CONFINEMENTS AND LIBERATIONS

THE MANY FACES OF THE VEIL

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Confinements and Liberations: The Many Faces of the Veil

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This study explored the veil as norm among modern middle and upper-middle-class women, a class that historically had rejected the veil until recently. The study sought to identify the loci of the forces pushing the wearing of the veil. The study is based on the integration of historical analysis with qualitative methods and content analysis. Specifically this research is based on triangulated data from (a) detailed interviews conducted with 65 young Muslim Egyptian women during the summer of 2008, (b) content analysis of 70 sermons delivered by four of the most influential preachers today, and (c) a survey of the history of the veil in Egypt.

Findings showed that the veil has become a unique instrument of power employed by several actors at three new and interrelated arenas of struggle. At the social level, women are using the veil to redefine their roles in society. At the political level, they are using various forms of the veil to declare full or partial alliance with counter-hegemonic forces challenging the state's moral authority and the state's political liberalization policies that have targeted women. At the global arena of power, women are engaged in a

solidarity movement against the West and the forces of globalization. All these tension zones are influenced by new patterns of immigration in the Arab world and by new forms of intraregional globalization fostered by a newly emerging Arab satellite industry.

This study was the beginning of research that should continue to investigate through the utilization of novel and more focused integrated methods this particular phenomenon. The struggle to remove the bonds of the West, in particular, invites future research to dissect the many aspects of interregional and intraregional globalization and their impact on religious identities across the world. This research also suggested that the attitudes towards the veil, women, the state, and the West are in a state of flux, requiring the use of novel identity barometers to assess the direction, magnitude, and implications of these changes on the relationships between the West and the Muslim world.

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Three Arenas of Struggle

The Faculty of Economics and Political Science of Cairo University, English Section is one of the most prestigious university faculties in Egypt and home to upper-middle and upper-class university students. The young women in this faculty are dressed in the latest fashion trends: Gucci Bags, Diane Von Furstenberg mini-dresses over tight Levi jeans, complemented with headscarves by world renowned designers such as Christian Dior, Hermes, Gucci, and Dolce & Gabbana, all of which making the style combination all the more captivating. A very similar sight would be seen at private universities, including the American University in Cairo, The German University in Cairo, and other private institutions whose main clientele are the sons and daughters of the country's most elite. Only 10 years ago, a veiled woman on these campuses would be uncommon. In general, the phenomenon was confined to lower and middle-lower classes and it was almost nonexistent among the upper-middle and upper classes of the Egyptian society. While the veiling phenomenon in Egypt has been on the rise since the early 1980s, it has been more of a lower-middle class phenomenon. Today, the veil, or the *hijab*, has become the norm even among the most affluent social groups in Egypt. The veil has traversed, in many different ways, all segments of urban society today and has done so with fascinating speed and momentum.

The recent and rapid evolution in the forms of dress in the Muslim world and the adoption of what may be labeled the "Islamic dress" has intrigued many observers and scholars. One camp of researchers views these new forms of dress as indicative of what

they call "religious resurgence," or "religious revival." Another strand of thought positions the phenomenon in the context of new and/or continued forms of gender oppression.[1] A third group insists that the spread of *hijab* today represents a form of collective action against a secular or secularizing state.[2] Common to all these theories are fundamentally flawed conceptualizations of agency, the state, and the socio-cultural structure. This project addresses these theoretical problems by reconceptualizing and examining afresh the process through which the new forms of dress have unfolded (and are still unfolding). Basically, I seek to answer the following questions: Why has the veil become the norm among modern middle and upper-middle-class women, a class that has generally rejected the veil until recently? What are the meaning(s) of the veil that are shared by this group and what are the different functions it performs for them and in society at large?

There are two important pieces in this puzzle: the visibility of this new symbolic form, and its execution *through and by* women. Its visibility is related to the power of its symbolism. The fact that the implementation of the symbol is conducted by and through women who are viewed as important agents for reproducing a (the) state,[3] suggests that

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[1] Nicolas Sarkozy, President of France, for example, argued that the *burqa* "is a sign of the subjugation, of the submission of women." In the name of freedom and women's rights, Sarkozy declared, "We cannot accept in our country women imprisoned behind bards, cut off from social life, deprived of identity…" See Doreen Carvajal, "Sarkozy Says Full-Body Muslim Gowns as a 'Symbol of Enslavement,'" *New York Times*, June 23, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com (accessed June 23, 2009).

[2] Fadwa El Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic: Egypt's Contemporary Islamic Movement," *Social Problems* 28, no. 4 (1981).

[3] Many scholars and observers contend that the role of women in preserving and reproducing national identity is crucial. One of the travelers to Egypt in the late nineteenth century, Elizabeth Cooper (1877-1945) argued that Egyptian women were "the chief preservers of the ancient customs of Egypt" (cited in Beth Baron "Unveiling in Earl Twentieth Century Egypt: Practical and Symbolic Considerations," *Middle Eastern Studies,* 25, no.3 (1989): 270-386, 373). Leila Ahmed also demonstrated from her own life story how her mother, and mothers in general, were normally stricter in their implementation of cultural regulations than fathers. See Leila Ahmed*, A Border Passage: From Cairo to America—A Women's Journey* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Girous, 1999). This research arrives at a similar conclusion: many women were pressured to wear the veil by their mothers. This research also demonstrates that women have

the veil today is a tool of power, both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic. I insist on emphasizing the multiplicity of the forms of the veil and the multifocal meanings and symbols that this highly differentiated piece of garment collectively and individually suggests.

My project is to dissect the many forms, meanings, and functions associated with today's veil. Through studying the veil, I investigate the mechanisms of control and resistance driving the symbolic displays of the veil. In doing so, I seek to unravel the subtle forms of subversion and submission exercised at various arenas of power. The global arena of power is shaped by the converging and diverging forces of globalization. The arena of the state represents the struggle between a multifaceted state that seeks to monopolize the cultural regulation of society on one hand and various formal and informal social groups on the other. The social arena encompasses the struggle among the multiple layers of social groups that are at times challenging and at others accepting of the version of religiosity propagated by the state. Veiling as a symbolic gesture appears in one context to signify an alliance with global forces against the state and/or social barriers, in another an alliance with the state against these ambiguous external forces, and yet in another the existence of often informal solidarities through which women attempt to resist and outmaneuver all these forces combined.

The most immediate and most accessible level of power politics at which the meanings and forms of the *hijab* are taking shape is the "society". At this level, veiling is related to the economic problems that young Egyptian people are facing today. On face

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been the main agent and instrument of change in the state. During the Naserite regime, women were targeted most in modernization activities. Religious clerics today are attempting to counter the state hegemony by rejecting the model of the modern woman that the state promoted and presenting an alternative models of womanhood that is being accepted by young Egyptians of both genders. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

value, the new veil demonstrates a strong and persistent mode of gender inequality to which Egyptian women have chosen (or are forced to choose) to submit. Although this holds significant elements of truth, it is just the partial story. The deteriorating economic conditions in Egypt and the rising unemployment have resulted in increased discontent with women crowding out men in the labor market. This is causing many male members of society to resurrect "traditional" arguments about a woman's proper role in society. However, the Egyptian woman responded to or accommodated that pressure through establishing the appearance of sex segregation without giving up any of the freedoms that she realized through policy or organized action.

Women today are using the veil to reclaim and assert their presence in public space without challenging what is now being seen as contemporary interpretations of Islam.[4] The veil empowers women to freely participate in the labor market and various social activities. Women are also using the veil as a mode of protesting new forms of gender biases. The veil, traditionally a religious symbol, has become a fashion symbol. Women have practically subverted the meaning and function of the veil thus turning it from an article symbolizing tradition to one associated with modernity.

The veil also gives women a very unique strategy for dealing with the economic situation and the scarcity of jobs. Rampant unemployment has led to a heightened level of resentment and loss of self-esteem. Today, and as this research demonstrates, young Egyptian men and women have little or no confidence in their talent. There is a common perception that "it's all the same." Those with the highest degree are equated with those with no degree, with all ending up in a job as a microbus or cab driver or another job that

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[4] Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam,* 223-225.

is in no way commensurate with the person's skills, qualifications, or ambitions. This phenomenon results in a lack of purpose, which in turn results in an identity crisis.

A similar finding was suggested in Shana Cohen's (2004) *Searching for a Different Future.* Cohen compares the state of the unemployed university graduate with a stateless individual who cannot prove his/her existence due to "the loss of philosophical meaning. In a sense, the person's rights as a citizen are denied by his/her inability to carry out their social responsibilities, which in turns undermines their citizenship.[5] This has driven recent university graduates to engage in various forms of informal religious activism, such as veiling and preaching. Responses to these economic situation in Egypt have been somehow gendered. Many Egyptian males have responded to the economic crisis by submitting to a state of idleness, spending most of their time with fellow unemployed or underemployed youth in cafes or joining militant Islamic groups. Women, on the other hand, are finding a way out of this trap by justifying the lack of opportunities by their resolution to select jobs that celebrate their veils and stress the importance of religious values in the workplace. Rather than submitting to the feeling that their talents are wasted, women are being selective in their career choices to maintain the image of a respectable Muslim woman.

The second symbolic location of tension codified by the veil is the conflict between the state and society. Many scholars and observers argue that the veil represents a general rejection to the secular vision that was promoted by state officials.[6] This view, I

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[5] See Shana Cohen*, Searching for a Different Future: The Rise of a Global Middle Class in Morocco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

[6] Gellner, for example, argues that fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon that is based on the rejection of the tenets of the secular state. See Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992). Ziad Abu-Amr (1997) argues that fundamentalism results from the failure of ideologies of liberalism and secularism, and the pursuit of untried alternatives. See Ziad Abu-Amr, "Issues

contend, is simplistic as it is based on a false dichotomy between the state and religion. The Egyptian state, I contend has never been purely secular. Rather, state officials sought to augment their power power through reconstituting the meaning of religiosity and synergizing religion and the modernization project that they launched after Egypt became an independent republic in 1953. The veil, but not religion, was seen by the state as an antithesis of this project. The fact that today the champions of the dress transformation are middle and upper-middle-class women, whose role in triggering change,[7] promoting stability,[8] and reproducing or transforming the cultural fabric of society,[9] clearly speaks to the acute levels of value contestation that are taking place in the Egyptian society between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses.

The third level of power struggles where veiling plays a significant role is global. Huntington's "clash of civilization" thesis[10] has been one of the most contentious propositions in political science. In essence, he suggests that globalization, instead of bringing about a "universal civilization" composed of people holding firmly the belief in individualism, secularism, and Western democratic norms, is pushing forward novel forms of differentiation and indigenization that are manifested at various levels of socialization starting with how people vote to how they dress. The forces of globalization, however, are not unequivocal. As some scholars assert, globalization is "a

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in Arab Islamic Fundamentalism," in *Religion, Ethnicity and Self-Identity: Nations in Turmoil,* eds. Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby, 35-52 (London: University Press of New England, 1997).

[7] Ruth Berins Collier, *Paths toward Democracy: The Working Class and elites in Eastern Europe and South America* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[8] Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

[9] Leela Fernandes, *India's New Middle Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

[10] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

strange amalgam of both homogenizing forces of sameness and uniformity *and* heterogeneity, difference, and hybridity."[11]

This study investigates the converging and diverging forces of globalization in Egypt. I examine how these conflicting forces are mediated and internalized at the domestic level and illustrate their impacts on religious culture. I also explore the hybrids that these forces produce at the points of intersection of these conflicting forces. By hybrid I refer to the fuzziness resulting from the fusion of already complex social phenomenon at a very high speed. This is not to claim that there were "pure forms" of concepts like religiosity or statehood in the past that now commixed; a hybrid here represents a mix of compounds rather than pure elements. The hybridity concept is used to demonstrate the catalyzation of existing and new forms of fusion and the increasing complexity and elusiveness of boundaries due to the accelerating processes of globalization and transnationalization.[12]

This research project addresses two entwined hybrids: the state hybrid and the religiosity hybrid. The hybridized state is a new state characterized by novel forms and realms of state autonomy and the emergence of new, "nontraditional" state functions.[13]

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[11] Douglas Kellner, "Globalization, Terrorism, and Democracy: 9/11 and Its Aftermath," in *Frontiers of Globalization Research*, ed. Ino Rossi, 248 (New York: Springer, 2007).

[12] Jan Kubik, "The State and Civil Society: Traditions and New Forms of Governing," in *Civil Society and the State,* eds. Emil Brix, Jürgen Nautz, Werner Wutscher, Rita Trattnigg, 33-52 (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2007).

[13] There are many manifestations of the state transformations that we are witnessing today. Timothy Mitchell (1999) talks about the new state role in Egypt's real estate boom today. The state, particularly the military apparatus is the main thrust of that boom. It has become a de facto partner to the private sector. As such the public-private divide that most literature portrays is misleading. Timothy Mitchell, "Dreamland: The Neoliberalism of Your Desires," *Middle East Report* 210 (1999): 28-33. Additionally, Fernandes notes the role of the state in creating a "new middle class" through the promotion of specific Western styles of living while at the same time emphasizing values such as authenticity in the realms of urban and media politics. These are many examples of other transformations taking place within and outside state borders, which mandate "new thinking" and approaches. Leela Fernandes, *India's New Middle Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

Some of the extant literature challenges the concept of the monolithic state, arguing that international forces, capital mobility, and transnational movements have weakened the state significantly and undermined its autonomy to an extent that it has become less relevant in producing key political outcomes.[14] Others argue that the state is still relevant and treat it as a monolithic form that determines all significant political outcomes related to regime change and political development. In this study I demonstrate that the state is still very relevant, but that it has been transformed radically from its original form thus resulting in the simultaneous transformation of other social phenomena, including religiosity and secularity. That is why we need new analytical frameworks that are as adaptive and mutable as the state itself.

The religiosity hybrid refers to the compounds of religio-political symbols that are rapidly evolving these days. The veil represents a perfect prism for exploring the interconnection among the state, religiosity, and globalization. The Muslim veil constitutes a language used to communicate, constitute and reconstitute the "clash." The meanings associated with the veil are far from uniform, and its manifestations and forms are as diverse as humankind. Both the forms and the meanings of the veil are in constant dialogical relation with the forces of globalization; its meanings and manifestations are constituted by globalization, and also constitute its direction, magnitude, and effect. According to Shirazi, "Once the veil is assigned a certain meaning the veil itself acquires the power to dictate certain outcomes—the garment becomes a force in and of itself."[15] But *hijab* is not just a tool of power and resistance, as many scholars have convincingly

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[14] See for example Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (New York: The Free Press, 1995) and Walter Wriston, *The Twilight of Sovereignty* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992).

[15] Faegheh Shirazi, *The Veil Unveiled,* 8.

demonstrated;[16] it also functions in various ways that dilute the binary "clash" logic that globalization generates and at the same time reifies and reproduces that logic. It is a perfect cultural object for dissecting and analyzing the collision, reflection, and refraction of the forces of globalization.

In her *Politics of Piety* Saba Mahmoud looks at various forms of religious practices including the veil that evolved in Egypt in the 1990s and how the veil, among other things, innovatively communicates specific messages even demands.[17] Through the exploration of various mosque-based "piety movements" headed by women, Mahmoud explains how women express their rejection of the "prevalent form of religiosity that treats Islam as a system of abstract values that is to be cherished but that, nonetheless, remains inessential to the practical organization of day-to-day life."[18] The fact that religion has become a peripheral aspect of social life, and that it has become increasingly difficult to tell whether a person is a Christian or a Muslim is a cause of concern for many women. The initiation of these "piety movements" is a reflection of that concern. The veil therefore represents a desire to assert the Muslim identity that is distinct and unique through the "cultivation of these bodily aptitudes, virtues, habits, and desires that serve to ground Islamic principles within the practices of everyday living."[19] The goal is therefore to establish Islam as the main foundation of all aspects of life, not just religious practices.

Mahmoud's study revealed that the veil was not just a reaction to the various socioeconomic and political forces that women were subjected to. The veil in many

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[16] See Lewis "Veils and Sales: Muslims and the Spaces of Postcolonial Fashion Retail," 423-441; Shirazi, *The Veil Unveiled*; Ahmed, "The Veil Debate – Again," 153-17; Haddad, "The Post-9/11 *Hijab* as Icon," 253-67.

