political. It is not a fair game anymore.[557]

The candidates and MPs who portrayed themselves as religious made arguing with them difficult, because they argued that God was on their side. This makes political dissent difficult, if not impossible, for their political opponents. Running for office and ruling in the name of religion, Tasnim argued, is determinantal to Islam itself.

Despite all of this criticism, people gave the "revolutionary" parliament (*al-barlaman al-thawri*) a chance. Millions of Egyptians tuned into the first few parliamentary sessions,[558] including Jude, who voted for Brotherhood candidates, not because she believed in them but because they ran against remnants of Mubarak's party (*fulul*). In the course of watching the sessions, however, she regretted her choice. "I remember I was so proud, during the first parliamentary session, of the liberals, and I hated every single Muslim standing out there. Every single one." While they were being sworn in, several Salafi MPs added an unofficial line to the oath stating that they would never "contradict the shari'a."[559] "Just say that silently to yourself," Jude said, figuratively talking back to the Salafi MPs. "Do you have to say it in front of people?" Jude believed that this was the Islamists' "opportunity to change Egypt in an unprecedented way." Did you know that millions were watching the session? Jude asked me. "Millions. I never

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[557] Tasnim, Interview by author.

[558] "Islamist elected speaker of new Egypt parliament," *CBS News*, January 23, 2012, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/islamist-elected-speaker-of-new-egypt-parliament/, accessed August 31, 2020. An Egyptian state television channel was set up in 2012 to broadcast the first post-revolutionary parliamentary sessions. Jehad El-Sayed, "Parliament channel closed: do Egyptians need to watch sessions?" *Egypt Today*, August 2, 2017, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/15192/Parliament-channel-closed-do-Egyptians-need-to-watch-sessions, accessed August 31, 2020.

[559] Jeffrey Fleishman and Amro Hassan, "Egypt's new parliament holds inaugural session," *Los Angeles Times*, January 23, 2012, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2012-jan-23-la-fg-egypt-parliament-20120124-story.html, accessed August 31, 2020. The oath ends with "a pledge to respect the constitution and the law, but several of [Salafis] added 'God's law." *CBS News*, "Islamist elected speaker." See also David D. Kirkpatrick, "Chaotic Start to Egypt's First Democratically Elected Parliament," *New York Times*, January 23, 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/24/world/middleeast/new-egypt-parliament-elects-islamist-from-muslim-brotherhood-as-speaker.html, accessed August 31, 2020.

saw this happen before. I was watching, and I was so enthusiastic." This enthusiasm quickly turned into disappointment and disgust: "They started fighting like cocks in session. And the guy [Sa'd al-Katatni] kept yelling, 'Let go of the mic! Let go of the mic!" These embarrassing moments were "put on blast" by the media, especially by the satirist Bassem Youssef.[560] Ziyad also remembered how one Salafi MP got up in the middle of a parliamentary session and made the call to prayer (*adhan*). "Those were the days," he said with a laugh. "Or when that other guy [MP] got a nose job… And then lied about it and said that he was mugged [laughs]. Just be quiet. If you say this as an MP, there will be an investigation, sir."[561] The parliamentary sessions were thus laughable, but also disappointing.

Hatim, a human rights worker based in Washington, D.C. argued that it was the Salafis who made the Islamists look bad, especially during the parliamentary sessions. The Salafis, for example, "would not salute the flag. They cursed Christians who were killed" during protests. Their performance in parliament and the bills they proposed "just made things on the ground look bad" for the Islamists. And Egyptians could not tell the difference between the Brotherhood and Salafis, Hatim continued, so they lumped all the Islamists together. Egyptian media also portrayed the Islamists as a scarecrow and spread rumors. The media, for example, accused

[560] Jude, Interview by author. Some of these moments were also closely analyzed by Bassem Youssef (with Darth Vader's theme playing in the background), making them more memorable to almost all of my interlocutors. See, for instance, "Albernameg? ma'a Bassem Youssef .. 18 February 2012," YouTube video, 24:13, February 18, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4McNGA2GXsE&list=PLFD93F16A202E2EF1&index=75, accessed August 31, 2020; and "Albernameg? ma'a Bassem Youssef .. 7 February 2012," YouTube video, 28:45, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3WloqNH97U&list=PLFD93F16A202E2EF1&index=81, accessed August 31, 2020.

[561] Ziyad, Interview by author. In March 2012, Anwar al-Balkimi, an MP from the al-Nur Party underwent plastic surgery and claimed that he was attacked and robbed. He resigned from parliament and from the party. See "Egypt MP quits over nose job cover up," *Aljazeera*, March 5, 2012, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/03/201235224452570454.html, accessed August 31, 2020; and "Albernameg? ma'a Bassem Youssef .. 24 Maris 2012," YouTube video, 26:14, March 24, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6e_So5O-p4&list=PLFD93F16A202E2EF1&index=93, accessed August 31, 2020.

Islamists of proposing to legalize child marriage.[562] "This was a rumor," Hatim argued. "Even the lowly Salafis did not propose this."[563]

Both traditional and social media highlighted and even immortalized some of the misguided steps of members of Islamist groups. The electoral victories the Islamists enjoyed in 2011 and 2012 emboldened some people to take it upon themselves to moralize society. Some Salafi groups, for example, established the association of *al-amr bi-l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar* (enjoining the good and forbidding the wrong), which was modeled after the Saudi Arabian and Taliban organizations whose "agents stopped women in the streets to impel them to observe 'proper' moral behavior and dress code."[564] These men were often met with resistance, but they caused panic among people who were already anxious about the rise of Islamism. Short video clips of men in *jalabiyya*s and big beards harassing unveiled women and vandalizing liquor stores circulated widely on TV and social media, fanning the flames of and paving the way for popular animosity toward the Islamists. And this was just the beginning of the end of the liminal stage.

The 2012 Presidential Elections

During the 2012 presidential election cycle, young Egyptians actively took part in campaigning for their favorite candidate perhaps for the first time in their lives. A record-breaking thirteen presidential candidates from various political, social and religious backgrounds

[562] On the rumors spread about Islamist lawmakers, see "Egypt's 'plans for farewell intercourse law so husbands can have sex with DEAD wives' branded completely false," *Daily Mail*, April 26, 2012, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2135434/Egypts-plans-farewell-intercourse-law-husbands-sex-DEAD-wives-branded-completely-false.html, accessed August 7, 2020.
[563] Hatim, Interview by author, Washington, D.C., January 2018.
[564] Bayat, *Revolutions*, 180. Diyab writes that some Salafi groups started demolishing Sufi shrines. A group even killed a Christian man in the governorate of Qena in the name of instating God's law. Diyab, *Al-Salafiyyun wa-l-siyasa*, 208.

were on the ballot.[565] Over thirty million people, i.e. more than half of the electorate, voted.[566] When none of the candidates won an absolute majority, the state held a runoff, and people, again, went out in droves to vote, albeit begrudgingly, between Ahmad Shafiq, Mubarak's short-lived prime minister and former minister of civil aviation, and Muhammad Mursi, a senior member of the Brotherhood. Mursi won the vote by a slight margin and promised to be a president for all Egyptians.

After we talked about the 2011 parliamentary elections and the crucial protests that followed them, I asked my interlocutors about the 2012 presidential elections. This line of questioning elicited a few chuckles and headshaking. My interlocutors spoke excitedly about the prospect of someone whom they supported winning the election. The conversation, however, quickly became somber as they remembered how, during the runoff election, they had to choose between Ahmad Shafiq, a remnant of the old regime, and Muhammad Mursi, a leading member of the Brotherhood. Much has been written about the presidential elections and the candidates, so in this section, I will focus on the main Islamist contenders and my interlocutors' reasons for voting the way they did. I will not focus as much on "non-Islamist" candidates, so I will briefly describe them and then turn to the "Islamists."

Among the top non-Islamist candidates (those not running on a promise to implement the Shari'a or claiming to have a religious reference that would guide their rule) were: the Nasserist Hamdin Sabbahi; the former Secretary General of the Arab League Amr Moussa; Mubarak's

[565] The ballot included the candidates' photos and symbols to accommodate illiterate voters. "Egypt's historic election – Wednesday 23 May," *The Guardian*, May 23, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/world/middle-east-live/2012/may/23/egypt-presidential-elections-live, accessed October 12, 2020; and Leila Fadel, "Egypt's presidential election: Facts about the historic post-Mubarak vote," *The Washington* Post, May 22, 2012.
[566] "Celebration in Egypt as Morsi declared winner," *Aljazeera*, June 24, 2012, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2012/6/24/celebration-in-egypt-as-morsi-declared-winner, accessed October 12, 2020. For a detailed breakdown of the votes during the first and second rounds of the presidential election, see Bernard Rougier and Hala Bayoumi, "The Electoral Sociology of the Egyptian Vote in the 2011–2013 Sequence," in Post-Mubarak Egypt," in *Egypt's Revolutions*: 139-159.

Minster of Civil Aviation Ahmad Shafiq; and the socialist, labor-rights lawyer Khalid ‘Ali. Hamdin Sabbahi (b. 1954) gained prominence in the political sphere in the 1970s when he publicly confronted Sadat during his televised visit to Cairo University, where Sabbahi was a student. The staunch Nasserist trained as a journalist, served as a MP for two terms under Mubarak and was politically active for decades before his presidential bids in 2012 and 2014 (as the sole candidate against al-Sisi). He won 21% of the vote (about 4.8 million votes) during the first round in May 2012.[567] Amr Moussa (b. 1936) served as Egypt’s foreign minister from 1991 to 2001 and then headed the Arab League from 2001 to 2011. He ran as a centrist candidate and as an alternative to the Islamists and won about 11% of the vote during the first round.[568] Ahmad Shafiq (b. 1941) was a senior commander of the Egyptian Air Force and minister of civil aviation under Mubarak from 2002 to 2011 and is often credited with modernizing Cairo Airport. He won 23% of the vote, qualifying him for the runoff against Mursi in June 2012.[569] Finally, Khalid ‘Ali (b. 1972), the youngest candidate, was a little-known social and economic rights lawyer and activist in Cairo. He won 0.5% of the vote (143,000) but was crucial in introducing social and workers’ rights into public discourse and gained prominence after fighting the

[567] Tewfik Aclimandos, “Hamdin Sabbahi,” in *Egypt’s Revolutions*: 255- 58. He ran again as the sole challenger to Sisi in the 2014 presidential election. Alaa Bayoumi, “Profile: The many faces of Hamdeen Sabahi,” *Aljazeera*, May 12, 2014, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2014/05/12/profile-the-many-faces-of-hamdeen-sabahi/, accessed October 21, 2020.

[568] Ayodele Akenroye, “Egypt’s 2012 Election: Free, Fair, and Polarizing,” *The Global Observatory*, June 8, 2012, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2012/06/outcome-of-the-egypt-election-2012/, accessed October 22, 2020; and Brian Katulis, “Previewing Egypt’s 2012 Presidential Elections,” *American Progress*, May 23, 2012, https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2012/05/23/11553/previewing-egypts-2012-presidential-elections/, accessed October 23, 2020.

[569] Ian Black and Abdel-Rahman Hussein, “Egypt confirms Mohammed Morsi and Ahmed Shafiq in election runoff,” *The Guardian*, May 28, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/28/egypt-presidential-election-morsi-shafiq, accessed October 22, 2020. After the 2012 loss and after Mursi issued an arrest warrant for Shafiq on corruption charges, Shafiq fled to the UAE. Shafiq subsequently threw his hat in the ring for the presidency again in 2018 against al-Sisi. In response, police in the UAE, which supports the Sisi regime, detained and deported Shafiq, so he withdrew his candidacy. “Ahmed Shafiq: Egyptian ex-PM withdraws from election,” *BBC*, January 8, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42597803, accessed October 22, 2020.

government for giving up two Egyptian islands (Tiran and Sanafir in the Red Sea) to Saudi Arabia.[570] He was also my socialist-inclined interlocutors' preferred candidate.

The sheer number and diversity of the presidential candidates was unprecedented in Egyptian history.[571] No one could have predicted which two candidates would make it to the second round and who would ultimately win the election. More surprisingly, Islamist candidates were allowed to run for president even with backing from previously outlawed religion-based political parties. It is important to note, however, that even if we lump together a certain brand of candidates, that is not to say that they all belong to the same camp. Those who supported Hazim Abu Isma'il, for example, would never have voted for 'Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh, for reasons I will explain shortly. Islamists, too, existed on a spectrum, though differences between them were not always apparent to Egyptians.[572] Once Islamism fell out of favor, everyone who ever presented her- or himself as Islamist became persona non grata.[573]

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[570] Like Shafiq, 'Ali had planned to run for president again in 2018 but ultimately withdrew from the race against al-Sisi, citing government violations, including the arrests of members of his campaign. 'Abd al-Hamid Wa'il, "Al-Times: Hasal 'ala 0.5% fi intikhabat 2012.. Khalid 'Ali yatahadda al-Sisi," *Masr al-Arabia*, https://masralarabia.net/5-0-حصل-على-التايمز--1463038-صحافة-أجنبية-%C2%A0--السيسي-يتحدى-علي-خالد--2012-انتخابات-في, accessed October 23, 2020; and "Khaled Ali Withdraws from Presidential Race, Citing Government Violations," *Mada Masr*, January 24, 2018, https://www.madamasr.com/en/2018/01/24/news/u/khaled-ali-withdraws-from-2018-presidential-race-citing-government-violations-and-unfair-competition/, accessed October 23, 2020. On the Tiran and Sanafir dispute, see Karim Adel Kebaish, "Tiran & Sanafir A Historical and Constitutional Argument Opposing the Territorial Cession of the Tiran and Sanafir Islands to Saudi Arabia," *Texas Law Review*, 97.4 (2019): 835-858.

[571] Buthayna Kamil, for example, became Egypt's first female presidential hopeful. Her campaign was short lived, however, because she was not able to collect the 25,000 required endorsements. She attempted to run again against al-Sisi and Sabbahi in the 2014 race but was once again unable to meet the registration requirements. "State TV Anchor Announces Bid for Presidency," *Mada Masr*, April 13, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20140413151559/http://www.madamasr.com/content/state-tv-news-anchor-announces-bid-presidency, accessed October 23, 2020; and Gamal Essam El-Din, "A two horse race: Egypt's presidential elections," *Ahram Online*, April 20, 2014, http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/99434.aspx, accessed October 23, 2020. Among the other non-Islamist candidates were Hisham al-Bastawisi, an Egyptian judge, and Abu al-'Izz Abu al-Hariri (d. 2014), an Alexandrian member of parliament. Together with Khalid 'Ali and four lesser known candidates, they won 2% of the vote.

[572] While I recognize that there are differences between the groups, I will henceforth use the term "Islamist" as my interlocutors and the media did.

[573] Another Islamist candidate I do not talk much about here is lawyer and Islamic thinker Muhammad Silim al-'Awwa, who did not secure many votes and was not influential at this time. On al-'Awwa, see Sarah Carr, "Meet Your Presidential Candidate: Selim al-Awa, the Opportunist," *Egypt Independent*, March 10, 2012, https://egyptindependent.com/meet-your-presidential-candidate-selim-al-awa-opportunist/, accessed October 26, 2020.

On the ultraconservative side, there was the Salafi Hazim Salah Abu Isma'il (b. 1961). A lawyer by training, Abu Isma'il joined the Brotherhood, as his well-known father, Salah Abu Isma'il, had done before him, and became the "rising star of the Salafi wing of the Muslim Brotherhood."[574] Hazim Abu Isma'il became a household name in Salafi homes after he began preaching on al-Nas TV channel in the early 2000s.[575] Lacroix and Shalata argue that despite Abu Isma'il's frequent criticism of the Mubarak regime on his show, Egyptian security forces did not harass him, unlike other Islamists who publicly denounced the government. This leads Lacroix and Shalata to believe that Abu Isma'il was a "second-tier Islamist figure," perhaps up until he joined the 2011 protests. He was one of the first Islamists to warn revolutionary forces about a possible military takeover. He thus created a political base for himself among revolutionaries, and this emboldened him to announce his presidential bid in May 2011.[576] His campaign came to an end on a technicality that was also a source of controversy, as I show later. In 2013, after Mursi's deposition and the crackdown on Brotherhood supporters, Hazim Abu Isma'il was arrested on forgery charges and remains behind bars to this day.[577]

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[574] Salah Abu Isma'il was an Azhari shaykh and member of the Brotherhood who also served in parliament. Lacroix and Shalata, "The Rise of Revolutionary Salafism," 165. Hazim Abu Isma'il eventually left the Brotherhood, though the timing of his departure remains unclear.

[575] Al-Nas TV reflected a certain Salafi sensibility that many viewed as too stringent. For example, founders Muhammad Hassan and Muhammad Husayn Ya'qub made sure that no music is played on the channel and banned female presenters. In her work, Yasmin Moll demonstrates the stark differences between Salafi TV and other Islamic channels that offer a variety of Islamic preaching styles, such as Iqra' TV. Producers at the latter told Moll that Salafi TV shows were "the equivalent of mom-and-pop shops: small, haphazardly run operations with no five-year plans or strategic visions beyond the promotion of a 'narrow' interpretation of Islam. From their perspective, the narrowness of Salafi religiosity—its doom-and-gloom (*gham wa ham*) tenor and disconnect from everyday life—was reflected in the narrowness of its televised *da'wa* forms." These producers believed that Salafi shaykhs preached on TV just as they preached on the radio. Yasmin Moll, "Television Is Not Radio: Theologies of Mediation in the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology*, 33.2 (2018), 239. On Salafi da'wa, see chapter one. In 2013, police raided the al-Nas Channel studio and shut it down. In 2015, it relaunched as a state-sponsored outlet for Azhar and Sufi shows "bent on fighting extremism." Abu al-Ghayt, "'Awdat qanat 'al-Nas' al-Misriyya.

[576] Lacroix and Shalata, "The Rise of Revolutionary Salafism," 166.

[577] "Hardline preacher Abu Ismail gets 5-year sentence for court siege," *Egypt Today*, May 5, 2019, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/70065/Hardline-preacher-Abu-Ismail-gets-5-year-sentence-for-court, accessed October 9, 2020.

Prior to the elections, Abu Isma'il was considered somewhat of an anomaly given his appeal to a wide spectrum of Egyptians who did not necessarily sympathize with Salafism. Lacroix and Shalata also credit Abu Isma'il with uniting disparate Salafi groups in Egypt and "generat[ing] the unprecedented growth" of the "revolutionary" Salafi movement.[578] During his political TV appearances post-2011,[579] Abu Isma'il always wore a big, neatly trimmed and peppered beard, suit and smile. He generally had a pleasant demeanor and greeted the TV hosts courteously. Hatim, for example, believed that Abu Isma'il was well-spoken and "handled the media well."[580] He was politically unaffiliated: he refused to allow either *al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya* in Alexandria or al-Nour Party to control him or influence his campaign.[581] Because of his Salafi and Brotherhood affiliations, Hatim continued, he was "the perfect match for many people."[582] Abu Isma'il's followers included Brotherhood youth, Salafis, and many who "had no prior ideological or partisan affiliation," including al-Ultras, hardcore al-Ahly Club soccer fans who became a vital political force on their own.[583] Hazim Abu Isma'il's formidable base of supporters called themselves "Hazimun", i.e. "Hazimites," which translates to "the determined."

Yasin, who throughout our conversation made it clear that he was not invested in anything religious, was impressed by the grassroots nature of the Abu Isma'il campaign, even though he disagreed with Abu Isma'il. He was a "populist Salafi" who appealed to different groups of people, Yasin explained. Somewhat amused, he said, "I do not know if you were in Egypt then, but there was a day when people woke up and found posters of Hazim around every

[578] Stéphane Lacroix and Ahmed Zaghloul Shalata, "The Rise of Revolutionary Salafism in Post-Mubarak Egypt," in *Egypt's Revolutions*, 165; and Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 150-1.
[579] He had his own Islamic show on al-Nas TV for years prior to the revolution.
[580] Hatim, Interview by author.
[581] Lacroix and Shalata, "The Rise of Revolutionary Salafism," 171.
[582] Hatim, Interview by author.
[583] Lacroix and Shalata, "The Rise of Revolutionary Salafism," 168. On al-Ultras, see Shawki El-Zatmah, "From Terso into Ultras: the 2011 Egyptian Revolution and the Radicalization of the Soccer's Ultra-Fans," in *Soccer in the Middle East*, eds. Alon Raab and Issam Khalidi (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015): 801-13.

corner in Egypt. Suddenly. Everywhere. On the walls. Distributed at bakeries. This was impressive," Yasin said with a laugh. Abu Isma'il "was a crook and everything, but he represented the populist view of Islam, and the Muslim Brotherhood did not do that."[584] In April 2012, however, the election commission eliminated Abu Isma'il from the presidential race, because his mother was an American citizen. Egyptian law stipulates that both parents of the candidate must be Egyptian (not dual citizens).[585] Yasin called Abu Isma'il a "crook" not because he was charged with corruption but because he avoided telling the truth about his mother throughout his campaign. As I will show later, an aggregate of mistakes made by Islamists and their supporters, such as Abu Isma'il's, ultimately disillusioned my interlocutors and led them to believe that those advocating for political Islam were not to be trusted and that they used religious rhetoric to make political gains.

By far, the most popular candidate among my interlocutors was 'Abd al-Mun'im Abu al-Futuh.[586] Those who voted for him wanted someone with a moderate Islamic reference who was not a member of the Brotherhood or a Salafi. Islam was important to him as a frame of reference, but he also supported the revolution and had revolutionary ideas.[587] Bayat writes that Abu al-Futuh's political vision was "post-Islamist," and this appealed to many people, including my interlocutors. Rather than run on a platform that seeks "to establish some kind of an Islamic order, including a religious state, sharia law, and moral codes," Abu al-Futuh promoted a politics that would have ushered in "a secular state and pious society," a project that was critical of the

[584] Yasin, Interview by author.
[585] Lacroix and Shalata, "The Rise of Revolutionary Salafism," 171-2.
[586] The number of interlocutors who voted for Abu al-Futuh is noteworthy for two reasons. Initially, I thought that the uniformity of political opinion meant that my sample size was skewed, but when I continued speaking with my interlocutors, I made two realizations: Abu al-Futuh had a very diverse support base, and those who voted for him later went in different directions with regards to politics and their religious practice and belief.
[587] Majida, Interview by author, Cairo, January 2019.

Islamist projects the Brotherhood and Salafis, like Abu Isma'il, advertised.[588] Hamza appreciated Abu al-Futuh's ecumenical and unifying platform, but he also argued that Abu al-Futuh was "principled" unlike the Brotherhood, of which Abu al-Futuh had long been a part. When the Brotherhood initially stated in 2011 that it would not field anyone for the presidency, Abu al-Futuh told the group that he wanted to run. When the group refused to let him do so, he left.[589]

Many of my interlocutors became increasingly disappointed with the Islamists, especially when the Muslim Brotherhood went back on several promises it made after Mubarak's fall.[590] The first was when the organization's leadership promised not to dominate the parliamentary elections but ended up winning almost 50% of the seats. The Brotherhood also promised not to field a presidential candidate but ended up fielding two: businessman and Deputy Supreme Guide of the Brotherhood Khayrat al-Shatir and then Mursi, when the election committee disqualified al-Shatir from running because of his prison record.[591] Many felt that the organization was hypocritical for forcing Abu al-Futuh out of its ranks when he announced his candidacy.

But the Brotherhood was believed to have changed its course out of pragmatism: when the Brotherhood felt that the military might disband the parliament in which they were the majority, Kinan, a civil engineer, told me, "they fielded a presidential candidate and a backup for

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[588] Bayat, *Revolution without Revolutionaries*, 149, 187. On *Misr al-Qawiyya*, see Dina Abdul Rahman Hosni, "Islamism and democracy: The Dilemma of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood youth," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 8.2 (2018): 19–34.

[589] Hamza, Interview by author (in English). Although he did not win, Abu al-Futuh established the *Misr al-Qawiyya* (Strong Egypt) Party, which depended on grassroots youth mobilization.

[590] People were underwhelmed by the performance of the parliamentarians, most of whom were Islamists. H. A. Hellyer writes, "Parliamentary sessions were aired on television and the parliamentarians did not acquit themselves well in the eyes of the Egyptian public. These elected representatives of the people were not occupied, it appeared, with urgent issues concerning the faltering economy… MB MPs were not solely responsible, but as members of the largest party they often bore the brunt of the blame." H. A. Hellyer, *A Revolution Undine: Egypt's Road beyond Revolt* (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), 56.

[591] Stéphane Lacroix claims that even though Mursi was sitting in the Presidential Palace, it was al-Shatir who was calling the shots, given his influence on and importance within the Brotherhood. Stéphane Lacroix, "Khairat al-Shater," in *Egypt's Revolutions*, 266.

him, even though they said they would not put anyone up for election, because they did not want to lose everything all at once."[592] Many of my interlocutors who were not tied to the Brotherhood were thus angry that the group did not stay true to its word. 'Aziza, who belongs to a Brotherhood family, could not understand why people were so upset with the group. "People in politics change their minds all the time," she told me. "Why does it matter? To people, it was like the Brotherhood was 'untrustworthy' or whatever" for changing its mind and fielding a candidate.[593] For 'Aziza, if you get involved in politics, you have to play by the rules of the game and be realistic. That people treated the Brotherhood differently from other political players led 'Aziza to believe that people were already biased against the group and that it never truly had a fighting chance to succeed politically.

Muhammad Mursi (d. 2019) was the group's second presidential pick and ultimately won the presidential election before being deposed a year later. Mursi was an American-trained physicist and served as an "independent MP" under the Mubarak regime. Although Mursi held several important positions in the Brotherhood, he was not well known to the public prior to the election. He was part of the Brotherhood's Guidance Bureau and headed the FJP when it was established in 2011. Mursi won 24% of the vote during the first round of the presidential election, which Bernard Rougier and Stéphane Lacroix argue, "roughly corresponds to the MB's true sociological base."[594] During the second round, Mursi won the presidency with 51.7% of the votes.[595]

[592] Tamir, Interview by author.
[593] 'Aziza, Interview by author.
[594] Bernard Rougier and Stéphane Lacroix, "Introduction," in *Egypt's Revolutions*, 8.
[595] Marie Vannetzel, "Mohammed Morsi," in *Egypt's Revolutions*: 259-263.

The "Lemon Squeezers"

Many of my interlocutors found themselves having to vote between a remnant of the Mubarak regime that they thought they had dismantled and a member of the Brotherhood, an organization many of them already had started to doubt. Thus those who voted for Mursi in the second round as "the lesser of two evils," called themselves *'asiri al-laymun* (lit., lemon squeezers), i.e. those who were forced to do something that made them uncomfortable.[596] Most of those who voted for Abu al-Futuh during the first round did not want to vote for Mursi in the second but begrudgingly stood in line to vote *against* Shafiq.[597]

Most of my interlocutors shared with me similar stories of how they genuinely believed in the political process during the first round in May 2012 and voted for the person they related to most, and how this optimism evaporated during the second round which was held a month later. Yasin, for example, was skeptical about the runoff between Mursi and Shafiq. He did not vote, but he was willing to give whoever won a chance. "Revolution makes people forget, but change happens over a decade," he said. He was disappointed by the results of the first round but still believed that there was room for people to take part in the political process and find their voice.

[596] Ziyad said that he was one of those who did as one band (Nepomuk) says in one of its songs, "Vote and Vomit." Ziyad, Interview by author.

[597] I voted for Abu al-Futuh and headed the grassroots campaign for him on the American University in Cairo campus. During the second round, I was one of the "lemon squeezers" who reluctantly voted for Mursi. During the course of writing this chapter, I once again became a "lemon squeezer" as I stood in line to vote for Joe Biden in the COVID-19-ravaged 2020 presidential election.

Presiden-tial Candidate	A. Abu al-Futuh	M. Mursi	A. Moussa	H. Abu Isma'il	A. Shafiq	K. 'Ali	S. 'Awwa	H. Sabbahi	Voided / Boy-cotted
Number of Votes	**20**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**4**	**1**	**5**	**6**

Table 1: My interlocutors' votes during the first round.[598]

Aside from the Islamists' underwhelming performance in parliament, which was disbanded right before the presidential election runoff in June 2012,[599] my interviewees were also incensed by the way the Islamists portrayed Mursi as a pious man, a theme that satirist Bassem Youssef later highlighted repeatedly on his satirical show. 'A'isha explained how the Brotherhood used all the tactics it could to make Mursi appealing to the masses, but the youth did not want to vote for him. Initially, the Brotherhood painted Mursi as the Islamist candidate, appealing to the masses who supported the Muslim Brotherhood and those who believed that Islam should play a role in governance. This was interesting to 'A'isha personally, because the shaykh who taught her Qur'an did something uncharacteristic: although he had never talked to her about politics before, he called her on the phone one day to convince her to vote for Mursi and to tell her friends to do so as well. This surprised 'A'isha, because before then, this shaykh with whom she studied the Qur'an for years, never expressed any political views. 'A'isha ended up voting for Mursi to "put [her] conscience at ease."[600]

[598] Some could not differentiate between both rounds of the election; some could not remember which way they voted or asked to skip the political portion of our conversation altogether. Most of those who voted for Abu al-Futuh voted for Mursi in the second round or abstained.

[599] Days before the runoff took place, the military had issued decrees that "sharply curtail[ed] the powers of the president." Hellyer, *A Revolution Undone*, 63. The military authorized soldiers to arrest civilians, dissolved the lower house of the Islamist-majority parliament, and took over the parliament's lawmaking and budget-setting powers. David D. Kirkpatrick, "Named Egypt's Winner, Islamist Makes History," *New York Times*, June 24, 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/25/world/middleeast/mohamed-morsi-of-muslim-brotherhood-declared-as-egypts-president.html, accessed October 26, 2020. The military also played a role in forming a new constituent assembly after Islamists and non-Islamists failed to come to an agreement on who should serve on it. Muhammad Shukri, "Q&A: Egypt's New Constitutional Declaration," *BBC*, June 18, 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18494178, accessed October 27, 2020.

[600] 'A'isha, Interview by author.

Jude was similarly less than enthusiastic and was upset by the rhetoric the Muslim Brotherhood used to convince people to vote for Mursi. She was happy that people got the person they voted for in office, but she "was 100% sure that this was the beginning of the downhill of Egypt's history." She and everyone around her felt that the reformist Brotherhood was not politically equipped to challenge the political structure that was already deeply entrenched in the Egyptian state. Leading up to the elections, members of the Brotherhood said things like: "Mursi is a beautiful person. Mursi prays all five prayers at the mosque and isn't a thief and is kind. I could marry into his family, not only vote for him!"[601] As she recounted these statements, Jude scoffed. "Okay, all of this is wonderful! But that doesn't make him capable of ruling Egypt." This language was meant to manipulate the masses, Jude argued. The Brotherhood was not revolutionary enough and did not have the political know-how to lead the country after the revolution. The religiosity of the group was no indicator of their political success, and Jude was disappointed that the Brotherhood used Mursi's piety to win people's votes, even when they knew Mursi was not the leader Egypt needed in that pivotal moment. For this reason, Jude, who had voted for Abu al-Futuh, decided to boycott the second round. "I was gravely disappointed," she said with a sigh. "The revolution didn't produce anyone else? There are more than 80 million Egyptians in the street. Not one of them saw himself worthy of [the presidency]?"[602]

[601] Jude, Interview by author.
[602] Jude, Interview by author (in English).



Figure 4: Women waiting in line to vote during the 2012 presidential election. Photo by author.

I was fascinated by the number of interlocutors who told me that they decided what to do with their ballot as they stood in line to vote. Zaynab was one of the people who decided to cast a spoilt ballot after speaking to an elderly voter standing in front of her. Zaynab recounted the story to me as she reflexively kept knocking on the bench we were sitting on:

> The old man kept telling me, 'You are like a daughter to me, and I am advising you: your life will be ruined if so and so won. We need to compromise—.' He talked a lot, and I could not understand which candidate he was talking about. 'Who will improve my life?' [I asked him.] Then he said, 'Shafiq.' I had to push back [laughs]. I told him, 'No, neither of them will work; now I know what to do.' Then he said, 'No, your voice is important!' And he kept trying to convince me. And I went and invalidated my vote. I wrote '*ish*, *hurriyya*, *'adala ijtima'iyya'* (Bread, freedom, social justice).[603]

Zaynab spent too much time on the streets in protest to believe in the promises of either candidate and was affectively moved to write out the revolutionary slogan on her ballot rather than vote for someone her heart did not believe in. When Mursi won, however, Zaynab still had

[603] During our conversation, Zaynab and I had to relocate twice, because there were too many people around us and in close proximity, which made both of us uncomfortable. Zaynab, Interview by author, Cairo, January 2019 (mix of Arabic and English).

hope that Mursi could be opposed and decided to join Youssef's crew and provided content poking fun at Mursi throughout his rule.

On the other hand, only two of my interviewees, Marwa and Bahir, voted for Shafiq. When I asked Marwa, the daughter of a wealthy businessman in Cairo, how she voted during the various voting opportunities, she laughed and said that she voted for whatever the *fulul* (remnants of the Mubarak regime) voted for. With regards to the presidency, Marwa reasoned that Shafiq was already rich and would not steal Egypt's wealth. She also believed that his work on renovating Cairo Airport in the early 2000s demonstrated that he had the vision and know-how to implement effective change. For Marwa, Shafiq was an educated and powerful man who was not after the presidency to consolidate power and would not be an embarrassment to Egypt, unlike Mursi who was the butt of many jokes in 2012 and 2013.[604] Bahir, who also worked in commerce, voted for Shafiq but for a rather surprising reason. Bahir found Salafism during a time when the people that I interviewed who were Salafi at some point in their lives turned away from it. His experience reflected the fluidity of the social fabric of post-2011 Egyptian society that gave people the freedom to interact with people they had never talked to before the uprising.

Bahir explained that his confusion during the 2012 election led him to a group of Salafis who were surprisingly pro-military and, less surprisingly, anti-revolution. Bahir recounted a conversation he had with one of his religious (*mutadayyin*) friends around the time of the election:

> I asked him, 'So, you, of course, will vote for the Brotherhood, yes?' He said, 'The Brotherhood? Why? Even if they threatened to kill me, I would not vote for them.' I asked him, 'Why? Okay, maybe the Nour Party?' He said, 'No, not even if they threaten to slaughter me!' 'Then who are you voting for?' So, he started telling me that the

[604] Marwa, Interview by author. A few of my interlocutors (though not many), including Marwa, worried that an Islamist takeover would mean "Islam would be imposed" on them, and that Egypt would become another Iran or Saudi Arabia. This was the same popular discourse that surfaced when Mubarak was toppled in 2011.

