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Urbanization and ‘‘Re-Islamization’’ in Postcolonial Egypt: *Al-Jamʿiyyāt al-Islamiyya* and the Muslim Brotherhood

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Abstract

This essay elucidates the background against which *al-jamʿiyyāt al-islamiyya al-ahliyya* [Islamic private associations] emerged in the Egyptian cities and embarked on ‘‘re-Islamizing’’ the urban public space throughout the interwar period. Their figureheads were drawn from among the urbanized/Westernized middle class, better known in the bibliography as the *effendiyya*. It should be noted that under the guidance of those modern teachers, lawyers, merchants and other professionals, *al-jamʿiyyāt* and most notably the Muslim Brotherhood instructed the Muslim dwellers of Cairo, Damanhur, Ismailia, etc. on the necessity to live in conformity to their religion and to preserve public morality. As we will see, such attempts constituted an ‘‘alternative’’ not only to the Christian missionaries but also to al-Azhar and the traditional Sufi brotherhoods. The latter had been active in rural areas and poverty-stricken urbanized districts as well. In summary, this article aims to revisit the early manifestations of Islamism in Egypt in tune with the broader modernization/urbanization process that the region of the Delta had been going through since the early twentieth century.

Keywords: Urbanization, effendiyya, associations, jamʿiyyāt, Islamism, Egypt, Egyptian, Sharia, Muslim Brotherhood.

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Introduction

This study deals with the intricate interaction between urbanization and the first *jamʿiyyāt* in contemporary Egypt that were labelled *islamiyya*. Before presenting my methodology, a brief definition of the phenomenon under question is necessary. The word *jamʿiyya* refers to the Arabic equivalent of *association* and/or *society*. These private initiatives abounded in Egypt in the turn of the twentieth century. They often addressed the diverse needs of their founders, who might have been members of foreign communities or specific religious denominations, journalists, poets or even religious scholars (*Kanisatu-l-skandariyya li-l-aqbat al-kathulic bi Misr* 2013; Kitroeff 1989, 22, 52 – 53, 145). Their warm reception by the native *effendiyya* has since become a permanent feature of Egyptian politics and society. By the same token, the formation of Islamism in its early stages can be attributed to these popular models of collective action and social mobilization. The *Jamʿiyya al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* [Society of the Muslim Brotherhood], for instance, technically remained a *jamʿiyya khaīriyya* [charity association], officially registered by the Egyptian authorities (Lia 1998, 40; Salim 1996, 717), for many years after its inception in 1928 notwithstanding its later aspirations to become an all-encompassing *Jamāʿa* [community] in line with Hasan al-Banna's *Shumūliyyat al-Islam* [Islam as a complete system] Islamist ideologies (Qaradawi 1992, 27).

This article deals with a question that concerns scholars of Middle Eastern social history and likewise students of Political Islam: In which way(s) was Egyptian urbanization and urbanity related to *al-jamʿiyyāt al-islamiyya al-ahliyya* and the Muslim Brothers in particular? To do so a two-fold methodological approach is adopted. My research rests upon the primary sources of *al-jamʿiyyāt* and analyzes their discourses as regards the urbanized/urban public space and the Sharia. Accordingly, the Islamic associations are considered part and parcel of the urban centers' interplay with the countryside by dint of several historical factors, i.e., the transformation of villages into industrial suburbia due to capitalist pressures and other post-independence developments, not the least of which was the Egyptian government's claim to be in charge of the nation after decades of direct British interventions.

Furthermore, my study grapples with the role of *al-jamʿiyyāt* by applying the lens of the anthropology of religion and postcolonial theory. First and foremost, the encroachment of the new associations on the daily lives of the Muslim populace is consistent with Islam's reconfiguration as the official religion of the postcolonial

nation-state. It can thus be interpreted within the theoretical framework of what José Casanova termed "deprivatization" of religion, in his study *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994, 40-44, 212). Additionally, according to the concepts of "hybridity" and "agency" (Abu-Lughod 1998, 18-22; Young 2001, 344-345) the nascent Islamist *effendiyya* provided a cultural translation of the cognitive categories that imbued Western perceptions of urban life, such as the public-private fault line, instead of passively assimilating them. In a similar vein, it is argued that the puritanical calls of Hasan al-Banna and his likes for the observance of public morality in the Egyptian cities have been integrated into the grant narratives of Islamism in accordance with Talal Asad's seminal concept of Islam as a "Discursive Tradition" (Asad 1993, 120; 2009, 20).