[17] Saba Mahmoud, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[18] Mahmoud, *Politics of Piety*, 45.

[19] Mahmoud, *Politics of Piety*, 45.

instances was prompted by a strong desire to reconcile the domain of the profane with that of the sacred. It should be noted that Mahmoud's study was conducted between 1995 and 1997. At that time, the mass-veiling phenomenon was not fully in motion, although it was starting to take roots. Also, the site of her research, mosques, suggests a level of religious activism and awareness that are common to three urban sites with very different socio demographic characteristics but are not necessarily universal. In other words, the forms and meanings of the veil that Mahmoud identified are both time- and group-specific.

The sample selection criteria in this research also brush the findings in a specific way. I study the functions and meanings of the veil among middle and upper-middle-class women only. I therefore can not sufficiently address the connection between the veiling phenomenon and social class. This study still makes an important contribution to understanding the dynamics of religiosity and class, which is the elucidation of new forms of religious practices and meanings that have been almost nonexistent among the middle and upper-middle classes, a group that spearheaded the antiveil campaign in the first three decades of the twentieth century and that was adamantly opposed to the veil until a decade ago. Today they have fully endorsed the *hijab* and have become among its most active proponents. Today the majority of middle- and upper-middle class women are veiled, and yet the veil is still portrayed in the literature as a lower-income group phenomenon.

The research also demonstrates that the veil, although a religious symbol, has little correlation with religion. Specifically, I refute the argument that the veil is representative of what the so-called religious resurgence movement. In fact, the veil

seldom translates into any form of formal religious activism. Notwithstanding the deep spiritual meanings that the veil reflected for some women, for the majority the veil has little formal connection to religiosity and is more a manifestation of various intricate power struggles that women engage in on a daily basis.

I am not arguing that religion has become an irrelevant cultural ingredient. On the contrary, I view the dichotomies between religion and politics as quite artificial. Along with Talal Asad (1993), I contend that the separation of the domains of politics and is a cultural artifact that was introduced in modern times by Western Renaissance philosophers.[20] Both religion and religiosity are products of prevailing socioeconomic and political conditions. Similar to Geertz, I view religion as a stratified phenomenon made of a doctrinal element at one level and a body of religious practices and rituals at another. Where Asad departs from that definition, and I agree, is the affirmation of the strong intercontention between these two strata. Asad argues that the domain of the doctrine and that of religious practices are mutually constitutive and that both of these strata are "intrinsically" dependent on discourses, symbols, and practices produced at other domains, including socio-economic conditions, political institutions, and prevalent international systems.[21] Although the texts constituting the religious doctrine are viewed to be sacred and unchangeable, the interpretations and meanings of these texts are highly differentiable and historically specific religious dispositions and practices. In Chapter 4 I provide a cursory demonstration of the mutability of religious texts and meanings. I locate the concept of the veil in religious texts and trace the conditions under which it has

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[20] Talal Asad, *Geneologies of Religion: Discourses and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1993).
[21] Asad, *Geneologies of Religion,* 30-33.

become a requirement *after* the death of the Prophet of Islam and under very specific socioeconomic conditions.

The following section analyzes in greater detail the state and religiosity hybrids and elucidates implications of the hybridization processes on the meanings and functions of the veil.

The State Hybrid

Many scholars have argued that boundaries between the state and society have become "elusive, porous and mobile."[22] The most permeable boundaries of the political, it is argued here, represent the perfect loci for analyzing the various hybrids that were brought about through globalization. In recent years, the concept of the state has been a central theme in political science debate. Many scholars discarded the concept of the state as irrelevant. They argued that revolutionary advances in telecommunications and information technologies resulted in the internationalization of the production process. Hardt and Negri[23] asserted that the global dispersal of manufacturing created a demand for a new centralization of specialized producer services, especially financial services. Centralized financial and trade-related services, which are located in a few "global cities," manage and direct the global networks of production. Saskia Sassen concurs, arguing that the "digitization" of space has penetrated all levels of our daily activities, including the "societal, cultural, subjective, economic, and imaginary structurations of lived experience and the systems within which we exist and operate." This resulted in a

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[22] Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and their Critics." *The American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (1991): 77.

[23] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negre, *Empire.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

decline in the significance of the concept of the nation-state and the rise of other more effective political actors, such as the global city, global markets, and regional trade zones.[24]

One major manifestation of the digitization of space that this research tackles is the emergence of satellite television in the Arab world and Egypt in the 1990s. Under Nasser's regime, public media, especially radio and television, became the main arm for educating the public, and even more importantly, for reshaping the Egyptian national identity.[25] It is through television that the state attempted to "modernize" society and to transform the meanings and practices of religiosity, including unveiling. Television images reach a much wider audience than any other media channel, owing to the high illiteracy rates in these countries.[26] This is why Arab states maintained tight controls on the broadcasting realm.

As satellite television penetrated the Arab world, the Egyptian government made every effort to curtail the demand for cable television. The government increased the number of terrestrial channels and provided more entertainment programs and drama shows. These efforts succeeded in keeping the demand for other sources of television broadcasting low in Egypt. Until the end of the 1990s, Egypt had the lowest access rate to satellite and cable television in the Arab world. Only 7.5 percent of Egyptian homes with television had access to cable and satellite in 1999, significantly lower than the 27.2

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[24] Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Saskia Sassen, "Between Topographic Representation and Spatialized Power Projects," *Art Journal* 60, no. 2 (2001), 12-20.

[25] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[26] Naomi Sakr, *Satellite Realms: Transnational Television, Globalization and the Middle East* (London: I.B. Taurism, 2001)*,* 5.

percent average penetration rate in the region.[27]   However, the market for satellite television has increased exponentially during the following decade.[28] A 2008 media survey in Egypt showed that 43.2 percent of urban households had access to digital cable and satellite.[29] Less than 10 percent of the women interviewed in this study indicated that they had no access to cable television channels.

This digitization of the media space has resulted in major transformation in the forms and functions of the state as its borders became more fuzzy and elusive. However, its power and authority have remained resilient. While many of the channels that Egyptians have access to today are private, and many are owned and operated by non-Egyptians, all these channels are still transmitted through a state-owned satellite called Nilesat. It therefore does have the power to ban specific channels and control the content of other channels. Moreover, the Egyptian state-run satellite channels still secure a very wide audience today.[30] Egyptian soap operas are still unrivalled in the Arab world, and are important media through which the state is able to influence and remodel national values.[31]

This project sheds some light on some of the intricacies between globalization and the state. Using Migdal's state-in-society approach,[32] I explore religious satellite media as a site at which the various interactions between the state, the public, and global forces

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[27] The penetration rate was significantly higher than average in Saudi Arabia (65.4%) and Lebanon (42.5 percent). See Sakr, *Satellite Realms,* 114.

[28] Sakr, *Satellite Realms,* 114.

[29] The survey was conducted by the Arab Advisors Group. The increase in access is mainly due to a burgeoning black market of reselling Pay TV signals to neighboring households. I could not access the survey itself, but data was obtained from a press release posted at www.ArabAdvisors,com regarding the results of the 2008 Egypt Media Survey. Press release downloaded at http://www.arabadvisors.com/Pressers/presser-200508.htm (accessed August 22, 2009).

[30] Naomi Sakr, *Arab Television Today* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 109-136; Sakr, *Satellite Realms,* 99-130.

[31] Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood.*

[32] Migdal, *State in Society*.

can be illustrated. The examination of these interactions highlights some of the transformations that the state is experiencing both conceptually and empirically. The research contributes to the literature on globalization by examining one of its unexplored layers, namely intraregional globalization. This relates to the fusion of cultures within regions that are simplistically grouped together in most of the globalization literature, including Arab cultures, Islamic cultures, Indian cultures, and the like. The last decade has witnessed an increase in the exposure of the Egyptian culture to Arab, particularly Arab Gulf cultures. These transformations caused the borders of the state to become fuzzy and elusive, albeit resilient. It also resulted in significant transformations in the religious culture and the hybridization of religious symbols, including the veil, along with the state.

The Religiosity Hybrid

The second locale of hybridity that this study tackles is the religiosity hybrid. The 1980s saw a surge in the literature on ethno-nationalism. This surge is attributable to the outburst of ethno-national wars around the globe following the collapse of the Soviet Union. By 1992, more than a quarter of the states in the world were experiencing ethnic wars. These "cultural" wars greatly puzzled political scientists; modernization theory predicted that the role of "culture" would subside as states embraced more the ethos of secularization and became circumscribed by Weber's "iron-cage" of the secular bureaucracy, which rejects all that is deemed "subjective" or "unscientific."

The realities of this time, however, revealed that the "inevitable" emergence of the secular state is a great myth in social science, and that the practices, meaning creation, and interpretation have and will always be components of political struggles. Social

scientists responded to this new reality in many different ways. Some maintained that cultural phenomena are ephemeral byproducts of modernization that will soon subside as the modernization schemes take root.[33] Others insisted that what we see as cultural is just a camouflage of "rational" or "structural" causes of these forms of politics.[34] Another group discarded the rational theory altogether and insisted that the cultural variable, monolithically and statically defined, are the only causal factor that scientists should look at.[35] Some approaches attempted to reconcile the two poles of the debate and proposed more nuanced solutions to the agent-structure problem and the relationship between the rational and the cultural levels. The following section focuses on the literature on religious revival and evaluates the relevance of the religiosity debate to explaining the spread of the veil among educated middle-class Muslim women today.

Seeking to explain the rise of Islamic movements in the Arab world, Philip Khoury[36] argues that religious resurgence is the result of "state's exhaustion," or the inability of the state to bring society into modernity through forging the socioeconomic changes necessary to support the new value system embedded in the secularization and

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[33] Gellner for example argues that modernization initially results in instability and may result in ethnic violence. The phenomenon, however, will soon subside as the state progresses in its modernization project. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

[34] Rational choice and instrumentalist approaches locate nationalist movements at the individual and/or group level. Some rational models emphasize economic goals, such as Paul Collier's "Doing Well out of War: An Economic Perspective," in *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars,* eds. Mats Berdal and David M. Malone. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000). Others emphasize political goals, such as the desire of the elites to diverge attention from national problems through instigating ethnic conflicts. See Simmel *Conflict.* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956).

[35] Huntington reported that civilization clashes will define all types of conflict during the post-Cold War Era. Culture, specifically religion, is viewed as the main axis of internal and international conflict in the world today. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.*

[36] Philip S Khoury, Islamic Revivalism and the Crisis of the Secular State in the Arab world: A Historical Appraisal," in *Arab Resources,* ed. I. Ibrahim, 213-236 (London: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1983).

modernization policies that were adopted in the 1950s.[37] Khoury maintains that state's exhaustion is the result of two structural causes: the state's position in the international power structure and the domestic power structure. Here the state apparatus, which is seen as completely separate and disjoint from society, tries to push society in a direction that it would have not gone through otherwise. This requires mass mobilization of social classes. However, economic and social realities awaken the masses whose aspirations and expectation have gone to a zenith. A significant lag between the mobilization and assimilation processes develops, as the expectations created through mobilization get frustrated. The result is greater polarization, the only viable expression of which, given the exhaustion of other ideologies, is Islamic revivalism.[38]

Eric Davis[39] adds some nuance to Khoury's model by providing an "ideational" dimension. His model rests on three concepts: "accumulation, legitimation and authenticity." The differential accumulation that accompanies the "imported development models" of liberalism and state capitalism increases the concentration of wealth in the hands of few, which causes a drop in legitimacy. This loss of legitimacy stimulates "introspection" among classes of the Egyptian society that have marginally benefited from the educational campaign launched during those periods, but are not able to elevate beyond their social classes. This situation results in an authenticity crisis and ideological

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[37] This analysis has some common elements with another model presented by Huntington in 1968, where he argued that forging a certain institutional change to modernize because it did not go at commensurate pace with socioeconomic changes to meet the expectations created by the new institutional set-up is doomed to produce social instability and violence. See Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

[38] See Philip S. Khoury, Islamic Revivalism and the Crisis of the Secular State in the Arab world: A Historical Appraisal," In *Arab Resources,* ed. I. Ibrahim, 213-2356 (London: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1983).

[39] Eric Davis, "Religion Against the State: A Political Economy of Religious Radicalism in Egypt and Israel." In *Religious Resurgence: Contemporary Cases in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Richard T. Antoun and Mary Elaine Hegland, 145-166 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press).

vacuum. Among a spectrum of possible ideological alternatives to fill this vacuum, militant Islam stands as the best competitor given its ability to relate to and explain social realities.

In this model, the author utilizes a class analysis to understand the dynamics of the movement. Islamic militants, he argues, come from particular classes. His empirical research on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt showed that the main base of the Muslim group is the newly urbanized professional middle classes—a class that modernization theory predicted would be the first to internalize the secular value system. However, they are mainly recent urbanizers, whose values are at odds with that of the urban values. That they chose to move to the city in spite of this perceived clash of values indicates their upward mobility aspirations, which soon get frustrated by socioeconomic realities. Without a sufficient ideational appeal for the discourse of radical Islam, Davis contends, those classes would not have been attracted to this movement as opposed to any other. The fact that they are professionals dictates a certain way of thinking about truth. Also the ideology provides a psychological/coping tool, and it explains the complexities of the social reality these classes are living in.

The strength of this model lies in its ability to capture several factors involved in the genesis and growth of these movements that other models are only able to capture sides of these movements. On the one hand, we can see the material forces at play. The gap between the expectations created by the new institutions and policies adopted by the state and the socioeconomic realities that the citizenry are facing provokes a desire for change. We are also able to see the dynamics of the confrontation and "clash" of various value systems. Third, the model situates militant Islamic movements among a range of other

possibilities, and the selection of that model in particular indicates its ideational strength and its ability to relate well to the structural realities. Nevertheless, the model is not able to explain why the values shared adopted by the subscribers of these movements are now shared by a great and expanding segment of society, some of which are not recent urbanizers, and many of which have actually been subscribers to a more Western style of life. There is limited applicability, therefore, to the research question at hand.

More recent literature synthesizes the structural models of Islamic activism with a nuanced institutional analysis that incorporates civil society. One prime example is Sheri Berman's *Islamism, Revolution and Civil Society*.[40] Along with Khoury and Davis, Berman contends that the modernization policies that were initiated during the Nasser's era offered Egyptians "a glimpse of what modernity has to offer, but not far enough to deliver it."[41] She argues that "the necessary precondition for the rise of Islamism has been the declining efficacy and legitimacy of the Egyptian state."[42] The faltering political system creates a "revolutionary situation" that invites various forms of revolutionary movements, the most successful of which is the Islamic civil society. Islamic groups have exploited the vacuum created through the decline of the public goods system by effectively providing a wide range of social goods, including health, education, and emergency services. These initiatives filled gaps in government services and created an enormous level of popular support for the Brotherhood. The results of various elections show that, given a fair opportunity, the Muslim Brotherhood may well take over the parliament and the presidential elections.

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[40] Sheri Berman, "Islamism, Revolution and Civil Society," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 2 (2003), 257-272.
[41] Berman, "Islamism, Revolution and Civil Society," 258.
[42] Berman, "Islamism, Revolution and Civil Society," 258.

Most, if not all, of the literature, on Islamic activism focuses on organized movements and imposes the conventional conceptual frameworks of civil society and social movements. Whether the civil society approach presented by Berman is applicable or not is a point of contention.[43] I argue, however, that the literature on religiosity and civil society has excluded many other forms of informal activism that are taking place at various levels of society today and that not only involve lower and lower-middle-class new urban people, but also spreads to the middle and upper-middle classes. One example of these movements are championed by a wide variety of religious scholars and preachers, each of which are targeting a specific segment of society, and all of which are utilizing the booming satellite television industry as a means of communicating with the public. These scholars and preachers have recently gained a lot of support, and many of them today are considered role models.