> revolution was *haram* (forbidden) and that he would never forgive those who took part in it.[605]

Bahir was shocked by what his friend told him, since Bahir believed that anyone religious would want an Islamist in power. Bahir's friend was also one of the Salafis who believed democracy is a Western innovation that was just as *haram* as revolting against the ruler. To him, avoiding all the political noise was best for one's faith. Bahir's friend confided that he did not want anyone from the Brotherhood or al-Nur to win; he in fact wanted Shafiq to win. Bahir could not believe that these words were coming out of "the mouth of someone with a long beard." This conversation piqued Bahir's interest, and he asked his friend if there were others who thought in the same way. Bahir's friend invited him to a small study circle, and Bahir has been a regular attendee ever since.[606]

The Salafi group did not care much about politics. What it cared about most, Bahir told me, was acquiring Islamic knowledge. Members did not believe that the Brotherhood or Salafis would be able to implement Shari'a, especially given that "everyday people know nothing about the religion (*al-din*) to begin with." The group believed that true reformation (*islah*) would come from the home, from working on one's own family and acquaintances. In the aftermath of the uprising, Bahir sat with groups from across the political and religious spectrum, including "liberals" and "Sufis," but ultimately decided to stay with this group of Salafis, who he felt best represented him. Although Bahir was an anomaly among my interlocutors for turning to Salafism when many people were turning away from it, his brush with the Salafis was a unique experience that was made possible by the revolution. It also represents an unexpected turn in that the same Salafis who previously eschewed politics and believed the revolution was forbidden in Islam also

[605] Bahir, Interview by author, Cairo, February 2018.
[606] Bahir, Interview by author.

believed that voting for Shafiq would set the wrong right again. This group thus departed from the "revolutionary Salafis" that Lacroix and Shalata said Hazim Abu Isma'il represented. They stayed true to the quietist tendencies of some Salafi groups in Egypt (and elsewhere) and preferred the maintenance of the political status quo ante over a new order that was built on a flawed premise: revolt against the ruler.

Despite their different political viewpoints, my interlocutors remembered still feeling excited about a more inclusive political process that valued citizens' voices and votes. They also hoped that whatever government came to power would reflect the will of the people and that it would be held accountable for any shortcomings or mistakes.

Mursi's Victory

On June 24, 2012, with 51.7% of the vote, Mursi was announced as the first democratically elected, civilian president of Egypt.[607] Thousands gathered in Tahrir Square to celebrate his victory. Ripples of red, white and black blanketed the Square. Pockets of female supporters in hijabs were cordoned off so as not to be harassed and to witness the moment in peace. David Kirkpatrick describes the scene of jubilation: "Smiling riot police officers put down their helmets to exchange congratulations with bearded protesters. Beaming Brotherhood supporters streamed in, swelling the crowd to perhaps 100,000 by nightfall. In a carnival atmosphere, fireworks were set off and vendors hawked cotton candy or threw pieces of fruit into the laughing crowd."[608] Exuberance, hope and cautious optimism filled the air.

[607] *Aljazeera* notes that out of the 26,420,763 ballots casted, about 850,000 were invalid, over 13 million were for Mursi, and a little over 12 million were for Shafiq. "Celebration in Egypt as Morsi declared winner," *Aljazeera*, June 24, 2012, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2012/6/24/celebration-in-egypt-as-morsi-declared-winner, accessed October 26, 2020.

[608] Kirkpatrick, "Named Egypt's Winner." The carnivalesque atmosphere of these gatherings, in which "social rules are suspended or inverted" is an important aspect of Armbrust's theorization of the ethnography of revolutions. Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 119.

Mursi arrived and joined the festivities. He immediately got up on a makeshift stage in Tahrir Square, where he was surrounded by security guards whom he kept swatting away to wave to the people gathered in the square.[609] "Mursi is the president of the Republic (Mursi *ra'is al-jumhuriyya*)," an unofficial emcee chanted, and the people followed along. The emcee then repeatedly, rhythmically cried, "Revolutionaries, free, we will stay our course (*Thuwwar, ahrar, hankammil al-mishwar*)!" Mursi joined in the chanting while standing behind a podium, pumping his fists in the air. In his televised speech, he congratulated the Egyptian people and mourned the loss of the "martyrs" whose blood was spilt in the very square in which he was celebrating his victory. He then told the Egyptian people that no power trumps their power ("*La sulta fawqa hadhihi al-sulta*!") Moving away from the podium, he walked away from his security guards to address the public directly. Pointing at the sea of supporters, he repeated, "*La sulta fawqa hadhihi al-sulta*!" A crescendo of applause followed. At this, Mursi opened up his suit to show that he was not wearing a bulletproof vest. He promised to be a president for all Egyptians and to make sure that the goals of the revolution were met. He tried to read from the speech he had prepared but diverged often to talk to people from the heart, affectively moved by the moment.[610]

When I asked Minna about this event, her face lit up. "Yay!" she unconsciously exclaimed. "A friend was visiting. The happiness I felt … That moment when he opened up his suit, [as if to say that] 'I'm not wearing body armor.' I was *so* happy." For Minna, this moment was "the personification of the revolution winning." Minna could hardly contain her excitement

[609] These were the same security guards who guarded Mubarak, Kirkpatrick writes. "Until 16 months ago, their appearance at the home of a Brotherhood leader could only mean a trip to one of Mr. Mubarak's jails." Kirkpatrick, "Named Egypt's Winner."

[610] The television presenters who, within a few short months, later criticized Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood, were supportive of Mursi and spoke excitedly about the possibility for unification and for a new Egypt. "Baththh Mubashir – al-Ra'is Muhammad Mursi yasil li-maydan al-Tahrir," YouTube, June 29, 2012, 1:17:34, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkTV0hs1iqk&ab_channel=CBCEgypt, accessed October 26, 2020.

as she recalled this hopeful moment. “I knew that it was only going upward from here. I feel like I’m going to cry now. I was very optimistic,” she said with a sigh.[611] Minna’s sigh was an affective signal reflecting the fact that she knew what was to come in my line of questioning: Mursi’s performance and ultimate downfall. The elation she felt with Mursi’s literal ascent onto the stage encapsulated the immense hope she had in his presidency, hope which eventually turned into grief then anger.

Conclusion

My interlocutors were faced with several trying moral breakdowns during these few months. During this liminal stage of the revolution, when everything was up in the air and anything was possible, hope was infectious. People went out in droves to vote. They hoped their favorite candidate(s) would win. They believed they had a voice. The political atmosphere also allowed the political participation of people from all walks of life, including Salafis, many of whom had previously eschewed politics and viewed democracy as an innovation. This hopeful mood, like the revolutionary fervor, was, however, liminal and eventually came to an end. Many of my interlocutors were angry that the “Islamists” did not protect the protesters from the brutality of the military that violently dispersed their demonstrations in 2011 and 2012, opting instead to strike deals with the army and safeguard their electoral advantage. Moreover, the youth were disappointed that the Islamists used endorsements from Islamic preachers to push their political agendas, and religious symbols and language to persuade the “religious” Egyptian people to vote one way or the other. Many of my interlocutors who believed in the possibility of having a civilian leader with an “Islamic reference” (*marji‘iyya diniyya*) still held onto this hope even after Mursi won, but even this hope turned into despair. Both my “religious” and “non-

[611] Minna, Interview by author.

religious" interlocutors reflected upon what they believed was a moral crisis in the performance of the Islamists, and reacted and were affected negatively.

Throughout our conversations, the smirks, smiles, fist-banging, tears, laughs and swearing marked the affective, visceral reactions the people I worked with had upon recalling the memories and feelings my questions elicited. There was an atmospheric, lingering mood of despair at the lost opportunity and hope in that their past activism could have afforded them a better future. Specific people and parties failed them, including people they used to admire and look up to. And it would only get worse.

Chapter 4: Moral Fallout: The Decline of the Bearded Presence

The moods during the first round of the presidential election were mostly hope, (cautious and, perhaps, cruel) optimism, and excitement. When the second round was announced, the moods shifted into skepticism, doubt and reluctance. Once Mursi won, a cautious hopefulness once again surfaced, as people wanted to give the new civilian-led government a chance and believed that it could be held to account. A few months into Mursi's rule, however, resentment, disappointment and anger became commonplace, as people became disenchanted by the exclusivist and inept Brotherhood rule and what many viewed as hypocritical Islamist discourse and action (highlighted by the then-free press). Eventually these negative moral moods turned into anger, and millions of people took to the streets to call for Mursi's removal and early presidential elections. The military obliged: it removed Mursi from office and perpetrated one of the worst massacres the country had seen in recent decades against Mursi supporters who had gathered in squares around Egypt, most notably in Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya and al-Nahda Squares in Cairo. Mursi, senior Brotherhood members and their supporters were rounded up and imprisoned once more. The Brotherhood was banned and deemed a terrorist organization yet again. Military generals regained full control of the country, and Egypt saw repression under current President 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi that has been far worse than that of the Mubarak era.[612]

This chapter charts the affective and emotional registers of my interlocutors as they witnessed all of these events unfolding. It also analyzes media content about the discourse used by Islamists and preachers who supported them and unofficially made comments that ultimately hurt Mursi's image. Particularly important to this conversation is satirist Bassem Youssef, who many of my interlocutors cited as a key figure in turning public opinion against the Islamists.

[612] Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 207.

The Bearded Presence

With the cautious optimism that came with a seemingly antiestablishment president came a sense of accountability: Mursi's opposition, in the post-revolutionary climate, felt emboldened to challenge and even mock Mursi and his decisions. The revolution, and perhaps Mursi's inability to control the airwaves, allowed for freedom of speech and freedom of the press to flourish, despite ultimately hurting the Brotherhood and its image. Opponents waited for every opportunity to attack the Islamists, and (bearded) Islamic preachers in turn, unauthorized by the Brotherhood to speak on its behalf, spread misinformation and further tarnished Mursi's image. Most of my interlocutors noted that Mursi was politically inept, did not have a clear vision or charisma and failed to align with the revolutionary forces to strike strategic alliances. Many of them spoke about how the media, both traditional and social, made them better aware of these indiscretions. Bassem Youssef, described as the Egyptian Jon Stewart, played an important role in raising awareness about the missteps of the Islamists, big and small. The visuality of the beard, which Youssef capitalized on throughout his show, became symbolically important, both subliminally and explicitly. The beard and what it represented reflected a more serious political and social reality: a palpable divide between those who referred to themselves as Islamists and anyone who opposed them. During Mursi's rule, a political binary of "us" and "them" (which conflated the Brotherhood and the Salafis) fully emerged, solidifying schisms within the fabric of Egyptian society that were exacerbated further with Mursi's removal from power.

Hatim reflected on how impatient people were with the Muslim Brotherhood as politicians. "It was our first time voting and their first time as politicians," he stated.[613] But

[613] Hatim, Interview by author. Brotherhood members had served in parliament before 2011 but as independents, since religion-based parties were illegal in Egypt prior to the uprising. Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*,

Hatim also understood that appearances and charisma mattered to people. And Mursi did not have either: "He did not look presentable, said random things and could not speak (eloquently). People made fun of him constantly." Initially, civil society and revolutionary forces backed Mursi, but he was not forward-thinking. He should not have chosen a military man, al-Sisi, to be minister of defense. This was Mursi's moment to instigate real change, Hatim continued, but "they" (the Brotherhood as represented by Mursi) missed the opportunity and cared mainly about "setting up the Brotherhood state (*akhwanat al-dawla*)."[614]

When talking about the Mursi government, my interlocutors often used the term "they" or the Brotherhood, signaling both a societal divide and a belief that it was the Brotherhood, and not Mursi, who was in charge of the state before the military takeover in 2013. Many of my interlocutors criticized the Brotherhood for failing to unify Egyptians, for making faulty alliances, for augmenting social and political polarization, for lacking a clear political agenda and for hurting the image of Islam in the process.

Bassem Youssef

The media undoubtedly played a role in changing public opinion about the Islamists (a term that by now conflated the Brotherhood and Salafis) and bringing down the Mursi government. Bassem Youssef, for example, became a rising star among middle and upper-middle class Egyptians in early 2011, when he launched a satirical show on YouTube about the

chapter 2, and Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, chapter 8. Egyptian courts lifted the ban on religion-based parties in October 2011. Alexandra Malatesta, "Egypt court overturns ban on religious-based political party," October 11, 2011, https://www.jurist.org/news/2011/10/egypt-court-overturns-ban-on-religious-based-political-party/, accessed October 8, 2020. Since the political downfall of the Brotherhood in 2013, several attempts have been made to reinstate the ban on political parties with a religious platform. See, for instance, Sonia Farid, "Religious parties in Egypt threatened with political ban," *Al-Arabiya*, October 15, 2014, https://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/analysis/2014/10/15/Religious-parties-in-Egypt-threatened-with-political-ban, accessed October 8, 2020; and "Parliament pushes for complete ban on religious parties," *Egypt Today*, February 24, 2018, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/43752/Parliament-pushes-for-complete-ban-on-religious-parties, accessed October 8, 2020.

[614] Hatim, Interview by author.

revolution from his home in Cairo.[615] In a trailer for his YouTube channel which was uploaded in March 2013, Youssef outlined the success his show enjoyed for two consecutive years: The seven episodes he released on YouTube from his laundry room in early 2011 garnered five million views in less than two months; season one of the televised series accumulated 200 million views; season two garnered 30 million views within four months in Egypt alone, and his al-Bernameg, according to Youssef, became the "most watched show in the Arab world."[616]

The heart-surgeon-turned-political-satirist landed several contracts to host his show on satellite television and eventually ended up on the privately owned, Egyptian channel *CBC* with a live studio audience and a stage that looked almost identical to that of Jon Stewart. The second season of his weekly show aired a few months after Mursi took power. Youssef made fun of Islamists and bearded Muslim preachers mercilessly, much to the delight of his audience. He exposed the Islamists' and their supporters' use of religious discourse to legitimize Mursi's rule and policies just as they did during the 2011 referendum and the parliamentary and presidential elections.[617] Youssef's show made some of the disappointing and shocking statements made by

[615] Each of Youssef's episodes garnered hundreds of thousands, if not millions of views, not counting those who watched the episodes on live television. His YouTube channel has over 350 million views as of November 2020. "About Albernameg," YouTube "about" page, https://www.youtube.com/c/albernameg/about, accessed November 5, 2020. For more on Youssef, see Justin Monticello, "Egypt's Jon Stewart' in Exile," *Reason* 49.6 (2017): 44-53.

[616] "Trailer qanat al-Bernameg 'ala al-YouTube," YouTube video, March 8, 2013, 1:27, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STkmjRCvU3Q&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 3, 2020.

[617] In the first episode of the season, Youssef criticized the FJP's platform (*Mashru' al-Nahda*, or the Renaissance Project), which some marketed as the "Islamic" project (*al-mashru' al-Islami*) rather than a "Brotherhood" project (*mashru' Ikhwani*). Soon after Mursi came to power, Islamists pushed more forcefully for Shari'a, though no one was quite sure what "making Egypt Islamic" entailed. There was a lingering fear among some Islamists that a new constitution would amend Article II of the 1979 constitution, as mentioned in chapter three. Patrick Haenni, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Failure in Power," in *Egypt's Revolutions*, 20. A month into Mursi's presidency, non-Islamist forces banded together to challenge the Islamists' identity politics. Islamists responded by launching a "million-man march to implement the Shari'a" or "*Millioniyyat tatbiq al-Shari'a*" in early November in Tahrir Square. During the demonstration, Hazim Abu Isma'il and surrounding protesters chanted, "*'Aysh*, *huriyya*, *Shari'a Islamiyya*," riffing on the popular revolutionary slogan, and replacing social justice (*'adala ijtima'iyya*) with "Islamic Shari'a." Muhammad and Hasan, "Abu Isma'il." There was another protest on July 29, 2012 that non-Islamists also dubbed *Jum'at* Kandahar, poking fun at the bearded men who led the protest and equating them with Jihadis in Afghanistan in terms of appearance and ideological claims. The Brotherhood had officially pulled out from this protest, so it was mainly a Salafi demonstration, but the general public did not always make that distinction. Armbrust, *Martyrs and*

Islamists memorable to many people, including my interlocutors. Some of those moments were further immortalized on social media in short soundbites that people shared and replayed. I thus credit Youssef with engraving in the minds (and hearts) of my interlocutors whatever statements they quoted to me verbatim during our interviews.

Youssef focused on how Salafi preachers made a concerted effort to bolster Mursi's moral credentials and used this as a basis for his political infallibility. Youssef's team compiled a sizeable number of videos from Salafi television channels in which nondescript bearded men hailed Mursi as a prophet-like and pious individual, while they delegitimized Mursi's political opponents. During one episode, for example, Youssef played a clip of a panel of bearded men discussing a recent television interview with Mursi. One of the panelists disapproved of the questions the two anchors, a man and a woman, asked and said, "No one is allowed to argue with [Mursi] except those who are at his level (*'ala shakilatih, min mustawah*)." For the panel, Mursi was above criticism, because no opponent had the same level of piety. The bearded panel then poked fun at the female interviewer. "Why is the woman interviewing him in full makeup (*mutabarrija*)?!" one of them yelled, while the others laughed.[618] "Get me a man! (*Hatu li rajil!*)" Youssef's audience howled in laughter, as Youssef stared at his audience with a smirk on his face. In that moment, it did not matter who those bearded men were; Youssef rarely mentioned their names.[619] The symbolism was clear: *they* were supporters of Mursi, and *they*

Tricksters, 142-4. On the questions of what Shari'a means to Islamists and who speaks for it, see Nathan J. Brown, *Arguing Islam after the Revival of Arab Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), chapter five.

[618] The word *mutabarrija* is used in Qur'an 24:60 and means adorned. See also 24:31.

[619] One of those men, Mahmud Sha'ban, a Salafi shaykh who teaches at al-Azhar University, was arrested in 2018 and again in 2020 for allegedly joining a terrorist organization. His wife and then twelve-year-old son also were detained in 2019. 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad, "Al-amn al-Mirsi ya'taqil zawjat wa najl da'iya masjun," *Aljazeera*, May 12, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.net/news/humanrights/2019/12/5/الأمن-المصري-يعتقل-زوجة-ونجل-داعية , accessed November 19, 2020; and Fatima Abu Shanab, "Tajdid habs Mahmud Sha'ban wa akharin 45 yawm fi 'al-indimam li-jama'a irhabiyya," *Al-Masry al-Youm*, July 26, 2020, https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2002578, accessed November 19, 2020.

looked down on people like the female anchor, Youssef and his audience, i.e. those they deemed less pious.[620]

Over and again, Youssef demonstrated the ways in which preachers such as these men claimed a monopoly over religion, and this visibly angered Youssef (and my interlocutors).[621] Toward the end of one of his episodes, Youssef turned serious and addressed the preachers who used inappropriate language to describe their political opponents, including him. He said, "Unfortunately, some people believe that they hold the keys to paradise and the afterlife and think that any attack against them is an attack on religion. Do not be surprised when you see people who are supposedly *mutadayyinin* cursing and using abusive language." Here, Youssef, like many of my interlocutors, pointed to the fact that the Islamists and the preachers who supported them did not draw a line between the political project of running Egypt and the Islamic identity they represented. Since most of the Islamists, except perhaps Abu al-Futuh, ran on a

[620] It is noteworthy that throughout the two televised seasons of Youssef's show, he did not criticize al-Azhar or its scholars. "Al-Bernameg- "Al-Ra'is wa-l-'ilam al-dusturi – halqa 3 – juz' 2," YouTube video, December 7, 2012, 13:55, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZrj36D65bg&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed October 16, 2020. There was a notable increase in sexual innuendos in season two, which Islamists constantly criticized Youssef for, even though Youssef showed how Salafi preachers accused Mursi's political opponents of sexual deviancy and used explicit language on their shows on Salafi TV channels. See, for instance, "Al-Bernameg – Mutahirrishun wa lakin – al-halqa 17 – juz' 1," YouTube video, March 15, 2013, 23:18, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuMRGIwe6Y4&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 3, 2020; "Al-Bernameg – Al-usra al-zaniya [sic] 'ashar – al-halqa 16 – al-juz' 1," YouTube video, March 8, 2013, 21:25, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1z_U-ENi4tQ&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 3, 2020; and "Al-Bernameg – Khazza'at al-i'lam – al-halqa 21 – al-juz' 2," YouTube video, April 12, 2013, 20:21, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dr2H0Y2sMjg&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 5, 2020. In an episode that aired in April 2013, Youssef showed one unnamed Salafi preacher on television saying that when a viewer asked him if it was permissible for him to kill Bassem Youssef, the preacher replied, "Not now" (*laysa al'an*), yet another phrase that has taken its seat among Egyptian colloquialisms in the aftermath of 2011."Al-Bernameg – Sirat Basim – al-halqa 22 – juz' 2," YouTube video, April 19, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S55GdPBxw40&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 5, 2020.

[621] I remember that Youssef was featured in several episodes of an Islamic TV show (*Thawra 'ala al-Nafs* or Revolution against the Self) presented by Moez Masoud. Youssef was among several cultural icons of 2011 and was thus portrayed as someone who was both influential in the 2011 movement and a role model for many. Other guests included retired soccer player Nadir al-Sayyid, folksinger Hamza Namira, MP 'Amr Hamzawi, among others. On the "ethics of the Square," which permeated this show and others produced by the *du'ah al-judud*, see Yasmin Moll, "The Revolution Within: Islamic Televangelists and the Politics of Ethics in Egypt," *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/arab_spring_1.html, accessed November 24, 2020.

platform that promised their supporters that they would implement the Shari‘a, the political and the religious were inextricably imbricated. The preachers Youssef criticized did not believe in separating religion and state, and thus they believed that any attack on their discourse was an attack on Islam and the Islamist project. The abusive language these preachers used on their shows, Youssef charged, was antithetical to the moral imperative found in the very Shari‘a these men professed to uphold.

“Question,” Youssef said, staring directly into the camera. “How could these people who say that they are close to and mindful of God (*nas bita‘it Rabbina*) talk like this, lie like this, be abusive in this way?” Youssef then played a short clip of Khalid ‘Abdallah, one of the preachers who was most critical of Youssef, to demonstrate the logic people like ‘Abdallah used to justify the moral dissonance between what they preached and what they ultimately did and said. Speaking to the camera, ‘Abdallah argued the following:

> Some people ask, ‘Aren’t the shaykhs supposed to be teaching people good manners and morality (*akhlaq*)?’ [He cites Qur’anic 9:73:] ‘O Prophet! Strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be harsh with them,’ and ‘be harsh with them.’[622] We said it a hundred times: We have examples in the *sira* of [the Prophet] using harsh (*ghilza*) words [when addressing the hypocrites, *al-munafiqin*], considerably harsher than the ones we have been using.[623]

‘Abdallah took the verse and interpreted it to fit the political and historical context in a way that felt inappropriate and hypocritical to Youssef.

The “hypocrites” during the Prophet’s time were those who feigned belief but actively sought to thwart Prophet Muhammad’s state- and community-building mission. Rhetorically, it might be understood that ‘Abdallah believed Mursi’s rule was akin to that of the Prophet, and Mursi’s opponents were as corrupt as ‘Abdallah ibn Ubayy, the most notorious *munafiq*

[622] Nasr et al., *The Study Quran*, 526.
[623] “Al-Bernameg – Ya wad ya… halqa 5 – juz’ 1,” YouTube video, December 21, 2012, 26:41, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DonuZolkeuE&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed October 16, 2020.

(hypocrite) during the Prophet's time. The following verse, in fact, explains that *munafiqun* refers to those who swore that they did not utter a word of disbelief "but disbelieved after having submitted [to God]. And they had ambitions that they did not achieve, and they were vengeful only because God and His Messenger enriched them from His Bounty."[624] The Qur'an thus clearly portrays the hypocrites as those who feigned belief but actually undermined the Prophet's authority. It is people who fit this serious description who are worthy of being mistreated. But Mursi was not the Prophet, and his opponents were not Ibn Ubayy.[625] The rhetoric of "us" versus "them" took on a theologically charged life of its own.

As soon as the video of 'Abdallah ended, Youssef continued his monologue, once again peering intently into the camera:

> This is the source of the problem: their interpretation and understanding of religion. They look at us, not as Muslims or Christians but, as disbelievers (*kuffar*), hypocrites, enemies of religion and God. For this reason, we deserve being called names and abused, maybe even tortured … For this reason, when someone tells me that I disrespect the '*ulama* and shaykhs, I tell him, 'It is a very simple equation: Just as you do not consider us Muslims, to us, you are neither shaykhs nor '*ulama*.'

Youssef's disappointment in, perhaps even disgust with, the Muslim preachers who openly attacked their opponents on the air, reflected the negative moral emotions many of my interlocutors also harbored toward the preachers in the aftermath of the Islamists' short political

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[624] Nasr et al., *The Study Quran*, 526.

[625] In a similar vein, in one of the video clips Youssef showed, a bearded man stood on a makeshift stage in Tahrir in front of throngs of bearded men as if giving a sermon. The man stated that someone saw a dream in which Hazim Abu Isma'il met the Prophet, and the Prophet told him that Allah was pleased with him. Youssef's audience laughed. Youssef showed another video in which 'Isam al-'Iryan (d. 2020), a senior member of the Brotherhood, said in an interview that Mursi was chosen by God. See, for instance, "Al-Bernameg – mawsim 2 – halqa 1 – al-nahda la tazal fi..? YouTube video, November 23, 2012, 21:40, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vJwFvFi4ZY&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed October 16, 2020; "Al-Bernameg – Ya wad ya… halqa 5 – juz' 1," YouTube video, December 21, 2012, 26:41, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DonuZolkeuE&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed October 16, 2020; and "Al-Bernameg – 'Ala hamish al-ri'asa – al-halqa – juz' 2," YouTube video, December 28, 2012, 22:08, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-bFQz73zOY&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed October 16, 2020. On the politicization of channels such as al-Nas, Hafiz, al-Rahma, see Ihab Nafi', *Sira' al-Du'ah: bayna al-din wa-l-siyasa* (Cairo]: Maqam li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', 2015), 94-96.

tenure and the ultimate defeat of the revolution. This group of people marketed itself as representative of Islam, but the way the Islamists and the preachers who supported them acted on the political scene ran contrary to many of the moral claims found within the Shari‘a they espoused. This moral dissonance was problematic to many of my interlocutors, including those who had once sympathized with the Islamist vision.

As the political divide between Mursi supporters and opponents grew and Mursi's rule was challenged further, the preachers' rhetoric against opponents became even more theologically charged. The Brotherhood had placed members and people it trusted in important government positions, but one group they did not have control over was judges in the Supreme Constitutional Court, who were appointed for life.[626] In June 2012, the Court had dissolved the lower house of parliament in which the Islamists were a majority and planned to dissolve the Constituent Assembly that that parliament had put together to draft the new constitution. This spooked the Brotherhood, and, on November 22, 2012, Mursi issued a constitutional declaration (*i‘lan dusturi*), "granting executive decisions legal immunity, replacing the public prosecutor and safeguarding the Constituent Assembly."[627] Mass protests in opposition to Mursi's declaration formed around the presidential palace, which led to violence. Seven people died, hundreds were injured, and dozens were arrested as a result of the protests. According to Marie Vannetzel, the Brotherhood narrative argued that members of the group "were legitimately fighting as 'martyrs'

[626] On the status of the judiciary before and after the 2011 uprising, see Nathan J. Brown, "Egypt's Judiciary in a Postrevolutionary Era," in *Egypt's Revolutions*: 101-21. Youssef produced an episode that talked exclusively about the number of ministerial positions held by Brotherhood members. "Al-Bernameg – Ya 'azizi kulluna Ikhwan – al-halqa 24 – juz' 1," May 24, 2013, 22:23, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIFSaO_3Yg8&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 5, 2020.

[627] Rougier and Lacroix, "Introduction," 8. One of the articles in Mursi's Declaration stated that "[i]f there is a danger that threatens the January 25 revolution, the life and safety of the nation, national unity, or impedes a state institution from performing its role, the president can take all necessary measures to address this danger as defined by law." Human Rights Watch warned that this article echoed Mubarak's infamous emergency law, which was in effect throughout his 30-year reign. Haenni, "The Muslim Brotherhood," 24-25. For a translation of the full text of the Declaration, see Haenni, "The Muslim Brotherhood," 36.

against ‘delinquent’ political opponents (*baltagiyya*) who were aided by *feloul* [remnants of the Mubarak regime] and insurgent police officers.” They also believed that they were “defending the state and the Revolution embodied by ‘their’ president.”[628] The demonstrations and the rhetoric used by Salafi preachers further solidified an ideological and social divide, pitting the “liberal and seculars” against Islamists.

In response to the protests, Mursi backed down on some parts of the declaration during a televised speech but insisted that the constitution that the Assembly drafted be put to a vote, another referendum over which Islamists and non-Islamists became divided.[629] The Brotherhood allied with al-Nur Party “to push through the most Islamized constitution in the history of Egypt, with articles that opened up the possibility of parliamentary activity being overseen by a body of ‘ulama … from al-Azhar University.”[630] Former presidential candidates, Muhammad ElBaradei, Hamdin Sabbahi and Amr Moussa, banded together to form the National Salvation Front in opposition to Brotherhood rule, and non-Islamists boycotted the referendum altogether. The constitution passed with 64% of the vote and a 33% turnout.[631]

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[628] Mursi accused those who used violence during the protests of being hired thugs. “Mursi yad‘u ila hiwar ma‘a al-mu‘arada fi khitabih,” YouTube video, December 6, 2012, 28:24, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1ShEesi1RI&ab_channel=قناةالحرة-Alhurra, accessed November 2, 2020. The Cairo headquarters of the FJP was set ablaze during these protests. Yasmine Saleh, “Egypt's Mursi calls for dialogue amid street fury,” *Reuters*, December 6, 2012, https://ca.reuters.com/article/egypt-politics-tanks-idINDEE8B504420121206, accessed November 2, 2020. Vannetzel, “Confronting the Transition to Legality,”55-56. For media coverage of the clashes, see “Radd nari min Yusri Fuda ‘ala khitab al-ra’is,” YouTube video, December 6, 2012, 2:09, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zk9o185sq4M&fbclid=IwAR3umcXONkK04Bc0AB28NSojgml9yN95Nxw5kjUwpvXphnje3aEhlWM5rtk&ab_channel=%D9%88%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%88, accessed December 2, 2020.

[629] Mursi said that he only made the declaration to make sure that the people’s voice is heard. Once the results of the referendum are announced, he continued, the constitutional declaration will be invalidated. “Mursi yad‘u.”

[630] Rougier and Lacroix, “Introduction,” 9.

[631] Rougier and Lacroix, “Introduction,” 9.

Leading up to the second constitutional referendum after Mubarak's fall and as the protests turned violent, Salafi preachers again took to the airwaves to push for a yes vote.[632] All the while, Youssef and his team curated these preachers' declarations and poked fun at them. The "us" versus "them" divide was deeply entrenched in the Salafi preachers' rhetoric, and Youssef never passed an opportunity to showcase the divisiveness of their words, but likewise perpetuated the social divide himself. For example, during one of his shows, which aired as the protests in front of the presidential palace were taking place, and the country was gearing up to vote on the new draft constitution, Youssef showed a video clip of a lesser-known Salafi speaker with a long white beard and a white Saudi-Arabian style headdress on a Salafi TV channel (al-Qur'an wa-l-Sunna). Regarding the referendum, the man said,

> If you find seculars, liberals, leftists and Christians going in one direction, and you do not have enough time to read up on the issue, then go in the other direction. Because these are the enemies of the Islamic project (*a'da al-mashru' al-Islami*), the enemies of Islamic thought, the enemies of Islam altogether. Forget about those who say, 'But we are Muslim,' and all this nonsense (*aflam Hindi*).[633] They are all the furthest thing from Islam and the most hated of God's creation.[634]

Here, the speaker equated one's political affiliation with one's status as a Muslim. The speaker is not as well-known as other Salafi presenters, such as Muhammad Hassan, Muhammd Husayn Ya'qub or Khalid 'Abdallah, but the way Youssef and his team put together these episodes with soundbite after soundbite of Salafis telling their opponents that they are going to hell and are not true Muslims was meant to affectively move people to be angry with these preachers who suggested that they have the higher moral ground.

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[632] The fact that there were two referenda post-Mubarak and that Islamists pushed for the yes vote on both caused some confusion among my interlocutors, but most remembered that Islamists used language like, "A yes vote will lead one to paradise."

[633] In Egypt, when people want to describe something that is long-winded and nonsensical, they call it *film Hindi* (Indian film).

[634] "Al-Bernameg – al-halqa 4 kamila," YouTube video, July 15, 2013, 1:00:01, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdoqZ9WnhEk&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed October 16, 2020.

How well Mursi performed on the political scene did not matter to these speakers; his personal piety was enough to cause committed Muslims to rejoice. One of Ya'qub's speeches once again found its way onto Youssef's show and managed to elicit the same sense of shock that the "battle of the ballot boxes" did during the first referendum in March 2011. Speaking to a large audience, Ya'qub said, "Your president [Mursi] has a beard. Your president goes on the lesser pilgrimage (*umra*) and visits the Prophet's Mosque. Your president leads people in prayer. Your president gives Islamic lectures. Your president follows the Qur'an and the *sunna*! Will you not praise God (*ala tukabbirun*)?!" Attendees yelled, "*Allah akbar*!" in unison. As Youssef's audience laughed, Youssef juxtaposed the Salafi preachers' fixation on Mursi's outward, ritual piety and what he perceived to be the economic failing of the Mursi regime. Rather than focus on the declining economy and increasing living expenses,[635] Youssef seemed to be saying, the preachers focused on the idea of having a Muslim in the presidential palace who performed his ritual duties, even if he was not performing his political duties well.

In another clip from al-Nas TV, a panel of three bearded men once again compared Mursi to the Prophet Muhammad.[636] Mursi had promised to achieve 64 political and economic goals within the first one hundred days of his presidency but failed to do so, and his opponents held him to account.[637] In response to this criticism, one of the bearded panelists asked, "What did the

[635] Bayat contends that Mursi followed ("if not extended") Mubarak's neoliberal policies, once again reflecting the Brotherhood's reformist rather than revolutionary politics. Al-Nur Party did not even address economic concerns and was satisfied with maintaining the economic status quo. Bayat, *Revolution without Revolutionaries*, 85; and Amr Adly, "Between Social Populism and Pragmatic Conservatism," in *Egypt's Revolutions*: 61-78. Tunisians had similar economic woes under their own Islamist government, which they viewed as incompetent and inexperienced, since it, too, was run underground for decades as the Egyptian Brotherhood was. Marks, "Tunisia," 44-45. For the Brotherhood's deals with notable Egyptian businessmen, including some who were part of Mubarak's inner circle, see Haenni, "The Muslim Brotherhood," 26-28.

[636] At the top left corner of the screen was a small picture of Mursi with the words, "We are with you" (*Nahnu ma'ak*), below it.

[637] Some of his promises addressed the country's most dire infrastructural and economic problems, such as traffic congestion, garbage collection, and bread and fuel shortages. Mursi also promised to better relations with countries, such as Iran. Shaimaa Khalil, "Egypt: President Morsi's 100 Days in Power," *BBC*, October 9, 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19882135, accessed December 17, 2020. Civilians established the

Prophet accomplish in a hundred days after migrating to Madina?" At this, Youssef rhetorically asked if Mursi was a new prophet who received revelation from God. The audience laughed.[638] The reference was obvious: if the Prophet himself could not achieve his goals within one hundred days of seeking to establish his state, how could Mursi? But why did the speaker specifically choose the Prophet of all Muslim statesmen to compare Mursi to? The implication was that the infallible Prophet did not achieve greatness in one hundred days and could not be faulted for this. Mursi, likewise, should not be criticized. Youssef showed a few more short clips of nondescript bearded men, saying that those who oppose Mursi do not oppose him or the Brotherhood but Islam itself. To this, Youssef said to the audience, "Congratulations, everyone! We are going to hell! *Ala tukabbirun*?!" again poking fun at Ya'qub's exuberance as he described Mursi's personal piety.