Newcomers in a Changing World: between the Village and the City

In 1920, roughly ten percent of Egyptians were concentrated in the cities of Lower Egypt. Nonetheless, between 1917 and 1937 the population of Cairo increased by sixty-six percent and that of Alexandria by fifty-five percent (International Historical Statistics 2003, 38, 48-52; Issawi 1946, 48). In 1937, 28.19 percent of the country's total population lived in cities (Hakim and Hamid 1982, 2). When Hasan al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood's founder, was a student in Dar al-ʿUlūm (Vatikiotis 1976, 102) in Cairo between 1922 and 1927, some villages like Giza or Bulaq began to turn into densely populated districts of the capital. Ten years later, the waves of urbanization that followed took place synchronously with the first expansion of the Muslim Brotherhood's branches in the suburban space (Mitchell 1993, 328; Mutawali 1989, 35). It is worth mentioning that the Brotherhood's biographer, ʿAbd al-Halim Mahmud, described Giza of that period as the "natural borderline between the urban and rural worlds" (1994, 132). The increasing numbers of the newcomers from the countryside and the growing distances among the expanding neighborhoods made the use of tram indispensable (Cunningham 1912, 35); the introduction of that particular means of transport heralded Cairo's ''rebirth'' as a modern metropolis.

Moreover, colonialism and the capitalist transformation of the agricultural sector drastically affected the character of almost every city and village. The new port city of Ismailia for instance, where the Society of the Muslim Brothers was founded in 1928, was created amidst Egypt's connection to the nineteenth-century international economy via the construction of the Suez Canal in 1869 (Wood 1896, 33-35). From that time on, British colonialism

secured the city's uninterrupted function as a bastion of imperial and foreign capitalist interests. Meanwhile, villages in the Delta region, like Kafr al-Dawar, Mahalla al-Kubra and Shubra al-Khaima, came to prominence as the leading centers of the Egyptian textiles' sector, when the big landowners responded to the Great Depression of 1929 by industrializing the country's agrarian economy (ʿAisha 1957, 9-10; Davis 1983, 135).

As a result, during 1927-1937 thousands of landless *fellaheen* [peasants] were hired, albeit seasonally (Holt 1968, 156), as textile workers in the factories of the pashas. Their cheap workforce helped Egyptian capitalism to stand on its feet, despite the dramatic drop of cotton prices in the international markets (Mutawali 1974, 140-141). Being trapped between their rural surroundings and the prospect of migration to suburbia (Vatikiotis 1984, 180), that amorphous and highly insecure proletariat was receptive to the *iṣlāhī* [reformist] messages of the Islamic associations. As a matter of fact, the promising rhetoric of *al-ʿadāla al-ijtimāʿiyya* [social justice] spread within the intervals of the rural-urban worlds, parallel to the Delta's urbanization/industrialization (Kourgiotis 2018, 1-16).

On top of that, the urbanization of that period was triggered by the emancipation of the Egyptian urban class from the political, economic and cultural dominance of foreigners (Landes 1958, 302). It is important to note that since the late nineteenth-century, large Greek, British, Armenian, Italian, French and other European communities flourished in Egyptian cities and towns by taking advantage of the Capitulations, i.e., the semi-colonial framework of exempting foreign nationals from the jurisdiction of native authorities and courts. At the turn of the twentieth century, foreigners constituted two percent of the country's total population. As late as 1937, forty-eight percent of them resided in Alexandria and thirty-two percent in Cairo. Every non-Egyptian was granted several immunities due to the Capitulations. Until its abolition in 1937, Egyptian legislation had been restricted by the powerful Mixed Courts that were in place since 1875 (Suleiman 1996, 30, 58, 80; Tignor 1966, 51-52). Hence the foreigners' sizeable presence and privileged status had a profound impact on the urban landscape, as on the habits and the life-style of the Egyptian urbanized strata. Whole neighborhoods were reshaped to satisfy the special needs and interests of the foreigners; café, dancing halls, theatres, cinemas, sports and youth clubs, schools, cultural centers and churches could be found in those cities under transition, alongside the numerous brothels and liquor stores that had been ferociously castigated by the first religious associations (Cunningham 1912, 27, 54; Singleton 1911, 118-120; Wood 1896, 17).