This study contributes to the literature on religious activism by illustrating the role of religious discourse in shaping attitudes and identities and the interactions of a wide variety of agents in the context of globalization. My research suggests that the Islamic intelligentsia have developed significant power over the process of value contestation and that many young Egyptians today align themselves more with the nationalist vision proposed by these groups as opposed to the state-propagated vision. Whereas there are no publicly announced goals by any of these preachers, there are subtle antiregime insinuations in their discourses and a declared vision of nationhood that is rooted in a variety of interpretations of Islam. The multiplicity of the forms of the veil is an illustration of the diversity of the competing visions of religiosity and nationalism in

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[43] Kubik argues that some of the defining characteristics of civil society, including transparency and accountability, are absent in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood.(unpublished manuscript)

Egypt today. Many of these visions are propagated at the level of the *ulema* but are constantly reconstituted by several other actors, including young Muslim men and women as well as the state. I will investigate the role of all these actors in redefining religiosity and the meaning of the veil in Egypt today.

The Veil as a Symbol of the Religiosity Hybrid

The question of the veil has always been a point of debate in Islam. While some historians and scholars insist that the veil requirement is historically specific, others contend that it is a general requirement, even as important as all five pillars of Islam. The latter side of the debate rationalizes the veil requirement in Islam and explains its necessity as a tool to maintain social stability, to protect the women and to raise her value. The explanations provided for the veil requirement include a need to curb the soul, a training tool and illustration of modesty, the necessity of the veil in absence of security and social equity, an illustration of male dominance, selfishness, jealousy and/or egoism, and others.[44] One of the main goals of the veil according to some of its proponents is the boosting of the value of the woman who was in the past a subject of exploitation. According to Mat'hary,[45] modesty and seclusion are things that women naturally seek, as it increases her value in the eyes of men. The veil makes the woman's beauty even more desired as it becomes inaccessible. This is especially true given the unstoppable sexual instinct that human beings have. But only the woman was selected for the veil because she longs for beautification more than men and enjoys capturing men through her beauty. Men would refuse to marry women who are unveiled because they are seen as cheap and

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[44] For a defense of the veil, see for example For a defense of the veil, see for example Murtaḍa al-Muṭahhari, *Mas'alat al-ḥijāb [The Question of the Veil]* (Beirut: al-Dar al-Islamiyyaah, 1987).

[45] Murtaḍá al-Muṭahharī, *Mas'alat al-ḥijāb*.

accessible. [46] This position about the necessity of the veil is the most prevalent right now. As will be discussed in the following chapters, most women use words like "gem" and "desired treasure" when explaining why they are veiled.

Towards the end of the 1970s, a body of literature emerged to explain the "return to the veil"[47] as a distinct manifestation of religious resurgence. In general, the literature focused on the various representations of the veil, including the failure of secularist policies, women's oppression, and national/international threat. Today, the discourse of the veil in Europe, especially France, is laden with Orientalist views regarding the status of women in Muslim countries. Very few studies, however, attempted to understand the origins of the phenomenon or women's motivations for adopting the veil. Although there was strong evidence to suggest that the veil decision in many cases was voluntarily taken by women, they insist that this voluntarism conceals patterns of women's oppression that are deeply entrenched.[48] The following review focuses on four seminal empirical studies that were conducted over the last three decades. These studies have shaped my understanding of the veil, my argument, and my research design.

Azza Mohammed Sallam[49] investigated the various factors that contributed to the return of the veil among educated women in Egypt whose grandmothers have went through great pains to discard in the past. The veil was treated as a manifestation of the revitalization movement in response to "excessive cultural stress," which in turn was

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[46] Murtaḍá al-Muṭahharī, *Mas'alat al-ḥijāb*, 57-79.

[47] John Alden Williams, "A Return to the Veil in Egypt." *Middle East Review* 11(1979):49-54.

[48] For an interesting discussion on the applications of liberal thought to the study of the veil, see Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Agency, and the Liberatory Subject." In *On Shifting Ground: Muslim Women in the Global Era*, ed. Fereshteh Nouraie-Simone, (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2005). The author critiques herself and other similar progressive liberals who assume that women seek their liberation as a rule, and any appearance of behavior that contradicts that pattern is a form of false consciousness.

[49] Azza Mohamed Ahmed Sallam, "The Return to the Veil among Female Undergraduate at Minya University, Egypt," (Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 1980).

produced by an attempt to reconcile "two ways of life."[50] Citing Fareed R. Zakaria, the author explained that the revival was the result of the failure of the imported Western culture "to provide abiding solutions to the Moslem world's social and economic problem," which in turn resulted in the return to religion for "spiritual solace."[51]

The author, veiled herself, combined qualitative methods (participant observations) with structured questionnaires that she conducted with a random sample of 80 female university undergraduates: 40 veiled and 40 unveiled. Simple bivariate analyses were used to test for the relationship between a woman's veil status (veiled or unveiled) and physical, health, economic, psychological, religious, family, education procedures, and future ambitions. The author used a self-designed questionnaire in addition to a number of standard scales, including the Views of Life Scale and the Mooney Problem Checklist. The findings suggested that religious reasons were the main driver for wearing the veil for the veiled group. While veiled women emphasized religious reasons behind their decision to veil, unveiled women provide nonreligious excuses for not veiling even though they were convinced it was a religious duty. This, according to the author suggested that "wearing the veil is consciously expressed as a…basic tenet of the Islamic religion,"[52] and that the return to the veil was part of this religious revival. Veiled women also expressed a need to emphasize their identity as Muslim women and to protect themselves from the other sex; they believed that the veil helped them accomplish both goals.

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[50] Sallam, "The Return to the Veil among Female Undergraduate at Minya University, Egypt," 26.
[51] Sallam, "The Return to the Veil among Female Undergraduate at Minya University, Egypt," 27.
[52] Sallam, "The Return to the Veil among Female Undergraduate at Minya University, Egypt," 107.

Economic status was another factor correlated with veiling in Egypt during the 1970s and 80s: the higher the status, the less likely the women would be veiled.[53] This is because "religiosity is more obvious among the lower and the middle class than among the upper-middle-class in Minya city."[54] The study also revealed that veiled women faced fewer future vocational and education problems. The explanation that the author proposed (but did not test) was that veiled women "committed to religion, are depending on God to solve their problems, and are sure that God will reward them as they are observant of their religion."[55]

The study revealed a number of typical problems associated with the research design the researcher selected. The participant was provided with a number of predetermined options (i.e., closed questionnaire) regarding the factors that might be associated with the veil. This approach might have predisposed the participant and created bias in the answers. Additionally, the author conflated religiosity with the belief in the veil as an Islamic requirement. The author did not test the religious orientation of the participants, as measured by how far they observed religious duties, how much they believed in fate, whether they read Quran regularly, or other indications of religiosity. The veil was used as an indicator of religiosity (independent variable) and as a subject of research (dependent variable) at the same time, which is a major methodological pitfall. Women's answers to open-ended questions posed by the author revealed a strong need to express and declare one's identity as a Muslim. Several participants conveyed that the

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[53] In Chapter 4 I demonstrate that the association between the veil and economic status was not linear in Egypt. During the Turkish rule in Egypt, the veil was associated with higher economic status. This association between the veil and higher economic status was broken towards the ends of the Turkish dynasty and then reversed in recent years.

[54] Sallam, "The Return to the Veil among Female Undergraduate at Minya University, Egypt," 116.

[55] Sallam, "The Return to the Veil among Female Undergraduate at Minya University, Egypt," 116.

1967 defeat revealed that the Muslim World was failing due to its negligence of its duties towards God. There seemed to be strong interaction effect between religious orientations and prevalent political conditions that the author did not test for. Political orientation could also explain some of answers of the participants that the researcher attributed to increased religiosity.

Shortly after Sallam's study, another one was conducted by the National Center for Social and Criminal Research regarding spread of the veil among undergraduate students.[56] A quantitative study was designed to identify the correlates of the veil and the most influential factors prompting the decision to veil. A total of 388 veiled and unveiled female undergraduates participated in the study and another 350 veiled and unveiled working college graduates. On aggregate, the socioeconomic profiles of the veiled and nonveiled women selected for the study were very similar. The study found that the veil predicted views regarding women's rights to education and work. Virtually all participants indicated that education was an absolute necessity, but significantly more unveiled women (36 percent for unveiled women versus 23 percent for veiled women) thought education was important in and of itself, not because it makes women better women and wives. More veiled women thought education was important due its role in preparing better wives and mothers. Unveiled women were more than twice as likely to support female work. Veiled women, on the other hand, supported a return to traditional views on women's social role. Almost one third of veiled women indicated that the lack of religious application in Egyptians' daily lives was the main obstacle facing the

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[56] Al-Markaz al-Qawmī lil-Buḥūth al-Ijtimāʿīyah wa-al-Jināʾiyah, *Ẓāhirat al-ḥijāb bayna al-jāmiʿīyāt. al-Taqrīr al-thānī : al-buʿd al-dīnī li-ẓāhirat al-ḥijāb bayna al-mihanīyā*t [The Veil Phenomenon among Female Undergraduates-Second Report: The Religious Dimension of the Veil Phenomenon among Female Professionals] (Cairo: The National Center for Social and Criminal Studies, Religious Studies Unit, 1984).

advancement of Egyptian women. Only four percent of unveiled women thought religiosity was the problem. On the other hand, 52 percent of unveiled women (compared to 20 percent veiled women) cited tradition as the main impediment to women's advancement.

The study revealed significant differences in the type of media content that the participants were most interested in. Whereas 87 percent of veiled women preferred religious media sources, the unveiled women were more interested in reading about political and social affairs than about religion. Both groups, however, provided similar ratings to the role of religious media in society: 61 percent of both groups thought the role of religious media was still insignificant. Veiled women were more likely to indicate that religious media is failing to promote awareness about religion. For them, this insignificant or negative role was due mainly to the inconsistency of these programs, the superficiality of the content, and the biased presentation of many topics. Veiled and unveiled respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the content of drama and movies as they often conflicted with authentic social and religious values and promoted or at least sanctioned various forms of corrupt behavior.

Findings about media content are particularly interesting. We see here a call for a greater role of religious media and a need for the media to become more effective and more responsive to the needs and issues relating to youth. It is in that context that religious media mushroomed towards the end of the 1990s and particularly over the last decade. Today the media is considered the prime source of religious education, and the spread of the veil is largely attributable to the number of women wearing the veil. The sheer size of the sample and the level of detail probed by the questionnaire instrument are

quite compelling, helping us to understand many facts about the veiling at the time. The study helped identify many of the correlates of veiling, including socioeconomic status, parents' education, media content, and others. It is not clear, however, why these women veil, and how they internalize the socioeconomic and political conditions in which they are living. This study needed to be followed up by another qualitative study that would seek to investigate the identities of these women and what the veil meant to them.

An explanation of the return to the veil based on the modernist approach was proposed by Fadwa El Guindi. She sought to understand the paradoxical phenomenon of the rise of veiling among "modern" educated female college students in Cairo. El Guindi associated the phenomenon with an informal, unorganized social movement called *mitdayyinin*, or the religious, that she insisted was different from the other organized Islamic movements such as militant Islam or *ikhwan muslemeen* (Muslim Brotherhood). The latter two represented responses to the 1967 defeat in the Arab-Israeli war, but the *mitdayyinin* movement emerged after the 1973 victory between Arabs and Israel. The 1973 war had a clear religious framing as it was launched in the name of Islam. Prior to that war, Islamic movements were all underground and were perceived as a threat to the regime. The 1973 victory in effect legitimized the Islamic movement and codified its behavior. "So this Crossing [of the Suez Canal into the Occupied Sinai]," argued El Guindi, "was the point at which Islam effectively and formally affirmed its legitimacy for the people."[57] The veil, which is a very visible symbol, represented this legitimization and an acceptance of the presence of outward expressions of religiosity in public.[58]

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[57] El Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic: Egypt's Contemporary Islamic Movement," 481.

[58] During Nasser's regime visible expressions of religiosity were not encouraged. I have heard many anecdotal stories that police restricted the use of visible religious icons, including crosses and

Parallel to the legitimization of informal religious activism, another process was in motion that also gave the veil a very particular form and meaning: the opening of the Egyptian market and culture to the international market. The institution of the "Open Door Policy" or *infitah* in 1974 brought about unprecedented movement of goods as well as people (foreign investors, Egyptian out-migrants seeking work opportunities in the Gulf countries, and tourism). These new exposure produced new patterns of income inequalities with wealth increasingly concentrated among a new class of entrepreneurs, many of whom were uneducated, and rising unemployment rates among the growing number of college students.[59] Another associated phenomenon was the increased perception of westernization and deterioration of morality. "To summarize," commented El Guindi, "infitah seems to be going hand in hand with *inhilal* (societal disintegration)."[60]

Societal disintegration, combined with a greater move towards co-education and sex integration,[61] had a direct impact on women. Nasser's policies resulted in greater participation of women in public space, and these policies were irreversible. However, the Open Door policies made women more vulnerable, and experienced more street harassment more regularly. Al Guindi asserted,

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Quranic verses. There were no laws to that effect, but it is a common story among people who lived during the Nasser era.

[59] This too is one of Nasser's legacies. He instituted free education for both males and females from primary school through college. This led to a great increase in demand for college education. The impact was particularly great for women. Whereas enrollment in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, and veterinary medicine increased five to nine fold among males, the increase was between 2,000 and 6,000 fold among women. See El Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic: Egypt's Contemporary Islamic Movement," 480-482.

[60] El Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic," 481.

[61] This development has been set in motion since the 1950s with Nasser's emphasis on women's education and women's rights. See Nadje S Al-Ali, "Between Political Epochs and Personal Lives: Formative experiences of Egyptian Women Activists," in Auto/Biography and the Construction of Identity and Community in the Middle East, ed. Mary Ann Fay, 163-64 (New York: Palgrave, 2001); El Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic," 481.

It is common, and has almost became tradition in Egypt, that men harass women in public by the most demeaning and undignified words, gestures and touching. Because men define the public world (not including the workplace) as their space, women are treated as intruders. And while women are being physically harassed, they are also accused of bringing it upon themselves by being there.

For El Guindi, the veil constituted the Egyptian woman's response to all these processes combined. If a woman responded to globalization[62] by acting in a "secular, modern, feminine" way, she would become much more vulnerable to the secular world. The increasing religiosity, a societal response symbolized and assisted by the veil, was associated with the emergence of an image of the woman as "formidable, untouchable and silently untouchable."[63] Accordingly, the veil represented a tool and a weapon that enabled women to participate effectively in society while reaping all the accumulated benefits of modernization. It ushered "the beginning of a synthesis between modernity and authenticity."[64]

This model elegantly synthesized the relationship between structural forces and the agent. It also helps to understand interesting nuances regarding the interaction of traditional and modern forces and some of the contradictory outcomes of globalization. The model, assumed a direct relationship between attitudes and certain events, which is often a problem of discrete analysis.[65] The author assumed that organized Islamic movements were contingent on a particular point, 1967, while the unorganized version was hinged on the 1973 war. The reader could not see how these two movements inform one another, and how they were both arguably products of deeper structural conditions

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[62] Globalization here refers the increase in the exposure to Western culture and products,

[63] El Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic," 482.

[64] El Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic," 465.

[65] In essence, the author adopted one of the premises of the path dependence approach, which assumes that the series of events following a particular event are contingent on that event. They cannot be explained, at least entirely, by the course of actions that preceded that event.

that predated the two events. In other words, the causal mechanisms for the *mitdayyinin* movement were not sufficiently highlighted here. Third, while the arguments are very interesting, the author provided no empirical evidence to support her assertions, and that cast serious doubts on the empirical validity of her arguments.[66]

Arlene Elowe Macleod[67] also tried to solve the paradox of modern working middle-class women "seeming to support their own subordination, and even to reproduce it…" through adopting the "new veil." She conducted an ethnographic study between 1983 and 1988 to understand the reasons for educated lower-middle-class women to choose to wear the veil. Macleod insisted that the new veil was emblematic of the urban woman's struggle to meet the dynamics and challenges of globalization that were especially acute in the urban city.