Youssef was sued dozens of times during his short tenure as a satirist on Egyptian TV from 2011 to 2014. Twice during Mursi's reign, his show was suspended, and Mursi supporters took Youssef to court for defaming Mursi and "insulting Islam."[639] In March 2013, an arrest warrant for Youssef was issued after several episodes went live in which the satirist portrayed Mursi as a pharaoh and made direct jokes at the president's expense. One of the most notable of those moments, for example, was when the National University of Science and Technology in

website "Mursi Meter" to hold Mursi accountable. Dina Zayed, "Morsi Meter' tries to keep Egypt's leader on toes," *Reuters*, August 2, 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-president-meter/morsi-meter-tries-to-keep-egypts-leader-on-toes-idUSBRE8710Y420120802, accessed November 2, 2020.

[638] "Al-Bernameg – 'Ala hamish al-ri'asa." In the short clips Youssef's team curated, most of these bearded men went unidentified. The visuality of the beard spoke for itself; the audience immediately knew what the speakers' political and religious orientations were before they even spoke.

[639] The show did not air during the months after Mursi's removal and during the summer of massacres against Mursi supporters. It aired again after al-Sisi came to power. Youssef tested the waters by making fun of al-Sisi supporters, and that was the end of al-Bernameg. The show was suspended, and the top prosecutor announced that he would investigate Youssef for insulting the military. Youssef fled the country and lives in the U.S. where he no longer produces content about Egypt. Ursula Lindsey, "The Jon Stewart of Egypt Is Gagged," *New York Times*, November 14, 2013, https://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/14/the-jon-stewart-of-egypt-is-gagged/, accessed November 2, 2020; and Monticello, "Egypt's Jon Stewart;" and "Egypt satirist Bassem Youssef faces arrest warrant," *BBC*, March 30, 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-21980343, accessed November 3, 2020.

Islambad, Pakistan awarded Mursi an honorary doctorate in recognition of "his achievements and significant contributions towards promotion of peace and harmony in the world and strengthening of relations with the Muslim countries, especially Pakistan."[640] Mursi was photographed receiving the degree while donning a graduation cap and gown that Egyptians had not seen before. The next day, Youssef emerged onto the stage donning a towering, exaggerated cap similar to the one Mursi was wearing. When a warrant was issued for his arrest shortly thereafter, Youssef showed up to court in the oversized cap. In the episode that aired after the charges against Youssef were dropped, Youssef's team gathered around him on stage and celebrated his victory in court and called him a hero.[641]

In an interview in 2017, Youssef talked about how he was not sure that satire ever changes anything on the ground, but it "humanizes people in power." This is what the show did under the Islamists: "Anybody [who supported] Muslim rule was considered holy. We broke that down."[642] The military was likewise considered sacred, and Youssef poked the bear but faced repercussions he did not face under Mursi. In their review of the last days of al-Bernameg, Joel Gordon and Heba Arafa argue that the show "spoke to and validated the growing frustrations that brought so many people back into Tahrir Square" to protest Mursi's rule.[643] Youssef made one

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[640] "Morsi gets an honourary doctorate," *Pakistan Today*, March 18, 2013, https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/03/18/morsi-gets-an-honourary-doctorate/, accessed November 3, 2020. 'Adil, one of my few interlocutors who was "proud" of the Brotherhood's performance, said that Mursi's foreign policy to improve relations with Turkey, Pakistan and Iran was a success. He also argued that Mursi improved the economy, education and agriculture during his one-year rule and that all of these sectors suffered after the coup. 'Adil, Interview by author, Washington, D.C., February 2018.

[641] "Al-Bernameg – Man sayarbah al-million al-nuskha al-ra'isiyya – al-halqa 20 – juz' 1," YouTube video, April 5, 2013, 30:47, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5x-ZLd0KFEQ&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 4, 2020.

[642] Monticello, "Egypt's Jon Stewart."

[643] In December 2013, he accepted the International Press Freedom Award and was named among the one hundred most influential people by *Times*. Joel Gordon and Heba Arafa, "Stuck with Him': Bassem Youssef and the Egyptian Revolution's Last Laugh," *Review of Middle East Studies*, 48.1/2 (2014), 38; and "Egypt satirist Bassem Youssef confirms end of show," *BBC*, June 2, 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27671642, accessed November 3, 2020. Youssef's show came to an end after he repeatedly made fun of the military's claims to have found a cure for AIDS and Hepatitis C. "Bassem Youssef Criticizes Disregard of Deadline for AIDS and Hep

final attempt to resurrect his show under al-Sisi, but gave up and canceled the show, because he was "tired of struggling' and worried about the safety of his family" after he faced lawsuits for "insulting the military" and "symbols of Egypt."[644] Youssef no longer produces shows about Egypt, but his show inspired other Egyptians, like Yusuf Husayn and 'Abd Allah al-Sharif, to take up political satire on YouTube.[645]

Gordon and Arafa argue that Youssef's "orientation is clearly secular,"[646] but I contend that he did not shy away from his identity as a Muslim and in fact was offended when the Salafi preachers questioned his religiosity. Youssef wanted to shame the Brotherhood's bearded supporters for preaching one type of outward religiosity but displaying another when their political interests were at stake. In their article about satirist Stephen Colbert and his criticism of Christian leaders in the U.S., Lynn Schofield Clark and Jill Dierberg argue that traditional news media report "abuses of power among religious organizations [and] the standard tone of report had been (and still is) one of scandal and moral outrage." By contrast, in political satire, "the

C Curing Devices," *Egypt Independent*, December 30, 2014, https://egyptindependent.com/bassem-youssef-criticizes-disregard-deadline-aids-and-hep-c-curing-devices/, accessed November 10, 2020.

[644] "Egypt satirist Bassem." Reportedly, Youssef was "slapped with the largest fine in the history of Egyptian media." Monticello, "Egypt's Jon Stewart." Princeton University invited Youssef in 2018 to speak about his experience. McCarter Theater was full to capacity. Youssef repeatedly asked the audience not to film any portion of the event, because he feared for the lives of his family members in Egypt and kept stopping his talk to chastise people who were taking videos with their phones.

[645] Husayn lives in Turkey and his show, "Joe Show" (formerly "JoeTube") airs on satellite television and has over 300 million views on YouTube alone. Al-Sharif lives in Britain, and his YouTube show (sponsored by YouTube itself) garnered over 400 million views, as of November 2020. Both satirists are sympathetic to the Brotherhood. See, for instance, "Joe Show: Meet the new king of Arab comedy who's skewering the region's scariest dictators," *The New Arab*, July 26, 2019, https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/society/2019/7/26/joe-show-the-new-king-of-arab-comedy, accessed November 3, 2020; "About Joe Show," YouTube "about" page, https://www.youtube.com/c/JoeShowAlaraby/about, accessed November 3, 2020; "About Abdullah ELshrif [*sic*]," YouTube "about" page, https://www.youtube.com/c/abdullahelshrif/about, accessed November 4, 2020; and "Abd Allah al-Sharif | halqa 24 | balaha 97," YouTube video, April 5, 2018, 4:04, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGCLs9Bt_KY&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=عبداللهالشريفAbdullahELshrif, accessed November 4, 2020.

[646] Gordon and Arafa, "Stuck with Him," 38. In the U.S., Colbert, who openly discloses his Catholic identity, is known to make fun of the media's and politicians' use of religion for political gain and fearmongering. Lynn Schofield Clark and Jill Dierberg, "Late-Night Comedy as a Source of Religious News," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the American News Media*, ed. Diane Winston (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): 97 – 110.

tone is more frequently one of glee."[647] Satirists "approach religion with irreverence" rather than "deference." Religion makes an appearance on their shows "for its relationships to and abuses of power, and in the role that the dominant US religion of Christianity has played in relation to the perpetuation of misunderstandings and religious intolerance."[648] I argue that this is not what al-Bernameg did.

Youssef cares about Islam and repeatedly pointed to the fact that he is Muslim. He was, of course, ecstatic when the Brotherhood and its Salafi supporters gave him fodder for his show, but there was a sense of indignation in many of his monologues when he talked about how the Salafis (who he collectively called "Islamists") alienated anyone who was not on their side politically, going so far as to call people *kafir*. He "gleefully" made fun of the people but never the religion they represented. He "humanized" those in power and showed that they should be critiqued. He highlighted the flaws in the political project of the Brotherhood and Salafis. For my interlocutors, Youssef magnified the two Islamic group's faults. Many of them actively followed his show as it aired live, while others remembered the memes and short video excerpts from his show that circulated on social media and immortalized the mistakes of the Islamists and the preachers who vouched for them. One can glean from the fact that Youssef's show was suspended multiple times under three regimes that he had considerable influence and viewership.

Mursi's Political Performance

My interlocutors were disappointed by the rhetoric used by Mursi supporters and what they viewed as Mursi's and the Brotherhood's political ineptitude, all of which were highlighted

[647] Clark and Dierberg, "Late-Night Comedy," 107-8.
[648] Clark and Dierberg, "Late-Night Comedy," 107.

by Youssef and other media personalities.[649] Since the Brotherhood was not considered a revolutionary force, its political and economic policies did not match up with the revolutionary ethos of the youth who fueled the movement. People perceived Mursi to be as corrupt as Mubarak in that he packed influential governmental and institutional positions with loyalists. According to Stacher, "With each new government announcement or initiative—such as ration cards for gas cooking tanks or asking Egyptians to limit electricity use by staying at home and not using lights—ridicule increased as people lost confidence in his leadership."[650] Lines around gas stations rivaled those of 1972 in the U.S. during the OPEC Oil Crisis. Electricity cuts became a daily occurrence. The Brotherhood explained away its shortcomings as a result of a deep state working to undermine its efficacy.[651] As criticism grew, the Brotherhood and the Mursi administration became "more paranoid" and "turned increasingly inward."[652] This secrecy was perceived as insularity, as if the group cared less about the rest of the Egyptian population and more about safeguarding its political interests. This insularity, in turn, gave opponents discursive

[649] Although I will not talk about him here, one popular media personality who essentially became the spokesperson for SCAF and an ardent supporter of the counterrevolution is Tawfiq 'Ukasha. See Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, chapter nine. Another diplomatic mistake Mursi made that a few of my interlocutors cited happened during the celebration of the anniversary of the October 6 (1973) military victory when, instead of celebrating the military, Mursi invited 'Abbud al-Zumur, one of the people who was responsible for al-Sadat's assassination, to the celebration. Al-Zumur had just been released after having been locked up for thirty years. Ivan Watson and Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, "Sadat's unrepentant killer aims for political future," *CNN*, April 14, 2011, http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/04/14/egypt.sadat.killer/?hpt=C2, accessed November 16, 2020.
[650] Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 144. The Mursi administration, Stacher argues, was in no position to challenge the deep-seated neoliberal policies of the state, especially given that Mursi also sought help from the IMF, which pushed his administration to undertake austerity measures in exchange for a loan. Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 145-6.
[651] Youssef covered the electricity cuts in an episode that aired in May 2013. "Al-Bernameg – Ya 'azizi." By 2013, the Mursi administration was also facing a potential water crisis, since Ethiopia began planning the Renaissance Dam on the Nile. Mursi and his officials downplayed the severity of the issue and suggested that divine intervention would ensure Egypt's freshwater supply. See, for instance, Ahmed Maher, "Egyptian Politicians Caught in on-air Ethiopia Dam Gaffe," *BBC*, June 4, 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22771563, accessed November 10, 2020; "Al-Bernameg – al-nahda tarwi al-'atshan – al-halqa 25 -juz' 2," YouTube video, 15:11, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUcaFUo4JuI&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 5, 2020; and "Al-Bernameg - al-halqa 26 kamila," YouTube video, 1:05:03, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QH1DR5UOYfU&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 5, 2020.
[652] Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 145-6.

ammunition to turn the populace against Mursi. As Stacher writes, "The more [the Brotherhood] tried to get things done away from the prying eyes of the state apparatus, the more easily agents of the status quo and those loyal to the military were able [to] build and execute a discursive and actual conspiracy against Mursi."[653] For Milton-Edwards, the Brotherhood played a zero-sum game that made it difficult for the organization to "work in alliance and cooperation with other political elements, even if they are fellow Islamists."[654]

Even more striking is that the Brotherhood lost some of its supporters who had long been beneficiaries of the social welfare programs the group organized under Mubarak. Steven Brookes argues that once the Brotherhood gained power, the line between the social services they provided to people and political mobilization blurred.[655] Social services, such as medical assistance and "other outreach efforts" that had gained the Brotherhood the people's sympathy and support for decades became politicized in service of the political party, a move which confused the people and which opponents criticized heavily.[656] Some Brotherhood members worried that this confusion would undermine the Brotherhood's core goal of social transformation. Their defeat in August 2013 was a vital moment for self-reflection, especially as

[653] Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 145.
[654] Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 194.
[655] Steven Brooke, "Egypt," in *Rethinking Political Islam*, 29.
[656] Ennahda Party, often considered the Brotherhood's counterpart in Tunisia, achieved electoral success in the elections following the downfall of Tunisian President Bin 'Ali in January 2011 but fell out of favor during the 2014 elections. This led its founder, Rashid Ghannushi, to announce a reshuffling of the party's priorities: "Ennahda has changed from an ideological movement engaged in the struggle for identity to a protest movement against the authoritarian regime and now to a national democratic party ... We must keep religion far from political struggles." This statement implied that Ennahda had to reconsider its role as a social, grassroots movement and its role as a political party, a realization that some Egyptian Brotherhood members also came to when they fell out of favor with the people. Ennahda began to consider all matters of politics secular, began to forgo its attempts to Islamize the state and aimed to become "*un parti comme les autres*." Abdou Filali-Ansary, "Ennahda's New Course," *Journal of Democracy*, 27.4 (2016), 99 and 105. On the changes in Ghannushi's Islamist thought and political theology, see Andrew F. March, *The Caliphate of Man: Popular Sovereignty in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Belnap Press, 2019), chapter seven. Ennahda Party also sought to distance itself from the Tunisian Salafi movement, which had become associated with violent "jihadist rhetoric" and vandalism. Hamid and McCants, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Political Islam*, 6; and Marks, "Tunisia," in *Rethinking Political Islam*: 32-53. Egypt also experienced a surge in violence in the Sinai Peninsula before and during Mursi's reign. Ismail Alexandrani, "Sinai: From Revolution to Terrorism," in *Egypt's Revolutions*: 179-96.

the Sisi regime actively dismantled the group's nationwide network of social services on which "millions of Egyptians" relied.[657] A gap between the Brotherhood and the people who voted Mursi into office widened, as the Brotherhood scrambled for power, and supporters made mistakes that the free press could now afford to criticize without limitations.[658]

Tensions continued to bleed into the new year. As the opposing political camps set up actual camps in various parts of the country, the violence escalated. Fifty people died in early 2013 during clashes surrounding the second anniversary of the January 25 uprising. Demonstrations also erupted in Port Said after a court "handed down death sentences to 21 people for their involvement" in the Port Said Massacre of February 2012. Egyptians began to lose faith in the Egyptian court system, which was "marred by allegations of corruption and politicized rulings."[659] As a result of the violence, Mursi appeared on television, wagging his finger at Egyptians, and warned that he would take action.[660] He declared a state of emergency, a move that further angered opponents. People began calling for Mursi's removal from office.

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[657] Milton-Edwards notes how the Brotherhood's pursuit of public office diverged notably from Hasan al-Banna's original aims for the group. Al-Banna often feared that political ambition would "limit the wider religious and Islamic ambitions that he nurtured." Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 19.

[658] In November 2012, during one of the Islamist-led protests dubbed "*Millioniyyat tatbiq al-Shari'a,*" i.e. the million-man march for implementing shari'a, Hazim Abu Isma'il criticized the draft constitution, which was put to a vote in December 2012, for giving the press unfettered freedom, which Abu Isma'il worried would embolden the press to "insult Islam" without repercussions. Wa'il Muhammad and Bahi Hasan, "Abu Isma'il: 'Al-Thawra laysat wasiyya 'ala al-umma.. wa nurid 'aysh.. huriyya..shar'iyya Islamiyya," *Al-Masry al-Youm*, November 9, 2012, https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/239100, accessed October 27, 2020.

[659] Abigail Hauslohner and Sharaf al-Hourani, "Egypt's Morsi declares state of emergency, curfew after deadly clashes," *The Washington Post*, January 27, 2013, https://www-washingtonpost-com.ezproxy.princeton.edu/world/middle_east/three-killed-hundreds-injured-in-second-day-of-clashes-between-police-protesters-in-egypt/2013/01/27/38dca0e4-68a5-11e2-95b3-272d604a10a3_story.html, accessed November 3, 2020.

[660] Finger wagging became a symbol of authoritarian repression in post-2011 Egypt. Several military generals who were in power during the interim period between Mubarak's fall and Mursi's ascent to power famously wagged their finger as a warning sign during their televised communiques. See, for instance, Rana Khazbak, "Tahrir Protesters Reject 'Threatening' SCAF Statement," *Egypt Independent*, July 17, 2011, https://egyptindependent.com/tahrir-protesters-reject-threatening-scaf-statement/, accessed November 4, 2020; Wendell Steavenson, "The Army Wags Its Finger," *The New Yorker*, November 20, 2011, https://www.newyorker.com/news/wendell-steavenson/the-army-wags-its-finger, accessed November 4, 2020; and Reza Sayah and Amir Ahmed, "Egypt's Mursi Declares Curfew in 3 Cities, Vows 'Justice' for Those Behind Violence," *CNN*, January 28, 2013, https://www.cnn.com/2013/01/27/world/africa/egypt-unrest/index.html, accessed November 4, 2020.

‘Aziza, one of the few interlocutors who supported the Brotherhood while it was in power, believed that the organization was not given a proper chance to rule and partially blamed Youssef for turning public opinion against Mursi. Although she avidly watched Youssef’s YouTube channel in 2011, her respect for him waned in the months leading up to Mursi’s removal. “I appreciate now political humor and everything, but that year, we couldn’t go from a tyrannous government with someone who was in power for thirty years to electing a president and being critical of him and having a healthy political satirical comedy show.” For ‘Aziza, people needed to be united during this transitional period. It was not the time to “make fun of him when he went to Pakistan and put that thing on his head.” Egypt in this tense, politically liminal stage was not yet ready for political satire. “We need to stabilize things before they collapse.” ‘Aziza reiterated that she was close to the Brotherhood members but was not uncritical of them. “I know they messed up, and I am so critical of the way they live their lives and their practices and some of their political ideologies—I think that [the organization’s slogan] ‘Islam is the solution’ is the worst idea ever. You’re doing a lot more harm than good to religion when you use that word.” Despite disagreeing with the Brotherhood on the social and political level, ‘Aziza was still hurt personally by Youssef’s satire and how it changed the public’s perception.[661]

Zaynab, who invalidated her vote during the 2012 presidential elections and was also one of Youssef’s researchers, confided that, after Mursi’s defeat, she regretted being part of Youssef’s team. When Mursi won, she initially thought of him as “the lesser of two evils,” someone “we can fight.” Zaynab joined Youssef’s team while Mursi was president, and she wholeheartedly believed in her job. She had to watch hundreds of hours of footage and find

[661] ‘Aziza, Interview by author.

"idiotic things" that "could be used as material" to make fun of Mursi and his supporters on the show. Prior to the Mursi win, while SCAF was still visibly in power, Zaynab joined almost all of the weekly Friday protests, even when they grew violent. During those demonstrations, she told me, laughing, "I was ready to put my life on the line … There were times when people … told me, 'Write your number on your arm in case they find your corpse." When Mursi won, she joined fewer protests and decided that her work for Youssef was a form of "helping the country," and it ultimately colored her worldview and gave her a renewed sense of purpose.[662]

Generally, interlocutors who were less sympathetic to the organization also admitted that the cards were stacked against Mursi and the Brotherhood and that they were not ready for the challenge. "Mursi, of course, never dreamt that one day he would be president; it just happened," 'A'isha told me. The political scientist wanted to stay true to democratic ideals, let Mursi stay in power for the four years and see what he was capable of doing. The Brotherhood had been incubating its political ideas for eighty years, 'A'isha reminded me. "We should have given them the chance to share those ideas with the public and allow the public to debate them … The experiment ended before it even began," 'A'isha said solemnly. "They lost their chance and so did we. Egyptians, in general, lost the chance to debate these ideas and see what could have come out of them."[663]

Tasnim, who worked as a journalist during Mursi's rule, knew that the Brotherhood was doomed to fail, especially as the first ruling party after a revolution, but she also blamed Brotherhood supporters and their televised actions and words. The Brotherhood allowed people to speak in their name and to say "backward things." Salafi shaykhs, "who are supposed to represent Islam," for example, "appeared on TV and used profanity." For the everyday viewers

[662] Zaynab, Interview by author.
[663] 'A'isha, Interview by author.

who know nothing about the divisions within Islamic groups, Tasnim continued, it is easy to believe opponents who say that these people were "taking advantage of religion," were "the ones who assassinated al-Sadat", and were "turning Egypt into Iran." The Brotherhood administration was aware that Salafi shaykhs were on the air saying these things but failed to stop them, and this ultimately hurt the Islamists' image collectively. Add to that the power outages and gas shortage. "It was all a series of unfortunate events but not by coincidence," Tasnim concluded. When I asked her if all of these political events affected people's religiosity, Tasnim told me that people's *akhlaq* (morals and manners) changed. "It is now normal for people to curse (*sabb*) religion." When someone loses that much respect for religion, Tasnim asked, "how can this person go and pray afterward?"[664] People could not separate the political actions of the shaykhs, which oftentimes made them appear immoral, from the Islam they preached for years. The shaykhs' discursive use of Islamic texts and their use of their religious authority to support their political positions led people to believe that Islam needed reforming because the political Islam these people ushered in appeared problematic and antithetical to the teachings of the Qur'an and *sunna*.

Maryam, one of the "secular" people who described herself as a non-believer, told me that she was genuinely worried about her future in an Islamist Egypt. The day Mursi was elected, Maryam recounted, she watched the animated film *Persepolis*, which explores the cultural shifts in post-revolutionary Iran,[665] and watched as "secular Iranians had to leave after the Islamic Revolution." That scene reminded her of her own reality and led Maryam to believe that there was no room for her in the country. She was not worried about "silly things like the Islamists

[664] Tasnim, Interview by author (in English and Arabic).
[665] The film is an adaptation of Marjane Satrapi's autobiographic graphic novel by the same name. Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, *Persepolis: dessin de vie* (Lormont: Le Bord de l'eau, 2016).

forcing people to wear hijab but about the everyday fabric of how things are. Everything would become unfamiliar, and I was already feeling like I was struggling to live in Egypt as a person who is *mish mu'mina* (a nonbeliever), let alone being a nonbeliever while those in power are the Muslim Brotherhood."[666] There was a sense of anxiety fostered by the divisive rhetoric that supporters of the Islamist project used that led people like Maryam to fear for their lives.

Some of my interviewees doubted the Brotherhood's very allegiance to Egypt and could not look past the fact that the Brotherhood is a transnational movement. Two interlocutors, for example, told me that they were concerned when Mursi held a conference for Syria at Cairo Stadium in June 2013, after having already heard that mass demonstrations against the Brotherhood were scheduled for June 30. The stadium was teeming with women in hijabs and face-veils and men in large beards and green headbands inscribed with the words *La ilah illa Allah* (There is no God but God). Every one of the 75,000 seats in Cairo Stadium was occupied. Together, the multitude sang songs in Standard Arabic that were "foreign" to the Egyptians who listened to them. Salafi and Azhari shaykhs got up one-by-one to praise a very serious-looking Mursi who looked straight into the camera without the faintest smile on his face. One Salafi speaker made a prayer that June 30 be a day of "victory for Islam and Muslims and a defeat for the hypocrites and nonbelievers," once again claiming that those who protested against Mursi were the enemies of Islam.[667]

"Were Mursi's loyalties to Egypt or to the *umma*?" my interlocutors asked me. "I remember watching Mursi's speech in the stadium, when he said, 'Whoever wants to go [to

[666] Maryam, Interview by author.
[667] For Mursi's full speech, see "Mu'tamar al-umma al-Misriyya li-da'm al-thawra al-Suriyya wa hudur Muhammad Mursi wa 'ulama al-umma kamil," YouTube video, 1:39:43, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFtIshzK_kA&ab_channel=adelmansour, accessed November 16, 2020. See also "Al-Bernameg – al-halqa 28 kamila," YouTube video, June 21, 2013, 57:13, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFh7hDy6tbY&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 5, 2020.

Syria] should go."[668] Bahir explained. "In that moment, I knew that that was it for Mursi. I knew that the military would get rid of him, because he was destroying the country." Bahir was also one of a handful of interlocutors who personally knew young Egyptians who wanted to join the fight in Syria against the Asad regime.[669] The songs that rang in the stadium, the speeches that alienated anyone who opposed Mursi, the prayers that God smite anyone opposed against the Islamists, all raised questions for my interlocutors about the Brotherhood's allegiance to Egyptians and its political motivations. Two weeks later, people were out in droves protesting Brotherhood rule and calling for Mursi's ouster. Major clashes between Mursi supporters and opponents took place on a grander scale, and once the military intervened, there was no turning back.

[668] Mursi did not explicitly say this, but Muhammad Hassan, the Salafi shaykh, spoke before Mursi at the conference and claimed that Muslim scholars issued a *fatwa* stating that it is incumbent on every Muslim (*fard 'ayn*) in Syria to wage *jihad* with "one's self, wealth and weapons" (*bi-l-nafs wa-l-mal wa-l-silah*) and that every other "Muslim country" should help. "Mu'tamar al-umma." For a realist analysis of Mursi's decision to cut ties with the Syrian regime during this conference, see Sarah Grebowski, "Morsi's Cheap Win on Syria," *Atlantic Council*, June 18, 2013, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/morsis-cheap-win-on-syria/, accessed November 16, 2020.

[669] One of Bahir's friends, in fact, went to Syria and died there. Bahir talked to a group of young men who wanted to join the Syrian struggle and found that they "spoke like anarchists." During his meetings with them, Bahir told the men that they were not following the *fiqh* of *jihad*. "Who is your leader (*amir*)?" he asked them. "Is there a clear cause? Do you know who you are fighting? Aren't you worried about meeting your Lord with the blood of a Muslim on your hands?" Bahir blamed Mursi, at least partially, for giving people the greenlight to take part in the Syrian civil war, a cause that he believed was riddled with ethical questions. Bahir, Interview by author. "By June, it became clear," Kinan told me. "Mursi's speeches started … sounding improvised and incoherent. His speeches lasted two hours." To emphasize the point, Kinan said, smiling, "I remember I was watching a soccer match. The speech started as the match started, so I watched the first half of the match and flipped to the speech, and he was still talking. I watched the second half of the match and flipped back to the speech, and he was still talking." Kinan was probably referring to Mursi's speech on June 26, 2013. Kinan, Interview by author. For Mursi's speech, see "Khitab Mursi yawm 26 6 2013," YouTube video, 2:36:40, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMEb4aTOvcI&ab_channel=AlJazeeraMubasher قناةالجزيرةمباشر, accessed November 16, 2020. See also Abigail Hauslohner, "Morsi blames corruption, conspiracy for Egypt's problems," *The Washington Post*, June 26, 2013, https://www-washingtonpost-com.ezproxy.princeton.edu/world/middle_east/morsi-blames-corruption-conspiracy-for-egypts-problems/2013/06/26/b10d27fc-deaf-11e2-b2d4-ea6d8f477a01_story.html, accessed November 16, 2020.

The Coup-volution and Rabi'a

Although Mursi promised to be a president for all Egyptians, his administration did not include political adversaries. Seeking to cultivate loyalty, the administration "replaced the heads of the security apparatus, the state media, and the army by other members of these institutions."[670] This included promoting little-known military intelligence General 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi to minister of defense, who later deposed Mursi and took his place as president. By the end of Mursi's first year in power, many people from across the political and social spectrum lost respect and sympathy for the Brotherhood. In April 2013, the *Tamarrud* (Rebellion) Campaign began and reportedly collected millions of signatures in support of Mursi's removal and of holding early presidential elections. Soon after, people began to call for mass anti-Mursi demonstrations on the first anniversary of his rule: June 30, 2013. That day, the military joined forces with everyone who was disaffected with Mursi's rule, including revolutionary forces and activists and Mubarak supporters, and protested in droves against Mursi.[671]

Depending on whom you asked, this movement was either a coup or a revolution. Or it was initially a revolution when they joined the protests but became a coup once the new

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[670] Rougier and Lacroix, "Introduction," 8.

[671] Bayat draws a painful picture of the 2013 movement. He writes, "From the revolutionaries' prism, Morsi's forceful ouster served as a catalyst to remove the barriers that had prevented a stalled revolution from moving forward. It served as a desperate midwife for a pregnant nation that was enduring agonizing labor to give birth to a new social order; it needed a dramatic push: revolutionary coercion. But that turned out to be a midwife poised to take the life of the unborn, that is, to terminate the very revolution it claimed to want to save." Bayat, *Revolution without Revolutionaries*, 214. Footage of the protests had a cinematic quality, with the camera zooming in and out strategically to portray the critical mass of protesters, which some began to call a corrective revolution. Reportedly, famed Egyptian filmmaker Khalid Yusuf directed the aerial footage of the anti-Mursi demonstrations from a military helicopter. "Mashahid tarikhiyya qam bi-taswiriha al-mukhrij Khalid Yusuf min ta'irat al-jaysh wa yahki sir hadithat wuqu' al-ta'ira bihim," YouTube video, July 4, 3013, 2:51, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWAZSOpkZAE&ab_channel=mohamedsamir, accessed November 24, 2020; and Hakim Abdel Naim "On the Swift Un-Banning of Karma, and the Popular Notion of the 'Dissident Artist," *Mada*, June 28, 2018, trans. Mariam Ibrahim, https://test.7iber.com/en/2018/06/28/feature/culture/on-the-swift-un-banning-of-karma-and-the-popular-notion-of-the-dissident-artist/, accessed November 24, 2020. According to Monica Mark, the success of the anti-Brotherhood movement in Egypt reportedly emboldened those who opposed the group's counterpart in Tunisia, and pushed Ennahda to rebrand itself and accept defeat, even though it initially used the same language of "legitimacy" (*shar'iyya*) as the Egyptian Brotherhood. Marks, "Tunisia," 45-51.

authoritarian regime solidified its grip on politics. Stacher argues that when the economic interests of the military no longer aligned with those of the Brotherhood, the generals turned their backs on Mursi and sided with his opponents.[672] The military then dehumanized the Brotherhood in order to win the public's support to use violence against the Brotherhood, which it began to call a terrorist organization. On August 14, 2013, the military violently cleared out the two major squares in Cairo where anti-coup demonstrators staged a sit-in for over forty days in protest against Mursi's house arrest on July 3. The massacres and the renewed oppression of the Brotherhood and its supporters caused perhaps the most formative moral breakdown for my interlocutors, many of whom quarreled with family members over the legitimacy of the state's use of violence to get rid of political opponents. The memory of the massacre and the social schism that deepened more than ever after it has left families divided to this day.

Rebellious Uncertainty

'A'isha remembered how confusing the events leading up to Mursi's removal were in contrast to how sure she was that joining the 2011 movement was the moral thing to do. Facebook memories that pop up every year reminded 'A'isha how disappointed she felt throughout the *Tamarrud* Campaign, through al-Sisi's speech on July 1, 2013, and during the mass protests that deposed Mursi. "I did not like the military's involvement and was worried."[673]

[672] Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 146-7.

[673] 'A'isha, Interview by author. For a timeline of Mursi's last days in power, see "Key Events of 30 June Revolution," *Egypt Today*, June 30, 2018, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/53082/Key-events-of-30-June-revolution, accessed November 17, 2020. Like 'A'isha, I did not sign the *Tamarrud* petition or join the protests on June 30 or after, because I felt everything was unclear. At the time, I lived close to Rabi'a where Mursi supporters staged a sit-in and had to deal with the detours they created around the perimeter of the square. They caused considerable congestion in a city that was already congested, and the taxi drivers I rode with often cursed at the protesters for "disrupting" the flow of traffic.

Socially, people were more divided than they had been since 2011 and politically, the democracy people had fought for in 2011 was at stake.[674]

Maya signed the petition, because she believed Mursi was "the Islamist version of Mubarak,"[675] and a few of my interlocutors joined the June 30 protests. Although Ziyad was a member of the Brotherhood when he was younger, he participated in the June 30 protests, even though he initially was hesitant about joining. He even wrote poetry to that effect: "A wise person," he recited in Arabic, "will not go to the source of water, unless he knows how to find his way back, even if it means he will die of thirst." "To this day," he confided, "I do not know if joining was the right call … If I went back in time, I do not know whether I would change my stance. This is one of those situations that make you realize how small one is."[676]

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[674] At the end of one if his episodes, Youssef had a strangely premonitory monologue in which he addressed the question about where the show's loyalties lie: "Unfortunately, our relationships even within families are fragmented now. How can you make people just smile? To make them laugh is very difficult. It is no longer just about jokes and satire; it is about knowing if you are with or against me... I can tell you who I am not with. I am not with those who fought us, called us *kafir,* hung up nooses for us and called for us to be suspended and jailed. So I would not even care about what they think. At the same time, I am not with hypocrisy, deification of rulers and committing the same mistakes we made for over thirty or sixty years. I am not with the people who dream about divisions within the military and wish for something similar to the Syrian civil war. At the same time, I am against accusing someone of treason or terrorism, and against random arrests and the violence of the security apparatuses. It is difficult for me to overlook those who are treated unjustly, whether they are jailed or killed because they were in the wrong place or because they were wrongly accused. And it is impossible for me to stand with those who are happy when police officers are killed, when churches are burned and when innocents are killed at the hands of terrorists ... After 6/30, we are told that the revolution started in order to promote democracy and freedom of speech and expression and to overthrow a religious fascistic regime. But we are worried that we will exchange a fascistic regime in the name of religion for a fascism in the name of the nation and national security. If I stand against this, it does not mean that I am a terrorist or extremist and want to bring the state to its knees. The question is: will the new regime be able to take a joke or will it not differ from the one before it?" After this episode, Youssef's contract with CBC was voided, and Youssef moved on to an Emirati satellite channel (MBC), where his third season lasted only eleven episodes before being taken off the air again. "Al-Bernameg – al-halqa 1 kamila," October 25, 2013, 1:12:54, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dIlb5Q4vDI&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 6, 2020. One interlocutor told me that the person who referred me to him had not spoken to him in years because of her allegiance to the Brotherhood, and only contacted him to help me find interlocutors.

[675] Maya, Interview by author. For coverage of Salafi preachers' rhetoric about the *Tamarrud* campaign, see "Al-Bernameg – Itmarrad wa ijri ya rumman – al-halqa 24 – juz' 2," YouTube video, May 24, 2013, 12:03, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbMyKUkGQi0&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 5, 2020. See also Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 51 and 148.

[676] Ziyad, Interview by author.