Against such a backdrop, the 1919 patriotic uprising of the Egyptian urban class alarmed the privileged foreigners for the first time since Ahmad al-Urabi's revolt in 1879. Public servants of the mixed Anglo-Egyptian administration, lawyers, merchants, journalists, writers and teachers, in unison with the nouveaux riches and the pashas, reclaimed from the foreigners their "distinct spiritual and material domains" (Chaterjee 1993, 3-13). Pashas and effendis were indeed united in their common nationalist cause, nevertheless the two social groups evolved differently in modern Egyptian history. Unlike the title of pasha, that had been originally confined to royal dignitaries of Muhammad Ali Pasha's dynasty and later on passed to the great landowners and the upper urban bourgeoisie, the effendis could be called as such by virtue of their education, modern professions and the adoption of Western lifestyle, clothing, habits, etc. Until the early republican period, i.e., after 1952 Free Officers' Revolution, the Egyptian *effendi* could be quickly recognized by his elegant European costume accompanied by the tie and the nineteenth-century *tarbūsh* (Baer 1964, 131; Balls 1920, 119).

Undeniably, the ambitious *effendiyya* achieved crucial victories for the country's urban class: these were the declaration of a constitutional monarchy, the universal male suffrage and the gradual abolition of the Capitulations in the wake of the Montreux Convention in 1937, to mention but a few (Hussein 1973, 28-35; Al-Rish 1975, 75, 80, 124). After the termination of the British protectorate in 1923, successive governments tried to expand state bureaucracy and in the long run to ''Egyptianize'' public administration by recruiting school teachers, engineers, doctors, nurses and other civil servants in the villages and the provincial towns (Cromer 1908, 299; Tignor 1966, 181, 324). In their bid to fight illiteracy and provide state services to the population, the ruling elites of the Wafd and the other political parties mobilized once again the youngest members of the *effendiyya*, who had left their villages in order to study in the urban centers (International Historical Statistics 2003, 996).

That was exactly the case of Hasan al-Banna and many of his colleagues who were appointed as teachers upon their graduation from Dār al-ʿUlūm. Despite their rural and Sufi backgrounds, for example, al-Banna and his associates on the path of Ismailia did not conceal their membership in the Shadhiliyya order (Al-Banna 1966, 55). Their utilization by the postcolonial state was a modernizing process in its own right. Al-Banna recalled in his memoirs that he was reprimanded by an Egyptian inspector of the Ministry of Education because of the way he was dressed: "how do you expect to become a teacher while wearing the *ʿabaya*?!" (Ibid, 26)

Apparently, the postcolonial state's preference for an ideal type of urbanity echoed Kemal Ataturk's nation-building projects in the newly founded Turkish Republic and their appeal to the Egyptian *effendiyya*. By the time of his appointment in the primary school of Ismailia, Hasan al-Banna had been transformed already into a typical young *effendi* easily recognizable by his European tie and the red *tarbūsh*. Mahmud ʿAbd al-Halim in his voluminous *Ahdath sanaʿat al-tarikh* [*Events that wrote History*] wrote about his first impressions from al-Banna:

I saw in his red tarbush the politically conscious urban class, in his European clothes an employee of the modern Egyptian state, while his long black beard represented the piety of Muslim men (1994, 38).

The abovementioned description of the young teacher, indeed, epitomized that new breed of neo-traditionalist activists who were destined to become the founding fathers of the contemporary Islamist movement.

The Emergence of *al-Jamʿiyyāt*: their Ideological and Social Outlook

The country's urban class as a whole, i.e., Muslims coupled with Copts, defined urbanity via their gradual acquisition of state structures and institutions. Nevertheless, some Muslim effendis were assigned with the task of redefining the religiosity of their fellow compatriots/coreligionists who were incessantly arriving in the big cities. While it is true that the postcolonial Egyptian state educated the young effendi Hasan al-Banna, dressed him up as a European and then appointed him in a governmental school, it was the teacher who in turn taught the urban class how to instill religion into the public life of the nation. That development, among others, precipitated the birth of the modern Islamist ideology.