Macleod also treated the veil as a lens for investigating the contradictory roles of women in power struggles: while women were constantly engaged in "the reproduction of the past," they were also active agents in the production of social change, both of which were quintessential to the modernization process.[68] Modernization resulted in the widening of income inequalities and the deterioration of the standards of living of lower middle-class urban women. While provided opportunities for education and government work to unprecedented numbers of Egyptian citizens across classes, these opportunities

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[66] I examined El Guindi's *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (New York: Berg, 1999) looking for a development of the argument she proposed in her 1981 article. Although the author insisted that the book was not about the anthropology of dress but more about the identity politics expressed by the veil, there was hardly any analysis of identity in the book. The author here reviews the veil in different civilizations and cultures, how dress was dealt with in anthropological studies, and some applications of the veil among both men and women in various cultures. The article reviewed above was inserted almost verbatim in Chapter 8, although with very interesting photos and figures. None of the problems outlined above were addressed in her book.

[67] Arlene Elowe Macleod, *Accommodating Protest: Working Women, the New Veiling, and Change in Cairo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[68] Macleod, *Accommodating Protest,* 2-5.

resulted in new patterns of frustration. "[T]he enormous swelling of the government bureaucracy…has produced a most inefficient system which gives jobs to many but satisfying and well-paying jobs only to the highest ranking officials."[69] As such, men working in the Egyptian bureaucracy were no longer able to provide for their families as expected culturally, and women were forced to join the labor force.

Most of the Western-centered feminist literature emphasized that women, once given the opportunity, would seek to become an effective member of the workforce, and focus on means to facilitate and empower women's decision to work.[70] Macleod told a different and interesting story: the Egyptian lower-middle class women, many of which were first or second generations of villagers, preferred to stay home and reproduce their gender roles as housewives and mothers. The economic conditions that women from this class experienced impinged on their rights to stay at home. The husbands were even more resentful of this new reality as it directly diminished their masculinity. Rather than responding to the redistribution of financial responsibilities through sharing some of the responsibilities at home, or even relaxing some of their expectations, husbands were more cynical of their deficiency at home and their inability to cook a good meal and keep the house neat and tidy all the time. Instead, they constantly complained that their mothers used to be much better housewives than their wives are.

The social effects of women's entrance into the labor market were compounded by another factor: the overemphasis of women's sexuality in the Arab culture. Macleod

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[69] Macleod, *Accommodating Protest,* 83.

[70] This critique of Western liberalism prompted the writing of Saba Mahmood's *Politics of Piety.* In that book the author challenged the idea of women as a standard rule seeks their own liberalization. Through an ethnographic study conducted at three mosques representing three different classes, the author found that Egyptian women initiated various "piety movements," the goal of which was to experience Islam in their everyday lives through a set of rituals and activities that are located in Islamic teachings. The veil and language usage are both manifestations of this movement

commented that women in the Arab world were often portrayed as alluring sexual objects that men easily fall trap to. Some women acknowledged "their own "immoral" urges.[71] One of the participants in Macleod's study explained, "Men see women who have a nice body and they want her. This is how it is. So, if I want to go to work, I have to expect this."[72] This is why the norm of veiling and seclusion was imparted from one generation to another. Both men and women supported this norm and helped reproduce it.

The economic conditions that forced women to go out and work added significant tensions to the husband-wife relations in Egypt. Men were becoming more restrictive and controlling of their wives' behavior; women had to ask permission to go outside home and, in many cases, they were denied even visits to the family. Additionally, conflict situations emerged as men became more suspicious of their wives who had to interact with men in the streets and at work. Women became particularly vulnerable as they were exposed to verbal and physical street harassment on a daily basis. So although going out to work was not really a desire or an option, society looked down upon women who defied the sanctions of gender segregation by going out to work. Working undermined the natural role of the woman as wife and mother, for which women got the utmost respect in society.

The veil in this context represented an innovative tool for dealing with all the contradictions that working, urban class woman faced. Women used the veil to send a message to people they interacted with that they were respectful, and not accessible to anyone in the street. Women who left leave their houses on a daily basis. Macleod asserted, "Veiling is a two-way mode of communication not merely a form of dress

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[71] Macleod, *Accommodating Protest,* 84.
[72] Macleod, *Accommodating Protest,* 83-84.

imposed on women against their will and depriving them of control."[73] These women voluntarily adopted the veil as strategy to negotiate power at the domestic, social, and global levels. Through the veil, they were able to renegotiate ownership of public space. They were "protesting" the forces that dictated their challenging of their natural roles, and at the same time they were "accommodating" the counter social forces that were cynical of her new role as a breadwinner. She was thus using the veil to reaffirm, synthesize and alter her traditional and new role. Through the veil, women were demonstrating their rejections of the "Western," and declaring that while they were active agents in the modernization process, they were distinct from Western women and were making every effort to dissociate themselves from them.

The argument presented by Macleod is quite original. There is an elegant synthesis of various levels at which identities are negotiated as the forces of modernity are competing with tradition. We are able to examine the historicist arguments about the endogamous and unchanging role of culture which resulted in deterministic and uncritical conclusions about the contradictions between Islam and modernity. One major drawback in her analysis is that her methods are neither clear nor consistent. The reader cannot see how the author derives her findings from her data. The author also makes many assertions without providing sufficient empirical evidence, which is not what one would expect from an almost five-year ethnographic study. Other than a few quotes by women regarding how different they are from the Western women, there is little evidence of links between modernity and globalization, a key layer of power struggle in her argument. The definitions of these two concepts were also left vague.

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[73] Macleod, *Accommodating Protest,* 101.

The author claims that the "accommodating process" that lower-middle class working women engage in exemplifies identity negotiations that are taking place in urban Egypt today; a process which should involve a significant number of social actors. However, according to the 1996 Census, only 14 percent of Egyptian women worked, and most of working women were rural women. Many of the urban women stop working after they get married or after their first child arrives. Accordingly, the scope of the power struggles that the author identifies is still quite limited. My research builds and illustrates the arenas of power struggle that Macleod listed but with a clear illustration of the multi-layered processes of subversion and submission that women initiate through the veil.

Egypt as a Case Study

For the purpose of this analysis, I will use Cairo, Egypt, as a case study. Egypt is a perfect case study not just because of its significant political weight in the Arab and Muslim world, but also because the transformations that took place in the Egyptian Muslim fashion over the last two decades provide a perfect research material for understanding religiosity. This is because the Egyptian fashion has undergone fundamental transformations in a seemingly cyclical way: all women (Muslim and non-Muslim) were veiled before 1925. By the 1950s, a veiled woman in the Egyptian cities was a rarity. In the 1970s, the veil started reappearing in the streets, but it was by then a strictly Islamic product. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, unveiled women became a one-off. Understanding the underlying causes of these transformations will unravel the processes through which the forms of religiosity adapt and mutate.

A study of Egypt will also allow us to understand the intricacies and complexities of globalization. Egypt has a strongly entrenched economy. It has strong political and economic linkages with the West, particularly the United States. These links extend beyond governmental linkages to include people and groups who do business with the West as well as nonprofit organizations that have a strong presence in Egypt and the West. Through a study of religiosity and the veil in Egypt, I will be able to examine the interaction between globalization and religiosity from different angles and offer an explanatory framework for understanding radical tendencies and political polarization.

Data Sources

My project uses several data sources and research methods. First, I situate the current position of the veil in a historical trajectory through examining the genealogy of the veil in Egypt and the various shifts in its forms and levels of observance. This analysis relies on secondary data sources, including documents and studies by contemporary scholars on Egyptian female dress, analysis of art works from various periods depicting Egyptian women, documentations of travelers and historians who have visited Egypt at various points in time, and autobiographies and life stories of Egyptian women who took part in early nationalist activities. This section, therefore, provides the necessary historical context for the veil debate. It also helps identify trends in the rise and fall of the importance of the veil in the Egyptian society as well as the various social and economic correlates of the veil.

A second source of data is responses to a detailed structured interview conducted with 65 veiled and unveiled middle- and upper-middle Muslim women between the age

of 18 and 32 during the summer of 2008. All the interview questions were open-ended. We started the interview by collecting basic demographic data and then asked questions regarding the women's decision to veil, how the veil affects the women's social role and view of self and society, the functions that the veil performs, the various sources of religious education that Egyptian women rely on, the current perceptions about the forms of the veil that exist in Egypt today and how women perceive the great variety in dress today. Qualitative and interpretive methods were used in the analysis as detailed in Chapter 3.

A third source of data is religious sermons given by various popular preachers in Egypt today, mostly during the past five years.[74] My interviews show that religious sermons featured on cable television were the primary source of religious information for the vast majority of the respondents. The analysis of these sermons serves to identify various versions of the religious discourse that coexist in the Egyptian society today and the effects of these discourses on the dominant forms of religiosity and the meanings and forms of the veil.

My Argument and Research Approach

The veil is emblematic of three forms of power negotiations and tensions that are characteristic of Egyptian politics today. The first represents the renegotiation of the position of women and men in the public space and the social role of gender. The main

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[74] For preachers who have been influential for a while, I went back to their early sermons to provide a trajectory of their thought development and identify the changes in their emphases in the religious message.

question that will be answered is "How do women view their roles in society today and what function does the veil play in realizing and affecting these roles?" I demonstrate that the veil has become a ticket for acceptance in the social space. It determines the level of social respect a women gets in society and the opportunities she gets access to. However, social respect of women is not hinged purely on religion, but rather on new attitudes towards women in public space. Egyptian women today are exposed to enormous forms of verbal and physical harassment in the street, which prompted many women to the use of the veil as a signifier of respect and a defense against being branded by the growing number of people as a person of ill-repute. This strategy is not always successful in that respect, but it is still viewed as necessary.

While all women insist that they are veiled because it is a religious duty, further analysis reveals that the veil is not principally the product or signifier of religious awakening but rather a symbolic tool associated with the emergence of new attitudes towards women. This is demonstrated through a discussion with women regarding their perceptions of the current state of religiosity in Egypt and how it compares to the previous generation. Two thirds of the forms of veil that women adopt today are not considered strictly Islamic as they do not abide by the modesty rules stipulated in religious texts. For some respondents, the veil has become distorted from its "pure form,"[75] a very deplorable fact for these women. For many other veiled women, who still do not abide by the strict religious rules regarding the veil, their veils represent a creative way to deal with social pressure without giving up their own ways of life. By adopting "edited" forms of the veil, they are subverting the meaning of the veil and transforming it

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[75] The "pure form" relates to a modest form that is conservative, not attractive, loose-fitting, and designed for women to pass unnoticed in the street, as though she is invisible.

from a symbol of oppression imposed by a strongly patriarchal and man-centered society to an article of fashion, protest, and liberation.

The second site of political struggle that the veil indexes is the tension between the state and society, or more specifically the conflict between the version of Islamic understanding endorsed by the regime and the many other versions offered by various preachers and groups. I investigate some forms of religiosity that are competing today and trace the doctrinal sources of these versions in specific parts of the religious texts. My interviews reveal that women perceive significant contradictions between religious opinions issued by the state-sponsored religious institution, al-Azhar, and those provided by various preachers. The political struggle between the state and the champions of the various forms of religiosity is still unresolved; many women trust al-Azhar and treat it as the primarily source of religious information, while others have very negative opinions about it. Some participants in the research denounced secularism and the diversion of the regime from the true religious path, while others were not conscious of any role that the regime plays in the reconstitution of religiosity.

Another solid manifestation of the intense competition over the process of value construction is traced in the discourses of religious preachers. Regardless of their opinions about the acceptable form of the veil and the understandings of religious teachings, the religious discourses contain subtle antiregime underpinnings and a message that social reform requires regime reform. A clearer message imbued in all the sermons is the need to reform the woman as a first and most essential step for restoring society. During the Nasserite era, woman became the primary target of the state's modernizing activities. While most political institutions of the state remained

underdeveloped despite many state-sponsored modernization initiatives, the status of woman was steadily improving as measured by women's access to education and other types of opportunities.

The educational reforms initiated during Nasser's regime benefited both sexes, but women were targeted intensively through media campaigns.[76] The modernization of woman was the only accessible mode of political development that the state was ready to implement, and the state functionaries made concerted efforts to promote an image of the female Egyptian citizen as "modern," equal in rights and responsibilities to the male, and free to integrate in society. Because of that emphasis on women, the religious intelligentsia attempted to reverse the state modernization projects that they perceived as failed, also by targeting women. All liberalization programs adopted by the state were sharply critiqued as corrupting policies that are behind all social as well as economic deterioration that the Egyptian society is currently suffering from. Undoing the state's policies towards women liberalization is considered the first step to social reform. Each preacher proposes a vision of reform that is rooted in a definition of women's social role and responsibility.

Another manifestation of the unsettled war of religious visions is the tension between the forms of religiosity advocated by some religious clerics and the application of that form by an important agent—the Egyptian woman. Through juxtaposing the teachings of Islam offered by various preachers and the meanings and practices of religiosity expressed by the women who support these preachers, one sees that the

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[76] In *Women and Gender and Islam,* Ahmed discusses some of the results of Nasser's policies on women's education and the status of women. El-Guindi's "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic" also spells out some of the results of Nasser's policies as illustrated in trends in enrollment in engineering and science schools, which were least likely for women to enroll in.

women are actively engaged in a process of reconstituting the discourse. In other words, by accepting the rhetorical tenets proposed by a particular preacher, for example his advocacy of complete sexual segregation expressed through the acceptance of a Saudi-like dress form (characterized by complete coverage of all face and body), yet not even attempting to implement any of these teachings in their lives, women are in effect transforming the message. Ann Swidler's[77] concept of praxis becomes particularly relevant here. Culture is a "tool kit" of various traditions, symbols, myths, and stories, but the meanings of the "tool kit" are determined by how people "share" and "use" the elements of the toolkit.[78] Each preacher invokes a very specific version of Islam and portrays it as the only true image of this religion. In turn, many women "pick" and "choose" from all these versions and re-ascribe the image they create to one of the preachers, and in so doing recreate the message and reconstitute its meaning and scope.[79]

But why are women pretending to accept a particular version of Islam when their behaviors demonstrate a fundamental rejection of that version? The answer lies in the third dimension of power struggle they are engaged in. The global "clash" that the veil represents is investigated through an analysis of how women see themselves vis-à-vis the West and the functions the veil performs in dealing with the forces of globalization. Even though I did not ask any direct question regarding the West, a common theme running through the female respondents' discourses is the need to resist the American cultural and political encroachment through invoking and emphasizing their Muslim identity whenever possible. Both genders are united in this goal. It could be argued that women

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[77] Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 2 (1986): 273-86.

[78] Swidler, "Culture in Action," 273.

[79] This selective internalization of religious teachings is confirmed in my research. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 detail this process and its implications.

partially accepted some of the forms of male dominance as a demonstration of their rejection of the Western ethos. By accepting the regression of their role in society and status, they are emphatically rejecting what they see as the U.S.'s false world liberalization and democratization thesis, under which banner it invaded Iraq.

The women's attitudes towards globalization, however, are not unidirectional. In their everyday practices they demonstrate a complete, almost uncontested immersion in a global world. They partake in the Western lifestyle through their dress, their evening gatherings at "modern" cafes, the movies they watch, or the cars they drive. They also watch cable television, which features "liberal"[80] Arabic and Western movies as well as religious and entertainment programs offered via religious cable channels. The demand for both types of channels (entertainment and religious) is astronomical, and most women watch both equally enthusiastically.[81] Through analyzing the content of cable television, with an emphasis on religious programs, this research offers a new angle of understanding the contradictory implications of globalization and how the Islamic world is succeeding in co-opting some of its forces and dynamics to assert its identity.

Organization of the Chapters

This study is composed of eight chapters. In the following chapter, I provide an overview of trends in socioeconomic conditions over the last three decades. The analysis provides a macroeconomic review followed by a description of basic labor force

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[80] These programs are said to promote morals that are counter to authentic traditions. Women are featured in non-Islamic clothes and their behavior and clothes on television, according to many respondents in this research, are provocative.

[81] Many of the multichannel Arab satellite channels, including ART, Orbit, MBC, Dubai TV, signed agreements with Western-owned media, such as Disney, Movie Channel, MTV, and others to feature some of their programs on their channels. These deals have substantially increased revenues for these channels. See Sakr, *Arab Television Today*, 109-136; Sakr, *Satellite Realms,* 99-130.

characteristics. Trends in educational attainments and marriage statistics are also reviewed. In Chapter 3, I detail the methods and approaches adopted in this study. All the data sources are described and methodological limitations are spelt out there.