Yasin noted that at these protests which were "backed by the military," he "did not have a sense … of real opposition and danger," unlike the protests in Tahrir in 2011. Mawadda and Kinan both told me that the atmosphere of the anti-Mursi protests was carnivalesque. "Everyone was joking and laughing," Mawadda began. "It was a party. Some guy put a sticker on my back saying, 'We want a new president (*'Ayzin ra'is jadid*).' He put it on my back, and my cousin took a picture of me. And I remember I uploaded it as my profile picture [on Facebook], and when I went home, I realized that I uploaded this dumb, stupid—I was so upset with it. I immediately took it down." Upon reflection, Mawadda realized that her involvement in these protests was "dumb nonsense," and she felt "an insane amount of guilt" afterward. But she was caught in the collective effervescence of the carnival-like atmosphere, in the "groupthink"-inspired, euphoric moment which took over her rational, independent thought.[677]

The Stage, the Sit-in, the Speech

Prior to the June 30 movement, Mursi supporters gathered in several squares in Egypt, including Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya[678] in Nasr City and al-Nahda in Giza, to celebrate Mursi's one-year anniversary as president, but after the June 30 protests, the sit-ins turned into a movement against the anti-Mursi protests. At the center of Rabi'a Square, the Brotherhood set up a stage that was complete with professional stage lights and sound system. Posters that read "Anti-Coup" and "Pro-Democracy" in English formed the backdrop for anyone who got up to talk on the stage, perhaps as a call for support from non-Arabic-speaking countries. Videos showed a multitude of jubilant faces, Egyptian flags ruffling around every corner, pockets of women

[677] Mawadda, Interview by author.
[678] The nodal point of Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya Square is the mosque which was named after the famous eighth-century Sufi saint by the same name. Rabi'a also means fourth. After the Rabi'a Massacre, Brotherhood members created a symbol to commemorate those who died in the square: a hand with four fingers up against a lemon-yellow background.

banded together in protest. The thousands gathered in the square to listen to some Salafi and Azhari preachers and Brotherhood leaders praise Mursi and curse those who opposed him. Speakers on the stage spoke of *jihad*. Traditional and social media again jumped at the opportunity to splice and televise excerpts of speeches made on the "Rabi'a Stage," which became infamously known as *al-manassa* (the stage). Youssef's last episode of season two aired right before the June 30 protests, and in it, he showed men with beards and prominent Brotherhood members standing on stage in Rabi'a making statements like, "Whoever sprays Mursi with water, we will spray him with blood." In another clip, an unidentified Salafi man said that he dreamt that the Prophet was with Mursi, and when it was time to conduct one of the daily prayers, the Prophet asked Mursi to lead the prayers instead of him.[679]

On July 1, 2013, al-Sisi gave Mursi an ultimatum "to step down and accept early elections or be forcibly removed from office." This was the last time, Stacher writes, that "the military would offer the Brotherhood a menu of choices with only bad options."[680] The same day, during his last speech Mursi focused on one thing and one thing only: his legitimacy

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[679] "Al-Bernameg – al-halqa 29 kamila," YouTube video, June 28, 2012, 1:01:02, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Oy4w0MIWac&ab_channel=Albernameg, accessed November 5, 2020. Video clips of speeches given from the stage can be found on YouTube with anywhere between hundreds of thousands to millions of views each. See, for instance, "'Ajil Misr kamila zawjat al-ra'is Muhammad Mursi fi yawm al-'I'd 'ala manassat Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya," YouTube video, August 7, 2013, 3:16, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhDpM-HjSis&ab_channel=بلقيسنيوز, accessed November 16, 2020; "Al-Sisi yaghraq fi hammam damm: Ru'ya yarwiha al-shaykh ductur Safwat al-Hijazi amam al-malayin fi Jum'at al-Zahf," YouTube video, 7:36, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEciVysCl_0&ab_channel=NASRIMBK, accessed November 16, 2020; "Hadha video yajma' mu'zam al-khurafat allati tataraddad fi Rabi'a," YouTube video, August 10, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nibq90riIzM&ab_channel=نورالحقيقة, accessed November 16, 2020; and "Lahzat i'lan 'azl Mursi fi manassat Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya," YouTube video, July 4, 2013, 6:02, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wzq-p9uaVeo&ab_channel=ElWatanNews%7Cجريدةالوطن, accessed November 16, 2020. In one video with over ten thousand views, Safwat al-Hijazi, a television preacher who was one of the most vocal supporters of Mursi during the Rabi'a sit-in, said to the multitude of people in the Square, "If any one of you wants to disperse their protest [i.e. the anti-Mursi protests in front of the Presidential Palace] to ensure the stability of the nation, then go with firm belief that God will support you (*fal-yatawakkal 'ala Allah*)." This sounded like a rallying cry, as attendees cheered loudly. "Kalam muhimm li-l-shaykh Safwat al-Hijazi 'ala manassat Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya 13-7-2013," YouTube video, July 15, 2013, 22:50, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTTM64HaGzI&ab_channel=AlHiwarTVقناةالحوار, accessed November 16, 2020.

[680] Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 52.

(*shar'iyya*) as president. He blamed an invisible enemy for trying to defeat the revolution and undermine his rule. Mursi reminded his listeners that the Brotherhood had multiple electoral victories since the 2011 uprising. People barely remember Mursi's speeches, but many of my interlocutors recalled that in this forty-five-minute speech, Mursi invoked the principle of legitimacy at least two dozen times.[681] Mursi stated, during the midnight address, that he would not step down and that his removal might bring about more violence in the streets. "*Legitimacy* [after God] is the only thing that guarantees for all of us that there will not be any fighting and conflict, that there will not be bloodshed … If the price of protecting *legitimacy* is my blood, I'm willing to pay it [for the sake of Allah]."[682] Do not let anyone dupe you, Mursi continued. "Protect *legitimacy*. Not for me; I am but the guardian of *legitimacy*." His legitimacy as president was guaranteed by the constitution, he argued, and anyone who challenged his authority undermined the revolution and its democratic ideals.[683]

Two days later on July 3, 2013, the military placed Mursi under house arrest.[684] Immediately after, al-Tayyib, head of al-Azhar, addressed the nation on television, standing at a

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[681] "#Honaal3asema – 2-7-2013 – Kalimat al-ra'is Mursi hawla al-ahdath al-jariya," YouTube video, July 2, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULqCEfyeQQc&ab_channel=CBCEgypt, accessed November 16, 2020.
[682] David D. Kirkpatrick and Ben Hubbard, "Morsi Defies Egypt Army's Ultimatum to Bend to Protest," *The New York Times*, July 2, 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/03/world/middleeast/egypt-protests.html, accessed November 16, 2020. "I will not allow anyone to contest this legitimacy. This is not allowed (*marfud*). This is not allowed (*marfud*). This is not allowed (*marfud*)," Mursi said. "#Honaal3asema."
[683] "#Honaal3asema."
[684] No one heard from Mursi for almost two and a half months after his house arrest, except for a short video in which he denounced the actions of the military. "Mohamed Morsi's statement after being ousted by Egypt's military," YouTube video, July 5, 2013, 2:09, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SumIZZ6x3Xg&ab_channel=TheGuardian, accessed November 16, 2020. In July 2013, a court accused Mursi of the following: "arson, destruction of documents, conspiring with Hamas [the Brotherhood's counterpart in Palestine] to commit acts of violence against the police and the army throughout the country, and kidnapping officers and soldiers in conjunction with his escape from Wadi Natrun prison in January 2011." A month later, the public prosecutor accused Mursi and other Brotherhood leaders of inciting violent protests around the Presidential Palace in December 2012. Marie Vannetzel describes Mursi's pleas of desperation in front of a panel of judges: "The trial, which began on November 4, was interrupted by outbursts from Morsi and adjourned," she writes. "This time the ousted president played the leading role, refusing to wear prisoner's garb and pleading his own case: 'I want a microphone so I can talk to you. There is a military coup in this country! I am the president of the republic, according to the Constitution of the state, and I am forcibly detained! This is not a court with the jurisdiction to try a president!" Vannetzel, "Mohammed Morsi," 263.

podium with the Egyptian and military flags positioned behind him, and military generals, police officers, the Coptic Pope and revolutionary figures like Muhammad Elbaradei to his right and left.[685] He began with the traditional Islamic greeting and asked God to help him in what he was about to say. A hopeless political divide has taken over Egypt, al-Tayyib argued, and neither political camp was willing to give in. For this reason, he said, "I agree with the opinion of those in attendance, and I support the people's right to an early and fair presidential election, the integrity of which is guaranteed by everyone here (military, judges, police)." He continued, "I ask God that the outcome of the election will reunite the two estranged factions."[686] Al-Tayyib was the only visible Islamic authority in the gathering after Mursi's ouster, and his presence signaled al-Azhar's official backing of the anti-Mursi demonstrations and removal of the ruler, a clear reversal of his position in 2011.

The Massacres

Almost a week later, on July 8, supporters of Mursi protested in front of the Republican Guard headquarters in Heliopolis, Cairo, where it was rumored that Mursi was being held, and clashed with the military and police standing guard. According to different reports, at least 50 people were killed and more than 400 were injured at dawn.[687] Following the news, Shaykh al-Azhar again made a statement on television, offering his condolences to the families of the

[685] One interlocutor chuckled as she said, "When these people all agree on something and band together, you know that no good will come out of it."

[686] After the announcement ended, this particular news channel then broadcast images of waving flags in Tahrir Square, and the television host was heard saying, *Allahu akbar* (God is great!), signaling her excitement about the Shaykh's endorsement of the movement and its demands. "#Honaal3asema." Not all Azhari scholars condoned the June 30 movement, and some senior scholars demanded that al-Tayyib step down from his position as Shaykh al-Azhar after this announcement. Yunus Qandil, Ahmad Fayiz and 'Isam Fawzi, eds., *Al-Hala al-diniyya al-mu'asira fi Misr, 2010-2014 miladi: dirasa tahililiyya wa maydaniyya,* supplementary vol. (Rabat: Mu'minun bi-la Hudud li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Abhath, 2016), 26. Shawqi 'Allam, the Grand Muft who replaced Jum'a in 2013, issued a *fatwa* that year arguing that people have the right to protest peacefully. Some Azhari shaykhs, like Mazhar Shahin who became famous during the 2011 protests as the imam of the 'Umar Makram Mosque on Tahrir Square, issued controversial *fatwa*s, such as those that argued that a woman should divorce her husband if he was a member of the Brotherhood. Qandil, Fayiz and Fawzi, *Al-Hala al-diniyya*, 29-30.

[687] Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 110.

martyrs and called for an immediate investigation into the events in front of the Republican Guard headquarters "in order to quell suspicion" and "end the *fitna* immediately."[688] He then announced that with the "stench of blood in the air," he decided to go into seclusion, until everyone put an end to the violence. Tasnim, who lived ten minutes away from where the Republican Guard is housed, remembered hearing the sound of gunshots from her home. "The number of people who died must have been more [than reported], because I could hear the gunshots from before dawn to sunrise. Nonstop ... It was scary, and it was heavy. It was not just one shot fired in the air. No, it was people with rifles, which they fired nonstop. It was continuous. On and on and on." On that day, Tasnim's mother decided that they should leave the country. "We bought tickets and left two days later." Tasnim and her family left Egypt two weeks before the Rabi'a massacre, which they would have also heard from their home.[689]

On July 25, al-Sisi once again called on Egyptians to flood the streets in support of the military's "fight against terrorism," i.e. against Brotherhood and anti-coup protesters who had been demonstrating for a month by then.[690] 'Aziza never camped in Rabi'a Square but went there regularly. The Rabi'a sit-in coincided with Ramadan, so 'Aziza observed the nightly Ramadan prayers (*tarawih*) with the protesters in the square. "It was so spiritual," 'Aziza recalled. "Rabi'a

[688] He also called for five more initiatives: for the formation of a reconciliation committee; for the transition period to not last longer than six months and for authorities to draw a detailed outline for this time period; for the media to do its duty and unify the nation and avoid deepening the social and political schism; for the release of all political prisoners and for the authorities to remember that it is their duty to protect peaceful protesters and not punish them for speaking their minds peacefully. "Bayan Shaykh al-Azhar 'an ahdath al-Haras al-Jumhuri," YouTube video, September 25, 2018, 4:22, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMKpwTo86F8&ab_channel=شخصيةمصر, accessed November 25, 2020.

[689] Tasnim, Interview by author. At least five other interlocutors left Egypt after Rabi'a, and most of them were not affiliated with the Brotherhood.

[690] Al-Tayyib made another statement urging people to join the protests but remain calm and peaceful. "Shaykh al-Azhar yahuthth al-Misriyyin 'ala talbiyat da'wat al-Sisi ila al-tazahur," *Al-Hurra*, July 25, 2013, https://www.alhurra.com/egypt/2013/07/25/شيخ-الأزهر-يحث-المصريين-تلبية-دعوة-السيسي-التظاهر, accessed November 25, 2020. As some protesters marched toward Rabi'a to join those who were already there, the military blocked the procession and killed 95 people. According to Stacher, "It was the largest death toll in a single protest since the initial unsettled days of January 2011." Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 112.

was seen as a Brotherhood thing and not an anti-coup thing, even though there were a lot of people who were not Brotherhood but were against the military," she told me and urged me to note this in my research.[691] 'Aziza was also in the square during Eid *al-Fitr*, the holiday celebrating the end of the Ramadan fast, and brought balloons for the children who were there with their parents. Inside the square on Eid, "There was this communal sense of joy," 'Aziza told me. People created a new utopic, liminal space in which to collectively air their grievances. "People turned Rabi'a into a small town to be able to survive," 'Aziza told me. Over the course of her visits, she took pictures, shot videos, created a montage to counter the media's narratives that claimed that people in Rabi'a were armed and posted it on Facebook.[692] "The square was all very peaceful. At the time it was the most peaceful place in Egypt for me."[693]

Protesters remained in the squares until August 14, 2013 when the military attacked and ended the sit-in violently. At dawn, the police and the military "unleashed a coordinated attack on the protesters that lasted for twelve hours." Initially, the troops used tear gas and birdshot but quickly escalated to "using snipers from rooftops and helicopters, ground forces, bulldozers, and armored personnel carriers."[694] According to Human Rights Watch, security forces used live ammunition, leaving "hundreds killed by bullets to the heads, necks, and chests."[695] Although the military claimed it had issued warnings to those in Rabi'a Square, those who managed to escape said they heard no such warning. Security forces blocked all exits and entry points. As Stacher

[691] One of the people who was killed in Rabi'a, 'Aziza continued, took part in the *Tamarrud* Campaign before realizing that "he made a mistake in judgment." 'Aziza, Interview by author.
[692] For an analysis of state-sponsored media coverage of Rabi'a, see Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 161-4.
[693] 'Aziza, Interview by author.
[694] Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 113.
[695] "All According to Plan: The Rabi'a Massacre and Mass Killings of Protesters in Egypt," August 14, 2014, Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/08/12/all-according-plan/raba-massacre-and-mass-killings-protesters-egypt#, accessed November 16, 2020.

observes, "Even those injured or surrendering were not allowed out. In many instances, they were shot at instead."[696] The attack went on for hours.

Eventually, the military surrounded the Rabi'a Mosque, where corpses were held, and the medical clinic next to it. Later that evening, Stacher writes, "[T]he police likely set the mosque, other buildings, and tents on fire. Security arrested nearly eight hundred people, and detainees were beaten and tortured and some summarily executed on the spot."[697] Brotherhood leaders and those sympathetic to their cause were rounded up and imprisoned. Many others fled the country. This event had many dire repercussions: "the radicalization of thousands of members; the prosecution of hundreds of the movement's leaders, resulting in the majority of them also being sentenced to death; and finally the proscription of the movement as a terrorist organization."[698] Al-Nur Party leaders (who did not represent all Salafis) surprisingly supported the coup and escaped persecution from the military junta.[699]

Al-Azhar's Response

In a communique on national television shortly after the violent dispersal of the protesters, a very somber-sounding al-Tayyib offered his condolences to the families of those

[696] Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 113.
[697] Stacher, *Watermelon Democracy*, 113-4. Human Rights Watch claims it was "the largest state massacre of citizens in a single day in recent world memory." Less than two days later, people protested the massacre in 'Abbasiyya Square in Cairo after Friday prayers, and security forces killed over a hundred more people. Human Rights Watch, "All According to Plan."
[698] Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 50. Wael Ghonim, the former Google executive who took some credit for laying the foundations for the 2011 movement on Facebook, fled to the US and regularly posted videos of himself on social media that have led some followers to worry about the state of the activist's mental health. Sally Nabil, "Wa'il Ghunaym ya'ud ila al-mashhad al-Misri bi-maqati' video muthira li-l-jadal," *BBC*, September 11, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-49667169, accessed October 20, 2020. Rougier and Lacroix estimate that at least 20,000 Islamists are now behind bars. Key non-Islamist revolutionary figures, like 'Ala 'Abd al-Fattah and Ahmad Mahir, are likewise incarcerated. Rougier and Lacroix, "Introduction," 11. Several Brotherhood leaders languished in prison. Mursi died in 2019 (his 25-year-old son, 'Abd Allah, died of a heart attack four months later), Mahdi 'Akif, former Supreme Guide, died in 2017, and 'Isam al-'Iryan died in 2020.
[699] Milton-Edwards, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 178. On the Nur Party during and after the 2011 uprising, see Maha A. Ghalwash and Lawrie Phillips, "The Nour Party: Weathering the Political Storm in Post-Revolutionary Egypt," *Middle East Critique*, 26.4 (2017): 315-330.

who were killed in al-Nahda and Rabi‘a Squares. “I want all Egyptians to know that al-Azhar did not know about the plan to clear the square beforehand and only found out from the news earlier this morning,” al-Tayyib announced, clearly distraught by the military’s actions.[700] He denied any culpability on al-Azhar’s part, but most of my interlocutors were not willing to forgive the Azhari shakyhs. Many of my interlocutors, in fact, clearly remembered how some Azhari officials like al-Tayyib reversed their 2011 *fatwa* on the permissibility of protest.[701]

Many of the youth I spoke to were especially angry at Jum‘a for his position on the 2013 protests and his support for the military’s actions, essentially justifying the violence they used against anti-coup protesters. Nine days after the dispersal of protesters from Rabi‘a and al-Nahda, Jum‘a sat down for an interview with television show host Khayri Ramadan and explained the reasoning behind reversing his 2011 *fatwa* on the permissibility of protest. The words “Egypt under attack” in English and “Egypt fighting terrorism” were emblazoned on the bottom of the screen, stoking fear of violent reactions from Brotherhood supporters and portraying the military as a national hero.[702]

In his gentle manner and with his signature calm smile and soft voice, Jum‘a talked to the audience in simple terms they could understand, while seamlessly connecting the present political climate to the Islamic tradition of the past. The Prophet knew that everything that is happening now would happen, he began. In the *Musnad*, the well-known collection of *hadith* attributed to Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), the Prophet said, “A *fitna* will take place, and there will

[700] “Bayan Shaykh al-Azhar Duktur Ahmad al-Tayyib li-l-umma hawla fadd i‘tisamay Rabi‘a al-‘Adawiyya wa-l-Nahda,” YouTube video, 2:31, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKEAxbZKLug&ab_channel=24.ae, accessed November 25, 2020.
[701] The relationship between the Brotherhood and al-Azhar was fraught before Mursi took power but became more strained during Brotherhood rule. Ibrahim Nafi‘, *Sira‘ al-Du‘ah*, 133-138.
[702] Reports of sectarian violence were common, though the police did not investigate crimes like the burning down of churches when they happened. Abigail Hauslohner, “Ravaged churches reveal sectarian split feeding Egypt’s violence,” *The Washington Post*, August 20, 2013.

be much *haraj*," Jum'a narrated. "And what is *haraj*?' the Prophet's companions (*sahaba*) asked him.' This was a new word for the companions," Jum'a explained to his audience. "The Prophet replied, 'Lying and murder (*al-kadhib wa-l-qatl*)." *Haraj*, Jum'a argued, became commonplace during 2013 in response to Brotherhood rule.[703] In 2011, he continued, people blamed al-Azhar for not supporting the protest, but "we were worried about bloodshed. I just did not want the youth to die." Jum'a thus contrasted himself with "old" Brotherhood leaders who led the "vibrant youth" astray and "put them on the frontlines, while they hid." Jum'a portrayed the Brotherhood leadership as self-interested and claimed that they would "end up in the dustbin of history (*mazbalat al-tarikh*)." They lied and manipulated people emotionally. They claimed that their fight was divinely inspired, and that they received revelations from the Archangel Gabriel, he said, referring to the language used on the Rabi'a stage during the sit-in.[704]

During the two-hour interview, Jum'a defended his support for the military and disdain for the Brotherhood. My interlocutors were especially upset about a speech Jum'a gave to military men in October 2014 in which he said that the Brotherhood "are the dogs of hell," that "they stink" (*ra'ihatuhum 'afina*) and that they should be killed.[705] To further cast doubt on the Brotherhood, Jum'a claimed that those who fought for Mursi were *Khawarij* (heretics). Once again, tying the historical present with a theologically tricky event in the Islamic past, Jum'a quoted 'Ali ibn Abi Talib's statement about the *Khawarij* who fought (and eventually killed) him

[703] "#Momken." In various iterations of the hadith, there is no mention of lying; killing is sometimes mentioned thrice, along with an abundance of wealth. Ibn Majah, *English Translation*, Vol. 5, Hadith no. 4052, 243.
[704] To give credence to his claims, Jum'a invoked the authority of the beloved Shaykh al-Sha'rawi, who he argued hated the Brotherhood, which had spread rumors about him. "Their rumors were thrown in the proverbial dustbin of history, and his memory [Sha'rawi's] remained strong." "#Momken."
[705] In the episode with Ramadan, Jum'a clarified that he urged the military to kill only in self-defense. *Khuruj*, the concept he used in 2011 to denounce the largely nonviolent protests against Mubarak, means "armed, violent rebellion (*khuruj musallah*)." In Rabi'a, the military acted in self-defense against armed protesters, Jum'a argued. Pointing a weapon at an officer even without the intention to shoot legally allows the security personnel to shoot the person holding the gun.

during the First Fitna. ‘Ali said, “They are our brothers who revolted against us (*Ikhwanuna baghaw ‘alayna*).”[706] As he often did in these televised interviews, Jum‘a did not contextualize this statement and knew that people would react emotionally to the double entendre of the word *Ikhwan* (i.e. the [Muslim] Brotherhood).

According to early Sunni reports, during the First Fitna in which one group of companions sought to avenge the death of Uthman ibn ‘Affan, the third Rashidun Caliph, and another supported ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib as the new caliph, people asked ‘Ali what he thought of “The people of the camel,” i.e. those who took part in the Battle of the Camel (see chapter two). ‘Ali was asked, “Are they polytheists (*mushrikun*)?” ‘Ali replied, “No, they run away from *shirk* (associating anything or anyone with God).” They said, “Are they hypocrites (*munafiqun*)?” He replied, “Verily, the hypocrites barely praise and remember God.” They asked, “Then what are they?” ‘Ali replied, “They are our brothers who revolted against us.” In another narration, ‘Ali added, “We fought them, they realized their mistake (*fa’u*), and we forgave them (*qabilna minhum*).”[707] Jum‘a used this report to argue that Brotherhood members should not be viewed as nonbelievers, but it is allowed for the military to fight them (but not kill them), until they cease fighting for Mursi’s return to power.[708] The Sunni tradition generally does not favor either party

[706] “#Momken,” and Asad, “Thinking About Tradition,” 204. Jum‘a’s disagreements with the Brotherhood started decades ago, going back to Sayyid Qutb’s controversial writings. He tied the organization’s present with its past to argue that it is necessarily violent and is based on flawed ideologies. For Jum‘a’s negative views of the Brotherhood, see ‘Ali Jum‘a, *Fiqh hubb al-Hiyat* (Cairo: Dar al-Nahar li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi‘, 2017), 134-152. Masooda Bano translates *Khawarij* as “those who exited Islam.” Bano, “At the Tipping Point? 722. Though *Khawarij* certainly evokes the notion of exiting (from the root word *kharaja*), Jum‘a clarified in interviews that he did not mean to say that Brotherhood members were no longer Muslim.

[707] Abi Bakr Ahmad ibn al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, vol. 8 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2003), Hadith no. 16753, p. 215. For the various narrations, see Salah al-Din al-Idlibi, “Fatwa 625: Hal qal ‘Ali radiya Allah ‘anh fi al-Khawarij ‘Ikhwanuna baghaw ‘alayna’??!” *Rabitat al-‘Ulama al-Suriyyin*, October 27, 2013, https://islamsyria.com/site/show_consult/625, accessed November 17, 2020. For a Shi‘i interpretation of “Ikhwan” in the context of ‘Ali’s saying, see “Ma ma‘na ikhwanuna baghaw ‘alayna?” YouTube video, February 13, 2016, 2:56, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyJ7Tsgdqd0&ab_channel=FADAKTV, accessed November 18, 2020.

[708] Jum‘a said, “Shoot him where it does not kill him. That is it. Then rush him to the hospital and treat him.” The show host also asked Jum‘a about al-Qaradawi’s support for the Brotherhood, and Jum‘a replied that al-Qaradawi is

during the First Fitna, but Jum'a seemed to suggest that 'Ali had the moral high ground against those who attacked him, and likewise, the Egyptian military and people were within their rights to oppose and oust their political opponents who allegedly attacked the military and thus the nation.

David H. Warren argues that Jum'a's conception of nationhood is in fact "highly significant for understanding [his] Islamic legal arguments in favor of the coup and the subsequent crushing of anti-coup demonstrations."[709] Warren writes that since the nineteenth century, the idea of the nation became a significant part of the Islamic "tradition's framework." Even the term *Khawarij*, morphed over the centuries and became synonymous with terrorism and treason against the nation-state.[710] For Jum'a, the Rabi'a Massacre was a price that had to be paid to save the nation.[711] He cited the same *hadith* he cited in 2011: "If you are *all—all* and not a group (*jami' wa laysa jama'a*)—of the same mind and heart," and "someone tries to cause a rift

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senile and should no longer be taken at his word. "We should just pat him on the shoulder and let him be … Anyone who follows him … is among the *Khawarij*, too." "#Momken." Al-Qaradawi, a long-time supporter of the Brotherhood, also reversed his position and stated on al-Jazeera that the removal of the president "is forbidden and will lead to chaos and civil strife (*fitna*) in the nation." He then called for the "return of *shar'iyya*," i.e. Mursi's (legitimate) rule, in order to prevent *fitna*. Mubarak was not a *shar'i* (legitimate) president, he argued, because he had corrupted and looted the country for decades. Despite this, Mubarak was not removed but rather elected to step down. By contrast, Mursi was "freely and fairly elected" and was a legitimate (*shar'i*) ruler. Less than one year after Mursi took office, al-Qaradawi continued, the military removed him. "This is absolutely forbidden [in Islamic law] (*yuharrim hadha tahrim batt*), because the foundation is to protect (*tur'a*) *shar'iyya,*" i.e. the legitimacy of the ruler. Mursi's election was a contract (*bay'a*), i.e. people were legally obligated to obey him, since he was the ruler (*wali al-amr*), and did not commit open apostasy (*kufr bawah*). Like Jum'a in 2011, al-Qaradawi in 2013 cited the *hadith* that calls for the killing of those who create disunity. "Aljazeera Channel 21 07 2013 Barnamaj al-shari'a wa-l-hayat maʿa al-shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi," YouTube video, 55:11, April 28, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwpVnpYYmbo. See also "Al-Qaradawi: al-khuruj 'ala Mursi, haram," *Al-Alam*, June 22, 2013, https://www.alalamtv.net/news/1486896/القرضاوي-الخروج-على-مرسي،-حرام; and Basma 'Abd al-'Aziz, *Satwat al-nass: khitab al-Azhar wa azmat al-hukm* (N.p.: Sefsafa Publishing House, 2016), 80-81.

[709] David H. Warren, "Cleansing the Nation of the 'Dogs of Hell': ʿAlī Jumʿa's Nationalist Legal Reasoning in Support of the 2013 Egyptian Coup and Its Bloody Aftermath," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 49 (2017), 459.

[710] Warren, "Cleansing the Nation," 467 and 472.

[711] Warren, "Cleansing the Nation," 460. 'Ali Jum'a's own strong feelings about the Egyptian nation can be seen in two of his works, one of which was sent to me by an interlocutor: 'Ali Jum'a, *Tajruba Misriyya* (Cairo: Nahdat Misr, 2008); and 'Ali Jum'a, *Fiqh hubb al-hayat*.

between you, then kill him, whoever he is."[712] In 2011, Jum'a viewed Mubarak as the legitimate ruler and the protesters as a minority rebelling against the majority who supported the president. In 2013, Jum'a argued that the protesters were an overwhelming majority (*al-sawad al-a'zam*)[713] demonstrating against an unwanted ruler.[714] The military did not stage a coup in the latter case. Mursi was a ruler who came to power through the ballot boxes but did not know how to rule and lost the confidence of the people who had voted for him.[715] Islamic law, Jum'a continued, says that "the imam who came through legitimate means, if his followers remove him, then that is it. They remove him by force (*quwwa*) in order to prevent bloodshed (*dar'an li-l-damm*)." If he is an unfit ruler, he loses his *legitimacy* (*tasqut shar'iyyatah*). Jum'a concluded, "Mursi is not a legitimate ruler (Mursi *la shar'iyya lahu*)," and his supporters were a misguided minority.[716]

A Moral Reckoning

The Rabi'a massacre was a moral breaking point for almost all of my interlocutors on several levels. Many of the youth could not believe that some of their loved ones, the shaykhs

[712] Ibn al-Hajjaj, *English Translation*, 5:185, Hadith no. 4796. See also "Al-Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi yafdah 'Ali Jum'a bi-radd qawi wa qasi," YouTube video, 13:23, August 26, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uq8PTC4rHSE, accessed October 13, 2020.
[713] This is a *hadith* that some, like Ibn Majah, categorized as unreliable. Ibn Majah, *English Translation*, 5:174-5, Ḥadith no. 3950.
[714] Jum'a said, "The people revolted, and the military stood by them. We were all (*jami'*) of one mind. Then a group [i.e. supporters of Mursi] caused a rift between us, 'so kill them whoever they are." "Al-Shaykh Yusuf." This is the reasoning al-Qaradawi used when responding to the question about the status of the 2011 protests in Yemen.
[715] In the interview, Jum'a did not express sadness over Mursi supporters who were killed by the military. When the host asked him about the fate of the person who believed that supporting Mursi was the same as fighting for Islam, Jum'a replied, "Allah will bless him on the Day of Judgment, because he was an idiot (*'abit*) and thought he was doing the right thing." "#Momken." Toward the end of the show, viewers called in to complain about the Brotherhood. One woman, for example, talked about her ex-husband who belonged to the *Ikhwan* and how he was dishonest in his dealings with her and others. Most of the comment below the YouTube video praised Jum'a and included prayers asking God to bless him.
[716] "#Momken," and Warren, "Cleansing the Nation," 465. Warren argues that Jum'a "legitimated the coup by drawing on a premodern principle whereby the legitimacy to rule was rooted first and foremost in the capacity to govern effectively (*taghallub*). The underlying assumption of *taghallub* is that usurpers' ability to overthrow a ruler demonstrates their de facto ability to ensure stable rule, and therefore their legitimacy." Warren, "Cleansing the Nation," 458.

they used to listen to and admire, and significant sections of Egyptian society condoned the bloodshed and supported al-Sisi and the military in their assault on Mursi supporters and anti-coup demonstrators. ‘Aziza, for one, could not believe how violent people became toward members of the Muslim Brotherhood. “People literally wanted them to die,” she told me, as tears began to well up in her eyes. People completely disregarded all their years of social service and all they gave up over the decades. “Do you know the expression, ‘*Al-shanta wara al-bab*?” she asked me. She explained, senior Brotherhood members always kept a packed suitcase behind the door in case the police came to arrest them in the middle of the night. They sacrificed so much throughout their lives already. “Regardless of how you disagree with them ideologically, I feel that people just didn’t look at them as humans. People didn’t empathize with them. They saw them as evil, as traitors.” By this time, tears began to quietly stream down ‘Aziza’s face. The only thing that kept ‘Aziza going and making sense of the world after Rabi‘a, as she “went into a deep depression,” was a firm belief in divine justice, that those who were treated unjustly “will get their rights in the afterlife.”[717]

Heidi’s voice cracked as she described what she saw in Rabi‘a. “If I watched Israel turning Gaza into rubble, it would not have looked like this,” she said to me, echoing the many references several interlocutors made to Palestine as they described the protests in Egypt from 2011 to 2013. “I thought the worst thing I would see was the Muhammad Mahmud St. massacre. Rabi‘a was so much worse. For real. May Allah have mercy on them, and may Allah hold [the Brotherhood leaders] accountable.” Heidi was just as angry with local human rights organizations that claimed that the removal of Rabi‘a protesters was “in accordance with

[717] ‘Aziza, Interview by author. ‘Aziza continued, “Eventually we went back to our lives and resumed work, but every now and then a new tragedy happened … We wailed about it and posted a prayer on Facebook. That’s all we did.” Social media became a collective grieving space for those whose voices were stifled anew.

international standards" (*wifqan li-l-ma'ayir al-dawliyya*). "I want to tell them, 'You sons of bitches, what are you talking about?! If you saw how the corpses were lined up on the floor of Rabi'a Mosque, you would not say this!' Hate the Brotherhood; assassinate them all politically, but actually killing them? Are you crazy?! What is this politics that justifies the killing of so many innocent people? Goddamn the throne (*mal'un abu al-kursi*)! Goddamn the throne that turns mothers into mothers of prisoners and mothers of martyrs [voice cracks]. Why? For whom? What in this world would call for this?"[718]

Hamza believed that some sort of reckoning would take place in this life, even before the next. "Like it or not, it was the blood of the innocents, and we're a Muslim country. If you're going to believe that there's a God, and there's justice, then there's a reckoning for these things." Everyone in Egypt was not "more than three people away from one of the people who was killed," Hamza said, as he banged his fist against the chair. "That blood is not cheap."[719] When I asked Ziyad about Rabi'a, he paused for a moment and then said that he lost thirty-four people to the massacre.[720] From a moral standpoint, Du'a' told me, "We *have* to condemn the massacre. And very strongly. I felt that was a breaking point in Egyptian society." How was it a breaking point? I pressed. The debate was no longer political, she answered. "People were divided over whether it was okay to *kill* someone, because they had a different approach or ideology." The massacre and its repercussions sent what was left of the Brotherhood underground again. The fact that people "justified what happened" was morally disconcerting to Du'a'. "I just found it

[718] Throughout this emotionally charged portion of our interview, Heidi swore instinctively and kept apologizing. "One of the things I developed after this revolution was a potty mouth," she said, apologetically. Heidi, Interview by author.
[719] Hamza, Interview by author (in English).
[720] Ziyad, Interview by author.

hard to believe that people could be so blinded … I just felt that Egyptian society had lost its way completely."[721]

'Aziza became resentful toward Egyptian society after Rabi'a and no longer felt like she belonged to it. She said,

> It's so weird, because it was so different from how I felt two years earlier. It [the 2011 uprising] was the proudest moment of my life ... It was such a big shift from yea, we did this, and we are such a great people, and all that to we suck and we have no standards, no principles. We only cheer on what works for us basically … And you lost faith in the concept of social movements and social change, because, what does it matter? It's all going to shit eventually.