Yet, the re-invention of Islam as a socio-cultural program that supersedes the limits of a "conventional" religion in early Islamist discourses, i.e. *al-Islam fi-kull makān wa-zamān* [Islam's eternal and universal mission] (*Jarida al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, vol. 41, 1934, 6; *Majallatu-l-Taʿaruf*, vol. 12, 1940, 1; Al-Banna 1983, 178) would have been inconceivable if the secularized and essentialistic notions of religion (Samuli 2010, 4-5; Zubaida 2006) had not already been integrated into the Islamic "Discursive Tradition." Islam had been already transformed into what Talal Asad calls a "Natural Religion" by the standards of Enlightenment, the same way Christianity did. Both John Lock who wrote his famous essay *Reasonableness of Christianity* in 1695 and

Emmanuel Kant one century after him, who discussed the "only one and true Religion," no matter if it is Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, articulated the same problematic: how will religion be ''reconstructed'' in order to fill a specific space in the modern world and lead society spiritually, scientifically, culturally or even politically? (Asad 1993, 40-42).

The underpinnings of that discussion in colonial Egypt were to be found in the contacts that had developed since the late nineteenth century amongst the delegations of Western European hegemony and the Azharite Muslim thinkers, like Muhammad ʿAbduh (Saʿad 1993, 109). In the absence of a Church, the British administration and—after 1922—the postcolonial state renegotiated with two social/intellectual forces for the "reconfiguration" of Islam as a religion that adheres to the colonially inspired tenets of Reason and Modernity (Bhambra 2007, 15-34). On the one hand, there were ulama of al-Azhar who considered themselves the guardians of tradition (Rahman 1982, 26-27, 45). Even so, in the age of the nation states and their respective official religions those scholars were downgraded to the status of mere civil servants, far from being the commentators who had been exercising *ijtihād* [reasoning] for centuries (Saeed 1994, 97-103, 120-121). On the other hand, the Muslim *effendiyya* attempted to fill the same space through their engagement with the Islamic associations.

Both al-Azhar and the *jamʿiyyāt* at times collided over religious authority over the society and the state. To put it differently, the question was: who was *more eligible* (emphasis mine) to discuss Islam's stance on a variety of modern and complicated issues, ranging from the just distribution of wealth, to the living conditions in the cities and the education of women—the schoolteacher Hasan al-Banna or the Rector of al-Azhar? The Azharite ulama were frustrated with the appeal of the new *jamʿiyyāt* to their students. The fact that they assumed active roles in brotherhoods founded and run by the non-theological *effendiyya* reflected the ongoing postcolonial encounters between religious scholars and the Western-educated professionals (Harris 1981, 181; Saad Eddin 1997, 37). The case of the Muslim Brotherhood was indicative of that trend. Judging by the profiles of its membership and leadership, the organization was unquestionably dominated by the *effendiyya*. Still, many ulama who lacked the ability to reach the highest echelons of al-Azhar joined the brothers out of their desire for social eminence (Heyworth-Dunne 1950, 20, 31). It is noteworthy that five out of the sixteen presidents of the Brotherhood branches until 1932 were Azharite graduates (Al-Banna 1966, 125). In 1933, four members of the *Maktab al-Irshād* [the Brotherhood's

"politburo"], were ulama, as opposed to six effendis (*Jarida al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, vol. 16, 1933, 24).

As far as their structure was concerned, *al–jamʿiyyāt* combined elements from the youth clubs of the foreign communities, the Christian missions and the Sufi *tarīqa* [orders]. The acquaintance of the *effendiyya* with those models of socialization, preaching and charitable work made their diffusion into *al–jamʿiyyāt* much easier. One of the oldest associations, the Islamic Association of the Sharia, founded in 1913, classified Muslims as a distinct religious category that needed its own schools and social services especially designed for its members (Daud 1992, 135; Hamd Bin Sadiq 1994, 452). Thus, Muslims were ''reinvented'' vis-à-vis their Christian compatriots who had also been founding their own *jamʿiyyāt* as a means to foster their Coptic identity within Egypt's emerging urban class. A few effendi Copts, for instance, founded the Brotherhood of the Faith in 1914. Their declared mission was to assist materially their poor fellow Christians while teaching them the Gospel (Conference of British Missionary Societies Archives, May 2 1944, 6). Along the same line, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) had been active in Egypt since the WWI. Its sports clubs, publications, Bible lectures, and free of charge Sunday schools for the Coptic youth inspired some Muslim nationalist intellectuals, as well as the Azharite ulama. The Young Men 's Muslim Association in other words, the ''Islamic version'' of YMCA was founded in 1927 (Faunce 1914, 95). As for the Muslim Brothers, they organized youth corps, such as *al-Jawālla,* modeled after the boy scouts of the Greek and Italian communities (*Jarida al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, vol. 42, 1935, 23 – 24).