In Chapter 4, I look at the veil from a genealogical point of view, starting at the beginning of the twentieth century. The main goal is to demonstrate the nonlinearity of veiling practices in Egypt and the varying interpretations of religious text that prevailed during various eras. I also pinpoint some of the key factors that lead up to changes in the attitudes towards the veil. While I survey women's dress in Egypt since the beginning of the Islamic conquest in the seventh century, a major focus of the chapter is the rise of nationalist movements in Egypt in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This analysis provides a context for examining the interaction between religion and politics in the early makeup of the nationalist visions. It also offers an appreciation of the role and position of women in the nationalist movements, which is crucial understanding the links among the veil, religion, and power in Egypt today.

Chapter 5 explores the meanings and symbols associated with dress styles and the veil in Egypt today. While analyzing my research assistants' conversations with Egyptian women aged 18 to 32, I attempt to dig into the minds of Egyptian women to analyze how she perceives herself in the larger schema of political and social life in Egypt and how that role is affected, defected, and effected through the veil. It is through this exploration that I dissect the dimensions of the gender power dynamics. I also delve into some of the dimensions of the society-state and global power struggles, although a more exhaustive analyzes of these arenas of power politics is conducted in Chapter 6.

Chapters 6 and 7 examine the various sources of religious education that constitute religious discourse in Egypt. These chapters combine the analysis of the interview materials with the content analysis of 60 sermons downloaded and transcribed from the internet. The sermons were delivered by five popular preachers between 1999 and 2008. Both chapters bring to the fore an underexplored level of globalization, namely intra-regional globalization. Intra-globalization refers to the fusion of cultures within regions that are simplistically grouped together in most of the globalization literature, including Arab cultures, Islamic cultures, Indian cultures, and the like. More specifically, I investigate the impact of the emergence of Arab satellite television and the new patterns of migrations among Arab countries on the forms and meanings of religiosity and perceptions regarding women and the veil in Egypt. I also demonstrate how these new forms of technology affected state legitimacy and power over the domain of value constitution in Egypt.

In Chapter 6, I explore the development of one of the manifestations of intra-regional globalization. I examine the first type of religious media that emerged in the late 1990s which emphasized the liberal face of Islam. This type of media is referred to as the new-age media. Chapter 7 utilizes a state-in-society approach to demonstrate more clearly the competition taking place between the state and social groupings over value contestation at another type of religious media that emerged during the last five years. This type attempts to resurrect traditional interpretations of Islam that are stricter and more openly anti-Western.

Both the state and social grouping are actively involved in a process redefining Egyptian identities through repositioning women's status and role in society. Reframing

women's roles and attitudes has become the key gauge of success of power politics taking place among competing religious understandings today. The forms and meanings associated with the veil are indicative of forms of alliance between diverse social groups and the religious role model they follow. It is also a symbol of protest against the state, a phenomenon in which the female agency plays a very active, albeit arguably not fully conscious, role today.

In the last chapter I summarize all results and show how they feed into my general argument regarding the three arenas of power struggle. I outline some implications of my study for the further research on gender, power, and Islam in the Middle East. In particular, I offer several observations regarding the future of Egypt in light of my analysis of these three issue-areas. A note on research gaps that this study identified but did not fully address serves as a capstone of the study.

Chapter 2

The Socioeconomic Context of the Mass-Veiling Phenomenon

This chapter overviews the socioeconomic context under which the veiling phenomenon is taking place. The review covers macroeconomic conditions including the size of the economy and economic growth, as well as some socio-demographic trends in labor force, educational attainment, income distribution, and marriage. The analysis emphasizes trends rather than point values as the goal is to track the various socioeconomic transformations that were taking place at the time when the veil started to emerge as a social norm.

Data were drawn from a myriad of domestic and international sources, including the Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development, the Egyptian Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics, The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Stated Agency for International Development. It should be noted that obtaining data on socioeconomic conditions in Egypt is a major challenge. There are major contradictions and inconsistencies in the data. Conditions in Egypt do not always allow for consistent methodologies, which result in data inconsistencies and series breaks. Some of the shifts in trends that will be discussed below could simply be the result of methodological changes that may or may not be highlighted by the entity collecting the data. In addition, the parties collecting the data are not always neutral, and this also affect the integrity and accuracy of the data. Given these limitations, and also given the constraints of this research project, explanations of shifts in trends will not be attempted.

Economic Overview

In 2007, Egypt's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was estimated at $130 billion, which was roughly one percent of the size of the United States economy. Egypt is among top 50 fastest growing countries in the world, averaging at 5.9 percent growth rate in real GDP over the last five years.[82] In 2007, growth in real GDP was estimated at 7.1 percent, or three times the rate of growth in the United States for the same year (2.1 percent). Even after the global recession hit the world at the end of 2007, the Egyptian economy continued to grow at 7.2 percent in 2008 (Figure 1).[83] However, the International Monetary Fund predicted a decline in this growth rate to reach 3.1 percent in 2010, still a positive growth.[84] During the last six years, growth was spurred by recent new discoveries in natural gas which brought about significant wealth.[85]

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[82] World Development Indicators Online. http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/ext/DDPQQ/showReport.do?method=showReport (accessed July 24, 2009).

[83] World Development Indicators Online. http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/ext/DDPQQ/showReport.do?method=showReport (accessed July 24, 2009). Also author's calculations.

[84] International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook: Crisis and Recovery* April 2009 (Washington D.C.: International Monetary Fund Publication Services, 2009).

[85] Energy Information Administration: Country Analysis Briefs: Egypt. August 2008. www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Egypt/pdf.pdf (accessed July 24, 2009).

Figure 1. Annual Growth in Real Per Capita GDP
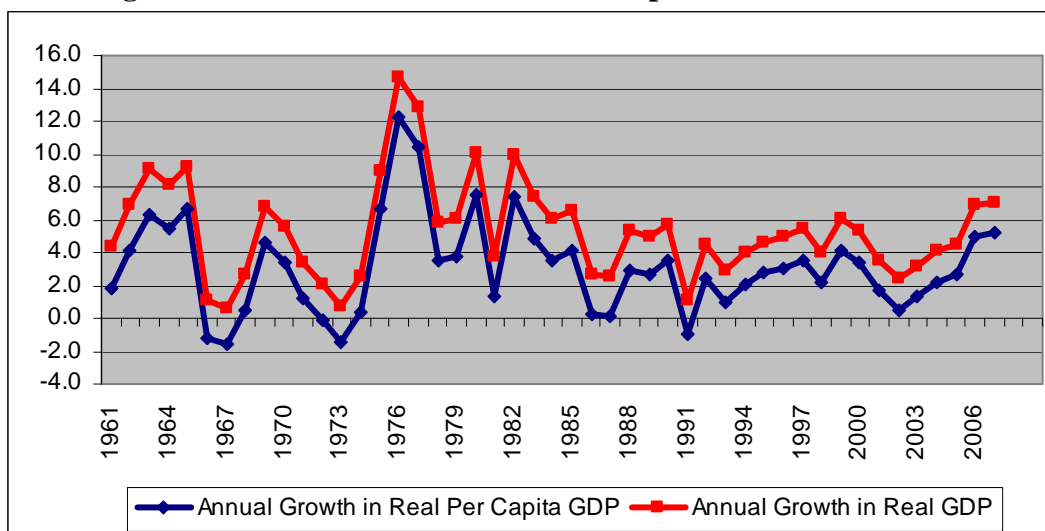
According to world organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, growth during the 1990s was the result of the economic reform and structural adjustment programs (ERSAP) which was implemented in 1991. The program resulted in the transition from a public-sector dominated economy to a private-sector, and market-oriented economy, a transition that is usually is associated with higher efficiency and greater resource utilization.[86] The growth rate in real per capital GDP, although two percent lower, has been tracking that of the total GDP.

In addition to the recently discovered natural gas reserves, real estate was another major engine of growth in Egypt. The state launched several mega developmental projects, such as building new cities around Cairo. The goal was to reduce the population density around the Nile Valley and to increase the populated areas in the country. According to Timothy Mitchell (1999), these developmental projects were carried out by

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[86] There is a vast literature on the contradictory impacts of the ERSAP programs on the social and economic conditions in Egypt. See for example, Gouda Abdel Khalek, "Structural Reform or Dutch Disease: On the Macroeconomic Effects of ERSAP," L'Égypte Contemporaine 84, no. 433-434 (993): 101-149; Joseph Licari, "Economic Reform in Egypt in a Changing Global Economy," *OECD Working Paper* 129, 1997.

the Egyptian Military, which has become the largest real estate contractor today. The state has also become a de facto partner in many of the large private sector projects. [87] These private-public partnerships make studies such as Barrington Moore's the role of the private sector in democratic transitions inapplicable. [88]

Income Distribution

In 2007, per capital gross national income in Egypt was estimated at US $1,580, which is three percent of the per capital national income in the United States. There are great variations in the average income across income group. Egypt ranks 23rd in terms of income inequality (measured by GINI Index). [89] In 2005, the share of the national income held by the highest income quintile (highest 20 percent) was 41.4 percent (slightly lower than the United States' 46 percent). This means that the top 20 percent hold more than double their fair share of national income. It amounts to an average annual income of US $3,275. [90] On the other hand, the lowest income quintile holld 8.9 percent, or less than

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[87] Timothy Mitchell, "Dreamland: The Neoliberalism of Your Desires," *Middle East Report* 210 (Spring, 1999): 28-33.

[88] Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship, Democracy and Socialist Revolution in Central America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

[89] The Gini index measures the extent to which income distribution in a give country deviates from a perfectly equal income distribution. A Gini index of 0 means that every person receives the same percentage of the national income. A of the population hold x percent of the income. Egypt's Gini index is estimated at 34.4 percent, while that of the United States is estimated at 40.8, which means that Egypt's income distribution is less unequal than that of the United States. Data downloaded at the NationMaster.com website, http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/eco_gin_ind-economy-gini-index&date=2000 (accessed August 1, 2009.

[90] This translates into 3.5 percent of the average income of the top 20th quintile in the United States (US $105,017). However, the cost of living in Egypt is much lower than in The United States. Many of the major budget items in the typical family income budget are non existent or is much lower in Egypt. For example, housing costs for families that were established before the 1990s were much lower. People in this income group either own their houses (which is fully paid through heir or savings) or rent them at an annual cost of about $40 annually. On average, an American family spends 33 percent of its income on housing. Other items such as childcare, transportation cost less. Accordingly a family making $200 to $500 a month in Egypt may be meeting their self-sufficiency needs while one making $46,000 a year in a place like New Jersey may not.

half their fair share of income.[91] The average income of the lower income quintile was US $707, 5.6 percent of the average income of the highest quintile. Income distribution has not changed significantly between 1990 and 2005.[92]

Employment Distribution by Sector and Industry

The share of private sector employment has been rising constantly since the implementation of the ERSAP programs, growing from 61.5 percent in 1991 to 70.9 percent in 2007 (Figure 2). The increase was the result of a privatization program that that impacted several large retail, wholesale and manufacturing companies. Between 1998 and 2008, the annual growth in public sector employment averaged 0.4 percent compared to 2.4 percent for the private sector.[93] However, the share of public sector employment in Egypt is still almost twice as large as that of the United States.

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[91] Their fair income share would be $1,580. The actual share is 44.5 percent (8.7%/20%) of the fair share of income, which is $703.

[92] World Development Indicators Online. http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org.proxy.libraries .rutgers.edu/ext/DDPQQ/showReport.do?method=showReport (accessed July 24, 2009).

[93] Ministry of Economic Development, Employment Distributed by Economic Sector. http://www.mop.gov.eg/English/Employment.htm. Author's calculations (accessed August 3, 2009).

Figure 2. Employment Share by Sector: Private vs Public Sectors
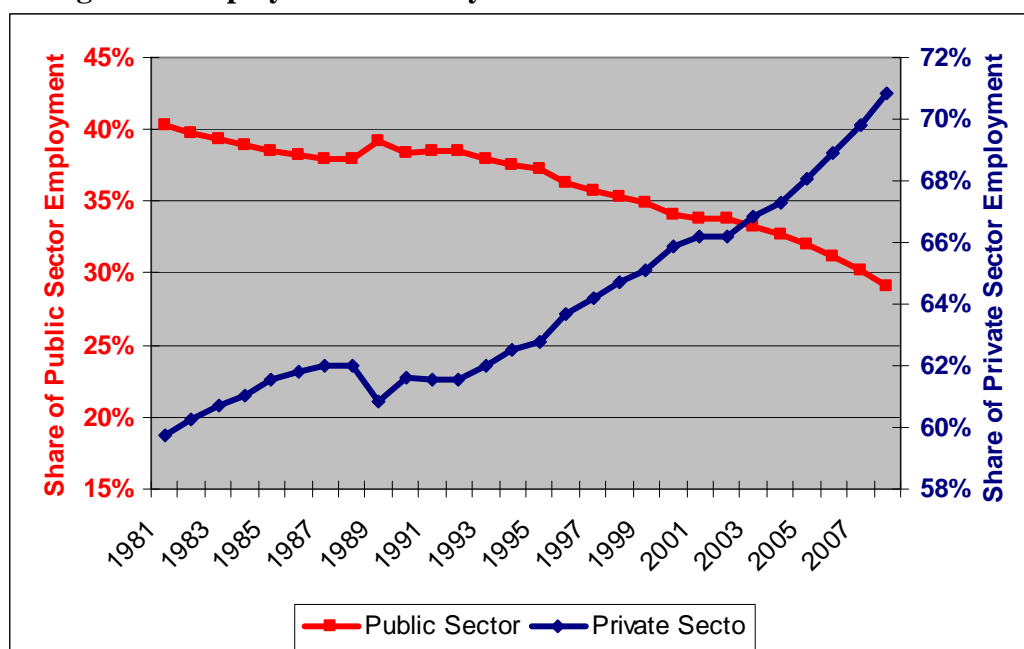
The Egyptian economy is one of the more diversified economies in the Arab world. The share of its primary sector, or the sector concerned with the utilization of raw materials from agricultural products and mining, has been declining constantly, while those of the secondary (manufacturing of finished goods) and tertiary (services) sectors were expanding. Between 1972 and 2007, the share of agricultural sector declined from 31.1 percent to 14.1 percent. The industry (manufacturing and mining) and services sectors were more volatile and inversely proportional (Figure 3).[94]

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[94] World Development Indicators Online. http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/ext/DDPQQ/showReport.do?method=showReport (accessed July 24, 2009).

Figure 3. Percentage Share of Agriculture, Industry and Services Sector in GDP

One of the most important industries in Egypt is, constituting 3.5 percent of total GDP and 10 percent of the industrial sector. It also constitutes one-quarter of the manufacturing exports. Egypt is one of the largest garment exporters in the world, ranking 38th worldwide. The textile and garment industry is also among the fastest growing industries, with an average annual growth rate of six percent or higher.[95] Muslim women's fashion is boasting the garment industry growth. Some observers argue that the diversity and creativity in the veil fashion industry is partly responsible for the current spread of the veil.[96]

Population and Labor Force

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[95] YnFx Yarn ExportWatch, "Egypt's Textile and Apparel Industry," **YNFX Yarn Monitor"** *Monthly Textile Market* **Intelligence** 2(5), 2009. Egypt's Textile And Apparel Industry Yarn and Fabrics Exchange. http://www.yarnsandfibers.com/yarn_monitor/feb09/index.php?a=2 (accessed July 24, 2009).

[96] For example, a program broadcasted on cable television in 2006 called the "Return of the Veil" argued that that availability of a wide variety of veil styles a fashion-forward garment industry was one factor responsible for the spread of the veil. The program resulted in a lot of debate, and several blogs followed, including one at http://sendrlla.blogspot.com/2006/09/blog-post_14.html and another at http://www.thakafa.net/vb/showthread.php?t=6297 (accessed July 24, 2009).