The political and social landscapes were irreparably damaged as a result of the violent dispersal of the anti-coup protests. The shadow of the moral fallout enveloped Egypt. "Everyone at work was in disbelief," 'Aziza recalled. "Rabi'a was a distinct line in our timeline. So life was before-Rabi'a and after."[722] She then recounted the story of two of her male coworkers who actively took part in the Rabi'a sit-in and began to sob. "I saw two of my coworkers come into the office with their beards shaved off. It was really tough." She paused and cried. I patted her on the knee and told her that we could stop, but she insisted on telling me the whole story. When she caught her breath, she continued,

> *Al-hamd li-llah* they were fine, but the idea of having to shave your beard off in the street was really intense. It felt like they were broken. And then that day, one of them … told us what happened. I don't remember everything, but I remember this excerpt … He basically said that he was taken by the thugs (*baltajiyya*) of the police and military. And they were waiting somewhere for people to come get them, and he basically ran away. I remember him saying something like, 'I either stay here and get tortured, or I can run away, and they could shoot me, and kill me right away. So I ran.'[723]

[721] Du'a', Interview by author (in English).
[722] I heard this expression from my interlocutors often: "My life is pre- and post-X event." Usually, the event was traumatic, like the massacre or learning that one's spiritual shaykh sexually assaulted female followers.
[723] 'Aziza, Interview by author (in English).

Rabi‘a was a personal tragedy for ‘Aziza. The grim emotional space she occupied stayed with her for years after the massacre. She avoided driving through Rabi‘a at all costs, even though it is a busy throughfare. She often had to drive her sister to tutoring sessions in the environs of the square, and one day was forced to drive through it. “I was so angry,” she told me. “They renewed the mosque and put a statue [in the middle of the square]. On that day, I dropped my sister off, parked and cried for maybe an hour in the car.” Driving through the area became easier with time, she continued, but the heavy burden of witnessing what happened to family and friends and the breakdown of the social and political fabric in post-2011 Egypt compelled ‘Aziza to leave the country and study abroad. Although her mother would not have allowed ‘Aziza to travel alone under different circumstances, she explained, “Mama understood at the time that I needed to leave.” She began to cry again.[724]

Diminished Moral Capital

In *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age*, Zaman argues that religious authority is “the aspiration, effort, and ability to shape people’s belief and practice on recognizably ‘religious’ grounds.”[725] Masooda Bano builds on Zaman’s definition to argue that unlike power, religious authority is not coercive; people voluntarily heed the advice of those in authority.[726] Certain institutions in Muslim-majority countries, such as al-Azhar, and religious groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis, managed to garner influence and instruct practitioners on correct Islamic belief and practice. Knowledge of the Islamic foundational texts “forms the foundation of Islamic authority,” but the “moral dimension” is equally important. As Bano

[724] ‘Aziza, Interview by author.
[725] What “religious” signifies differs depending on the context and the practitioner, but Zaman argues, building on Asad, “discussion of religious authority does not require a shared definition of it.” Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought*, 29.
[726] Bano argues that Shaykh al-Azhar’s authority waned after his support of the 2013 coup. Bano, “At the Tipping Point? 716.

contends, "A true Islamic scholar does not merely teach Islamic principles; he is expected to embody them."[727] Followers thus hold religious figures to a higher moral standard, and if the figures deviate from that standard, as they were perceived to have done from 2011 to 2013, their influence and authoritative power wane. Bano writes, "This pressure on the scholar to embody what he teaches is rooted in the model of the Prophet Muhammad, whom Muslims see as the ultimate teacher."[728] Speaking truth to those in power is one of those moral obligations religious figures were expected to fulfill. For many of my interlocutors, Azhari and Salafi scholars failed to do so when al-Sisi and the military violently overthrew the Brotherhood government.

What is more, Bano writes, some prominent Azhari *'ulama*, like 'Ali Jum'a, "condemned the Brotherhood with such ferocity that they have severely compromised their moral authority."[729] Historically, this was the first time that Azhari scholars criticized the government's political opponents so strongly. Even under Nasir, when scholars had to bolster Nasir's credibility by delegitimizing the Brotherhood, they did so by using a few cautious words that reflected their neutrality on the matter. According to Bano, "Such behavior is much more in line with the popular understanding of the idealized conception of a scholar: one who maintains independence from political authority, attempts to be impartial, and takes human life seriously."[730] Jum'a's harsh words against the Brotherhood, therefore, appeared out of character and led many (though not all) to question the former Mufti's authority and that of al-Azhar as a state-sponsored institution.

The religious authority and moral capital of the *'ulama* were not the only things to suffer after Rabi'a; visible markers of religiosity, like the beard, became symbols of a moral

[727] Bano, "At the Tipping Point?" 716.
[728] Bano, "At the Tipping Point?" 716.
[729] Bano, "At the Tipping Point?" 721.
[730] Bano, "At the Tipping Point?" 723.

disconnect: those who displayed these outward signs of piety were seen as untrustworthy and insincere. People equated religiosity with hypocrisy, Hatim began, "and Islam with Islamism."[731] Any physical marker that reminded people of the Brotherhood and Salafis became suspect. Muhannad told me that when he sees a man in a beard or a woman in a face veil, he "becomes worried." During Mubarak's time, he continued, whenever he saw someone with a beard he felt "safe and happy." Some men grew beards during Mursi's rule thinking they would gain financially by receiving better treatment from fellow bearded businesspeople. The beard was no longer a religious symbol but one of loyalty to a political ideology that demonized anyone who did not support Islamist rule. "I hold these people responsible," Muhannad concluded. "They destroyed the image of religion."[732]

Basim likewise said that prior to the 2013 events, he treated women in *niqab* and men with beards "with neutrality," but he has become even less trusting of them today. "Everyone who has ever harmed me was *mutadayyin* (religious)." As a businessman, Basim said that it was those who walked out in the middle of a meeting to pray who cheated him financially. "Those who prayed after the meeting did not do so. Maybe this is all wrong." Then, to lighten the mood, Basim said, "Maybe if you came back ten years later when you're doing a second PhD and asked me [laughs], I will tell you for sure."[733] Equating people's religiosity with how they look is a thing of the past, he concluded. Morality, including honesty and sincerity when dealing with others, is what ultimately shows a person's piety and closeness to God.

[731] Hatim, Interview by author.
[732] Muhannad, Interview by author.
[733] Basim, Interview by author, Cairo, March 2018.

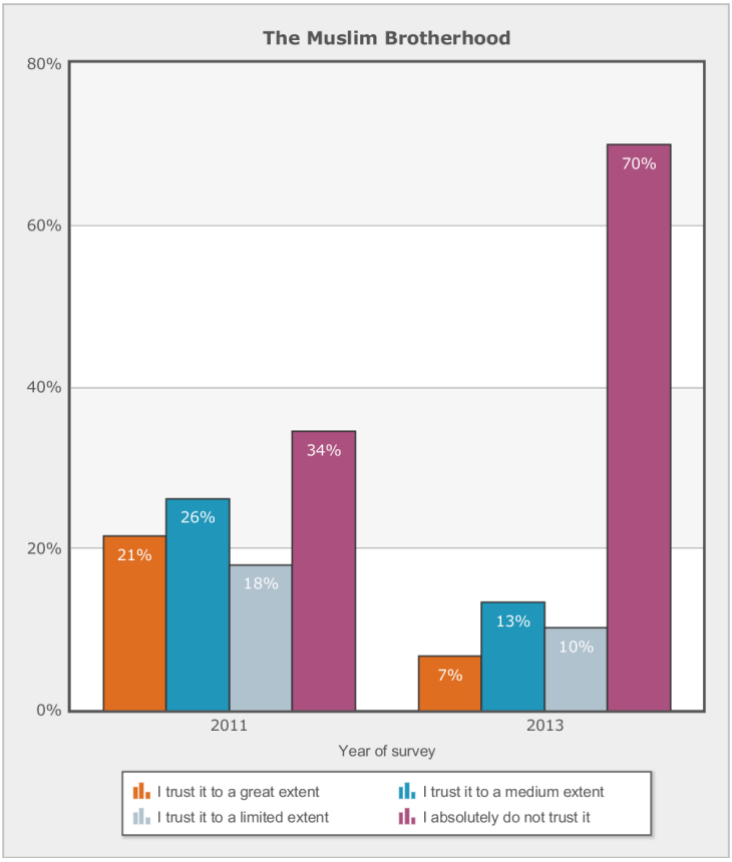


Figure 5: An Arab Barometer survey of 1,200 Egyptians shows a significant decrease in trust in the Brotherhood from 2011 to 2013. Source: Arab Barometer.

Some interlocutors, like Jude, pointed to specific actions taken by Islamists, including some of the moments immortalized in Youssef's show and subsequent shares of clips from his show on social media, that directly contributed to people's negative perception of Islam in the wake of Islamist rule. One of the most striking examples of this for Jude was when Hazim Abu Isma'il was dishonest about his mother's nationality during his presidential bid. Yusri Fuda, a television presenter who became well-known especially during 2011, asked Abu Isma'il if his mother was a US citizen. "I am so happy you asked that question," Jude said, mimicking Abu Isma'il's gentle disposition and smile. "Does your mother have an American passport?" Fuda asked Abu Isma'il again. "I will get to that, Mr. Yusri," Abu Isma'il reponded. For an hour and a

half during the talk show, Jude recounted, visibly upset and amused at the same time, "Yusri asked the question, and Abu Isma'il avoided it. You have to watch this episode,"[734] she told me. "Just answer the fucking question!" she said, figuratively addressing Abu Isma'il. "I'm serious. Sorry [for swearing]. Answer the question! It's a yes or no question." For many, Jude continued, this was a simple query, and Abu Isma'il failed to answer it honestly, leading many people to view him as untrustworthy. What is worse, she said, "People identified this kind of behavior with Islam … because he used to call himself *Shaykh* Hazim Abu Isma'il." People were not able to divorce the un-Islamic behavior of those who claimed to represent Islam from the religion they preached. This led to yet another moment of moral dissonance and breakdown. "This is not Islamic behavior," Jude concluded with a hint of anger in her voice. "This is *against* Islam. This is not Islam by any means. People have been using the statement, 'We tried the Islamists, and what did we gain from them?' I hate this statement."[735]

Jude's anger came from a place of caring about her faith and feeling that it was betrayed by the people who preached it for years. These religious figures were regarded as moral authorities, but their moral capital fell, as people viewed their actions as incommensurate with the morality they once preached. Once these religious figures entered the political arena, they did not become secular politicians: on the one hand, their words and actions were taken by followers

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[734] The conversation about Abu Isma'il's mother begins at 1:30:00 in the video. "Liqa al-shaykh Hazim Abu Isma'il ma'a Yusri Fuda 07-05-2012," YouTube video, May 8, 2012, 3:01:06, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkkYZ3qJcBE&ab_channel=mforislamTube, accessed November 18, 2020. Abu Isma'il's supporters launched protests in April 2012 in 'Abbasiyya Square after Abu Isma'il was disqualified. Yasmine Saleh, "Egypt's Salafi presidential candidate claims moral victory," *Reuters*, April 11, 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-presidency-salafi/egypts-salafi-presidential-candidate-claims-moral-victory-idUSBRE83A1HA20120411, accessed November 18, 2020.

[735] Jude, Interview by author. Maryam said that the aftermath of the revolution helped her realize that religion, which she had almost no ties to, "is not a monolith." "As someone who doesn't think about religion," Maryam explained, "I could see the nuance more, that someone could be one of the "traders of religion" (*biytagir fi al-din*) versus someone who is truly a believer. It felt that there was a cloud over all this [nuance], and it was blown away. But … not all shaykhs are the same. Even the Muslim Brotherhood are not all the same … There are shaykhs who tell you, 'Islam is in the heart,' and others who say, 'Ballot boxes,' so I understand that there is a spectrum." Maryam, Interview by author (in English).

as a continuation and reflection of their moral authority to be defended as one defends one's honor; on the other hand, the Islamists' claiming the moral high ground and alienating anyone who disagreed with them negatively affected people's perception of the Islamic political project and Islam itself.

Conclusion

The negative moral moods, like shock and disappointment, that my interlocutors experienced in 2011 and 2012 quickly shifted into solidified negative moral emotions, like anger and disgust. Their shock at the Islamists' divisive and "un-Islamic" rhetoric and behavior turned into anger. Their disappointment with religious scholars they used to admire prior to 2011 turned into disgust and disrespect. According to Jonathan H. Turner, negative moral emotions, such as anger, contempt and disgust arise as affective responses to "the moral violations of others." Anger can also emerge "when another is perceived as committing an intentional and unjustifiable act that is directed either at self or others, causing a desire to restore justice."[736] Disgust likewise reflects a feeling that the actions of others are "revolting and inhuman because others have committed moral offenses."[737] My interlocutors viewed scholars like Jum'a with moral disgust for not only justifying the murder of people they believed to be innocent but for commending the military for its service in ridding the nation of the Brotherhood. Jum'a spoke of the Rabi'a protesters and the Brotherhood with contempt, "a negative evaluation of another [that] involves looking down on another and feeling morally superior,"[738] and curtails feelings of warmth,

[736] Jonathan H. Turner, "Moral Emotions," in *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*, 553.
[737] Turner, "Moral Emotions," 553.
[738] Turner, "Moral Emotions," 554.

affection and compassion for the other. For Jum'a, the Brotherhood threatened "the preservation of the community,"[739] i.e. the nation, and for this, they deserved his contempt.

The authority of Jum'a, al-Azhar and Islamic preachers waned among my interlocutors for what were believed to be moral violations. Many of my interlocutors were also disgusted by the rhetoric used by family members against Brotherhood members. Unable to avoid their families, many of my interlocutors simply refuse to talk to their loved ones about Egyptian politics and the negative moral emotions they harbor toward those who engage in immoral modes of thought. Turner concludes, "The macro-, meso-, and microstructures that organize social life all contain moral content. This is the moral order. The best way to see this moral content—this moral order—is for individuals to violate the values, ideologies, or norms, and then to observe people's emotional reactions to this violation." People's reactions to the violations in turn signal that the moral order has been threatened, and as humans who are "socialized into a moral order," they act "in ways to maintain" that order.[740] As youth who consume social media and treat it as a repository for their memories, my interlocutors have not forgotten the moments in which they felt that those they looked up to—preachers, parents, friends—engaged in a collective social abandonment of the sanctity of human life. The political events that took place from 2011 to 2013 presented several moments of moral breakdown to my interlocutors. The aggregate disappointments and shocks over the years, along with what seemed like a dramatic

[739] Turner, "Moral Emotions," 554. According to Paul Rozin and his colleagues, people respond with contempt over violation of the ethics of community (i.e. disrespect for hierarchies or threats to social cohesion), with anger over violations of the ethics of autonomy (i.e. rights and liberties of oneself or others) and with disgust over violations of "divinity" (i.e. "sanctity" or "purity" of life and "the natural order of things"). Paul Rozin et al., "The CAD Triad Hypothesis: A Mapping Between Three Moral Emotions (Contempt, Anger, Disgust) and Three Moral Codes (Community, Autonomy, Divinity)," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76.4 (1999), 574-6. Moral emotions found their way into studies about social movements, social stratification and gender roles, ushering in the sociology of emotion. Peggy A. Thoits, "The Sociology of Emotions," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 15 (1989): 317-342.

[740] Turner, "Moral Emotions," 564.

shift in society's moral compass, demoralized most of my interlocutors, affected their notions of piety in various ways and caused a moral falling out between them and people they once loved and admired.

Chapter 5: Growing Out of "Egyptian Islam" in Post-2011 Egypt

The Rabi'a Massacre marked the beginning of the end of the revolution. According to Armbrust, however, the event did not close "the liminal crisis that had begun in 2011. It was more like a schismogenetic [i.e. division-creating] establishment of a 'new normal' that actually enshrined liminality at the center of society."[741] Al-Sisi became president in 2014 after winning an election in which he did not have any true opposition.[742] He did not allow for parliamentary elections to take place before 2016, and even then, the legislative branch was "predictably toothless, essentially a rubber stamp for the large number of presidential decrees Sisi had announced" in 2017 and 2018. As a "body-less head," the Sisi regime "could never establish the sort of hegemony that Mubarak's NDP machine had engineered," and often resorted to violence to quash dissent.[743] Al-Sisi thrives on the division within society, within families, between friends, and on the fear barrier that has gone up once again.

The revolution was defeated, and the change revolutionary youth had hoped for did not manifest. However, several notable social shifts took place in Egypt in recent years. This chapter

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[741] Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 220.

[742] Hamdin Sabbahi, the Nasserist who ran for president in 2012, won 3% of the vote, and al-Sisi won the rest. "El-Sisi wins Egypt's presidential race with 96.91%," *Ahram Online*, June 3, 2014, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/102841/Egypt/Politics-/BREAKING-PEC-officially-announces-AbdelFattah-ElSi.aspx, accessed November 20, 2020. Part of the propaganda used to bolster al-Sisi's image included a photograph that was allegedly of al-Sisi as a little boy saluting Nasir. Omar Zaghloul, "The Return of Gamal Abdel Nasser?" *Egyptian Streets*, May 23, 2014, https://egyptianstreets.com/2014/05/23/the-return-of-gamal-abdel-nasser/, accessed November 20, 2020. Although initially lauded as a Nasir-like figure, al-Sisi has proven not to be a Nasserist at all but a neoliberal who advances the economic interests of the military, as Mubarak did before him. Zeinab Abul-Magd, *Militarizing the Nation: The Army, Business, and Revolution in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); and Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 236-7. Interviewees in a short documentary produced by France24 in 2017 explain that their economic status has shifted dramatically since the uprisings. One poor family confided that they only have enough money for subsidized bread but none for other basic necessities like vegetables. Another interviewee said that prior to the revolution, he was considered middle class but is now sliding into the lower class. He started a small microproject selling baked goods on the street with his sister in hopes of stalling such a turn in fortune. For a view on how the economy and political milieu took a turn for the worse in post-revolution Egypt, see "Égypte: six ans après la révolution, la disillusion," YouTube, January 25, 2017, 11:17, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKVxsQmwxOM.

[743] Armbrust, *Martyrs and Tricksters*, 221.

specifically highlights shifts in the perception and practice of Islam since 2013 among Egyptian youth and argues that a transformative, revolutionary understanding of religion is underway as a result and in the wake of a watershed political moment in Egyptian history. The revolution served as a marketplace of ideas and as an encounter with the "other." Almost half of my interlocutors noted that prior to the uprising, they had never heard of the Salafis or known anything about the Brotherhood or the other Islamist groups that had become popular in 2011 and after. The revolution was a liminal space in which people of different backgrounds and orientations came to meet and learn from one another without barriers. This gave people the freedom to speak and express themselves without fear.

With this newfound freedom came a critical discussion of the tradition and what Islam means to people in their daily lives. This ultimately led to a reversal of some of the religious trends that emerged since the 1970s and caused many among the youth to reconsider their need for scholarly guidance, how and whether to embody the tradition and its teachings, and, in some cases, their faith itself. In what follows, I trace three common developments among young middle-class Egyptians: those who remained practicing Muslims but questioned the authority of religious figures and religious teachings; those who turned to other sources of knowledge like those offered by Sufi scholars; and those who completely lost faith in Islam and/or God.

Questioning Tradition

For practicing Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad is the embodiment of Islam, and so they try to follow his normative example (the *sunna*), which they derive from *hadith*s that were transmitted by companions of the Prophet and their successors.[744] After his death, many

[744] Nakissa, *The Anthropology of Islamic Law*, chapter 3.

collected and preserved the *hadith*s in written form for posterity and differed in their methodology. Many of them tested the veracity of each *hadith* by examining the chain of oral narration from the Prophet (*sanad* or *isnad*) and the content of the *hadith* (*matn*) to make sure, at a bare minimum, that the narrators had a stellar (moral) record and memory and that the *matn* did not contradict the Qur'an.[745] Some collectors had no trouble including what were deemed weak *hadith* (they either had faulty *sanad* or *matn*), but Muhammad Isma'il al-Bukhari (d. 870) and his student Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (d. 875) broke with those who did so. They diverged, for example, from their teacher Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), the eponymous founder of the Hanbali *madhhab* (legal school), who had collected *hadith*s as well. Bukhari and Muslim thus became the "first to produce *hadith* collections devoted only to hadiths whose *isnāds* they felt met the requirements of authenticity."[746]

Despite these efforts, the authenticity of *hadith* has been the subject of many debates since their oral and written circulation, unlike the Qur'an which almost all Muslims see as the infallible, incorruptible word of God. The *hadith* corpus that eventually came about in the first few centuries of Islam provided Islamic civilization with a systematic, "common language for discussing the Prophet's *sunna*."[747] Jonathan A. C. Brown writes that in those early days, the works of Bukhari and Muslim (the *Sahihayn*, sing. *Sahihty*) were not immune to criticism, and that it was only "in the early modern and modern periods" that it has become "controversial to criticize the *Sahihayn*, but this is primarily due to Muslim scholars' eagerness to protect the status of the two books that they see as symbols of an Islamic tradition under attack from

[745] Jonathan A.C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009), 3. See also Abou El Fadl, *Reasoning with God*, xxxvi.
[746] Brown, *Hadith*, 31.
[747] Brown, *Hadith*, 38.

modernity."[748] This still rings true today, but in today's Egypt, more people like researcher and TV host Islam al-Bihayri have the freedom to question *hadith* openly and even talk disrespectfully about the early scholars who explicated and codified the Islamic tradition.[749] Part of what I am trying to show in this chapter is how the 'ulama are on the defensive with regards to their dwindling authority, at least among the youth, and how the tradition they preach has come under fire, especially after the revolution, which gave people like al-Bihayri the space to speak their minds. Al-Bihayri, some of my interlocutors who brought him up argued, served as a shock factor and paved the way for more people to speak critically of the Islamic tradition and of seminal Islamic figures such as al-Bukhari.[750]

Having garnered enough national attention since he began hosting his controversial show "With Islam" in 2013, al-Bihayri was invited to a debate in April 2015 with famous Yemeni Sufi Shaykh Habib 'Ali al-Jafri (who is a close friend of 'Ali Jum'a) and Azhari Shaykh Usama al-Azhari, the Egyptian President's Advisor on Religious Affairs. The debate aired on the Egyptian satellite TV channel CBC, went on for four and a half hours (until 3:30 AM) and has over two million views online alone. Short, shareable clips of the debate also circulated on social media platforms. The debate was meant to give al-Bihayri room to defend his controversial positions on foundational works in the Islamic sciences, including the Bukhari and Muslim collections. Al-Bihayri argued that we should not view the scholarly tradition as sacred and unquestionable and that *'ulama* should not have a monopoly over religion. During the program, the host showed clips of al-Bihayri's show in which he argued that Islam is not a science that people need to learn

[748] Brown, *Hadith*, 40.
[749] Some, like Reza Aslan, call al-Bihayri a reformer. See "Reza Aslan as Islam Behery," YouTube video, February 14, 2016, 5:56, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSizyOtPyD8, accessed July 26, 2019.
[750] In fact, a popular phrase Egyptians say when someone accuses them of saying something factually incorrect is "Did I misquote [or speak ill of] al-Bukhari? (*Ghilit fi al-Bukhari?*)" This shows the reverence many people have for the *hadith* scholar.

from teachers. "There should be no mediator between you and understanding religion yourself," he told his audience. It is on this premise that he found the courage to conduct his own research on the Islamic tradition.[751]

Al-Bihayri questioned the authenticity of Bukhari's *hadith* collection and even called the tradition garbage (*qimama*), a curse (*la'na*), and said that it needs to be "burned and buried."[752] Of course, none of these arguments sat well with the *'ulama* in the room. They argued that no one who has not studied at an Islamic institution like al-Azhar has the right to talk about the tradition in such a way, a statement that is a veiled critique of what al-Bihayri was proposing. Allowing the laity to talk about Islam in such a way is dangerous, al-Jafri argued. "That is what ISIS [Daesh] is doing now," he said defiantly. "They say, let's take this *nass* (text) and use it to legitimize our practices." This is the same practice, he continued, that brought us the Brotherhood's and Sayyid Qutb's thought, all of which are products of modernity. "The youth who write to me have begun to say that the tradition and Bukhari is all garbage," al-Jafri said to al-Bihayri, concerned. "You are destroying, not building."[753]

Al-Bihayri's logical arguments found resonance with the youth, even with some of al-Jafri's followers. Take, for example, al-Bihayri's treatment of the *madhhab*s as a faulty tradition. In one of the clips aired during the debate, al-Bihayri reasoned that three of the major *madhhab*s (Hanafi, Maliki and Shafi'i) all came into being before Bukhari began collecting *hadith*s. This, he argued, shows that the *madhhab*s are based on weak hadiths that were collected prior to the rigorous methods attributed to Bukhari and Muslim. The scholars, he argued angrily on his show,

[751] On a similar trend of laypeople interpreting the religious texts themselves in Post-Revolutionary Iran, see Asef Bayat, "The Making of Post-Islamist Iran" in *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, ed. Asef Bayat (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 35-70.
[752] "Halaqa kamila: huwar al-Habib 'Ali al-Jafri wa al-Shaykh Usama al-Azhari ma' Islam al-Bihayri," YouTube video, 4:30:43, April 19, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOay0gTJEkU, accessed April 12, 2019.
[753] "Halaqa kamila."

taught us that Bukhari and Muslim *are* the *sunna*. "All the *madhhab*s were created without the *sunna*. How were the *madhhab*s established without the *sunna* as written by Bukhari and Muslim? Also, they tell us that the strong *hadith*s are in Bukhari and Muslim. The *madhhab*s were developed before. Then that means the *madhhab*s were built on weak hadiths."[754]

This is a crisis, al-Bihayri concluded. Abu Hanifa (whose works inform the Hanafi *madhhab*), for example, was born 69 years after the Prophet's death and lived for 70 years (from 80 to 150 AH). Bukhari was not even born yet. This is also true of Malik, al-Bihayri said sarcastically: during his lifetime, Bukhari's parents had not even met each other yet. Likewise, when Shafi'i died, Bukhari was just ten years old. Al-Bihayri was most critical, however, of Ibn Hanbal who overlapped with Bukhari but did not base his school on *hadith*s from Bukhari since he already had his own *hadith* collection, the *Musnad.* "All the weak *hadith*s that we hear and have caused us so much trouble today can be found in Ibn Hanbal's *Musnad*," he claimed. "The weakest hadiths on the planet are found in this *Musnad*."[755]

All of the facts and dates you listed are correct, al-Jafri told al-Bihayri, but these things are not related. "I am trying to say this as delicately as I can so as not to disrespect you," al-Jafri began, while flashing his famous gentle smile at al-Bihayri. The Islamic jurists, including the four imams, transmitted *hadith* with their own *isnad*. In fact, al-Jafri explained, Bukhari transmitted *hadith* through Malik, Ahmad or any of the four, thus including them in the *isnad*s of some of the hadiths he has in his *Sahih*. Al-Jafri then added that Bukhari's *Sahih* is not a book of Islamic law (*fiqh*) nor is it a history book.[756] It is a book about the science of hadith (*'ilm al-hadith*). Al-Azhari wanted to show, also, that al-Bihayri's conception of the *sunna* is faulty.

[754] "Halaqa kamila."
[755] "Halaqa kamila."
[756] On this point, see Brown, *Hadith*, 3.

Bukhari and Muslim, he told al-Bihayri, are not the *sunna*. "There are many, many hundreds of books that are collectively called *sunna*. But Bukhari and Muslim are the most meticulous."[757] The two *'ulama* thus argued that there is no contradiction in the fact that the founders of the *madhhab*s did not cite Bukhari and Muslim. In fact, the founders informed and impacted the work of the latter two.

Al-Bihayri's rhetoric emboldened others in Egypt to think in a similarly critical fashion in Egypt. It definitely served as a shock factor for many and put the *'ulama* on the defensive, especially with regards to maintaining the integrity of the tradition they teach. Janna, a young woman who works at a marketing firm, remembers that after the debate, al-Jafri and al-Azhari "both got attacked online" by her friends on social media. But it was the revolution and the Brotherhood's failure afterwards, according to Janna, that allowed for "people like Islam al-Bihayri" to be given a platform. During Mubarak's time, she argued, it was difficult for anyone to say that Islamic rhetoric needed to be reformed in such a way.[758] Janna did not mind al-Bihayri's polemical stances, but for Jude, it is "unfortunate" (*shay mu'sif*) that some people in Egypt today consider al-Bihayri an "Islamic researcher [*bahith Islami*.]" Why is this the case? she asked rhetorically. "He is researching and showing you other sides of the argument. He says something and gives you the contradicting evidence and makes you think."[759] To Jude, al-Bihayri is encouraging people to think critically and not take anything for granted. He thus shows his viewers that there are many opinions on any given topic in the tradition, something that Jude and many other interviewees felt traditional scholars had shielded them from for years. Jude thus lamented that al-Bihayri who has no traditional religious training is allowed to speak in

[757] "Halaqa kamila."
[758] Janna, Interview by author, Cairo, January 2018 (in English and Arabic).
[759] Jude, Interview by author (in English).

this manner about the tradition and those who explicate it (the *'ulama*). She also puts her finger on another important move al-Bihayri is making: he has an implicit, and sometimes even explicit, mistrust of the later discursive tradition which is based on these earlier, foundational sources and, by association, delegitimizes the scholars who imitate (engage in *taqlid* of) these early scholars.

Al-Bihayri's rhetoric was so controversial that he garnered the attention of *'ulama* at al-Azhar, including al-Tayyib and was sued for blasphemy. In April 2015, around the time when he had the debate with al-Jafri and al-Azhari, the satellite television channel that hosted al-Bihayri's show (*Al-Qahira wa-l-nas*) issued a warning to al-Bihayri after several viewers complained about his criticizing the Islamic tradition.[760] Uproar from al-Azhar and its proponents eventually put al-Bihayri behind bars in 2016 for blaspheming religion and "encouraging the youth to question Islam."[761] Initially, he was sentenced to five years in jail but was pardoned by the president in 2017 after having served a year.[762]

In an interview with CNN after his release, al-Bihayri claimed that whoever put him in prison turned him into a "legend" (*ustura*), and he felt that the presidential pardon was a sign that an injustice had been perpetrated against him. In the interview, he was critical of al-Azhar,

[760] Sara al-'Isawi, "Indhar 'Al-Qahira wa-l-nas' isbu'iyyan li-tashih mukhalafat al-Bihayri," *Al-Ahram*, April 7, 2015, http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/376604.aspx, accessed March 3, 2019.
[761] In 2016, at an event in the US by a group called "Muslims for Progressive Values," Reza Aslan read a speech "in honor of Islam Behery" to the tune of a somber oud. He read: "My name is Islam Bihayri. I am a prominent Muslim researcher in Islamic studies and the host of a controversial TV show in Cairo, Egypt. On this show, I engage with modern-day issues stemming from traditional and conservative interpretations of Islam. As a free thinker and law school graduate, I have always advocated research, critical enquiry and philosophical discussions of theology that promote pluralism and reform. On my show, I encourage the Egyptian people to engage in *ijtihad*, the idea that one should rely on independent and individualistic reasoning to interpret the Qur'an and Islamic law rather than accepting sectarian ideologies or stilted dogmas." See "Reza Aslan as Islam Behery."
[762] "Faith, politics clash as Egypt's Al-Azhar pressed to reform," *AFP*, April 26, 2017, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/afp/2017/04/pope-islam-christianity-egypt-azhar.html#ixzz5lBO9temp, accessed March 6, 2019.

portraying it as out of touch with reality and with modern-day Muslims.[763] State religious institutions, he claimed, wanted to pacify and keep everyone submissive. That is not at all what society wants. People have now stopped taking the scholars' word for everything; they accept what they believe to be true and reject what they think is false:

> Some people do not believe that the headscarf [*hijab*] is obligatory [*fard*] but still pray the five obligatory prayers. The Qur'an was not revealed to a certain group of people, as I have said on my show. Religion should not only be interpreted by a certain group. There is no clergy. The Qur'an says, "[The Qur'an] is a clear statement to all people,"[764] not a specific people or for a certain time period… You understand it yourself [without a mediator], and you actively choose what to believe. But the pashas [he uses a sarcastic Egyptian colloquialism: *bahawat*] at the religious institutions took over Islamic thought to the extent that I was accused of (and subsequently exonerated from) 'destroying religious constants' [*tahdim thawabit al-din*, a concept I explore later in this chapter].[765]

Al-Azhar, he said, claimed that *he* was "destroying religious constants," but they hesitated to say the same about ISIS or to excommunicate its members. "This is the crisis we live in," he said.[766]

I do not know with certainty how influential al-Bihayri was on Egyptian society, but the fact that he caught al-Azhar's attention and was arrested shows that he was considered a threat by some of the most senior religious scholars in the country. Not many people in Egypt would speak as boldly as al-Bihayri speaks about Islam, but he is symbolic of what has become acceptable in Egypt today. My interlocutors, too, even those who still practice Islam, have come to use similar critical thinking tools when questioning the tradition they grew up learning.

"What and to Whom Do I Turn?"

The disappointment the youth felt toward the authorities they once trusted after 2011 and its aftermath led them to question many aspects of the tradition, including beliefs and practices

[763] Walid al-Husayni, "Islam al-Bihayri li-CNN: al-'afw al-ri'asi i'tidhar 'an hukm zalim.. 'A'id li-l-shasha wa man sajanani ja'alani ustura," *CNN*, November 23, 2016, https://arabic.cnn.com/entertainment/2016/11/23/islam-behery-interview, accessed April 1, 2019.
[764] Qur'an 3:138.
[765] al-Husayni, "Islam al-Bihayri."
[766] al-Husayni, "Islam al-Bihayri."

that they once believed were givens (*thawabit*) not to be challenged. "The revolution broke the fear barrier we had of thinking for ourselves," Heidi told me. "All of a sudden, Mubarak, whom no one ever imagined could be moved an inch from his throne, was overthrown, and this made a lot of people think aloud about things they used to think silently to themselves. Religion was the most important of these."[767] Usually during my interviews, before I could even finish my question about whether there were shifts in the religious landscape in Egypt, my interlocutors would often cut me off midsentence and say that there has been a very palpable change.

After letting out a hearty laugh in response to this question, for example, 'A'isha explained that one of the reasons this change happened is because the youth are rebelling. But another important part, she believes, is freedom afforded to them by the revolution:

> The revolution gave people a chance to express this freedom in whatever way they understood freedom to be … Part of it could have been the collapse of constants in general, not just in religion, but the collapse of constants that became clear with the revolution: the collapse of values, whether religious, political or familial. Disappointments. There was a moment when we started questioning what everything meant: the people who we thought were right turned out to be wrong; the things we believed in or our understanding of them, then, may be wrong as well. There was a moment of re-questioning many things, even the givens.[768]

These givens (*thawabit*) are not simple beliefs and practices that can be tossed aside or easily debated. As Zaman shows, al-Qaradawi believes that *thawabit* are the "beliefs, basic principles and understandings, and the fundamental laws on which the [Muslim] community has agreed with a definitive consensus and which each generation has received from its predecessor as a lived and certain reality."[769] For al-Qaradawi, the *thawabit* are the glue that hold the Muslim

[767] In her interview, Heidi confided that she was one of the women who took off the veil after the uprisings and is often approached by other women who think about taking it off. We spoke during Ramadan, so she spoke to me about her love of fasting. However, she also noted how she now had the courage to say aloud that she dislikes performing the daily prayers, something she would not have uttered to anyone before. Heidi, Interview by author.
[768] 'A'isha, Interview by author.
[769] Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought*, 66.

umma together and distinguish it from others outside of the tradition. These, he argues, should not be meddled with, or else the Muslim community will be lost. Al-Qaradawi is known for his "centric" views on Islam, recognizing that historically contingent aspects of the Islamic tradition can be debated, but the constants, those "conclusively established" by divine revelation and agreed upon by the *umma*, should not be.[770] Thus 'A'isha's claim that constants are questioned after the revolution is not something to be taken lightly, especially coming from someone like 'A'isha, who herself studied the Islamic tradition at length and knows the importance of the constants.