The activities of the Christian missions in Egypt left the strongest imprint on *al-jamʿiyyāt*. Similarities between the two models are striking, indeed. First, both of them were active in the same areas, i.e., the intervals between the expanding cities and the countryside, whether in the Delta or the Canal. Besides, the Muslim Brotherhood admitted publically that they were impressed by the successful *daʿwa* [proselytization] methods of the missionaries (*Jarida al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, vol. 3, 3; vol. 6 1933, 24). Following in the footsteps of the Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical and other missions that sought to gain new converts for their respective Churches (Suleiman 1996, 293), the new Islamic associations proselytized among Egyptian Muslims in the new urban religion of Islamism. Proselytization was not confined to the areas surroundings mosque or the *tarīqa*, but was undertaken in the form of public lectures. To that end the coffee shops, known as *al-maqāhī*, were singled out as the most popular places for the young preachers of the Muslim *effendiyya*

(al-Banna 1966, 43; Daud 1992, 104, 111). ʿAbd al-Halim Mahmud recalls his engagement as a Brotherhood missionary while a student in the School of Agriculture in the 1930s: "it was the first time that people saw preachers other than the ulama with their traditional education and appearance" (1994, 79).

Emulating the numerous Christian missions that had been active in Egypt since 1844, the Brothers took advantage of the prevailing conditions in the villages, i.e., malnutrition, diseases and rampant illiteracy, given that a welfare state hardly existed at that moment (Gollock 1906, 104). In a fashion that resembled missionary discourses elsewhere, the Muslim Brothers vowed, in the midst of the Great Depression, to combat "social ills" such as ignorance and poverty, along with immorality, prostitution, gambling, drug use, and the consumption of alcohol (*Awal laʾiha ʿamma li-Jamʿiyyati-l-Ikhwani-l-Muslimin* 1930). The branches that had been established in the cities and villages of the Canal throughout 1928-1932, paved the way for the Brotherhood's infiltration into the poor and overcrowded neighborhoods of Cairo, starting from the district of Sayyida Zainab (Halim 1994, 49). Once again, however, the Brothers were not alone in alleviating the misery of the newcomers from the countryside. By the time, their headquarters settled in Cairo in 1932, Christian missionaries had been running clinics and schools in the poor Bulaq district, as well as training Egyptian girls as nurses and seamstresses (Conference of British Missionary Societies Archives, July 4 1947, 5).

Finally, yet importantly, we should take into consideration the continuities and discontinuities between the traditional model of the Sufi orders and the modern phenomenon of *al-jamʿiyyāt*. The *tarīqa* and the *jamʿiyya* were equally dependent economically on private *waqf* donations in order to finance their philanthropic institutions and madrasas (Al-Bayumi 1998, 124, 218), not to mention their sharing of the same structures, places and even membership (Lia 1998, 134). Many newly founded Islamic associations, like *Jamʿiyyat Ansār Muhammad*, for instance, that declared war on Sufi practices (ʿAmar 1997, 114; Smith 1957, 126). The condemnation of local traditions that were connected mostly to the rural world, emanated from certain perceptions of religion and religiosity held by the Salafist-oriented ulama (Weismann 2011, 154, 160). Some ulama from al-Azhar went so far as to accuse the Muslim Brotherhood of being nothing more than another Sufi *tarīqa* that sought the veneration of Hasan al-Banna. Nonetheless, regardless of his Sufi origins, al-Banna considered the new phenomenon of *al–jamʿiyyāt al-islamiyya* to be a decisive force in redirecting the regenerated Islamic missionary activity away from the "backwardness" of Sufism (al-Banna 1966, 23, 98).