Egypt is the largest Arab state in population size, currently at 77 million.[97] It also ranks 16th in the world in population size.[98] In terms of population growth, however, Egypt ranks 88th in the world, with a population growth rate of 1.7 percent.[99] The government launched a major population control campaign in the 1980s and 90s that resulted in the reduction of population growth from 2.6 percent between 1980 and 1985 to its current level.[100] The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs projected that the growth rate will continue to decline to reach a level of 0.55 percent by 2050.[101]

The population size, however, does not translate into human capital in Egypt. This is mainly due to a low labor participation rate and the lack of economic and work opportunities for utilizing these human resources. Egypt has the second lowest labor force participation rate in the world, with less than half (49.4 percent) of the population being employed or actively seeking employment.[102] The participation rate has been declining trend since the end of the 1980s, and has continued its downward until the into the third millennium, when the rate started reversing slowly (Figure 4).[103]

Figure 4. Labor Force Participation Rate of Women

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[97] Egyptian Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics. http://www.msrintranet .capmas.gov.eg (accessed July 19, 2009).

[98] Alyaa Awad and Ayman Zohary, The End of Egypt Population Growth in the 21st Century: Challenges and Aspirations, The 35th Annual Conference on Population and Development Issues: Current Situation and Aspirations, Cairo Demographic Center, Cairo 20 - 22 December 2005.

[99] Source: Index Mundi. http://www.indexmundi.com/g/r.aspx?c=eg&v=24 (accessed July 19, 2009).

[100] Awad and Zohary, The End of Egypt Population Growth in the 21st Century.

[101] Source: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, World Population Prospects. http://esa.un.org/unpp (accessed July 19, 2009).

[102] Source: NationMaster.com. http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/ lab_for_par_rat_tot_of_tot_pop_age_1564-total-population-ages-15-64 (accessed July 24, 2009).

[103] World Development Indicators Online. http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers .edu/ext/DDPQQ/showReport.do?method=showReport (accessed July 24, 2009).
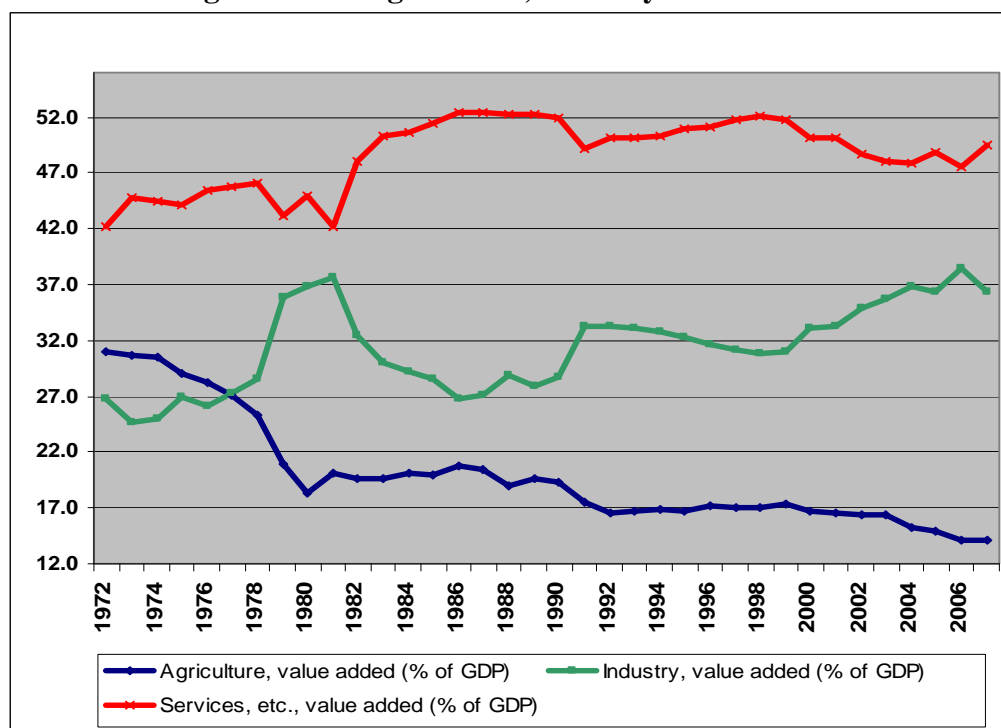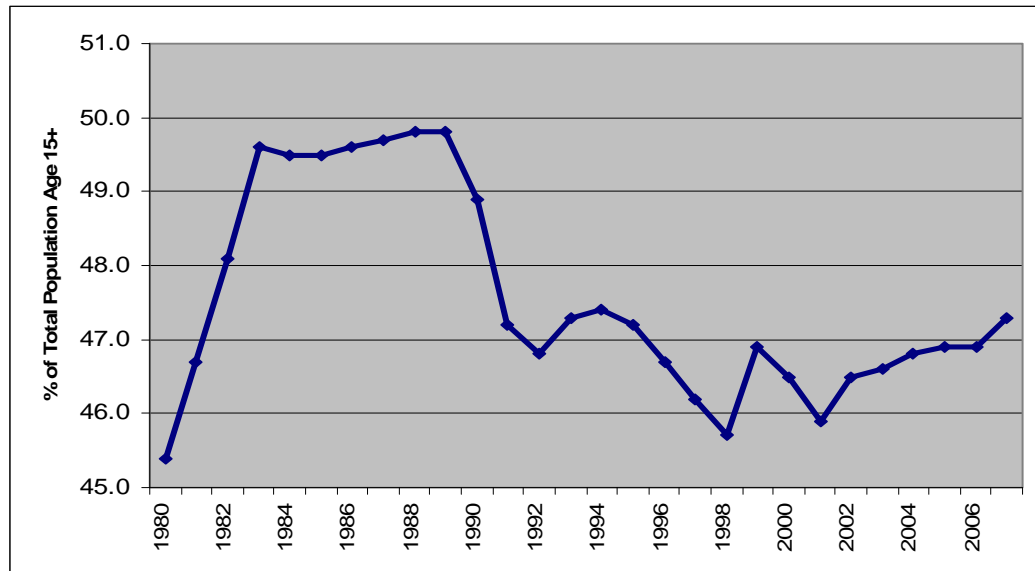
Labor Force

Labor force participation rates among women are particularly low. On average, four in five women are not participants in the labor force, compared to one in four for men. Figures 5 and 6 present trends in labor force participation rates for men and women over the last three decades. During the early 1980s, or the first years in the current regime, participation rates for both men and women were increasing. The trend, however, reversed quickly for men (starting 1983). Women's participation rate continued to increase until the end of the 1980s. The rates for both men and women continued to decrease during the 1990s. Towards the end of the 1990s, participation rate started increasing for women; it increased by 3.7 percent between 1998 and 2007. For men, however, it continued to decline.

Figure 5. Male Labor Force Participation Rates
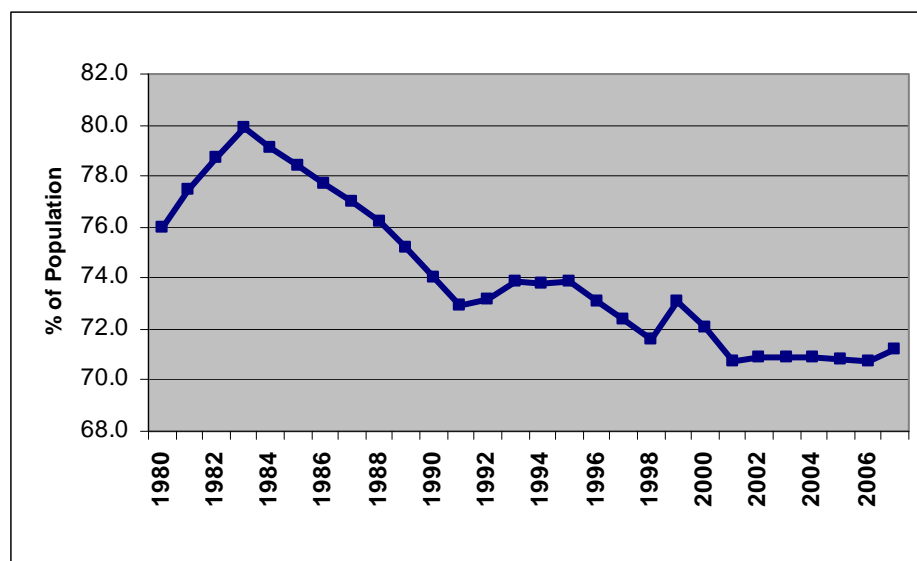
Figure 6. Female Labor Force Participation Rates
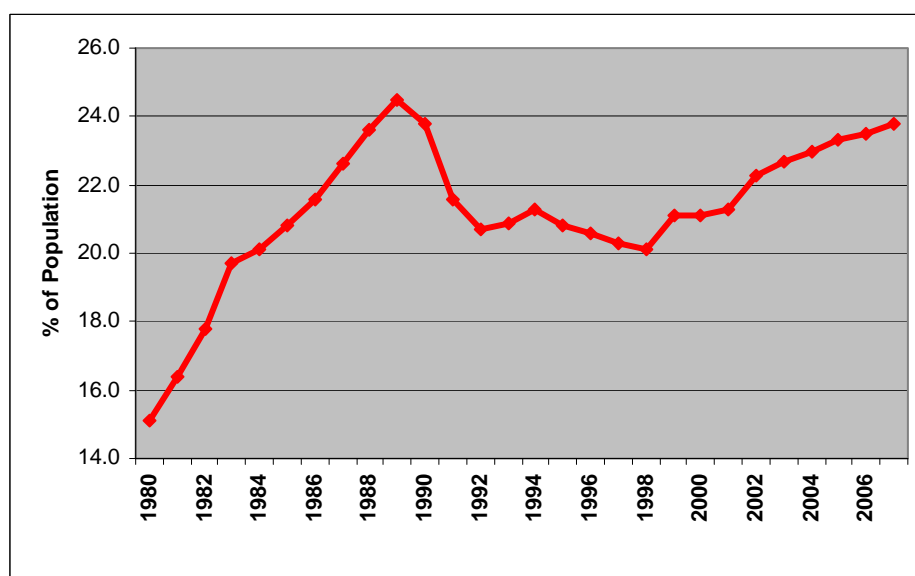
Unemployment

Significant gender disparities were also found in terms of unemployment. In Egypt, of the 23 percent of women in the labor force, only four in five were employed. That is, only one in six (16 percent) women ages 15 and up were employed, compared to

66 percent for men. The rates were on the rise during the early years of the implementation of the ERSAP program, and then they started declining during the second half of the 1990s to rise again starting the year 2000. There were no notable gender differences in the trends. However, female's unemployment rates were two to five times as large as the male's rate on average. The unemployment rate differential peaked in 2000, when the female's unemployment rate was 4.5 times as large as the male's rate. This demonstrates that women face complex structural problems in society today, some imposed by the economy and others triggered by other socioeconomic and cultural problems.

Figure 7. Unemployment Rates: Male vs. Female
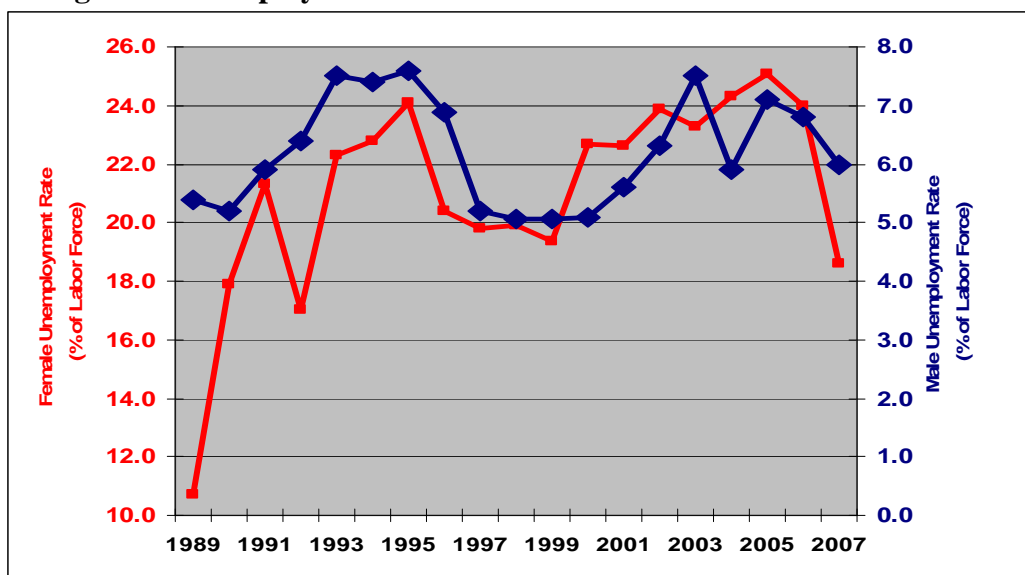
Figure 8. Ratio of Female to Male Unemployment Rates
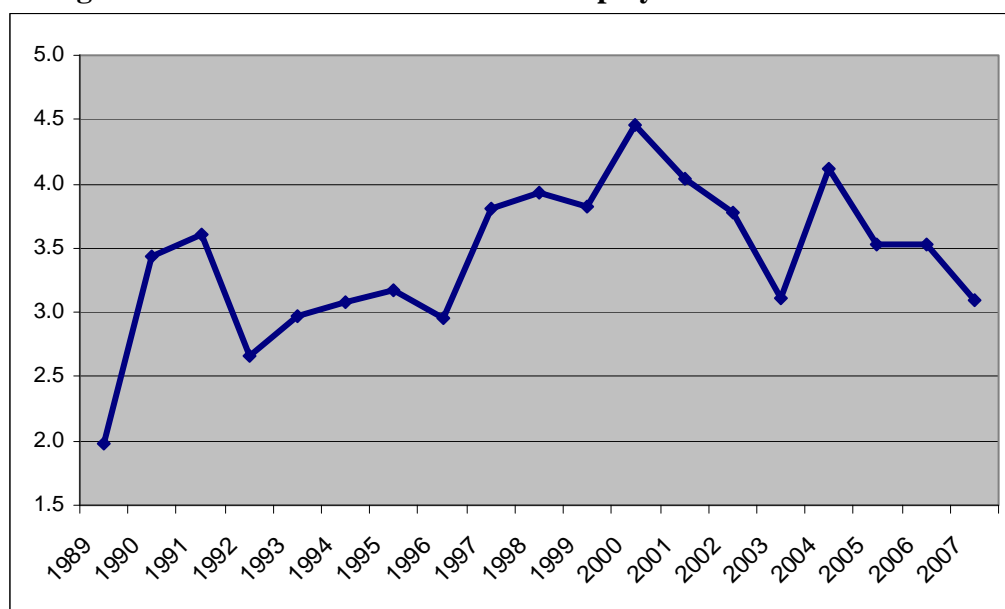
Employment

Over the last 15 years, the average growth in employment levels for both men and women averaged 3.1 percent. Employment growth rate for women was quite volatile spiking to 19 percent in one year (2007) and dropping to almost negative four percent in the following year. Men's growth rate in men's employment on the other hand has been relatively more stable, and never recorded a negative value (Figure 9).[104]

This volatility in female employment and unemployment statistics may be attributed to several factors. First, the base year employment for women is very small. Accordingly, small changes in the absolute level of employment translate into big relative changes. Also, as noted earlier, there are major limitations in data collection in Egypt, which may result in inexplicable changes. It may also suggest that the gains that women realized in terms of employment are not deep enough. Changes in family conditions, such as new births, or in social attitudes towards women's work may result in significant

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[104] Egypt's Information Portal. http://www.eip.gov.eg/nds/nds_view.aspx?id=3693 (accessed July 25, 2009).

changes in women's employment and labor force participation. However, data still suggest that women's economic power has increased significantly over the last decade. Between 2001 and 2006, women's labor force participation increased by 2.2 percent (Figure 9) and their share in non-agricultural employment increased by 2.8 percent (Figure 10).[105] As will be noted in the following chapters, these results are particularly significant with respect to this project. The transformation in attitudes towards the veil towards the end of the 1990s was associated with greater economic role for women.