This independent thinking people to be more brazen toward those in authority like the *'ulama* and *du'ah*. Simply taking what they say to be the (only) truth is no longer an option for many of these youth. The revolution showed that there is a wide range of Islamic legal opinions about any given topic, yet this was not something that was advertised widely prior to the uprising. The centuries-old tradition was one of the things that 'A'isha, along with many others, has started to question. "I saw how, in this short period of time, religious speech can be so strongly influenced by those in power," 'A'isha explained.[771] If in the past few years we were able to see this unfold before our eyes, what then of everything that has been said and written by Muslim scholars over the past 1400 years (since the rise of Islam), the very works that we now follow as tradition? she asked. Having studied the Islamic sciences closely for years, 'A'isha

[770] The list of constants for al-Qaradawi, Zaman writes, is, however quite short and encompasses "the obligatoriness of prayer, fasting, zakat, and hajj, as well as the prohibition of adultery, financial interest, and wine." See Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought*, 66.

[771] 'A'isha, Interview by author (in English). Another interlocutor observed that people have now become more aware of the politicization of institutionalized Islam like that of al-Azhar. He explained that if one went to get a *fatwa* from a shaykh at al-Azhar, one would be worried that the *fatwa*, too, would be politicized. "If you ask al-Azhar, 'Can I give money to the [Donation] Box of Egypt [*Sanduq Misr*,]' they will probably say yes—because that is what the state wants," he said to give an example. This politicization makes one lose trust in the institution. Hasan, Interview by author, Cairo, January 2019.

came to realize that the knowledge at her fingertips may have been tainted or, at least, incomplete:

> I became more critical that when I read the historical texts, even Islamic law (*fiqh*) and tradition, I needed to be aware that many factors went into shaping *fiqh*, for example, or that certain *fiqh* opinions reached us and others did not.[772] Or that certain opinions became the mainstream while others did not. Or that a certain understanding of the foundational texts (*nusus*) came about as the result of political or historical circumstance. I became more interested in learning about the background of the author and the historical moment in which he finds himself. I mean, this is basic critical thinking; it's nothing new. But now I am more aware. I do not take things for granted …, not even the *hadith*s themselves.[773]

'A'isha thus had doubts about the scholarly tradition she had been studying for years. Her skepticism even led her to question some sayings attributed to the Prophet.[774]

The fact, however, that many religious opinions about a given topic exist is not new in academia, but it was more of a revelation for many of my interlocutors. In *The Calligraphic State*, Messick shows how authoritative the foundational texts (*nusus*) are to Muslims and how they inform their everyday lives and practices. These *nusus* that inform Shari'a, which then informs everyday Muslim practice, were not always clear on their own, so "scholars elaborated its points in commentaries, [and] teachers clarified its subtleties," thus adding to the discursive tradition.[775] However, not all of these supplementary works were authoritative. "A central

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[772] On this point, see Nakissa, *The Anthropology of Islamic Law*, 216-7.
[773] 'A'isha, Interview by author.
[774] 'A'isha is a social scientist by training, but she still linked the past to the present in a way that might seem anachronistic. In *The Impossible State*, Hallaq shows that the medieval and the modern Islamic states are not comparable, especially when it comes to the implementation of Shari'a. The two states do not operate in the same way, and their historical contexts are different. He believes that Shari'a is not implementable in today's highly globalized and unethically capitalistic world. Hallaq, *The Impossible State*. Thus, it might be factually inaccurate to compare the two in such a way, but this is a concern I have heard from several young Muslim Egyptians, especially women and especially pertaining to rulings about women's issues. One example that came up a few times, for example, is the prohibition of women traveling alone. Some women argued that the only reason this is a principle in *fiqh* is because it was unsafe for women to travel alone through vast deserts on camelback and be subject to the elements and bandits. Nowadays, air travel is swift and safe, so this concern has been lifted. Al-Qaradawi issued a *fatwa* (about traveling for pilgrimage) to this effect. For the fatwa, see Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "*Hajj al-mar'a bi-la mahram*," al-Qaradawi.Net, https://www.al-qaradawi.net/node/3976, accessed August 1, 2019.
[775] Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, 16. See also Grewal, *Islam Is A Foreign Country*, 38-39.

problem in Muslim thought," Messick writes, "concerns the difficult transition from the unity and authenticity of the Text of God to the multiplicity and inherently disputed quality of the texts of men. A concurrent underlying tension was generated in shari'a scholarship where an unresolvable gulf opened between divinely constituted truth and humanly constituted versions of that truth."[776] There was, therefore, an understanding that what God revealed through the Prophet is divine and perfect, while human interpretation of that revelation, in the form of *fiqh*, is liable to err. This imperfect science, however, is necessary, since "the truth of Revelation could only be implemented through the medium of human understanding."[777] These works differed in the measure of their authoritativeness. Unlike the foundational texts, however, these commentaries "pertained to history rather than to the eternal; to societies of rifts and hierarchies rather than to the ideal communitas of the umma; to difference rather than to certainty."[778] Thus the commentary tradition, including *fiqh*, was understood to be contextual, a product of the time in which the scholars who elaborated it lived.

Many Paths, Not One

Having recognized that there are many interpretations of Shari'ah, several of the people I spoke to who still considered themselves practicing (and thus still embodied the tradition in their daily lives to the best of their abilities) said that they became more lenient toward those who view religion or practice it differently from the way they do. Hasan, a young entrepreneur who was influenced by various religious groups (from Salafis to the Brotherhood to the *du'ah*) throughout his life, said that today, he has come to reject every single one of them. "I started seeing that ... religion is not one single path. And there is no one action that can take you to

[776] Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, 16-17.
[777] Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, 17.
[778] Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, 17.

heaven."[779] The issue, though, is at once simpler and more complex than Hasan had previously thought. A simple deed that one might not notice that he or she is doing could take that person to heaven, like treating parents with kindness, he explained. At the same time, you cannot live it up as you please and say that God is the Most Merciful (*al-Ghafur*—one of Allah's 99 attributes) and will forgive you. "I feel this is the dilemma," he confided. "You do not know what [deed] will get you there. So you need to do and try everything … But in the end, the idea that we have a specific path we have to follow, no, I no longer see this as the problem."[780]

Likewise, 'A'isha has come to believe that "religion is ease," referring to the oft-cited *hadith* of the Prophet.[781] "Things are no longer clear-cut [to me] as they were before."[782] Like Hasan, the revolution helped 'A'isha realize that "Everything we had believed was right at one stage [of the revolution], we found out was wrong at another." And the curveballs kept coming, so 'A'isha adapted:

> Every person we thought was one thing turned out to be something else. All of these changes shifted the way we look at life. And [religion] is part of life. I became more accepting in general; I do not hold on tightly to any one thing or believe in it wholeheartedly, because I know that it can be wrong or that it is just one point of view that could be inadequate or partial or can change later because of other factors, etc. Keeping an open mind to such possibilities, I think, is one of the things I came out with from this moment.[783]

Again, this uncertainty and focus on conditionality and contextuality led 'A'isha to be more accepting and "less judgmental" of others. And again like Hasan, she became "accepting of the

[779] Hasan, Interview by author.
[780] Hasan, Interview by author.
[781] See Abu Abdul Rahman Ahmad bin Shu'aib bin 'Ali An-Nasa'i, *English Translation of Sunan An-Nasa'i*. ed. Abu Tahir Zubair 'Ali Za'i and Huda Khattab, trans. by Nasiruddin al-Khattab (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), Vol. 6, Hadith no. 5037, 43.
[782] 'A'isha, Interview by author.
[783] 'A'isha, Interview by author.

idea that each person might have their own way of getting at the truth, that their path doesn't have to be [my] path, and that there are various paths that could lead to the truth."[784]

The Youth, the Shaykhs and the Du'ah

With this ecumenical and more accepting attitude came a decrease in respect for the *'ulama* who are (or, in this case, were) seen as the arbiters of the tradition.[785] Inas, who like Hasan had been part of various religious groups throughout her life, lamented that people's view of the *'ulama* and *du'ah* is in shambles and that she herself can no longer listen to any religious figure speak. Her parents, for example, still listen to scholars on TV. "For me, this is something that is out of the question," she said, laughing. Young people saw the stances that figures like 'Amr Khalid, Muhammad Hassan and Muhammad Ya'qub took during these tumultuous times and were shocked and disappointed. "I became religious when everyone was getting veiled and now everyone is taking it off," Inas said. The societal changes that Inas noted throughout the past fifteen or so years (since the early 2000s) made her believe that religion was all about visible trends (*zahira*). "Whatever the religion, a big part of it is social pressure, social conformity and social trending. This is how religiosity works. It has to do with power dynamics used by people to feel good about themselves. I discovered that being religious in reality has to do with a lot of things I didn't sign up for."[786]

Basim, too, became more critical of the *'ulama* after the revolution. He was, at some point, close to the Brotherhood but has now come to "hate" them. But the Islamists were not the only ones in whom he had lost faith. The power that shaykhs have and are given by people is

[784] 'A'isha, Interview by author.
[785] Messick illustrates that Shari'a texts "lived in social relations, in human embodiers and interpretive articulations. As a general requirement of their attainments, scholars were meant to give of acquired knowledge." See Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, 152.
[786] Inas, Interview by author (in English).

what ultimately corrupts and leads to a "mess." If the revolution did anything, it put everything out in the open. Religious figures in every religion, Basim argued, are corrupt and greedy: "The idea that you have power over the ones who come to you at the mosque or the church is, of course, a corrupting thing. Why on earth would someone who fought with his wife go tell a shaykh? Is the shaykh qualified…? They need therapy!"[787] Basim himself had personal ties with various shaykhs, but over time, he felt that they no longer had authority over him, and he no longer cared to listen to them. "I have not gone to Friday prayers in years," he told me. "I sit in the air conditioned car and get out to pray the two cycles of prayer (*rak'a*s) and leave. I know the sermon; it's the same thing we hear over and over. All of my friends do the same."[788] Ultimately, he came to realize that as long as he is not harming anyone, he will do as he pleases, even if some scholars argue that what he does is not permissible. He explained:

> For example, I eat steak that is cooked in alcohol. And I like it. And every time I travel, I eat it. And I don't become inebriated. And there is a *fatwa* that says that alcohol evaporates in heat, so eat and be merry. I will take this more lenient *fatwa*. I am not harming anyone. I am sure I am better than someone who kills, for example. I am better than him. The shaykh who says that a murderer is good is the same shaykh who says that my eating the steak made with alcohol is bad. Each person does what they want as long as she or he is not harming anyone else. This is what I believe now. And I no longer care.[789]

The scholars' opinions no longer matter as much to Basim. Having seen how *fatwa*s were used to justify what he perceives to be an injustice led him to believe that *fatwa*s are not always legally sound. The power to decide what is religiously sound no longer rests solely in the hands of the shaykhs but to everyday people.

[787] Basim, Interview by author.
[788] Basim, Interview by author.
[789] Basim, Interview by author.

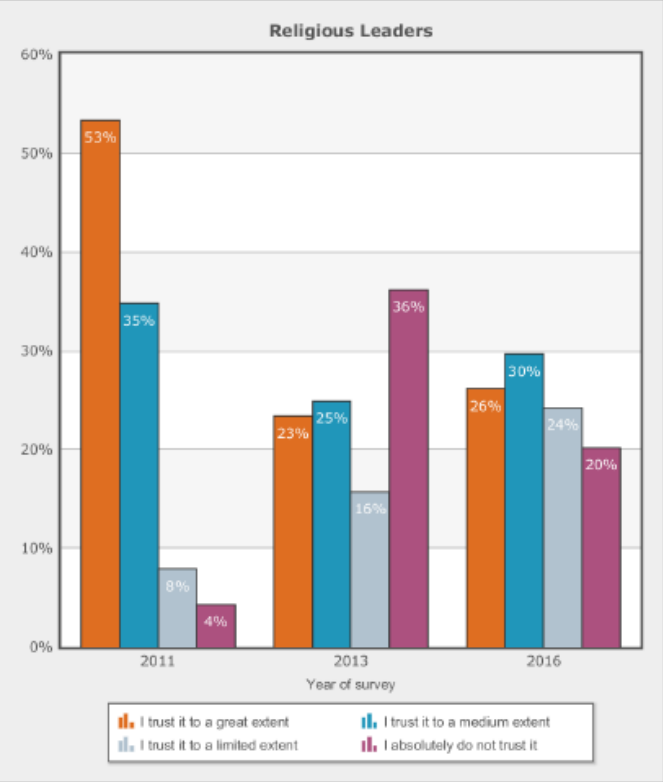


Figure 6: An Arab Barometer survey of 1,200 Egyptians shows a notable decrease in trust in religious leaders from 2011 to 2016. Source: Arab Barometer.

Hasan was even more serious in his disappointment in the scholars and the role they played during this crucial time. "I do not want to say that we were destroyed [*itdammarna*], but we really have been [destroyed] as a generation."[790] The main problem, for him, is that the youth were always taught to be followers, and now they have lost trust in those they were taught to learn from. This is not necessarily a bad thing, he said, but the youth no longer trust anyone:

> I have no problem submitting to someone who will tell me which way to go, but who is this person? This trust is gone. You do not know if you should go to al-Azhar since there are many problems… You want to go to a Salafi to learn from [him], but there is no longer any credibility. Those I used to listen to before, I cannot even bear to hear their voice now. Because you saw them in a certain situation that falsified all the beliefs they previously told you to have. 'You said things and then you went and did everything that contradicts that.' No, thanks.[791]

[790] Hasan, Interview by author.
[791] Hasan, Interview by author.

Like Basim, Hasan saw how, during the past few years, some religious scholars contradicted their own teachings, discrediting everything they had taught their students from years prior. Instead of swearing off religious teaching altogether like some of my interlocutors did, however, Hasan resorted to listening to non-Egyptian religious preachers who, he believed, have no ulterior motives while preaching.[792] "It is a mess," he lamented. People have lost trust in the religious authorities to the point that if one of Hasan's friends tells him that he listens to someone whom Hasan no longer agrees with, Hasan is elated that at least his friend is still listening to someone with religious authority. This has also become Hasan's attitude toward Sufism, which he does not agree with but thinks is a good last resort for those Muslims who are on the cusp of losing faith entirely.[793]

For Zaynab and Muhannad, their practice and understanding of Islam did not change as it did for my other interlocutors, because they never put too much faith in any religious figure. "On a personal level," Zaynab told me, "nothing really shifted just because I never relied on those people as a source of religion. My mom was very keen on making us resist them."[794] Her religious views come from her family, especially her uncle, a scholar of Islam based in the US. For his part, Muhannad, a man in his late thirties who works in real estate, also lamented the changes he sees in the religiosity of society. "It collapsed, collapsed [*inhar*]," he exclaimed, "to the extent that my veiled wife feels out of place. It breaks my heart."[795] When I asked him if he experienced any changes, he said that he never used to listen to any of the *du'ah* or shaykhs. It is

[792] This is not entirely true, since many of the preachers my interlocutors cited do have political stances. However, to Hasan, these "foreign" preachers talked about "basic things that are clean and religious." This person, he continued, "has no intentions, and you just listen to something to keep you thinking about religion." Other interlocutors said that foreign preachers were relatable and talked about issues that concern the entire *umma*. Among those preachers cited were South African Ahmed Deedat, Indian Zakir Naik and Americans Nouman Ali Khan, Suhaib Webb and Hamza Yusuf.
[793] Hasan, Interview by author.
[794] Zaynab, Interview by author (in English).
[795] Muhannad, Interview by author, Cairo, December 2018.

only during the last ten days of Ramadan, he remembered, that he would go listen to ‘Amr Khalid’s lectures. But in general, “I do not really listen to anyone. Maybe that is why I didn’t really get confused about religion [*ma itlakhbattish fi al-din*],” he said with a laugh.

The *du‘ah* have been increasingly under fire, and their influence has waned considerably. As I demonstrated in chapter four, ‘Ali Jum‘a has been criticized heavily by many for his speech to the military, which was openly anti-Brotherhood. When the *du‘ah* appeared in the early 2000s, they appealed to the youth, because they looked and sounded different than the shaykhs. ‘Amr Khalid was a big deal, when he came out, Rim told me.[796] Khalid simplified things and talked about social issues that appealed to the youth in language they could understand and stories with which they could empathize. “It was his style that attracted people to rediscover their faith ... He attracted a lot of youth.”[797] He was powerful to the extent that he got into trouble with the government, if you remember, she said to me. It was once he mixed religion with politics that people started to disrespect him. It “ruined everything, unfortunately,” she said with a sigh.[798] Jude was equally upset by the turn in the *du‘ah*’s fortune. She told me that she used to defend the *du‘ah* when her mother criticized them for offering “empty” spiritual rhetoric, but she now realizes that her mother was right all along. She used to say, Jude explained, that the *du‘ah* charge your spiritual battery, but that was it. What happens when your battery runs out? You have no base in any of the Islamic sciences to keep going and avoid what is wrong and do what is good. “Unfortunately, ten years [later], she proved to be right … Everyone who veiled because of Amr Khalid [now] took it off,” Jude pointed out.[799]

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[796] Hind, Interview by author, Cairo, July 2018 (in English).
[797] Hind, Interview by author. Not all youth were attracted to the *du‘ah*. Some of them called them “traders of religion (*tujjar al-din*)” or those who market religion to make money. On the neoliberalism in Egypt that allowed for the rise of the *du‘ah*, see Patrick Haenni, *L'islam de marché: l'autre révolution conservatrice* (Paris: Seuil, 2005).
[798] Hind, Interview by author. Heidi, too, said that the *du‘ah*’s stances after the revolution “were the shock of my life.” Heidi, Interview by author.
[799] Jude, Interview by author.

The effects of the *du'ah*'s preaching in the 2000s has dwindled among this class of Egyptian youth. "There is no respect now," Jude explained. "If you see 'Amr Khalid before and after the revolution, the number of people who call him names is astounding. People curse him out on Facebook."[800] This disrespectful attitude toward the *du'ah* can be seen most clearly in four incidents that took place in 2017, 2018 and 2020. In September 2017, Khalid posted a video of himself carrying out the rites of the greater pilgrimage (*Hajj*). He appeared to be crying profusely while calling on God to answer the prayers of all of his social media followers whom he loves so much. In *Du'ah al-supermarket* (The Supermarket Du'ah), Journalist Wa'il Lutfi does not take kindly to this display of emotion, calls it a performance and accuses Khalid of feigning piety while posing for the camera.[801] Then, in Ramadan 2018, Khalid was featured in a commercial for a Saudi Arabian poultry company. "Your soul will not be elevated [in piety] unless your body and stomach are sound," Khalid told viewers, suggesting that the quality of the chicken he was promoting helps worshipers perform their nightly Ramadan rites more piously.[802]

"Social media ripped 'Amr Khalid to shreds," Lutfi writes.[803] Memes, for example, featured Khalid's head in place of Colonel Sanders's head on the KFC logo and called it "Khalid Fried Chicken."[804] The backlash forced the poultry company to take down the ad, and Khalid issued an online apology: "People misunderstood what I was saying, and thought I used religion to promote a product. This is wrong and unacceptable … I seek God's forgiveness and take full

[800] Jude, Interview by author.
[801] Lufti, *Du'ah al-Supermarket*, 41. See also "Amr Khaled prayer controversy," *Al Arabiya English*, September 9, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/alarabiya.english/videos/1439253949461046/?v=1439253949461046, accessed August 1, 2019.
[802] "I'lan 'Amr Khalid alladhi athar sukhriya al-jumhur," *Akhbar al-Barlaman*, May 17, 2018, https://www.facebook.com/elbarlman/videos/1512240828905628/?v=1512240828905628 , accessed August 1, 2019.
[803] Lufti, *Du'ah al-Supermarket*, 41.
[804] For more memes, see Najla Moussa, "An Egyptian Preacher is Being Um… Roasted, after Using Spirituality to Sell Chicken," *Popsugar*, May 21, 2018, https://me.popsugar.com/food/Egypt-Preacher-Roasted-Using-Islam-Sell-Chicken-44866091, accessed August 1, 2019.

responsibility for this mistake." In his twenty years of preaching, Khalid said, he made many mistakes since he is only human and asked that people give him the benefit of the doubt.[805]

The last two incidents involve Moez Masoud's personal life. In 2018, Masoud married an Egyptian actress, Sherry 'Adil, who is not veiled. Many of the youth took to social media to criticize him for telling women for years to wear *hijab* on his shows but then contradicted his own advice by not practicing what he preached.[806] Masoud published a post on Facebook soon after, telling people that he alone is aware of his and his family's circumstances and that no one should judge the situation. He also added that *hijab* is more about dressing conservatively than about covering the hair. "Modesty in dress," he wrote, "is 90% of *hijab*, while the headcover is the crown that completes it." Reaching full *hijab* is a gradual process. He then made the case that his marriage was permissible and that he knew it would alarm many people, but he went ahead with it despite knowing that people would judge him and his wife for it.[807] Masoud stirred controversy once more in 2020. He divorced 'Adil and married another actress, Hala Shiha, who had left acting and worn the face veil for a few years before taking the veil off and returning to acting once more. The memes were merciless.[808]

Incidents such as these make Lutfi believe that "the phenomenon of the *du'ah al-judud* has come to an end." This does not seem like a temporary hiatus brought on by the pressures of

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[805] "Ta'liq Dr. 'Amr Khalid 'ala al-video al-muntashir mu'akhkharan," *Amr Khaled*, https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10156587374596165, accessed August 1, 2019. Comments on the video were mixed: some people argued that Khalid was influential and changed the lives of many youth and should be respected, while others called on him to end his career as a preacher.

[806] See "The Liberal Crucifixion of Moez Masoud," *The Hermit* (blog), July 17, 2018, https://egyptianhermit.wordpress.com/2018/07/17/the-liberal-crucifixion-of-moez-masoud/, accessed August 3, 2019.

[807] More than a hundred thousand people reacted to this Facebook post. Some supported Masoud and many more criticized him. For the full statement, see Moez Masoud معز مسعود's Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/MoezMasoud/posts/1868240536548459, accessed August 3, 2019.

[808] This was Masoud's fourth marriage, which became the butt of many online jokes as well. "Our Journey is One': Preacher Moez Masoud Confesses His Love for Actress Hala Shiha," *Egypt Independent*, December 2, 2020, https://egyptindependent.com/our-journey-is-one-preacher-moez-masoud-confesses-his-love-for-actress-hala-shiha/, accessed December 19, 2020.

our current circumstances, either, he adds. "And nothing has filled the void [the *du'ah*] left as of yet. Perhaps this will give us the space to discuss more seriously the renewal of religious thought."[809] Lutfi does not lament the fall of the *du'ah*, and, in fact, sounds hopeful for the future of religious discourse. From what my interlocutors told me, the damage to the image of the *du'ah* had already been done, however, before these four incidents. Whatever effect the preachers had on the youth in the late 1990s and early 2000s has waned. My interviewees no longer listen to them. Some cannot stand the sight (or sound) of them. With 'Amr Khalid's latest controversy, it appeared that the *du'ah* not only used their influence as religious leaders to push political agendas but financial ones of private companies as well.

Reevaluating Hijab

In early 2019, I went to the movies with a relative in Egypt to watch a film called *The Guest* (*al-Dayf*) written by TV personality and novelist Ibrahim 'Isa.[810] The premise of the film is that a "devout" teaching assistant at a prestigious university in Egypt wanted to propose to one of his students, so he went to meet her parents. The father of the bride-to-be was a controversial public figure and intellectual who wanted to "reform" Islam.[811] Most of the film is a conversation that takes place between the father and the young man who holds steadfastly to the tradition he was taught. When the young man told the family that he wanted their daughter to wear the veil, the father argued that the veil was not mandated by God. The young man proceeded to quote the oft-cited *hadith* in which the Prophet said that a woman should cover everything except her

[809] Lufti, *Du'ah al-Supermarket*, 140.
[810] Ibrahim 'Isa, *Al-Dayf*, Dir. Hadi al-Baguri, iProductions: Cairo, 2018.
[811] The intellectual shares an uncanny resemblance to al-Bihayri. Interestingly, al-Bihayri himself praised the film on his TV show, calling it an "enlightening" film that reflects society's ability to entertain conflicting opinions. He also thanked the Egyptian state and its censorship apparatuses for allowing a film like this, which questions "the hijab, Bukhari and Muslim and ibn Taymiyya in one fell swoop" to be shown to the public in its entirety. "Islam Bihayri yu'alliq fi barnamijh al-busla 'ala "Film al-dayf" qissat al-katib al-kabir Ibrahim 'Isa," YouTube video, 2:52, January 19, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hur7jPthKP4, accessed March 28, 2019.

hands and face.[812] The father then asked the groom, "Do you know the beginning of the *hadith*?" When the young man said he did not, the father explained that the Prophet said this when he saw Asma bint Abi Bakr, the daughter of one of the Prophet's closest confidantes and first of the Rashidun caliphs, walk into the room wearing sheer clothing. The Prophet looked away and told her to cover up. "Can you believe," the intellectual asked, "that the daughter of Abu Bakr would dare wear sheer clothing, especially in conservative seventh-century Arabia? This *hadith* is weak!"[813] During intermission, my relative who is herself veiled turned to me and asked, "Is it true what they said about the hijab?!" All I could tell her is that different people use different textual proofs to support their views. This ushered in a very lively conversation about the scholarly methods used to discern the strong from the weak *hadith*s. The film, in my view, is a reflection of the type of conversations middle and upper-middle class Egyptians have today about the Islamic tradition.

When Mahmood was writing in the early 2000s, she noted that there was a proliferation of studies about the resurgence of the veil in urban Egypt since the 1970s, and that each study offered its own explanation for why this was the case. Some offered functionalist arguments like safety from sexual harassment, while others portrayed veiling as a form of resistance against the commodification of the female body and the Western influences that push for it. Veiling was still a common practice when Mahmood conducted her ethnography in Cairo, and when she was

[812] Bin Ash'ath, *English Translation*, Vol. 4, Hadith no. 4104, 422.
[813] 'Isa, *Al-Dayf*. Interestingly, an Azhar shaykh who reviewed the film on Salafi al-Rahma Channel argued that 'Isa's reasoning is the same reasoning used by Salafis to make the case that it is the face veil (*niqab*) that is required of a woman and not just hijab. This is the reasoning used by influential Saudi religious scholar 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Baz (d. 1999). "Al-Malaf | Shahid fadiha Ibrahim 'Isa fi film al-dayf ma' fadila al-Shaykh/ Muhammad al-Zughabi," YouTube video, 18:29, January 21, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIo35Hu4mqo, accessed March 15, 2019. For Ibn Baz's *fatwa*, see "Al-Rad 'ala man yastadil bi-hadith Asma 'ala kashf Wajh al-Mar'a," Al-Imam ibn Baz website, https://binbaz.org.sa/fatwas/18029/الرد-على-من-يستدل-بحديث-اسماء-على-كشف-وجه-المراة, accessed March 15, 2019.

there, the women told her they veiled to embody "Islamic virtues of female modesty or piety."[814] What is fascinating to me is that this language has almost completely shifted to one of doubt even among practicing Muslim women in Egypt today. Aside from the growing number of women taking the veil off, those who still have it on are bombarded with arguments against it, saying that there is little if any proof that it is a religious mandate.[815] This has caused many women to question their decision to wear it.

The issue of women de-veiling has garnered a lot of attention in recent years from religious scholars and *du'ah* alike. Mustafa Husni, one of the best known of the *du'ah al-judud*, tackled the issue in his Ramadan show *Ha'ir* (Confused) in 2018. Each episode usually begins with a young person posing a question about Islam that confuses her. The hijab episode begins with a young woman sitting on a plush armchair in the middle of an empty loft who asks, "Why should I wear the veil when the Qur'an does not clearly call for it?"[816] To address this question, Husni talked about two things (which I am arguing have come under fire in Egypt in recent years): the importance of the *'ulama* and of the *sunna* to Islamic practice. He generally argued that if we have a question about something, we must ask the specialists, i.e. the *'ulama*. They are the ones who are able to decipher the parts of the Qur'an and *sunna* that might be less direct or less apparent to us than others (*zanni* rather than *qat'i*).[817] Islam, he explained, should be understood through three sources: the Qur'an, the *sunna*, and the works of the *'ulama*. "Without these three, our religion would be lost," he argued.[818] Without the *sunna*, he continued, three-

[814] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 16.
[815] Géraldine Schwarz notes that de-veiling is also commonplace now in Tunisia, Algeria and Iran. Géraldine Schwarz, "En Egypte, Le voile se lève," *Le Monde*, June 22, 2016, https://www.lemonde.fr/m-actu/article/2016/06/27/en-egypte-le-voile-se-leve_4958753_4497186.html, accessed December 19, 2020.
[816] "Al-Hijab – Ha'ir- Mustafa Husni – 8," YouTube video, 32:07, May 24, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hieUtdsgRFY, accessed April 12, 2019.
[817] See chapter 2.
[818] "Al-Hijab."

fourths of the religion, injunctions like prayer, inheritance and even hijab, would not be implementable.[819] People often say that the verse 24:31, which reads, "And let them [believing women] draw their handkerchiefs [*khimar*] over their breasts [*'ala juyubihinn*]," only refers to covering the chest and not the head. But we know from *hadith*s, Husni countered, "that khimar was actually a head covering and that as soon as the verse was revealed [to the Prophet], women went and covered their heads right away."[820] All the *madhhab*s, he continued, state that a woman who reaches puberty needs to cover herself. For Husni, if a woman does not cover herself, she is sinning.[821]

Unlike al-Bihayri, Husni discourages believers from doing their own research and reaching their own conclusions. He urges them to ask the *'ulama* about any matters that may confuse them. But this argument is out of touch with the reality of Egyptian youth today, many of whom have stopped listening to Egyptian *'ulama* and *du'ah* and have started negotiating with the tradition themselves as al-Bihayri does (if they bother at all). Many, even those who still identify as practicing Muslims, have started to doubt certain textual proofs and scholarly deliberations of the tradition.

For a long time, I have been loath to discuss the hijab in my work, because I feel that oftentimes in Western scholarship and in the West in general, it is seen as the quintessential marker of female Muslim piety.[822] But in conversations, especially with my female interlocutors, even if I never brought the hijab up, it was something that both veiled and unveiled Muslim

[819] "Al-Hijab."
[820] "Al-Hijab."
[821] "Al-Hijab."
[822] See, for example, Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*; Fadwa El Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic: Egypt's Contemporary Islamic Movement," *Social Problems,* 28.4 (1981): 465-85; Valerie Hoffman Ladd, "Polemics on the Modesty and Segregation of Women in Contemporary Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 19 (1987): 23-50; Arlene Elowe MacLeod, *Accommodating Protest: Working Women, the New Veiling and Change in Cairo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); and Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, to name a few.

women discussed. With the rising number of women taking it off,[823] young Egyptian women constantly struggle to find meaning in veiling.[824] And with arguments like those made in the film, more and more women are coming to believe that hijab is not an obligation or that proof for it is scant at best. That laypeople are actively engaging with the tradition themselves like al-Bihayri and 'Isa, who have no religious training, is something that was not as prevalent in Egypt prior to the revolution, or at least had serious repercussions if anyone did attempt to poke holes in the tradition.[825] With this confusion, I find that even those interlocutors who still see themselves as religious and are critical of questioning the tradition in such a way have become more lenient toward others who are confused or no longer share their views about the Islamic tradition. Some interviewees welcome the openly critical nature of today's Egyptian youth, while others lament it, fearing that it would lead many "astray," maybe even to atheism.

Heidi was among those who explained that the revolution was an eye-opener, especially for women. "I do not know if you noticed," Heidi began, "but the number of women who took off the veil after the uprising is quite high." She explained that she was one of those women. The reason women made this decision during this time, she argued, was not because of superficial explanations that people gave like women finding it difficult to get married with the veil on or that they wanted to emulate the leftists who filled Tahrir Square during the protests. It was not even about religion per se. "What happened was that women started asking, did I wear this

[823] In fact, in 2017, my Facebook Newsfeed was saturated with before-and-after photos of Egyptian college campuses in the 1950s and 1960s and now, with captions that nostalgically favored the former, hailing them as the days of beauty and elegance. The photos from the 1950s and 1960s showed women in miniskirts and their hair in chic bobs, reminiscent of the fashion of that era, while the latter showed women in hijab and the face veil, symbols of backwardness for the people who shared the photos.
[824] There is even a private Facebook support group called "Surviving Hijab" with hundreds of thousands of members that was established in 2014.
[825] Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (d. 2010), for example, was charged with apostasy for suggesting that Muslims should reevaluate how they interpret the Qur'an, arguing that they should situate the verses within their sociohistorical context in seventh-century Arabia. Agrama, *Questioning Secularism*.

because I wanted to, or was it because of peer pressure and because society said we should wear it?" Or was it just the thing we are expected to do, like going to school, getting good grades, getting married, etc.? "All of a sudden," she continued, "the revolution said surprise! We can do things differently."[826]

Heidi did not mind that this questioning was happening. "Religious discourse has been used against women," Heidi posited, making women believe that they are lesser than rather than equal to men. The veil was among the Islamic practices that many young women believed were ordained by man-made laws rather than divine law, and they thus felt that they should no longer adhere to it.[827]

Habiba who was raised by parents in the traditional Brotherhood way (see chapter one) is already instilling and fostering this critical thinking about religion in her four-year-old daughter. Habiba's parents taught her to act in a certain way, and she never really stopped to question this growing up. For her, this upbringing did not foster a knowledge of God. "I knew God when I got older, not through my family," she confided. "I came to know Him through questioning what they had taught me. I started reading things about His names and came to love Him a lot. Through yoga. On the contrary, my parents involuntarily pushed me away."[828] She asked to speak off the record about the direct effect of the revolution on her religious practice and understanding of Islam, but immediately after, she talked to me about how she diverged from what she had learned from her parents.

[826] Heidi, Interview by author (in English).
[827] Heidi was among the few women I spoke to who took off the hijab and volunteered to tell me about their de-veiling, even though I did not ask. Heidi, Interview by author (in English). Nadia Fadil noted similar trends of young Muslim women in Belgium reevaluating the Islamic tradition and coming to the conclusion that they do not need to wear the veil. Nadia Fadil, "Not-/unveiling as an ethical practice," *Feminist review*, 98.1 (2011), 94 and 100-1.
[828] Habiba, Interview by author.