Claiming the Urbanized Public Space: Islamism and the Question of the Sharia

The dialectics between urbanization and religiosity in postcolonial Egypt revolved around the private-public dichotomy. Hence, their long-lasting repercussions for the question of the Sharia and its implementation or "re-institution" in the urbanized public space should be examined within the same frame. In some Western metropolises like Paris, everyday urban life was divided into public and private spheres leading to the complete separation of the State from the Church in 1905 by law, at the peak of French republicanism (Sowerwine 2001, 41-46). Since the early twentieth century, the process of secularization entailed the privatization of religion in a given society. Thus, whether in Christian metropolis or Muslim colonies, state authorities entrusted the clergy or Sunni ulama respectively with the task of safeguarding the private character of religion. As a reward for assuming the role of "watchdogs," religious scholars were unrestricted in reinforcing their authoritative status upon the believers, i.e., approving or rejecting their forms of religiosity, rituals, habits, etc. In postcolonial Egypt the Islamist *effendiyya* via its *jamʿiyyāt* were the first social forces who seriously contested umama's monopoly.

Muhammad ʿAbduh considered the separation of the State from the Church absurd because no such institution existed in Egypt (al-ʿIraqi 1998, 23). Still, it was ʿAbduh, who, once appointed Grand Mufti in 1899, suggested the reform of the Sharia courts, along the lines of the public-private divide. In his influential study *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Talal Asad argues that the institutionalization and incorporation of the Sharia into the bureaucracy of the modern Egyptian state was possible in light of its recodification as a corpus of laws according to European judicial standards. From that time on, Sharia was endowed with an exclusive jurisdiction over the private domain as opposed to the ''non-religious'' public domain. In the aftermath of the reforms of Khedive Ismail and the British, postcolonial authorities in Egypt embodied Sharia as family and personal status law while its courts were redesigned to supplement the other two pillars of the Egyptian judicial system, i.e., the Mixed (1876) and the National Courts (1883). As a consequence, under the influence of colonial modernity, all judicial cases pertaining to family rights and relations were conflated with the privatized notions of religion (Asad 2003, 205-235).

Significantly for our purposes, Sharia was transformed in harmony with religious and judicial terms defined by the hegemonic Western modernity, and

signaled a breakthrough for the evolution of Islamism in the Egyptian cities. Hasan al-Banna propounded his view that the first step towards the ''resurrection'' of Egypt in the age of the nation states lay in Sharia's elevation to the sole source of all modern legislature (Al-Banna 1983, 40). Therewith, under the conditions of the early twentieth century urbanization in Egypt, the calls for *al-Iṣlāḥ* [reform] through compliance with the accepted standards of morality finally crystallized into the demand for an all-encompassing implementation of the Sharia. Like others before and after him, al-Banna advocated the view that the only remedy for the ethical, social and intellectual decay of that age could be discerned in the example of the *Aslāf* [ancestors] during the first days of the Caliphate (Arkoun 1996, 147; Zakariyya 2005, 24 – 25). In final analysis, by invoking the tradition of the pious forefathers in order to justify the complete "re-institution" of the Sharia, the Islamist *effendiyya* translated culturally the cognitive categories that had been already imposed by Europe on Muhammad ʿAbduh. At this point, it is imperative to quote Asad again: "it is important to ask how the re-ordering of modern life imposed certain demands on the Islamic tradition" (2001, 7).

According to José Casanova, a leading scholar in the field of religious studies, the privatization of religion does not necessarily underscore its degradation. Quite the contrary; it could lead to the renegotiation of its public role as well (Casanova 1994, 212). In that sense, the demand of the modern Islamic associations vis-à-vis the postcolonial state as to "re-installation" of the Sharia conditions its transition from the "sanctioned" private to the once ''restricted'' public realm. Therefore, the Islamists' zeal to--kin Casanova's terms"deprivatize" religion, culminated in direct interventions in the social conduct of city dwellers or even attempts to change their physical appearance. In the context of postcolonial theory, the orthopraxy of the ulama and later on the *jamʿiyyāt* against the Sufi rural forms of religiosity speaks volumes about the greater *agency* of colonized subjects as manifested in their appropriation of the modern concept of public space within the discursive tradition of Islamism (Asad 2003, 67). What is more, *al–jamʿiyyāt* proposed a new roadmap to urbanity on the grounds of renegotiating with the growing numbers of the newcomers from the countryside and the parties of the emancipated urban class on the limits of Sharia's expanding jurisdiction. That has been a twofold process, both bottom-up and top-down. Its ramifications can be detected throughout the twentieth century up to present day in Egypt (Tamir 2010, 610-630).