Figure 9. Growth Rates in Employment: Men versus Women

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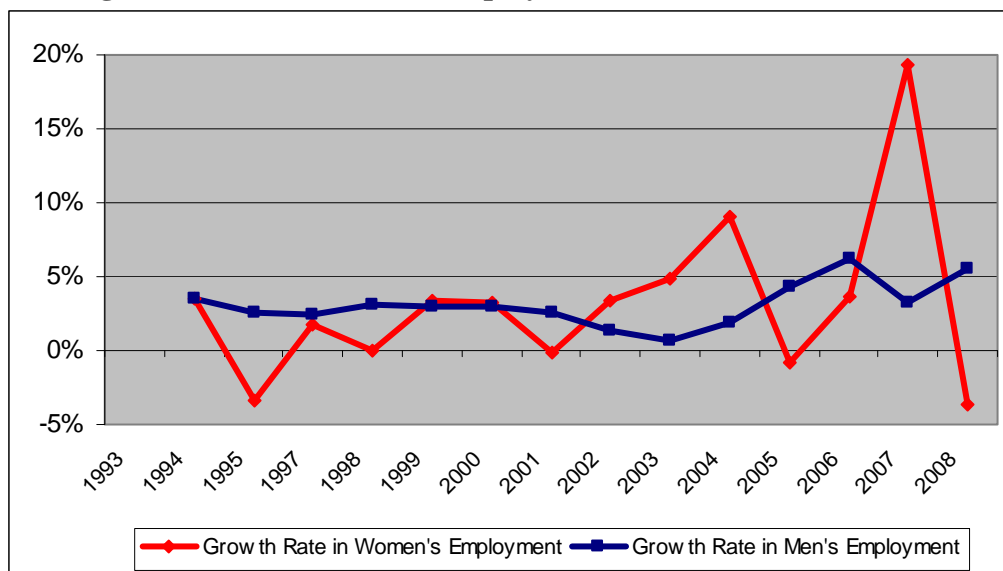
[105] World Development Indicators Online. http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org.proxy.libraries
.rutgers.edu/ext/DDPQQ/showReport.do?method=showReport (accessed July 24, 2009).

Figure 10. Women's Share in Nonagricultural Employment
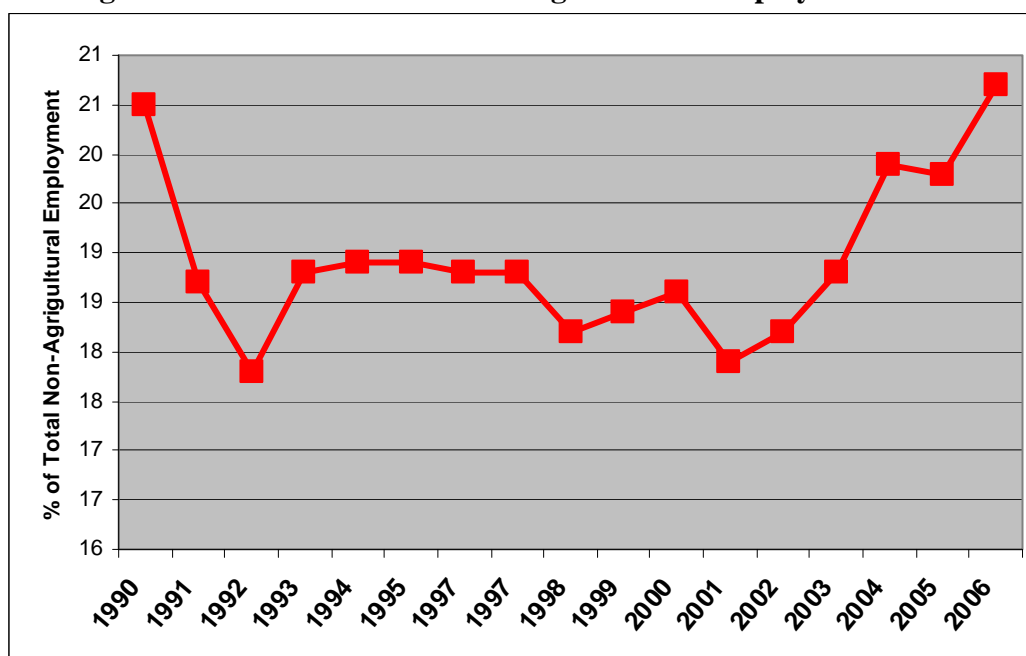
Education

The public sector is the principal provider of education services in Egypt. Education is free through university and compulsory from ages six through 15. This is one of the main legacies of the Nasserite regime. During the 1950s and 1960s, the regime democratized education; it made it accessible and free to every Egyptian. New schools were erected in villages and remote areas which previously had no access to public services.[106] The educational campaign was coupled with an employment guarantee for every university graduate, which promoted exponential increases in enrollment in all educational levels. Today, according to the 2006 Egyptian Literacy rates have also been increasing. Between 1986 and 2006, illiteracy rate decreased from 49.6 percent to 30 percent. The rate is higher for women (37.3 percent) than for men (22 percent).

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[106] United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report on Education 1998/99* (Nasr City: Institute of National Planning, 2000).

While education is free through college in Egypt, the Nasserite policies also resulted in an educational system that is overloaded and severely undersupplied. The system overall has failed to deliver on its core mission. Many Egyptian parents today, especially in Cairo, send their children to private schools. Countrywide, seven to nine percent of all primary students were enrolled in private schools between 2002 and 2007.[107] This percentage is significantly higher in Alexandria and Cairo, but there is no data available on school enrollment in bigger cities in Egypt.

One of the main reasons behind the deficiency of the public education system in Egypt is the low salaries for teachers. According to the 1998-99 Human Development Report, teachers earned $35 a month. Many of these teachers supplement their income by providing services through an informal education sector. They offer private lessons to students that can afford it. Children of parents who cannot afford private lessons end up with very low quality education and are more at risk to drop out. A 1996/97 survey conducted by the Egyptian Ministry of Education found that 63 percent of students at the preparatory level (equivalent to Grades seven to nine in the United States) take private lessons.[108] Students who are able to enroll at a college or a university are generally the ones who have the means to afford this informal market.

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[107] World Development Indicators Online. http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/ext/DDPQQ/showReport.do?method=showReport (accessed July 24, 2009).

[108] United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report on Education 1998/99*, 26, 82.

Figure 11. Distribution of Educational Status in Egypt
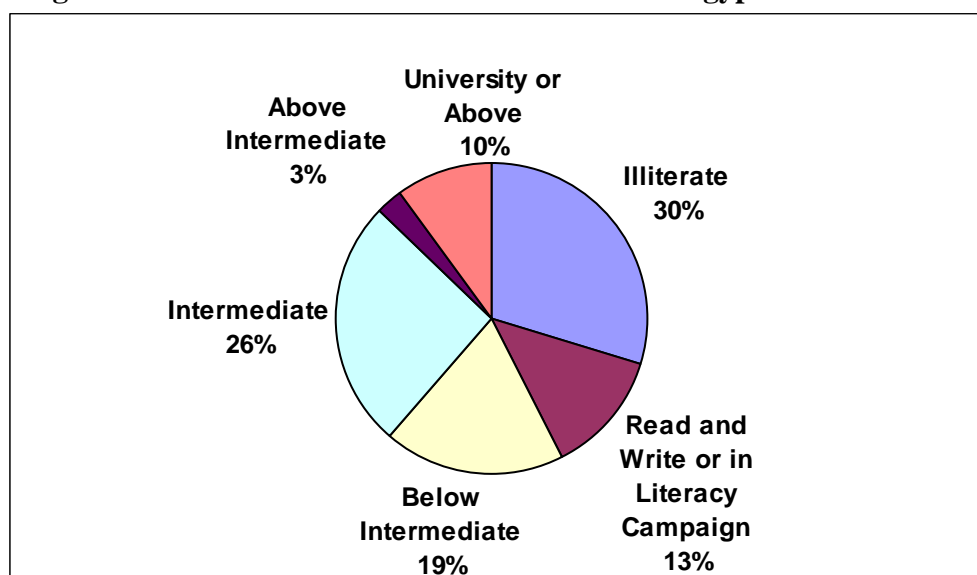
There are significant differences in the distribution of educational status in Cairo compared to the total country population. Literacy rate in Cairo is higher (80 percent versus 70 percent countrywide) and the ratio of people who are either enrolled at a university or have attained an university degree or higher is twice as high in Cairo. Data also reveal smaller gender differentials in educational attainment in Cairo. Twenty-three percent of Egyptian males have (or are working on) a university degree compared to 19 percent for women (Figure 12).[109] The ratio is higher for men and women between 20 and 30 years. At the country level, 15 percent of men and women 20 to 30 years old have or are working on a bachelor's degree. Data for Cairo City are not available. But assuming the same relative distribution of educational attainment in Cairo compared to the overall Egyptian population, it is estimated that at least 30 percent of Cairenes ages 20 to 30 years have or are in the process of attaining a bachelor's degree. These educational statistics are highly comparable to the United States statistics on the

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[109] Egyptian Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics, The Final Results of the Population and Housing Census 2006, Table 4, Population Distribution by Educational Status and Sex 10 Years and Above http://www.msrintranet.capmas.gov.eg (accessed July 19, 2009).

distribution of population by educational attainment, which is estimated at 26 percent.[110]
This research is based on interviews with women with some college education or who
graduated college. Participants in the study represent about one third of the total Cairene
population.

Figure 12. Distribution of Educational Status in Cairo Egypt
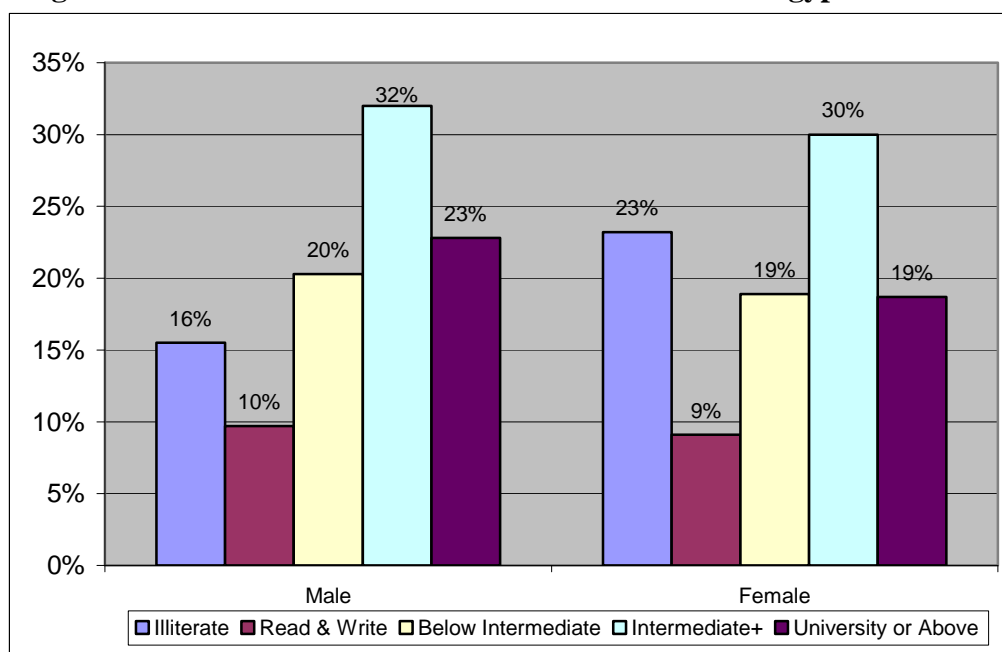
While women's participation in the labor force in Egypt is lower than in Western
countries, their enrollment at higher education institutions is relatively high and is on an
upward trend. The size of female enrollment at bachelor level higher education
institutions rose by 71 percent between 1991 and 1996. Moreover, their enrollment as a
percentage of total enrollment rose from 33 percent in 1985 to 35 percent in 1991 to 41

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[110] U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey. http://factfinder.census.gov/
servlet/DTSubjectServlet?_ts=267233517234 (accessed August 2, 2009).

percent in 1996.[111] This is comparable to university level enrollment in the United States., where women constitute 42 percent of tertiary enrollment.[112]

There is high demand for science, mathematics, and engineering majors in Egypt In 1990-91, women represented 31 percent of total enrollment in bachelor's of science majors (compared to 35 percent in the United States).[113] However, this ratio decreased to 24 percent in 1996.[114] It appears that the fields of study in Egypt are less gendered in Egypt than in other parts of the world. Women in Egypt (and many other Arab Countries) are more likely to excel in science and mathematics fields of study than their counterparts in other parts of the world. However, as the labor force analysis above demonstrates, their competitiveness at the level of education does not translate proportionally in the labor market. Egyptian women are welcomed in all fields of study, but once graduated, they face many cultural and social barriers to employment, resulting in an unemployment rate for women that is more than three times as large as than for men.

Marriage

There have been changes in patterns and trends of marriage that could have impacted the behavior of both young men and women, especially urban men and women ages 20 to 30 years. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, the worsening economic conditions have resulted in delayed marriages. The problem is not restricted to

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[111] See Subhi Qasem, *Higher Education System in the Arab States: Development of Science and Technology Indicators* (Cairo: UNESCO and ESCWA, 1998).

[112] Data on gender distribution at higher education institutions in the United States was obtained from United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Institute for Statistics, Custom Tables. http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/tableView.aspx (accessed August 01, 2009). Data on Egypt was obtained from Subhi Qasem's *Higher Education System in the Arab States* study, which was prepared for the UNESCO. There are differences in the definitions and methodologies that render these data incomparable.

113 Linda J. Sax, "Undergraduate Science Majors: Gender Differences in Who Goes to Graduate School." *The Review of Higher Education* 24, no, 2 (2001): 153-172.

[114] Qasem, *Higher Education System in the Arab States*.

lower-income groups. Upper-middle classes have high economic and social expectations regarding the potential mates of their daughters. These expectations divert significantly from the realities of these times, as the housing crisis and the prices of furniture, jewelry and other marriage essentials are beyond the reach of even the upper-middle-class groups.[115] This has created what many call today "marriage crisis," or the transformation of marriage from a social norm to a luxury. [116]

Delayed marriage is evidenced by data on average age of marriage in Egypt. Between 1988 and 2005, the median age at first marriage for women aged 25-49 increased by 1.9 years (Figure 13).[117] The average age at first marriage is correlated with years of education that the woman obtained. The Demographic Health Surveys reveal that median age of marriage for women with a secondary education was more than four years higher than that for women with only primary education.[118]

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[115] For an analysis on the effect of economic and work conditions on women, see Sajeda Amin and Nagah H. Al-Bassusi, "Wage, Work, and Marriage: Perspectives of Egyptian Working Women," Journal of Marriage and Family 66, no.5 (2004): 1287-1299.

[116] For a sample of some featured stories on the marriage crisis in Egypt today, see Rahim Sayani, "Marriage in Crisis," *The Yale Globalist,* Jan. 22, 2009. http://tyglobalist.org/index.php/20090121181/Features/Marriage-in-Crisis.html (accessed August 1, 2009) Magdi Abdelhadi, "Spotlight on Egypt's Marriage Crisis," *BBC News, Cairo,* Aug 12, 2008. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7554892.stm (accessed August 1, 2009).

[117] The Demographic and Health Survey is a program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and is conducted in developing countries.

[118] Source: Egypt Demographic Health Survey, Macro International Inc, 2009. MEASURE DHS STATcompiler. http://www.measuredhs.com (accessed August 1, 2009). No data on women with college education are available.