Of the things her parents taught her to do, the visible aspects (*zawahir*) of Islamic practice are what Habiba feels conflicted about teaching her daughter. To her, her daughter's humanity (*insaniyya*) and having a sense of dignity and self-worth are also really important. Peer and parental pressure, Habiba mused, are largely to blame for "three-fourths of our problems as teenagers," as we try to fit in with our peers but stand out (in piety) for our parents. All Habiba wants to do is raise her daughter to be balanced (*sawiyya*):

> She should choose. I am not saying that she should choose to be an disbeliever [*kafira*]. I will teach her that there is a God, but I am terrified that I would ruin her. You know when you are holding something made of glass, and you know you have to protect it? You have a responsibility toward it. But at the same time, you are afraid that any word here or there can destroy everything ... And when she gets older, she can come to her own understanding of it, you know?[829]

Sometimes her daughter asked her metaphysical questions and about God's existence. Habiba was often at a loss for words, but most of the time, she said, "I just let her ask, and let her figure it out herself … I do not want to mold her as I was molded, because I feel like I will be doing her an injustice."[830] The veil is one of the practices that Habiba's daughter questioned her about, and Habiba does not want to impose it on her.

Since we spoke, Habiba has taken off the veil, much to the detriment of her relationship with her family. When we spoke, however, she told me that whenever her daughter tells her that she would prefer for her mother not to be veiled, Habiba personalized the matter and did not portray it as a religious obligation: "I tell her that I am choosing to cover myself," she explained. "There are some people that I like to show myself to." She would not understand abstract concepts like modesty (*haya*), nor would she understand legal categories like *fard*. In her little mind, she wondered why God would single women out in such a way. "There are so many

[829] Habiba, Interview by author.
[830] Habiba, Interview by author.

questions that would make God appear bad—something that I started to feel, even though my parents never made me believe that He was bad." Habiba still does not know if this is how she should raise her daughter, but this is what she is comfortable doing for now. "I ask Allah to push me in the right direction," she concluded.[831]

Only a revolution, Bayat writes, could cultivate such courage and daring among Muslim women in a society where taking off the hijab remained by far harder socially and religiously than putting it on. The revolution made these women believe that rules could be broken and norms could be altered, while the dispirited rule of the Brotherhood made them question the logic behind that type of religiosity.[832] The reasons cited for de-veiling by these women was not an imitation of the West but a rebellion against the teachings they grew up learning, made possible by the freedom afforded to them by the revolution. Some women even left their family home, opting instead to live alone while unmarried, a practice that was not at all common or even condoned in pre-revolution Egypt. "Such public expression of personal liberties and lifestyle," Bayat continues, "was unprecedented in scale and scope in the societies in which patriarchal sensibilities and conservative religiosity had gained extraordinary momentum since the 1970s. But the revolutions of 2011 shook many of the established ideas."[833]

Travel and Change

In *Islam Is A Foreign Country*, Zareena Grewal follows the lives of young Muslim Americans who, having been raised in the US, decided to travel back to what many (to Grewal, mistakenly) call the "Muslim World" (namely, Egypt, Jordan and Syria) in hopes of "recovering their tradition's lost knowledge, lost dignity."[834] Interestingly, travel to the US was, for some of

[831] Habiba, Interview by author.
[832] Bayat, *Revolution without Revolutionaries*, 181-2.
[833] Bayat, *Revolution without Revolutionaries*, 183.
[834] Grewal, *Islam Is A Foreign Country*, 34-35.

my interlocutors, the lens through which their view of Islam shifted. In the US, they saw a more inclusive, more understanding version of Islam. After the revolution, many young people fled or left Egypt, traveling to countries abroad for study or work, and this relocation affected the way these youth viewed the tradition. As I have shown thus far in the dissertation, my interlocutors had for many years taken the Islam they learned in Egypt to be a given, a part of their lives they did not ask questions about. For the few interlocutors I interviewed who did leave Egypt, traveling to countries where Islam was not the majority religion pushed them to relearn aspects of the tradition they could not question before.

'Aziza left Egypt after the Rabi'a massacre which was too much for her to bear. When she spent time in the US, she consciously made the decision to only do the bare minimum in worship, until she can independently arrive at conclusions about Islam without the pressure of Egyptian society. Like many of my interlocutors, she no longer listens to Egyptian shaykhs and looks for alternative religious sources. She reads those sources critically and then decides what she believes in. "I feel I need to relearn everything," she told me. This includes giving less value to certain practices that Egyptian society touted to be of utmost importance. In Egypt, she explained,

> It was really important how we [women] dress. I don't give it the same value here [in the US] … But I don't care anymore the way I did before. Not because I don't care about God or religion, but because I don't think that these things are important. I think this is how our culture interpreted religion, because the social aspect of it tends to be important. And, of course, social judgment is just a normal thing, so things that have a superficial nature are given a lot more importance than other things that people can't see.[835]

Egyptian culture placed more importance on material forms of religiosity rather than focusing on the internal, which she sees as more important. "I feel we've forgotten what is … the actual intent behind rituals and rules." She then made an argument for the contextuality of a practice

[835] 'Aziza, Interview by author (in English).

like hijab. The underlying principle of the practice, she argued, is "women covering and not wearing provocative things, [so] they are not overly attractive to stupid men." But in the US, the more conservatively dressed a woman is, the more attention she draws to herself. "I'm not saying that I can take off my hijab and wear a bikini," 'Aziza clarified, "but the context is different, so the rules, the emphasis, have to be different."[836]

The revolution and its aftermath pushed 'Aziza to live elsewhere. And while living in a country in which Islam is not the majority religion, she freely reevaluate the Egyptian Islam she grew up with. She continues to wear the hijab in the US but confessed that she has been doing the bare minimum. Likewise, her faith in God and Islam has become "completely logical":

> I believe in God, because I don't think the universe can exist without a higher power … I believe in Islam, because chronologically speaking, it is the last religion; it is the only religion that acknowledges the previous Abrahamic ones, so it is, historically speaking, the soundest one to follow. And I think the Qur'an is a miracle, not because of the text *per se*, but because no text could [be] maintained for 1400 years [as it was] ... That, for me, is a miracle: that it was maintained and no changes were made to it. That's about it ... But issues of faith and spirituality are kind of at a loss now, and it's more about me trying to find a connection. I need to go about it in my own way to make sense out of everything else that has to do with religion. Because when we were taught about religion, we were taught about everything except what I just talked about: except for the basic faith and basic belief. Because we took it for granted. We didn't really have another option. Any other way of thinking about it wasn't fathomable.[837]

What 'Aziza explained is what I mean by revolutionary religion. In her case, her traveling abroad pushed her to question the givens she was taught growing up. Without the external pressures of Egyptian society and family, she tried to make sense of the beliefs she had long held onto without looking for the deeper meanings. She wanted to believe and practice, because she had found her way to those things independently. She suspended her previous beliefs in order to

[836] 'Aziza, Interview by author.
[837] 'Aziza, Interview by author (in English).

come back to them on her own. Or perhaps she will forge her own path, which seems to be the case.

Ayman, the photojournalist, was inversely affected by his travels to the US. Living here, he told me, and seeing the diversity of the Muslim communities made him realize that there are many ways of being Muslim. When he relocated, Ayman's "mental health was in shambles." While he was still in Egypt, he was picked up by the authorities frequently (for his Salafi allegiances but also for being politically active) and oftentimes tortured. Having been through this and seeing people die on the street, the "pain of doubt," Ayman said, became very strong. "I would walk, for example, on the Alexandrian corniche at dawn, and I would look to the heavens, to God, and yell, 'Why are you doing this to me? Why are you letting us die? Why are you willing to let me be arrested and tortured? Show me the truth!'"[838] After telling me this, Ayman said he wanted to show me a picture of himself at the time and flipped through his phone. "You will not recognize me," he said. "This is what I looked like then," he said, holding his phone up to me. A broken young man with dark circles under his angry, tired eyes looked back at me. "I was mentally unwell," he continued. "This is what I look like now. There is a huge difference, right?" There was.

Ayman could not take it anymore, so he quit medical school and headed to Europe, where he became "agnostic," and eventually landed in New York, where he was exposed to new forms of Islam.[839] "The issues of religion and God were always on my mind," Ayman recalled. "They were filters that I saw the world through." When he went to New York, he saw the power of, but also the disappointments that came with, materialism and neo-imperialism. This made him

[838] Ayman, Interview by author.
[839] Ayman acknowledged his privilege and was well aware that it was only because his family was well-off that he could travel this way.

reevaluate his stance on religion and belief in God. His first step was to go back to the Friday prayers at the mosque. There, he "found that there are open-minded Muslims, liberal Muslims, Muslims who accept homosexual people, Muslims who accept atheists. It was no longer a monolithic experience." He recalled a saying by one of the medieval scholars that is used often by Sufis: "The paths that lead to Allah are as many as the breaths taken by all creation."[840]

This was not what he was taught in Egypt. One of the concepts he learned as a Salafi student was the idea that there is only one group of believers that would be saved in the Hereafter, known as *al-firqa al-najiya*. They derive this from a *hadith* found in Bukhari in which the Prophet states: "The best of my community [i.e., Muslims] are my generation, then those who come after them and then those who follow them." To the Salafis, they are the ones who follow most closely in the footsteps of the Prophet and his successors and thus believe that they are that saved group.[841] His Salafi teachers taught Ayman that all Muslim groups go to hell except this one group, a belief, Ayman reflected, that has become nonsense to him: "I saw the African American community, and their religiosity is different from that of the West African community or the Pakistani one or the Arab. Even the Arabs, if you go to a Moroccan mosque, it is different from an Egyptian mosque…[842] So are all of these going to hell?"[843]

He ultimately felt that he was free to be the kind of Muslim he wanted to be in the US, but also the fact that Muslims are othered in the US pushed him to be with others who are like him. Moreover, he met and married his wife in the U.S., and she encouraged him to explore the

[840] The saying is attributed to the medieval jurist and Sufi Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) who was also the disciple of Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328), whose work influences Salafis today. Muhammad Ratib al-Nabulsi, "Ahadith Ramadan 1429 AH," September 11, 2009, http://www.nabulsi.com/brown/ar/print.php?art=1833, accessed June 12, 2019.
[841] Haykel, "On the Nature," 34.
[842] Grewal writes, "Muslims in the US make up the most demographically diverse national Muslim population in the world." While many Muslim Americans take pride in this fact, "this diversity is also a source of divisive conflicts over religious authority." See Grewal, *Islam Is A Foreign Country*, 41.
[843] Ayman, Interview by author.

myriad forms of Islam therein. "I have become a mixture of many things as a result of the diversity," Ayman concluded.

In this section, I have shown how the Islamic discursive tradition as explicated by religious figures, like the *'ulama* and the *du'ah* in Egypt, is no longer as authoritative to Muslim Egyptian youth as it was before the revolution and its aftermath. Even those young Muslims who claim to be practicing have questioned the idea of one orthodoxy, one way to be Muslim. This does not mean that the *'ulama* and *du'ah* will entertain proposals to shift Islamic discourse to appease the youth, who no longer trust their expertise, or the state, which also has called on Islamic institutions in Egypt, like al-Azhar, to reform religious discourse.

"I Am Not A Believer"

"I am not a believer," (*ana mish mu'min*) is how my nonbelieving interlocutors described themselves. They avoided using the often-pejorative term *kafir*, which denotes "not so much epistemic rejection as affective ungratefulness."[844] Except on one occasion, all of my interlocutors who professed nonbelief were respectful of my own beliefs and of the teachings of Islam and the Prophet.[845] In fact, one nonbeliever, kept accidentally, perhaps habitually, saying, "We believe…" or using the honorific title, our superior or master (*Sayyiduna*), for Prophet Muhammad. He often caught himself doing so and backtracked. This shows how entrenched

[844] Schielke, "Being a Nonbeliever," 304.

[845] The one exception took place off the record, so I will not relate it to any of my interlocutors. After a fruitful discussion with one male interlocutor, he questioned my own belief in God. Since I believe it is only fair that my interlocutors ask me questions, as I did of them, I indulged him, but no answer I gave was satisfactory. He then questioned my choice to veil. When I told him that I believe that it is something that pleases God, he scoffed and said that I only wear it to stand out (among people) and to make others feel less than (*"Inti biti'mili kida 'ashan al-tamayyuz*"). He then praised women he knew who recently took the veil off, and said that when they were veiled, he would never have taken a second glance at them. When they de-veiled, he said they were absolutely beautiful. He hinted that he believed my veil was oppressing me. I was hurt and a bit rattled, but I had to pretend that he did not offend me. I thanked him profusely for his time and we went our separate ways.

Islamic discourse is in the lives of Muslims in Egypt, that even when they leave the faith, they still find themselves using Islamic phrases and conversing with Islamic teachings.

The revolutions of the Arab Spring, Bayat argues, made "the subalterns believe that rules could be broken, norms altered, and sacred beliefs questioned—even the very idea of God. And they could."[846] This ushered in "a burgeoning 'atheist movement" that emerged at a time when religious parties like the Brotherhood's FJP and Salafis' al-Nour in Egypt and the Ennahda Party in Tunisia came to hold (and lose) positions in government. More than two million Arab atheists "came out" as atheists. They were featured on television debates, spoke to journalists and openly voiced their beliefs online and on social media platforms. While some youth became atheist, others lost faith in the religion they grew up with, whether Islam or Christianity.[847]

Schielke demonstrates how difficult the life of a nonbeliever in Egypt is given how "religious" the rest of society is or purports to be. This is a sentiment that some of my interlocutors also expressed. Some opined that if they made their nonbelief public, it might affect their relationship with their loved ones or cause them to lose their jobs. They did, however, all tell me, usually in hushed tones when we met in public places, that they felt more comfortable talking about their nonbelief to others and have become more open about it after the revolution. But despite the difficulties that Schielke outlines in his study, he finds that these young people commit to nonbelief because of doubts fostered by "an intimate moral discontent with a prevailing sense of religion."[848] One way they navigated some of these difficulties before was through cyberspace, where they made their discontents known online and found a support

[846] Bayat, *Revolution without Revolutionaries*, 183.
[847] Bayat, *Revolution without Revolutionaries*, 184.
[848] Schielke, "Being a Nonbeliever," 302.

network of likeminded individuals.[849] After the revolution, however, nonbelievers have found each other and started to discuss their ideas face-to-face, in real time.

Several of my "practicing" interlocutors explained that many people have turned to atheism after the uprising, especially out of despair. At least two of them mentioned the well-known story of a young woman, Zaynab al-Mahdi, who had associated with the Brotherhood and was active during the revolution. They described her as someone who was full of life and cheerful, but she made national news when she committed suicide. Maya and Habiba knew people who were close to al-Mahdi, and they had very similar stories to tell. Al-Mahdi was a veiled young woman who became depressed as the revolution petered out. "She started asking existential questions about religion and [asking] if God is just," Maya told me.[850] Al-Mahdi tried to talk to her Brotherhood friends about her doubts, but they ignored her completely and did not try to understand what she was going through. She took off the veil, felt ostracized, became depressed and ultimately killed herself. It was alarming to both Maya and Habiba, but they both sympathized with her.

Others who underwent similar conditions, Maya told me, became atheist or anti-religion. Questions of theodicy arose for many people. Maya explained: "These people [asked], if people get killed in the streets for no reason, where's God [in] all of that? They started to question the entity of God itself… If He is there and witnessing [all of this], why doesn't He do anything about what is happening?"[851] For Habiba, al-Mahdi's actions raised questions about the permissibility of suicide in this instance. If someone like al-Mahdi has gone through so much, Habiba asked, how is it possible that her suicide could take her to hell? Her uncertainty about al-

[849] Schielke, "Being a Nonbeliever," 307.
[850] Maya, Interview by author (in English).
[851] Maya, Interview by author (in English).

Mahdi's fate along with the post-revolutionary disappointment and trauma made her question many religious opinions she had previously taken for granted.[852]

On the Cusp of Nonbelief

Silim, my youngest interlocutor, talked to me about his struggles with his doubts about Islam. One of my atheist interlocutors referred me to him, describing Silim as someone who "is unsure about but is on his way to atheism." When I spoke to him in 2019, Silim was a senior at a prestigious Western university in Cairo, studying engineering. He grew up in a "normal," religious family that prays and fasts. From the time he was eight years old, his mother took him to the mosque to memorize Qur'an. "I was told I recited the Qur'an beautifully," he told me, "and in school, I was known for this." His "religious peak," he added, happened during middle school. He became an ascetic and stopped listening to music and drawing, as his "strict" Salafi "brothers" at the mosque advised him. Everything had revolved around religion. "That phase was the best phase in my life," he confided, "because I was a part of something greater than myself."[853]

Beginning in high school, after the revolution, Silim started to have doubts and visited several mosques for answers, but no one could comfort him. He eventually gave up on thinking about his questions. But the spiritual side of carrying out rituals like prayer was gone for Silim. At this point, he said, he prays just to placate his conscience ("*arayyah damiri*"). He cannot sleep at the end of the day without making up all of the five prayers he missed throughout the day for some reason that he could not explain. But he is no longer certain about his faith. This makes him feel empty. Earlier in his life, he told me, "I faced a lot of problems, but I had many friends. Life was good. I had beliefs, I was passionate, I had things to do that gave me a sense of

[852] For a discussion of Egyptian *'ulama*'s take on suicide before the 2011 revolution, see chapter two.
[853] Silim, Interview by author, Cairo, January 2019.

purpose."[854] Belief was comforting. Now that he is unsure about being Muslim, Silim worried that he would no longer fit in with society.

It was in college, during an internship, that Silim met atheists and people who did not adhere to any specific religion (*la-diniyyin*), and this shocked him. "I did not know that this mindset existed," he said. "I found out that one of my colleagues was an atheist ... I do not know why, but the idea scared me."[855] There was a range of nonbelief in the office where Silim worked. Some people believed in a god but "did not know who He is." One person in the office believed that all religions are false, and that there is no proof that God exists. This person was not searching for anything, Silim told me. He instead made fun of religions and said things like "he will turn his microwave into a god and worship it." "This person used to be my [clinical] therapist," Silim confided.[856] Silim had previously asked this person about his doubts, and he told him, "If you feel there is no God, then believe that." Concerned, Silim asked him, "What if in the end, there did turn out to be a God?" The man replied, "Then you will have done what you saw was right, did your own reasoning (*ijtihad*) and if He punishes you, then He is cruel, and there is nothing you will be able to do about it."[857]

The only thing Silim was sure of is that there is a God. "Other than that, I am not sure of anything." No one has given him a satisfying answer. Islam gave him a system of values to uphold, but now that he does not practice, he does not know what his values are. "The only value [I have now] is that I do not want to hurt anyone." Yet something held him back from exploring things he long held off from doing like drinking alcohol and having premarital sex, and Silim did

[854] Silim, Interview by author.
[855] Silim, Interview by author.
[856] Perhaps about a dozen of my interlocutors confided that they are in therapy, something that was not as common in Egypt before the revolution, or was stigmatized at least. Elizabeth M. Coker, "Selfhood and Social Distance: Toward a Cultural Understanding of Psychiatric Stigma in Egypt," *Social Science & Medicine*, 61.5 (2005): 920-30.
[857] Silim, Interview by author.

not know what it was. To me, it sounded like the difficulty of breaking out of habituation. It is similar to his inner struggle with giving up prayer every night; for years, he had been conditioned to believe that certain things were not allowed, and this stayed with him even during his moments of doubt. The value of not harming others is also of extreme importance to Silim. People believe for the sake of conformity and not because they believe, Silim divulged. People do not do their own research. People conform out of comfort or to fit in better with the rest of society.

Belief in Nonbelief

Musa was raised by a "religious family" in the rural Egyptian governorate of Minufiyya, but by the age of twenty, he started having doubts that he could not tell his family about. It was around then that the revolution started, and he moved to Cairo where he met likeminded people. Musa talked about how he grew up memorizing the Qur'an and praying every prayer in congregation at the mosque. "I was the perfect Muslim child," he said. In fact, he added with a chuckle, the rest of the villagers knew it was time to pray as soon as they saw him leave the house, even before the call to prayer (*adhan*) was made. But certain issues like "the marginalization of homosexual people" and the *hudud* (i.e. corporeal punishments found in the Qur'an for certain sins) did not sit well with Musa even when he was "religious." He felt he could not ask his parents these questions, but he could not stop thinking about them.

One day, he just became "ambivalent" about his doubts. Like so many other young Egyptians, for Musa, Mubarak's fall showed him that nothing was stable, including authorities. With access to the internet and then later to the city (Cairo), Musa became acquainted with people and ideas he did not have access to at home. He eventually also became ambivalent about the presence of a higher power. At that point, the counselor he was seeing suggested that if he

prayed, his troubles and doubts would go away. "It really bothered me, so I told her I do not believe (*ana mish mu'min*),"[858] he recounted. His counselor, seemingly worried that this was a phenomenon, told him that the revolution is the reason for the rise of nonbelief in Egypt, that the youth were revolting against everything. Musa believed that this was too simplistic an explanation but agreed that there was some truth in the statement.

Shortly after the revolution, Musa still did not know that he was a nonbeliever. He "struggled with" and "hated" the idea of not being a believer. "I still see it this way," he told me, "because … my place of birth forced me to believe in this one thing." "We followed our fathers blindly," he said, echoing verses of the Qur'an as Silim did when making the same point.[859] "I could not be myself in the country, so I came to Cairo and found people like me." And though he was agnostic when I met him, Musa argued that the teachings instilled in him when he was religious still governed his actions. For a long time, for example, he could not have a relationship, because he was taught that it was wrong to do so before marriage.[860] "I just want to be a good person," he told me, again, similarly to Silim. "I do not want to harm anyone. I believe that if there is a just higher power, it will view me with favor. *If* it is just."[861]

Despite his belief in his nonbelief, Musa remained respectful of Muslims and Islam, but Faris was more hurt by the religion and those who preach it. Faris's religious upbringing was heavily influenced by his mother's Salafi way of thought. After resisting his mother's teachings for a while, just before college, he decided to "become closer to God," and joined as many religious education classes as he could. He delved further and further into theological studies to

[858] Musa, Interview by author, Cairo, January 2019.
[859] See, for example, Qur'an 2:170.
[860] Both he and Silim confessed that their eye contact with the other sex was also affected by this, since they were taught to lower their gaze. They asked if I could tell during our interview. I could.
[861] Musa, Interview by author.

the point where he began having doubts. Each time his shaykh introduced him to a new existential or theological hypothetical, Faris's doubts increased. His teacher told him that doubt is only natural: "You experience more and more doubts until you reach a stage where you believe without thinking."[862] But this method of breaking everything down to build it back up caused Faris a lot of problems that only continued to grow. One day, Faris recounted,

> During the *hadith* lesson, the shaykh told us a famous story about al-Bukhari: al-Bukhari went to get a *hadith* from a man after traveling for three months. While the man was narrating the *hadith* to Bukhari, he stretched out his hand to a horse as if he was going to give it an apple or a lump of sugar. And when the horse approached the man, he hid what was in his hand and tied the horse up. So when al-Bukhari saw this, he told the man, since you deceived the horse, you could be deceiving me, too [and he did not take the *hadith* from the man]…[863] So I asked the shaykh, 'What if he had done this before al-Bukhari arrived? That means that al-Bukhari's *hadith*s are problematic.' The shaykh kicked me out of class, and it was the last time I went. He told me, leave and don't come back. At this time I was shaykh-less. My book was my shaykh. But someone had said, whoever is without a shaykh is lost ... Of course, this was a kind of intellectual oppression so that people do not try to think.[864]

This example is used by the shaykh and others to show how rigorous al-Bukhari's *hadith* collection methods were, but Faris asked a logical question and was punished by his teacher for it. This episode did not immediately push Faris away from religion but made him search for a new teacher. Just before the revolution, his doubts grew more intense to the point where his thoughts kept him up at night. And if he asked a shaykh his questions, he was rebuked and told that there were some questions that were off-limits. Still, he continued searching.

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[862] Faris, Interview by author.

[863] On this story, see Hani Dawwa; Hani Dawwa, "Hirs al-imam al-Bukhari 'ind jam' al-hadith," *Masrawy*, August 19, 2014, https://www.masrawy.com/islameyat/sera-7adeth/details/2014/8/19/325207/حرص-الإمام-البخاري-عند-جمع-الحديث, accessed June 4, 2019.

[864] Faris, Interview by author. Interestingly, Nakissa unearths a similar understanding while conducting ethnographic research with Azhari shaykhs. He writes, "Traditionalist scholars I spoke with strongly associated private reading with heresy. A widely circulated expression holds that whosoever takes his book as his *shaykh* has taken the devil as his *shaykh*." The technique of receiving knowledge directly from the lips of a shaykh, Nakissa continues, "is important because it ensures that whenever a student receives a text, he also partakes in companionship" with the shaykh. Nakissa, *The Anthropology of Islamic Law*, 176-7.

Theodicy played a role in Faris's story as it did with many young Egyptians as well. After having seen the atrocities happening in Syria and then personally witnessing what happened on Muhammad Mahmud St. in late 2011 in Cairo, Faris began asking existential questions: "Why is this happening?" he asked. "Where is God? Where is justice?"[865] The day Faris joined the Muhammad Mahmud protest with his brother, he had a close brush with death, and it led him to an important realization:

> [Getting hurt] made me feel that I was doing something important. It was the first time I felt that I was going to die. At that moment, this was the moment I decided I was right [in my nonbelief]. Because every other time when I felt I was close to death, I thought about God, and I worried about what would happen to me after I die. In that moment, I knew … I was done. I was not afraid. It was not that I was not afraid of death; I was not afraid of dying and being judged… If I die [I thought], I would go nowhere, to nothingness. I do not have anything to worry about.[866]

In the midst of the very protest that could have taken his life, Faris realized that his fear of God was no longer there, a fear that had previously led him to become "*mutadayyin*" (religious) in the first place.

Closer to 2012, he found a Sufi center that had opened after the revolution (I elaborate on this center later in the chapter) and became interested in the philosophical and spiritual point of view of Islam that Sufis there held. His Salafi background, however, kept him from fully accepting their theological teachings, which he viewed as lax, and he took issue with their way of interpreting the Qur'an. Nonetheless, he attended their lectures, but did not find the answers he sought, so he turned to the one who started it all for him: his mother. "I felt like everything had failed me," he said, "so I decided to go talk to my mom, even though I knew she should be the last person I speak to." His mother told him to go for *'umra* (the lesser pilgrimage) and talk to

[865] Interestingly, unlike many of my other interlocutors, Faris did not mention the Rabi'a Massacre. Perhaps this is because he had already stopped believing in God by then.
[866] Faris, Interview by author.

God there and implore Him to bring Faris closer to Him. This was Faris's last attempt at belief, and it failed miserably as he witnessed people defiling the sacred Islamic sites and contradictions within the way the Saudi Arabian state claimed to uphold Islamic teachings.

Although it took him a few years to come to this conclusion, by 2013, Faris eventually believed that, metaphysically, there is something at play that is "much bigger than a god who governs this entire universe but sits there focusing on us, when we are nothing." Eventually Faris stopped believing in God, a point he was always afraid of reaching. When we spoke, he said that his current belief was that there was a *Matrix*-inspired big-data like power that is ineffable to and defies human understanding. "But I believe there is no such thing as Allah or Jesus or Buddha or cow," he concluded. Thinking about these existential and metaphysical matters ultimately took its toll on Faris's mental health, so he stopped thinking about them altogether. "I sought medical help because of these things at some point," he said, laughing.

> That is when I thought about al-Ghazali's quote when he was on his deathbed—and this is not the *nass*, but he said, I wish I was like my mother; she could not read nor think. I feel that I regret having read and learned so much. It made life more difficult for me. I became an overthinker.[867] I escaped from all of this. Now I sleep without thinking about any of these things. It was really hard to reach that point [laughs]. There was a point when I used to tire myself so I can go to sleep. My eyesight got weaker because of it. I drink a lot of alcohol, so I can shut down [laughs].[868]

[867] Amani who put me in touch with Faris told me that after the revolution, she, too, questioned religious authorities, and this led her to read *sira* and Islamic history books. The history of wars and confusion after the Prophet's death confused her, so she stopped reading. "My atheist friends," she told me, "kept reading … and this made them ask questions. The more they read, the more they asked. This backfired. I think something sparked this. Some kind of disappointment in their lives that made them ask a specific question. This is how it usually starts." Amani, Interview by author. Amani's analysis holds up for Amir, another one of my interlocutors as well. Amir, a young man who works in marketing, told me that he was disappointed and shocked when he delved deeper into Islamic political history soon after the 2011 uprising began. Most of the caliphs, he found out, were murdered, some by other Muslims. "I found out why we don't learn three-fourths of the details of the political history of the Righteous Caliphs of the Umayyad and Fatimid history," he said. They are "full of backstabbing." Amir, Interview by author, Cairo, January 2019 (in English).

[868] Faris, Interview by author.

The days of belief, Faris confessed, like several of my other nonbelieving interlocutors, were the days when he had inner peace that he no longer felt he had when he met with me. Belief, to Faris, is "an escape" for people from reality until they die or are judged by God.

I asked if the revolution was the reason behind his nonbelief. At first, he denied that it played a role in his doubts but then said that it emboldened him and accelerated the process to nonbelief, which he said he would have reached eventually on his own. The revolution allowed him to vocalize his inner frustrations with and anger toward God and feelings of injustice.[869] It also added to his doubts. Like many of my interlocutors, Faris came to know more people during the protests, people whom he would not have met during his days of religiosity, of being "*mutadayyin*," people who ultimately shared his budding doubts and helped him make sense of them. "It would have been impossible for me to meet these people if it were not for the revolution," he told me. "The revolution or the society that emerged from it plucked me out of the circle [I was in before] where I would have never developed the way I did [had I stayed]."[870]

Silim similarly believed that humans naturally ask existential questions, but the revolution either sped up the process or made it more acceptable to ask such questions. With the internet, social media and a pivotal political moment, the youth found the space to doubt where they could not before. This is a generational phenomenon, Silim argued. When he looks at his father's generation, he sees subservience throughout the reigns of Presidents Nasir, Sadat and Mubarak. "I talk to my father a lot," he told me. "Information is at our fingertips, and we do not believe blindly, because we do our own research." His father's generation, however, believed in whatever they were told and conformed to keep up appearances. "This explains why they were oppressed for so long." They did not ask questions and did as they were told. "We were taught to

[869] He created comics and memes about Islam and Allah on social media which angered many.
[870] Faris, Interview by author.

suppress the existential questions that naturally come to our minds." Growing up, Silim remembered, he could not ask his mother anything, because she got upset. "But our generation no longer takes things for granted," he concluded,[871] and the youth recently began to ask the questions they were too afraid to ask before, questions that go so far as to challenge God's existence.

Sufi Sensibilities

It would be a mistake, however, to think that all Egyptian youth have turned to atheism or to being skeptical of Egyptian religious scholars and the tradition they represent. Some of my interlocutors, in fact, turned to Sufism as a final resort in the aftermath of the revolution, and they did so for a variety of reasons. As Mittermaier shows in her seminal work *Dreams That Matter*, the Egyptian middle and upper-middle class have been interested in and a part of Sufi circles and orders for many years. Her demographic, however, is older than mine.[872] What I try to show here is that: 1. There has been an increased interest in Sufism among middle and upper-middle class youth, and 2. The revolution brought these youth to Sufism in various ways, including disappointment in the stances of *'ulama* and institutions or even love and admiration for these very figures. Interestingly, even those interlocutors who took issue with Sufism before (usually due to their Salafi past) have become more accepting of the mystic way.

In his fieldwork-based work on Sufism in Fayyum, Egypt, Shahata Siyam argues that Sufism is the religious expression of the poor. In this way, he reinforces the divide between Great and Little Traditions as popularized by Gustave von Grunbaum and others.[873] "What we

[871] Silim, Interview by author.
[872] Mittermaier, *Dreams That Matter*.
[873] Gregory Aldous, "The Islamic City Critique: Revising the Narrative," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 56.3 (2013), 491.

mean by popular religion [*al-din al-sha'bi*]," Siyam writes, "is a religious network that brings together mostly poor people or laymen, especially considering that it is a means by which one can alleviate the pains and difficulty of a financially burdensome life … Sufi tariqas' call for purifying the soul and asceticism become a way of distancing one's self from the torture of the existing social structure."[874]

Nakissa adeptly explains the role of a Sufi shaykh. He writes that learning about the Shari'a and its rules does not in and of itself lead one to better character and "good dispositions/mental attributes." One must work to acquire such things (as Asad and Mahmood suggest), and one way to do this is to follow the guidance of a Sufi shaykh, who, like a doctor, finds out what ails a patient (read Muslim) and prescribes "special medicine as treatment (*ʿilāj*) for the diseases of the mind/heart (*amrāḍ al-qulūb*)." The shaykh may instruct the student to read a specific amount or passage of the Qur'an daily, for example, or repeat certain litanies (*adhkar*) every day. Each student receives a different treatment from the shaykh depending on what ails her.[875] This often comes from a belief that these shaykhs are "friends of God" (*awliya*) and are endowed with esoteric knowledge from God to which others are not privy. Each shaykh follows a long line of *awliya*, going back to the Prophet, and teaches his or her disciples a specific path (*tariqa*) that brings the disciples closer to God. Further, the shaykh's proximity to God "allows him to intercede on behalf of those who place themselves under his protection."[876]

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[874] Shahata Siyam, *Al-Din al-sha'bi fi Misr: Naqd al-'aql al-mutahayil* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Amma li-l-Kutub, 2015), 9- 10. In volume 5 of Markaz Dal's work, the editors argue that celebrating the Prophet's birthday (*mawlid*) and the veneration of saints is an inherited (and beautiful) part of popular religious life in Egypt. Unlike Siyam who shows disdain for these practices, the researchers here lament attempts to curb these practices. Qandil, Fayiz and Fawzi, (eds.), *Al-Halah al-diniyya*, Vol. 5, 29-30.

[875] Nakissa, *The Anthropology of Islamic Law*, 107.

[876] Rachid Chih, "What is a Sufi Order? Revisiting the Concept through A Case Study of the Khalwatiyya in Contemporary Egypt" in *Sufism and the Modern in Islam*, eds. Martin Van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 29. See also Nile Green, *Sufism: a Global History* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 3-6; and Tarek Ladjal and Benaouda Bensaid, "Contemporary Egypt: A Study of Sufi Political Engagement in the Pre and Post-Revolutionary Reality of January 2011," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 50:4 (2015): 468–485.

Annemarie Schimmel writes that Sufi scholars do not reject Shari'a and its rules but rather add to them—"additions that made more exacting demands on their personal lives."[877] The famed Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), Schimmel posits, should be credited for creating the "moderate Sufi outlook [that] began to color the life of most average Muslims." It was he who first argued that it is "the life of the heart that matters," and as such crafted a method "of combining the life of the heart in strict accord with the law and with a theologically sound attitude" that made even skeptic "orthodox theologians take the Sufi movement seriously."[878] In recent years, the *du'ah* notably introduced "purification of the heart" (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) to many of the young people I spoke to.



Figure 7: I was surprised to find well-known former Jihadist Najih Ibrahim promoting Sufism "as a means of combatting extremism" at the Azhar wing of the massive Annual Cairo International Bookfair (January 2019). Photo by author.