Thereby, the puritanical *Jamʿiyyatu Ansār Muhammad* reprimanded its members for attending "immoral" places of the urban landscape, like theatres,

cinemas and dancing halls, whilst instructing them to *measure their piety and manhood* (emphasis mine) by growing their beards, allegedly after the fashion of the Prophet (Daud 1992, 185). However, in their endeavor to "re-Islamize" the urban environment and demonstrate their piety, they came to oppose the *effendiyya* of the Muslim Brothers as concerns their dress code, i.e., the substitution of the European costume and the *tarbūsh* in favor of the white, "purified" *ʿabaya* (Hamd Bin Sadiq 1994, 444). The strict orthopraxy of the *jamʿiyyāt* was apparent first and foremost in the names under which they were registered by state authorities. The Brotherhood for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice was such a representative case. Founded by the young al-Banna and some of his colleagues during their school years in Damanhur, that *jamʿiyya* intervened directly in the lives of the city's residents. During mass protests against the British rule and urban disturbances occurring every day, those new entries from the rural world to the *effendiyya* of the big city were preoccupied with the habits of the "deviant" Muslims. They allegedly sent threatening letters to their neighbors, when they consumed alcohol and neglected their daily prayers or their obligatory fasting during Ramadan (Al-Jundi 1978, 12; Saʿid 1997, 57).

Affected by the colonialist legalistic re-imaginations of the Sharia, the Muslim Brothers put the protection of the Muslim family at the core of their "re-islamization" campaign. Indeed, the Christian missionary and Muslim Brotherhood had many similarities regarding the reformation of the individual, the family and the society consecutively (Dennis 1897, 76 – 135; al-Tahan 2002, 142-145). Besides, the brothers devoted a large part of their literature discussing family cohesion, the segregation of sexes in public places and women's rights to education and work, as long as they did not contradict their *natural role* (emphasis mine) as "pious wives" and "responsible mothers" (Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun 1954, 8-9). Focusing on the segregation of sexes, we refer to a novelty that would have been incomprehensible out of the context of the rapidly urbanized and educated Egyptian society. Overall, the Brotherhood views on family life would have not taken a concrete shape, if it had not been for the emergence of the Egyptian nuclear family, modelled after the nineteenth-century family of the European urban class (Seidel 2005, 113-117). In turn, the establishment of family as a social construction in Egypt had been embedded in the labor-intensive model of capitalist development, which the country's pashas, as well as the foreign investors, wholeheartedly embraced.

Apart from attempting to "re-Islamize" the urbanized public place from the bottom-up, the Muslim Brothers had been incredibly efficient in lobbying the

postcolonial state for "re-instituting" the Sharia. Notably, after the abrogation of the Capitulations in 1937, the Christian missions reported that:

> Under the influence of the fast-growing Islamic associations, successive Egyptian governments had been pushing during the last years for the compliance of all modern legislation with what is commanded by the Sharia. In the meantime, Islam has already been declared the official religion, while steps are taken every day to diminish our missionary activity in the country (Conference of British Missionary Societies Archives 1948, 17).

Owing to the increasing number of their members and their expanding influence, the brothers did not hesitate to question the Azharites' claim to maintain the position of state interlocutors over matters of religion and public morality. In this regard, ten years after the foundation of his *jamʿiyya*, Hasan al-Banna met al-Azhar's Rector and asked the ulama to support the Brothers' efforts as the "genuine" Islamic missionary work (Bayyumi 1978, 263-264; *al-Nadhir*, vol. 2, 1938, 6-7).