Skepticism about Sufism in Egypt continued, but after the defeated revolution, even my interlocutors who once deeply mistrusted the mystic path became tolerant of it. Hasan, for example, told me that he has always disagreed with Sufis, but he now accepts Sufism, because it has become a place of recourse for many youth who could potentially leave Islam altogether.

[877] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 84.
[878] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 96.

Sufism is still *bid'a*, Hasan told me, using the word Salafis use to describe practices that they believe are not rooted in the way of the Prophet and his earliest followers. But Hasan swore to me that there was a time in his life when he wished Sufism could be "completely eradicated."[879] It is a movement that he saw as "corrupting religion." Salafis largely condemn Sufis, claiming that they associate others with God, give saints and prophets powers that belong exclusively to God, and/or deny or view God's attributes literally rather than metaphorically,[880] and thus commit *shirk*. They censure Sufis for practices that they claim are un-Islamic like visiting the graves of saints, celebrating Prophet Muhammad's birthday (*al-mawlid al-nabawi*) or seeking someone or something's intercession with God.[881] Despite these concerns, Hasan has become more accepting of Islamic views that run contrary to his, including Sufism, arguing that there is more than one correct way in Islam. "When I hear now that a friend of mine took a different path," Hasan explained, "I say, good, at least he has not become atheist… I will not deny it: if someone asks me if [Sufism] is right or wrong, I will say it is wrong … Does it represent religion? No, it does not. But in the end … at least this person still has a religious core" and has not fallen into atheism or any of the other "risks prevalent in the Islamic world today."[882] Sufism was something of a lesser of two evils.

Although several people I spoke with felt similarly toward Sufism, some like Basim were more critical. Basim told me that many of his friends had turned to Sufism but as part of a fad. Sufism, he said, is the "Starbucks of Islam," a trendy, hip way to be in the world. "You want a nice Islam that makes you feel fuzzy inside?" he asked rhetorically. "You go in the morning [to a

[879] Hasan, Interview by author.
[880] For example, Sufis, many of whom are considered theologically Ash'ari, believe that when God is described as having a "hand," it is not a figure of speech. Salafis thus accuse them of anthropomorphizing God. Many Azhar shaykhs are Ash'ari.
[881] Haykel, "On the Nature," 38-41.
[882] Hasan, Interview by author.

Sufi circle] and make *dhikr* [remembrance of God] and then drink [alcohol] and date and travel to Las Vegas and do as you please… then come back and ask God for forgiveness [*istighfar*] and all is well again."[883] This is what Sufism offers many of the youth now. Of course, not all Sufis are like this, Basim qualified, but many of them are. Women, for example learn that—regardless of whether you think it is *fard* or not—they will not have to wear the veil because, in the end, God is most merciful, most forgiving (*Rahim* and *Ghafur*).[884] This is the same for drinking alcohol for some. Many think this way, Basim said: "I made a mistake? I will make *istighfar*." Fear of God is minimal, while trust in His mercy is infinite to the point where people do not think they will be held accountable for their sins. "If I was disappointed in religion and in the revolution, what is the one cool thing I can be, so I do not turn to atheism?" Basim again asked rhetorically. "I will become Sufi."[885]

Habiba explained that initially she was reluctant to join Sufi circles immediately after the revolution mainly due to her upbringing in a Brotherhood household. Brotherhood members, she told me, "have this phobia of Sufism, because they see it as something that tells you not to get into politics" and because it offers an individualized version of Islam that gives precedence to your direct relationship to God and puts the communitarian aspect of Brotherhood life in

[883] 'Ali Jum'a disapprovingly talks about a "Sufi fad" (*modat al-Tasawwuf*) in which youth only embody the physicality of being a Sufi (*bi-tariqa shakliyya*) and do not conform to the pillars of being Sufi (*arkan al-tasawwuf*) or the path to Allah (*al-tariq ila* Allah). This physical Sufism, he explained, entails wearing white clothing or hijab, carrying around prayer beads, etc. "It is a stylish statement," Jum'a argued. This is not Sufism. The Sufi path has steps derived from the Islamic tradition that lead to (moral) excellence (*ihsan*). The path is about knowing God and knowing yourself, he continued. It is not about what you wear or how you look; it is about purifying the heart of all that ails it and beautifying it with all that is good ("*takhliyat al-qalb min kull qabih wa tahliyat al-qalb bi-kull sahih*.") echoing the equation popularized by the *du'ah*, many of whom were Jum'a's students. Jum'a added that internal purification should be accompanied by worshipping God and civilization-building ('*ibadat Allah* and '*imarat al-ard*). "Haqiqat al-tasawwuf wa modat al-tasawwuf," YouTube video, 32:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1dW6ZPn0CI&ab_channel=أ.دعليجمعةDrAliGomaa, accessed December 20, 2020. See also Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 98-100 and 131.

[884] In fact, many of my female interviewees who had taken off the veil were also deeply invested in Sufism. This is not to say that all women who are interested in Sufism are not veiled, but there is an observable correlation.

[885] Basim, Interview by author.

jeopardy. But since 2016, Habiba has revolted against these Brotherhood notions and has begun to discover Sufism. She loves Sufi poetry and songs praising God and the Prophet (*madih*). Interestingly, she ties her interest in Sufism to her yoga journey. "It enriches my spiritual experience," she explained. "I see it as a spiritual path. Not that I want to be Sufi. It is more about not having experienced religion from a strictly spiritual side."[886] In this way, Habiba considered an Islam that focused on spirituality and individualism rather than the practice- and ritual-oriented, communitarian version of Islam that the Brotherhood espoused.

That Sufism is apolitical in nature (as Habiba mentioned) is a belief that many of my interlocutors held.[887] A prime example of this is clear from my interview with 'Isam who found and became a devoted member of the Sufi community after the revolution. 'Isam told me that prior to 2013, 'he did not care much for religion and thus did not know much about the Brotherhood, Salafis or al-Azhar. When the 2011 revolution came around, 'Isam was active politically (both on the ground in Cairo and at his university) to the point where he unfavorably judged anyone who did not support the protests. "I felt I was fighting for justice," he said. He felt that there was too much abuse of power and that well-connected people got away with everything.[888]

In 2012, however, his political views took a different turn. He had become disengaged from politics, and this allowed him to "explore the world beyond." After going through

[886] Habiba, Interview by author.
[887] There is an understanding that Sufi orders prefer to focus on the internal, i.e. "the purification of the soul and the strengthening of Muslim's spiritual relationship with God in preparation for the life to come," while paying less or no attention to worldly matters like politics. Du'a 'Abd al-Latif, "Sufiyyat Misr.. Al-Sulta wa tawzif al-'atifa al-diniyya," *Al-Jazeera*, May 28, 2018, https://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2018/5/28/صوفية-مصر-السلطة-وتوظيف-العاطفة, accessed December 20, 2020. Historically, however, there have been politically active Sufis. Some, like founder of the Shadhili Sufi order Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili, even took part in the Crusades. See Ladjal and Bensaid, "Contemporary Egypt; and Alix Philippon, "Bons soufis' et 'mauvais islamistes:' La sociologie à l'épreuve de l'idéologie," *Social Compass*, 62.2: 2015: 187-98. 'Ali Jum'a and Ahmad al-Tayyib both belong to Sufi tariqas and are, as we saw, politically active as well.
[888] 'Isam, Interview by author, Cairo, September 2018 (in English).

something personal in 2012 that he preferred to keep to himself, ‘Isam began to pray, quit smoking and asked a “religious” friend for guidance. This was the “beginning of my connection with God,” a feeling, ‘Isam said, that was akin to a beautiful honeymoon period. He listened to ‘Ali al-Jafri, and it changed his life. He had no idea that al-Jafri was Sufi, but he was enamored by al-Jafri’s rhetoric, and then when he met Sufis in person, he was even more impressed by the way they treated others and carried themselves.[889] He learned that these people whom he sensed were special are what Sufis call the saintly “friends of God” or *awliya*. These are people who have risen in spiritual rank to the point where they are “special intimates” of God and can then guide other Muslims down the spiritual path. Just being close to these people, ‘Isam said, “changes a person” in a “very positive way.”[890]

When he first met the “*awliya*,” he still viewed the 2011 revolution with favor, but a friend warned him that the shaykhs would not share his political views. “Most of the shaykhs, if not all of them,” he explained, “do not believe in instantaneous change. They don’t believe in us taking to the streets and instigating change the day after tomorrow and [that] everything will be good. They believe in a long process of correcting.” This eventually became ‘Isam’s belief as well. Everything they preached was true, he said, so why would their political views not be correct as well? There was a consensus among them all that the revolution was not the way to go, and this convinced ‘Isam: if all of these people of vast knowledge and who are close to God agree that revolting against the ruler is not the correct course of action, then surely, they are right. Quoting a *hadith* to give credence to his point about his teachers’ correct opinion, ‘Isam

[889] Among the qualities that ‘Isam admired in the shaykhs was their ability to not be vindictive and to be kind to those who are unkind to them. Similarly, Nakissa talks about the effect a shaykh can have on his follower’s demeanor through companionship (*suhba*). One can learn Shari‘a from a shaykh by observing and emulating his mannerisms. Nakissa, *The Anthropology of Islamic Law*, chapter 4. See also Green, *Sufism*, 9.
[890] ‘Isam, Interview by author.

recited: "My *umma* will not unite on misguidance."[891] "As long as these figures whom I respect and revere have similar opinions, they're probably right," he concluded.[892]

He then defended all of the public Sufi leaders like al-Jafri and Jum'a whom people have accused of being puppets for the government, and argued that they are some of the most knowledgeable people he ever met who also do not care for worldly gain. Anyone who claims otherwise "should go to hell," he said. 'Isam thus completely shed his revolutionary politics and embraced the Sufi community's views as his own. Consensus of the scholars he respected was proof enough that whatever stance they took was the correct one.

This shift was no easy feat, 'Isam explained. As someone who earlier held onto abstract values like justice, 'Isam said that it was difficult for him (and many others like him) to justify the apolitical stance of his Sufi teachers, but he had trust in their knowledge and believed that they knew things that he did not. The revolution was *haram*, 'Isam said outright. There was consensus about this among senior Azhar scholars, even if some shaykhs there disagreed. When I asked him if he agreed with al-Azhar's assessment, the once revolutionary declared, "I believe that we shouldn't have [protested]. Will we go to hell because we did? No. Will God smite us for doing this? No, because God is merciful. He knows that we were misguided."[893] Many of Jum'a's students wanted to join the revolution, 'Isam explained:

> Shaykh 'Imad 'Iffat, whom Shaykh 'Ali [Jum'a] loved [like a son], he joined, wanted to die in the cause and got what he wished for. I seek Allah's forgiveness [*astaghfir Allah*], but [laughs], would Shaykh 'Imad go to hell because he chose take to the streets? God willing, [*in sha Allah*] no; he [will] get the highest gratification [from God] for joining that day. Is Shaykh 'Ali mad at 'Imad for joining the revolution? No. He's upset for him.

[891] For *hadith*, see Ibn Majah, *English Translation of Sunan Ibn Mâjah*, Vol. 5, Hadith no. 39, 174.
[892] 'Isam, Interview by author. This understanding probably also stems from the belief that the *awliya*, due to their closeness to God, also have "access to God's divine qualities," can know things that others do not (i.e. have *ma'rifa*) and can work miracles (*karamat*). Green, *Sufism*, 9.
[893] 'Isam, Interview by author.

> He is sad that he left us. He was his [figurative] son. Does that mean that Shaykh ʻAli vilifies everyone who did so? His own [figurative] son did! And died doing it.[894]

The issue is bigger than *halal* and *haram,* ʻIsam argued, which is why it is difficult for many people to swallow the difficult truths these shaykhs speak. But, again, the consensus among them (*ijmaʻ*), the clarity and certainty they have, reassured ʻIsam.

One of ʻIffat's students, Ziyad, was Sufi long before the revolution began, and although he respected Jumʻa prior to the revolution, he came to strongly disagree with his teachings. After the revolution, Ziyad explained, the middle class wanted to preserve the status quo and not have to think about women's rights, the rights of the poor and minorities, or any of the uncomfortable, potentially-reformist questions that arose with the uprisings. So Jumʻa "created Sufi rhetoric" that "scares people away from any sort of change." He relies too much on the rhetoric of miracles (*muʻjizat*) and supernatural wonders (*karamat*) that Sufis believe God gives to his *awliya*. "I am a Sufi person," Ziyad started. "I do not deny this at all. I live on the blessings of *Sayyida* Nafisa.[895] I seek her help in everything I do. I talk to her all the time. So I have faith in *awliya* and *karamat*. But what I know is that for this to be part of public discourse like this, this is odd. And it is built on waiting for miracles."[896] This reliance on miracles to deliver change is antithetical to being proactive and does not lead to liberation. ʻIsam talked about abstract values as something he fought for in the past but is now convinced by his Sufi teachers that aspiring to reach these values may not be the best course to take, since there are hidden dangers not apparent

[894] ʻIsam, Interview by author.
[895] *Sayyida* Nafisa (d. 824) is a Sufi saint and one of the descendants of the Prophet who died and is buried in Cairo. She "had a great reputation for possessing barakah (blessings from God) and performing miracles," including healing the sick. "Al-Sayyida Nafisa," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1689, accessed July 29, 2019.
[896] Ziyad, Interview by author.

to everyone. Ziyad lamented this lack of proactivity and blamed Sufi rhetoric for teaching people "to endure injustice."[897]

Since Ziyad lost his Sufi shaykh to the revolution in 2011, he has been searching for a new teacher. "I am looking for someone who will lead me in my path," Ziyad told me. "His absence is really affecting me … This is one of the things I prayed for deeply."[898] Ziyad was one of those young upper-middle class Egyptians who followed a Sufi path before the 2011 uprisings started, but there were many more who began searching for teachers to lead them down the spiritual path. Many of my interviewees either joined or had heard of a specific Sufi center that was established in 2011. The center (temporarily) served as a safe haven for many of the religiously inclined revolutionary youth who had no one else to turn to. Amani was one of these youth. "We were all upper-middle class youth with trust issues and complexes," she began.[899]

The center did not stay open long. A couple of years after it opened, senior members and financers of the center discovered that one of the scholars running the institution was taking sexual advantage of female followers under the guise of being their mentor and healer. Amani was among those who recounted the story to me.[900] Between or after lectures, the youth in attendance would go sit with one particular shaykh who started his own Sufi path (*tariqa*) and vie for his attention, so that they could "gain [spiritual] rank (*nartaqi*)" and "become the shaykh's friend."[901] They would spend time sending prayers and blessings to the Prophet collectively in the way the shaykh instructed them to. He became their spiritual caregiver (*murabbi*). The way you got closer to your *murabbi*, Amani explained, is by opening up to him

[897] Ziyad, Interview by author.
[898] Ziyad, Interview by author.
[899] Amani, Interview by author.
[900] Several of my interlocutors actually told me the story in hushed voices, thinking I had not heard it before, but it was a well-traveled story among this class of young Cairene Egyptians.
[901] Amani, Interview by author.

about anything: marriage trouble, personal issues. The more he knew about you, the more he could help you grow. So he knew everyone's secrets. He would have one-on-one meetings with followers.

Eventually, one young woman told members that she had a "special relationship" with the shaykh. Senior members subsequently discovered that almost a dozen young women had similar experiences with the shaykh and did not know that something inappropriate was happening. The board confronted him, and in 2015, it decided to shut down the center.[902] People were in denial about the shaykh's actions, Inas, who was on the board, told me. Several members would ask her how the shaykh was capable of such things if they themselves saw the *karamat* he was endowed with. "*What karamat*?" she asked them. "Seeing people's reactions," she said, "made me feel that I understood what it means for religion to be the opiate of the masses. I had a personal moment where I said, God, I hope this is not what [religion] is for me... I hope I'm not opiated, that my faith is not made of opium."[903] People believed what they wanted to believe, Inas explained. "They make believe to the extent that—I just felt how dangerous belief can be."

[902] Amani, Interview by author.
[903] Inas, Interview by author (in English).



Figure 8: Amani's unfinished artistic portrayal of the Shaykh as Aladdin and his female follower as a doting Jasmine. Photo by author.

For those for whom the Sufi center was a place of trust and safety, the moral and ethical dilemma this episode posed was too daunting and, ultimately, life-altering.[904] Amani has become nonchalant about religious practice now. "I do not need any more disappointments," she told me. "I cannot even listen to poems glorifying the Prophet anymore" or attend *dhikr* circles. Let everyone do their own thing. The time for community and communal worship is over, Amani concluded. 'Aziza also attended events at the center sometimes and said that the shock of this episode was "a big slap on the face, reminding everyone that shaykhs are people, too. And they can be bad people."[905] People right in the middle of it, 'Aziza explained, "either went into depression for a while, but they kept their relationship to religion and redefined it, or they left it

[904] One member of the board told me that the moment she found out about the abuse was a turning point for her; her life has become "pre- and post-" the Sufi center.
[905] 'Aziza, Interview by author.

altogether and went the other way." In a time when the youth were already distrustful of authority, this was one more blow to the trust they placed in those with religious authority.

Al-Azhar and State Secularization Efforts

While a few of my interlocutors were aware that Egyptian President 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi has been calling for religious reform and directly exhorting Shaykh al-Azhar to amend Islamic law, none of them cited these calls as reasons for the shift in how they personally view Islam. Some, however, were aware that Azhari officials have refused to comply with al-Sisi's wishes. This ushered in a series of public debates, which Masooda Bano highlights in in her article about al-Azhar's authority in post-2013 Egypt, especially following al-Sisi's calls for religious reform. After ousting Mursi of the Brotherhood in 2013, al-Sisi, Bano writes, "did not try to weave some grand narrative in defence of secularism; instead he presented himself as a true Muslim, one whose duty was to protect Islam from extremism."[906] He called on Shaykh al-Azhar, on multiple occasions, to change aspects of Islamic law and Azhar-sponsored curricula to make them more compatible with "Western liberal sensibilities."[907] Al-Sisi claimed that, because Muslims do not understand their religion properly, some have turned to violent action and wreaked havoc (through terrorism) that affected thousands in Egypt and worldwide. He argued that it is the shaykhs' responsibility to step up and curb this cycle of violence.[908]

Azhari officials did not critique the President for his statements directly, but they also did not acquiesce to his proposals. Beginning in 2015, al-Sisi closed certain prayer nooks and banned

[906] Bano, "At the Tipping Point?" 724.
[907] Bano, "At the Tipping Point?" 724. See also Jean Druel, "Le discours d'Al-Azhar n'est pas suffisant pour les jeunes Egyptiens," May 29, 2019, https://www.oasiscenter.eu/fr/entretien-avec-druel-al-azhar-et-les-jeunes-gyptiens, accessed December 19, 2020; and Laura Garrec, "Les enjeux de pouvoir de l'autorité religieuse dans l'Égypte post-transition démocratique," *Égypte/Monde arabe*, 2.16 (2017): 143-61.
[908] Bano, "At the Tipping Point?" 724.

unregistered preachers from giving sermons at mosques. In 2016, the Ministry of Religious Endowments (*Awqaf*) attempted to standardize Friday sermons across the country under the direction of the authorities, "a move designed to undercut radicalism—and to promote the president's policies,"[909] but al-Azhar resisted this as well.[910] Again, rather than direct its criticism toward the President, it "channeled its critiques towards the Ministry of Awqaf."[911] Then again, in early 2017, during a celebration for the Egyptian police force, al-Sisi talked about his concern for the growing divorce rates in Egypt. He addressed Shaykh al-Tayyib, urging him to issue a *fatwa* banning verbal divorce (*talaq shafawi*):[912] "Honorable Imam, don't we need a law to regulate divorce (since *talaq shafawi* is not working)? Shouldn't it take place in front of a marriage registrar (*ma'dhun*), so that people have a chance to reconsider? Isn't this better for the *umma* than to have street children with terrible manners everywhere…? What do you think, honorable Imam? You have worn me out," al-Sisi said with a laugh.[913]

Al-Tayyib did not immediately respond; the Azhar Council of Senior Scholars, which al-Tayyib heads, released a statement a few days later, arguing that *talaq shafawi* is perfectly legal in Islam, gave its evidence for its position and suggested a few alternative ways to reduce the divorce rate. The statement, although not directly addressed to al-Sisi,[914] ended on a serious note: "The Council of Senior Scholars hopes that those who take divorce *fatwa*s lightly and go against the *ijma'* of the legal scholars [*fuqaha*] and the Muslims carry out the duty [God entrusted them with); *an yu'addu al-amana*] and inform people of the rulings of Shari'a in the most correct

[909] "Reforming Islam in Egypt," *The Economist*, February 18, 2017, https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2017/02/18/reforming-islam-in-egypt, accessed August 3, 2019.
[910] Outlines of weekly Friday sermons followed by complaint mosques can be found on the Ministry of Awqaf's website: http://ar.awkafonline.com/?cat=20.
[911] Bano, "At the Tipping Point?" 730; and "Reforming Islam in Egypt."
[912] A man can divorce his wife by saying that he divorces her three times as per the Qur'anic verses 2:229-30.
[913] Husam al-Hindi, "Al-Tayyib wa al-Sisi… Matha ta'rif 'an sira' al-shaykh wa al-ra'is?" *Sasapost*, February 9, 2017, https://www.sasapost.com/ahmed-el-tayebvia-el-sisi/, accessed August 1, 2019.
[914] Bano, "At the Tipping Point?" 730.

way." Rather than waste their effort trying to meddle with Shari'a, the statement continued, these people "should turn their attention to that which helps people and solves their real-life problems. People do not need divorce laws to be reformed now. What they need is for someone to help them lead a dignified life," it read, presumably addressing those in power.[915]

In 2017, the late Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi (d. 2019) proposed a law that would give women equal inheritance rights, and many in Egypt demanded that their country follow suit.[916] Almost preemptively it seems, both Shaykh al-Tayyib and current Mufti of Egypt Shawqi 'Allam made pronouncements that this proposal is out of the question. 'Allam stated that the Qur'an is clear when it comes to inheritance law: the male inherits twice as much as the female.[917] Such a clear command, he said, is not open to interpretation.[918] In a statement, al-Tayyib lamented that unauthorized entities issue *fatwa*s about issues about which they had no knowledge.[919] He then accused the Tunisian *fatwa* institution of committing "a big assault on Islam" by not condemning such a proposal.

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[915] Al-Hindi, "Al-Tayyib wa al-Sisi, and "Al-Azhar yu'arid da'wa al-Sisi li-hazr al-talaq al-shafawi wa yuhaththir min 'al-fatawa al-shadhdha," *Arabic CNN*, February 6, 2017, https://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2017/02/06/azhar-opposes-sisi-proposed-ban-oral-divorce, accessed August 2, 2019. For the entire statement, see Shayma 'Abd al-Hadi, "Hay'a 'kibar al-'ulama': al-talaq al-shafawi dun ishhad aw tawthiq," *Al-Ahram*, February 5, 2017, http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/1388471.aspx, accessed August 3, 2019.

[916] Al-Sisi has not publicly called for equal inheritance. For more on the national debate spurred by Tunisia's proposal, see Hassan Abdel Zaher, "Debate heats up in Egypt over women's inheritance rights," *The Arab Weekly*, September 9, 2018, https://thearabweekly.com/debate-heats-egypt-over-womens-inheritance-rights, accessed August 3, 2019.

[917] See Qur'an 4:11.

[918] "Grand Mufti Rejects Calls for Equality in Inheritance between Males, Females," *Daily News Egypt*, November 26, 2018, https://dailynewsegypt.com/2018/11/26/grand-mufti-rejects-calls-for-equality-in-inheritance-between-males-females/, accessed August 3, 2019.

[919] Gamal Essam El-Din, "Islam's teachings face 'orchestrated campaign of distortion,' Al-Azhar's grand imam tells fatwa conference," *Ahram Online*, October 18, 2017, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/279002/Egypt/Politics-/Islams-teachings-face-orchestrated-campaign-of-dis.aspx, accessed August 1, 2019. See also the impromptu debate on religious reform between al-Tayyib and the president of Cairo University in January 2020. "Ahmad al-Tayyib wa 'Uthman al-Khasht: Huwar Shaykh al-Azhar wa Ra'is Jami'at al-Qahira bayna al-thana wa-l-intiqad fi suhaf Misriyya," *BBC*, January 31, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/arabic/inthepress-51326751, accessed December 20, 2020; and "Tajdid al-fikr al-Islami yush'il al-jadal bayna Shaykh al-Azhar wa Ra'is Jami'at al-Qahira, YouTube video, 45:57, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_EOW9XYzwf4&ab_channel=AlghadTVWebsite, accessed December 20, 2020.

Al-Azhar and other Islamic institutions in the country, however, took a few initiatives to better inform the public. Lin, the young Azhari-trained woman who is now a translator for al-Azhar's outreach programs, told me that the institution had been reaching out to Egyptians, but the media has been attacking it.[920] One of the Azhari initiatives was to set up *fatwa* kiosks in certain metro stations in Cairo, where commuters could walk up to the booth on their way to work or school and ask the Azhari shaykh inside a *fiqh* question free of charge.[921] "We were attacked harshly by the media," Lin said. "They claimed that we [at al-Azhar] were combatting the idea of secularism. And they want the state to be secular," she said, visibly distraught. The media, she continued, claims that al-Azhar and its teachings lead people to terrorism. One TV host said that "the Azhar curriculum puts the state at risk and is a threat to it … Nothing could be further from the truth."[922]

The efforts that Lin listed, however, show that al-Azhar is aware that shifts are happening within the country. It realizes that the state is trying to secularize certain aspects of society, perhaps even using language that portrays Islam and its adherents as threats to the rest of the world. In installing its *fatwa* kiosks in metro stations, too, al-Azhar is reaching out to people beyond its walls, hoping that it could help as many people as it could from falling into sin, or even disbelief.

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[920] Lin, Interview by author.

[921] Some shaykhs claimed that this initiative was meant to "combat terrorism." One of the shaykhs manning the booth said, "Since its launch, hundreds of curious commuters have stopped by to greet us and ask questions on a host of religious matters ranging from rulings on marital and divorce issues to life insurance and atheism." See Shahira Amin, "Fatwa on the go: Egypt's Al-Azhar sets up shop in Cairo Metro," *Al-Monitor*, July 20, 2017, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fa/originals/2017/07/egypt-cairo-metro-azhar-fatwa-kiosk-religion.html, accessed August 1, 2019. Dar al-Ifta also started digitizing *fatwa*s in 2013 in multiple languages. See its website: "Dar al-Ifta al-Missriyya," http://www.dar-alifta.org/Foreign/Module.aspx?Name=aboutdar, accessed August 4, 2019.

[922] Lin, Interview by author.

Conclusion

There is a segment of the disillusioned youth that still cares about the tradition and wants to believe in God and practice the teachings of the Prophet but is having trouble deciding who or what to follow. The authorities they listened to—i.e. the *'ulama*, the *du'ah* and/or their parents—all disappointed them in the aftermath of the revolution. Some of my interlocutors have gone a step further and questioned the tradition itself. Overall, these individuals (who are still "practicing Muslims") have become more lenient in their view of Islam and Islamic practice, realizing that many viewpoints could be correct, that people may find different paths to virtue (and/or paradise) and that religious figures should not be placed on pedestals, since they err just like everyone else. These groups still largely hold onto the *thawabit* or believe in the idea that there should be *thawabit* even if they are not sure what they are. The last group no longer believes in the *thawabit* and has turned to nonbelief. I argue that all of these trends are part of what I call "revolutionary religion," an epistemological mode in which Egyptian youth now feel free to question the religion they grew up learning, and this has led each down a different path to belief or nonbelief.

Conclusion: A Tale of Three Deaths

Muhammad Mursi died of a heart attack in June 2019. He collapsed in the soundproof defendant's cage of a Cairo court while on trial on espionage charges and was rushed to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead. Muslim Brotherhood members claimed that Mursi did not receive adequate attention for his diabetes and hypertension while in prison, and solitary confinement, along with few visitation rights, led to his "premature death." Mursi's son, 'Abd Allah, who died of a heart attack four months after his father passed, told *Reuters* that no one contacted the family about the burial details. Authorities also refused to "allow Mursi to be laid to rest in the family burial grounds in his native Nile Delta province of Sharqiya."[923] There was no funeral for this former Egyptian president to be televised.[924]

Non-Egyptian news outlets immediately juxtaposed Mursi's funeral with Mubarak's in February 2020.[925] Cairo was at a standstill as Mubarak, the ousted president, was given a military funeral procession fit for a "war hero."[926] The Egyptian presidency announced a national three-

[923] Nadine Awadalla and Enas al-Ashray, "Egypt's ousted Islamist president Mursi dies after collapsing in court," *Reuters*, June 17, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-mursi/egypts-ousted-islamist-president-mursi-dies-after-collapsing-in-court-idUSKCN1TI21T, accessed November 28, 2020. Mona Eltahawy, an Egyptian activist and one of Mursi's outspoken critics, wrote an opinion piece about how the Sisi regime mishandled Mursi's years in prison and death. Mona Eltahawy, "Mohamed Morsi Died in a Soundproof Cage," *New York Times*, June 18, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/18/opinion/morsi-death-egypt.html, accessed November 28, 2020.

[924] Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish president, held a funeral in absentia for Mursi. "Turkey's Erdogan Attends Funeral Prayers for Ex-Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi," YouTube video, June 18, 2019, 12:24, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oCMcDfRYxU&ab_channel=BloombergQuicktake%3ANow, accessed November 28, 2020. As before, social media became one of the few spaces where people could mourn Mursi's death collectively without harassment from the government.

[925] See, for instance, Rania Mostafa, "The difference between Morsi and Mubarak's funerals," *Middle East Monitor*, March 3, 2020, https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200303-the-difference-between-morsi-and-mubaraks-funerals/, accessed December 20, 2020; Declan Walsh, "Mubarak's Three-Decade Rule Is Brushed Aside in War-Hero Burial," *New York Times*, February 26, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/26/world/middleeast/egypt-mubarak-funeral.html, accessed November 28, 2020; and Mahmoud Mourad and Nadine Awadalla, "Pomp, praise and a divided legacy as Egypt buries Mubarak," *Reuters*, February 26, 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-mubarak-funeral/pomp-praise-and-a-divided-legacy-as-egypt-buries-mubarak-idUSKCN20K0WY, accessed November 28, 2020.

[926] During his speeches in early 2011, as protesters gathered in Tahrir Square, Mubarak often recounted his role as an air force officer who fought during the Arab-Israeli War of 1973. Egyptian news anchors and newspapers highlighted Mubarak's role as an officer and "war hero" at the time of his death but were mum on his time as

day mourning period, while television outlets displayed a black ribbon at the corner of the screen as if to honor someone who died in the line of duty. The funeral procession, which was held on the outskirts of Cairo at the Field Marshal al-Tantawi Mosque,[927] was short and replete with anti-revolutionary symbols. The televised funeral showed Mubarak's coffin, draped in an Egyptian flag, being gingerly lowered by young soldiers onto a Pharaonic-style horse-drawn carriage, complete with four golden obelisks holding the coffin in place. A twenty-one-gun salute rang out, as men standing in formation, marched behind the phalanx of decorated military men leading the procession. On the frontlines of this formation were: Ahmad al-Tayyib and Mufti Shawqi 'Allam alongside Coptic Pope Tawadros II, Mubarak-era prime ministers and parliamentarians, and al-Sisi in the middle alongside Mubarak's sons 'Alaa and Jamal.[928]

The stark contrast between the two deaths served to "distort the revolution, announce its death, and to humiliate the people who rebelled against the military regime," writes Rania Mostafa.[929] The military had always been in power and would never allow a civilian to oversee its activities. All the cards were stacked against Mursi, even in death. In contrast, Mubarak was celebrated for his military services 57 years ago and forgiven for his 30 years of authoritarian

president and his time in prison, which came to an end in 2017, when he was acquitted. "Egypt declares three days of mourning over Mubarak death," *Irish Times*, February 25, 2020, https://www.irishtimes.com/news/egypt-declares-three-days-of-mourning-over-mubarak-death-1.4184301, accessed November 28, 2020.

[927] Husayn al-Tantawi was head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and the first interim ruler of Egypt after Mubarak's removal. In 2012, Mursi had ordered al-Tantawi to retire. "Egypt leader Mursi orders army chief Tantawi to resign," *BBC*, August 12, 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-19234763, accessed November 28, 2020.

[928] Both of Mubarak's sons were released from prison in 2015. "Marasim tashyi' janazat al-Ra'is al-asbaq Muhammad Husni Mubarak min Masjid al-Mushir," YouTube video, February 26, 2020, 29:54, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKYWHyZd33I&ab_channel=dmc, accessed November 28, 2020. See also Walsh, "Mubarak's Three-Decade"; Mourad and Awadalla, "Pomp, praise and a divided legacy"; and Sally Nabil, "Egyptians divided over Mubarak's legacy," *BBC*, February 26, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-51643506, accessed November 28, 2020.

[929] Mostafa, "The difference between Morsi and Mubarak's funerals."

rule. Political scientist and activist Rabab El Mahdi said that, to her, Mubarak's death was "a reminder of the failures of the revolution. It's the end of a chapter with no closure," she said.[930]

An Uncertain Road Ahead

The political situation in Egypt today is so precarious that I did not ask my interlocutors questions about life under al-Sisi. Politically, most of them viewed the revolutionary days with nostalgia, though many confessed to me that they were no longer sure that revolting in 2011 and/or 2013 was the right thing to do. On disappointment, which many of my interlocutors felt for decades under the Mubarak regime, Zigon writes,

> When one can no longer dwell in the world in which one is, then two choices remain: either wait and hope against hope that something, somehow, might get a little better; or act. To act in an unbearable world is to act agonistically, since it is likely the case that something … must be acted against and changed in order to allow one to dwell again. To act in this manner is also creative and experimental, since prior to such political action there is no way of knowing or conceiving how one can act and what kind of action will be successful. Such political action is, as Giorgio Agamben might put it, a politics of a 'means without an end.'[931]

Most of my interlocutors took a leap of faith and acted to change their world from 2011 to 2013 before ultimately realizing that their actions would bear little, if any, fruit.

For a few years, however, the revolution had given many of these youth renewed hope and a sense that change was imminent. It also gave Egyptians the first taste of democracy, so seemingly unencumbered that no one could predict what the various voting opportunities would yield. It gave a wider space for religious parties to participate freely and without constraints. It

[930] Ruth Michaelson, "Hosni Mubarak buried with full military honours," *The Guardian*, February 26, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/26/hosni-mubarak-buried-with-full-military-honours, accessed November 28, 2020.
[931] Jarrett Zigon, *Disappointment: Toward a Critical Hermeneutics of Worldbuilding* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 1; and Giorgio Agamben, *Means without Ends: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

also gave people a sense of freedom and put factions that may have never met otherwise in conversation with one another. Slowly, the political tides began to turn and the first democratically elected president of Egypt, Mursi, was deposed within a year of his election, and his loyalists were massacred in public squares. In the aftermath, my interlocutors noticed a shift in religious expression and reception of Islam, the Islamic tradition and those who teach about them in Egypt, at least among the middle class that they belong to. They confided that something within them changed after all these events, but also that society has changed much as well. The revolutionary moment may have come to an end, but it has left in its wake an ever-evolving revolutionary religion.

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