Meanwhile, the famous neologisms of the Islamist literature, such as the Islamic Economy, Islamic Law and/or the Islamic Government started to gain popularity and provoked new passionate debates over Sharia and its future (Lia 1998, 185). More specifically, the political program that was dubbed by Hasan al-Banna *al-Hukūmat al-Islamiyya* [Islamic Government] was not a model of governance *per se*. He believed that any Egyptian government ought to intervene directly in public life by reclaiming more space for the Sharia, if it really deserved to be identified by the Muslims as an Islamic Government. Concurrently, the brothers exerted pressure on the ruling urban class and even sent a demarche to the Prime Minister Nahas Pasha in 1936 urging him to distance Egypt from Turkish Republicanism:

> The stance of the Turkish Republic on Islam is well known to everyone: they substituted the Caliphate with an alien-to-us republic. The government announced officially in its constitution that it is not an Islamic government any more. It abrogated the Sharia and recognized the same marriage and hereditary rights to men and women, not to mention the imposition of Western clothing and alphabet…How is it possible for the rulers of Egypt—the leading power among the nations of Islam and the East—to publically express that they are impressed by Kemal Ataturk's model?! (Al-Banna 1966, 185)

Although the brothers enthusiastically received in 1937 the young Farouk's advent to the throne in view of his commitment to reign in full accordance with

the Sharia (Ramadhan 1979, 89), they warned the government that people were at the brink of social upheaval demanding to be governed by the divine laws of the Sharia. ʿAbd al-Halim Mahmud recorded the prelude to that ''imminent revolution'':

> The old political parties were frustrated when they realized that an unknown brotherhood like ours opened its own branches in Cairo, i.e., their political sanctuary for ages. Their frustration grew even more when they saw in 1938 more than 4000 students marching in the streets of Giza and demanding the re-institution of the Sharia (1994, 129).

In a nutshell, the heirs to the Egyptian postcolonial state no matter if they were the pashas and the native urban class or the military regimes of Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak a few decades later, responded to the Islamist calls for more Sharia by amending the constitution and outrightly intervening in the re-arrangement of urban public life, namely by censoring ''immoral'' movies, books or theatrical plays, closing down liquor stores and fighting prostitution, vulgarity, and more recently, atheism. From the very beginning, *al-jamʿiyyāt al-islamiyya* portrayed such measures as the ''victories of Islam'' (*al-Nadhir*, vol. 16, 1938, 4), demonstrating that the state was yielding to their pressure. In the early Islamists' view the enhanced capabilities of the *jamʿiyyāt* in dictating the Islamic way of living in an urbanized environment set them apart from the "passive" ulama and the spiritually "stagnant" Sufi orders as a third pole within modern Islam, i.e., *al-Islam al-Harakī* [Active Islam]. Islamist narratives have been shaped against the background of such clichés ever since.

Conclusion

With the Muslim Brotherhood at their forefront, *al-jamʿiyyāt al-islamiyya* pursued what I have termed in this article the ''re-Islamization'' of the Egyptian society in tandem with its gradual urbanization during the first half of the twentieth century and the emancipation of its *effendiyya*. Most importantly, Egypt's first Islamists contested the authority of al-Azhar and the various Sufi *turuq* to speak on behalf of Muslims and Islam. The demand for ''re-instituting'' the Sharia in Muslim societies while delineating the extent of its jurisdiction has become ever since a part of the Islamic discursive tradition under the aegis of Islamist encounters with colonial modernity and the priorities of the postcolonial nation state. As has been suggested, the Egyptian fast-growing cities with their millions of residents constituted the *ideal scenery* (emphasis mine) for the fruition of such contacts between the Muslim Brotherhood and the country's rulers up to present day.

The *jamʿiyyāt* have been always keen on forging alliances with the urban class where they belonged, in return for retaining their social capital and networks. Broadly speaking, the postcolonial state of the 1930s and the 1940s tolerated their *daʿwa* and appeased them by giving in their puritanical demands hoping to contain the radicalization of the impoverished newcomers in the suburbia in the midst of general turmoil. It is no wonder that, not only pious Muslims, but also some Copts and even a few foreigners, mainly Greeks, reportedly donated large sums of money to the Muslim Brotherhood during the 1940s (Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun 1945, 17, 28). In spite of their misgivings about the potentiality of applying the Sharia in cosmopolitan Cairo, Alexandria or Ismailia, they were fully aware of its socio-political significance as an obedience enforcing mechanism in the face of radical nationalist and communist challenges.

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