Figure 13. Median Age at First Marriage Women 25-49 Years
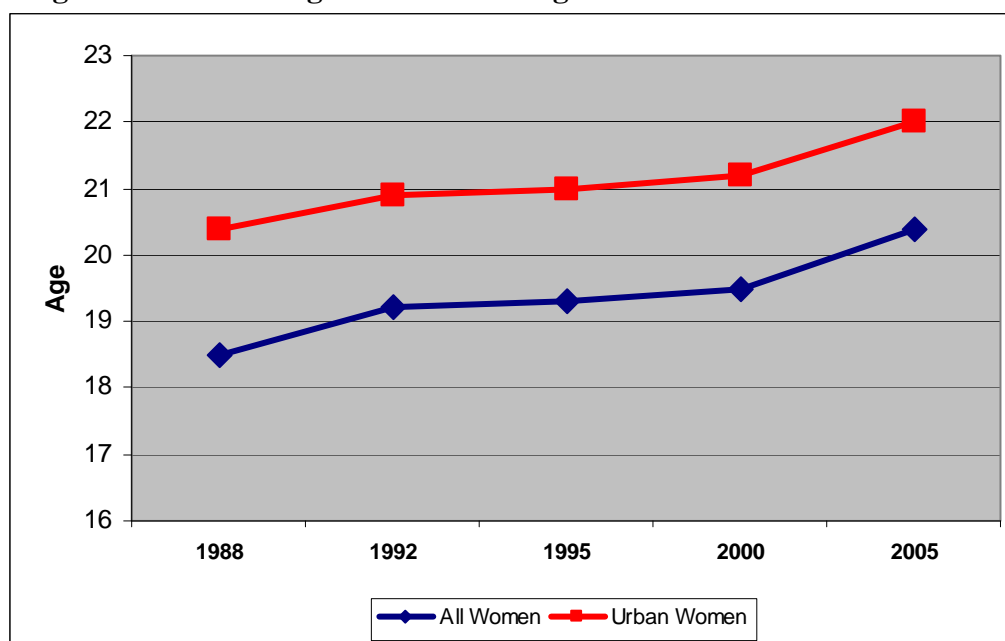
Data also reveal significant increases in the percentage of women aged 20-24 years who were single from 20 percent in 1947 to 56 percent in 1998 (Figure 14).[119] This trend continued into the 2000s. According to the Demographic Health Survey, the percentage of single women aged 25 to 29 increased from 13.4 percent in 1995 to 16.2 percent in 2000 and then to 18.7 percent in 2005.[120]

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[119] Amin and Al-Bassusi, "Wage, Work, and Marriage,"5.
[120]Fatma El-Zanaty, Enas M. Hussein, Gihan A. Shawky, Ann Way , and Sunita Kishor. *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 1995* (Calverton , Maryland: National Population Council and Macro International Inc.,1996); Fatma El-Zanaty and Ann A. Way. *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2000* (Calverton, Maryland: Ministry of Health and Population, National Population Council, and ORC Macro, 2001); Fatma El-Zanaty and Ann A. Way. *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2005* (Cairo: Ministry of Health and Population, National Population Council, El-Zanaty & Associates, and ORC Macro, 2006).

Figure 14. Percentage of Single Women and Men Aged 20-24
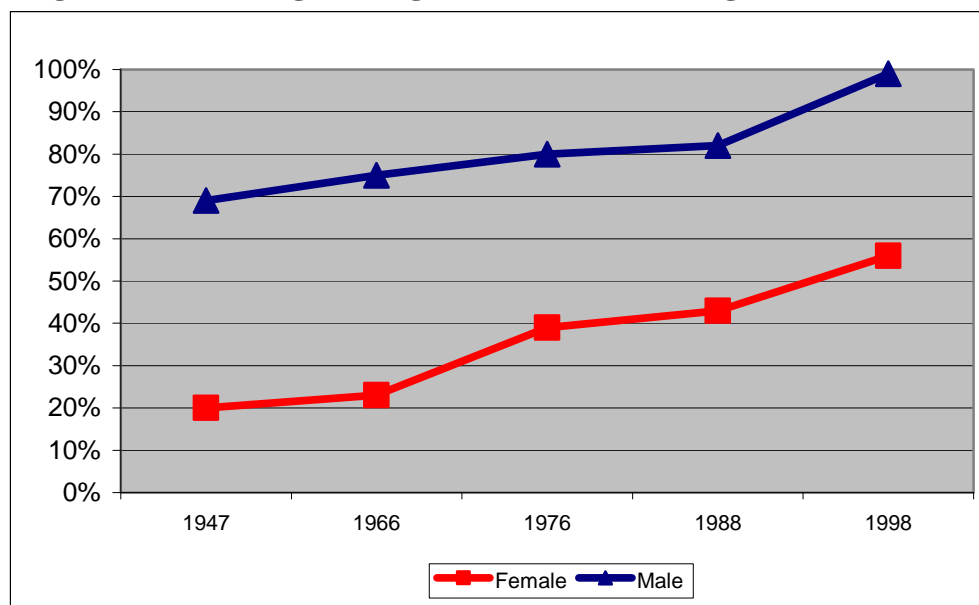
Conclusion

Analyses of the socioeconomic conditions in Egypt reveal a number of facts. First, macroeconomic conditions are full of contradictions. Simple measures of economic performance place Egypt in high international rankings with respect to its growth capacity. They mask, however, deep structural problems. Real estate is a central engine of growth in the country. The wealth resulting from real estate developmental projects is shared by a very small minority, thus skewing measures of economic performance and wellbeing. The majority of Egyptians are suffering from many types of deprivations. In addition, in spite of high growth rates, human capital utilization rates are quite low. Even those who are employed are still not making a living wage.

Egypt also ranks high in the world with respect to the educational attainments of its population. One in five Egyptians has a university degree. However, a university

education today does not guarantee a job, and even more importantly, does not guarantee a job related to one's education. A physician may graduate to work as a record keeper or cab driver. In spite of the growth in private sector employment (today accounting for about 30 percent of all jobs), it still has very limited capacity to absorb surplus workers.

One of Nasser's legacies was the portrayal of a public sector job as a social right—every university graduate in Egypt was promised a public sector job. The legacy has continued until this day. University graduates still wait for an "employment letter" from the government, which may take years even decades. However, when they get the job, they find out that they are adding to an already huge labor surplus. There is very little work to do; public sector employees for the most part sit at their desks solving crosswalk puzzles, doing crochet, or just going for a walk.[121] Accordingly, young Egyptians do not perceive themselves as playing an active role in the economic boom that Egypt is experiencing, as will be demonstrated further in the analysis of responses to the detailed interview. Developments happen irrespective of their engagement and for the most part have little or no impact or on their prosperity.

The divorce between talent, education, and work opportunities is even more profound for women. Women in Egypt excel in the science and technology fields. They face almost no barriers in studying these fields. However, they face significant barriers to employment. Other research confirms this lack of correlation between educational attainment and work opportunities for women.[122] This study does not analyze the causes of these barriers. However, it is important to note that these conditions are part of the social context that affects women's choices and behaviors related to the veil. The

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[121] Judith. Cochran, *Education in Egypt (*London: Croom Helm, 1986).
[122] Amin and Al-Bassusi, "Wage, Work, and Marriage."

following chapters will demonstrate that the veil may be considered one of the strategies that women utilize to cope with these barriers.

Women continue to face barriers to employment today. However, analyses reveal notable improvements in women's participation in economic activity. Women's share in employment has been increasing almost steadily since 2000 and they have been making efforts to become more active in the economic and professional realm. Accordingly, any analysis that takes one data point in time and concludes that the spread of the veil is a reflection of women's oppression or economic marginalization is quite misleading and should be avoided. Although women's role in the economy is limited, participation rate data have been trending up during the same period that saw an increase in veiling among. Again, this does not suggest any causal relationship, poositive or negative, between the veil and women's economic power, which may be correlated with delayed marriage or other factors. Although it is beyond the scope of this research to analyze the relationship between the macroeconomic and social changes that were taking place in Egypt over the last two decades and the mass-veiling phenomenon that dates back to the end of the 1990s, it is clear that this phenomenon is deeply entrenched in these conditions that affect both men and women in Egypt.

Chapter 3
Methods and Sample Profiles

Introduction

This research is based in large part on Norwood Russell Hanson's Logic of Discovery as opposed to the Logic of Proof. [123] There is little emphasis here on hypotheses-setting and evidence-searching in support or refutation to these hypotheses. Given the dearth of research on the process through which the veil emerges or retreats as a social norm, it is important to follow an investigative design that explores various processes under which the veil emerged and to identify reasons to suggest (rather than set) any given hypothesis. This method involves a significant level of inductive reasoning regarding the triggers and logics of veiling among women.

My Method

This research integrated techniques from three seminal methods in political science, namely historical analysis,[124] case study,[125] and interpretive methods.[126] Historical analysis was employed to trace the trajectory of veiling practices in Egypt

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[123] Norwood Russell Hanson, "The Logic of Discovery," *The Journal of Philosophy* 55, no. 25 (1958):1073-1089.

[124] The James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (2003) provide a description of comparative historical analysis in political science. I compared various periods in the Egyptian history and used techniques and assumptions outlined in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer's article. See James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, "Comparative Historical Analysis: Achievements and Agendas," in *Comparative Historical Analysis and Social Sciences*, eds. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[125] Assumptions and techniques were based on John Gerring, "What is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" American Political Science Review 98, no.2, (2004): 341-354; Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, "Part 1," in *Case Studies and Theory Development*, eds. Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004): pp. 1-37.

[126] See Jan Kubik, "Introducing Rigor to the Teaching of Interpretive Methods*," Qualitative and Multi-Method Research,* (Spring 2009): 11-17.

since the seventh century. This trajectory highlighted the similarities and differences in the socioeconomic conditions that prevailed during various phases of the veiling history.

This method provided the necessary context for the various concepts and themes related to the practices of veiling and seclusion in Egypt. It also helped provide a context-sensitive understanding of the "origins" of the veil phenomenon and outline the socioeconomic factors that had brought about changes in veiling practices. The method by itself, however, could not fully capture the role of culture and praxis in producing change, especially in political and cultural symbols. This was particularly true given the near absence of women's voices in the historical data sources available. This limitation was overcome through mixing this research strategy with interpretive and small-N methods.

The second method employed in this research was case study. There are a myriad of methods and research designs classified under this label. Some scholars portray case-study as one where the number of cases analyzed is not big enough to qualify for a large-N quantitative design.[127] Following John Gerring, I define a case study as one that investigates a "single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units." The unit here refers to a historically-specific phenomenon, which, in my study is the veil.[128] The implementation was carried out through the design of a semistructured interview that allowed for broad conversations with young Egyptian women regarding

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[127] See for example Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method, *The American Political Science Review* 65, no.3 (1971): 682-693.Lijphart argues that large-N studies are always superior. King, Koehane, and Verba (1997) disagree, and argue that through a "good" research design; small-N studies may produce valid causal inferences that may surpass large-N studies in power. See Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methodology for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[128] Gerring, "What is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" 342.

what the veil meant to them, how it related to their social roles and identities, and the various sources of information that constituted those meanings.

The interview was conducted with 65 young women who shared some basic socioeconomic characteristics. Yes/no questions were avoided as well as any other questions that might predispose women to a certain response. This was necessary to ensure that the discovery process sought in this research remained intact. The goal of the interview was to examine how these women perceive and respond to the complexities of the social transformations that are rapidly unfolding today. Content analysis was used in the analysis of the interview results. No inferences regarding causal relationships were sought as I was more interested in answering the questions what and how than why. Specifically, my research sought to understand the meanings of the veil today and how these meanings and forms came about.

The method, while not appropriate for making inferences regarding why a specific phenomenon took place, is useful in illuminating causal mechanisms. Gerring argues, "The in-depth analysis of a single unit [through] evidence-gathering—over-time and within-unit variation—is likely to provide clues into what connects a purported X to a particular Y."[129] As such, the research identified particular domains at which some of the processes underlying the veil phenomenon took place, one of which was digital media. Many interview respondents indicated that digital religious media, which only emerged towards the end of the 1990s, played an important role in the mass spreading of the veil towards the end of the 1990s. Some of the respondents celebrated this effect while other bemoaned. Almost all women, however, confirmed that it played an important role in changing veiling attitudes and practices. These results suggested the importance of

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[129] Gerring, "What is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" 348.

examining the domain of religious media to identify the processes that links them to the reconstitution of religiosity and religious practices in Egypt.

The interpretive method was used to analyze the relationship between religious media and the veil. This method is heavily influenced by the anthropological tradition. One of the main founders of this tradition is Clifford Geertz. In his studies, Geertz seeks to advance a "thick description" or an interpretation of "the meanings attributed to politics. Charles Taylor (1987) comments,

Interpretation, in the sense relevant to hermeneutics, is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of an object of study. This object must, therefore, be a text, or a text-analogue, which in some way is confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory – in one way or another unclear. The interpretation aims to bring to light an underlying coherence or sense.[130]

Max Weber is one of the earlier proponents of the use of interpretive techniques to understand or *Verstehen* the meanings of various concepts and phenomena and how these meanings are context-specific. The strength of the interpretative approach lies in its ability to offer deep descriptions and elucidations that other methods fail to do. For example, much of the literature on collective action that is rooted in rational choice theory postulates that actors with similar interests organize to affect policy outcomes. Some literature goes a step further and provides a theory of interest formation. However, without any knowledge of the cultural values and the value system that actors revolve in, we are not able to understand the effectiveness of the collective force. Veiling, for example, is analyzed here as a collective movement seeking to challenge and/or adapt to particular forces and power struggles.

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[130] As cited in Jan Kubik's notes on the philosophy of sciences and the comparative analysis, dated 09/28/2004.

Understanding the nature of this collective action requires an analysis of the various prevailing discourses on the veil. At one level, the words and language of women interviewed provided one source of data for the interpretive analysis. The method was used to understand why women veil and to reconstruct their motivations vis-à-vis the domain of religious discourse, constituted mainly by religious media. This involved what Kubik (2009) calls semiotic/communicative interpretation.[131] Kubik elucidates three components of this method: the intended meaning of the message, the meaning of the message, and the reception/interpretation (by an actor) of the meaning.[132] The imparter of the message in this context are the managers, owners, and preachers of religious media channels. The receivers are the women who follow these media sources. Interpretations regarding the meanings and functions of the veil were juxtaposed with the meanings of the veil and religiosity imparted by preachers to understand how the religious message(s) was (were) filtered by women and what their roles were in reconfiguring the message(s).

I should note here that religious media was not treated as a causal factor. Rather, it wa viewed as one of several other sites at which the politics of the veil could be unraveled. My analysis also built on Joel Migdal's *State-in-Society* approach[133] which is a processual analysis of conflict and struggle. This media site helps understand how state, religious groups, and various individuals interact and produce various identity definitions and cultural meanings.

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[131] Kubik, "Introducing Rigor to the Teaching of Interpretive Methods*,"*12.
[132] Kubik, "Introducing Rigor to the Teaching of Interpretive Methods*,"*14-15.
[133] Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society*.

The Interviewers

Two interviewers were hired to conduct the detailed interviews. Both were college students but they came from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Hind,[134] a female in the late twenties, was a student at the Faculty of Pharmacy, Cairo University, one of the top schools in Egypt that has a higher representation of upper and upper-middle classes in Cairo. Hind is unveiled and although conservative in her dress style, she has become disenfranchised due to her lack of conformity. Many times the interviewer and interviewee shared experiences and thoughts and their voices sometimes commingled, which provided me with a different vantage point for analysis. The unveiled women opened up to Hind and shared some of the fears, concerns, and the guilt feeling that society imposes on the unveiled. Some of the veiled women, on the other hand, were glad to participate in the study as it was an opportunity to preach and warn Hind, albeit indirectly, to conform, which again, gave me almost first-hand exposure to peer and social pressures and the perceived responsibilities Muslim women feel towards the unveiled that dictate certain behaviors.

Hind had a particular advantage with unveiled women, as she was unveiled herself. Veiled women, however, in many cased felt obliged to preach to her and not talk much about their personal experiences that could reflect negatively on the image of the veil. The vast majority of the interviews, therefore, were conducted by Hatem. Although he interviewed some friends whose characteristics conform to my target population, most of the women he interviewed were acquaintances he knew through the variety of

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[134] These are not the interviewers' real name. The names of the interviewers are concealed to protect their privacy and security.

networks to which he has access. This allowed for controlling variation in the socioeconomic characteristics without causing unnecessary bias in the responses.

Hatem, a male in his mid-twenties, was a student in the Open Education Center of Cairo University. He is a highly sociable person who works three different jobs. In addition, he is keen to develop himself professionally through signing up for some postsecondary professional certification in the field of computer technology and again that gave him a very wide access to respondents from different socioeconomic backgrounds. His strength lied in his large social capital and network that gave me easy access to my target group. He also had a personal charm combined with an image of trustworthiness that allowed him to engage in open conversations with young women who comfortably shared with him their experiences and concerns. His gender, therefore, in many cases was helpful as many women opened up with him regarding their views about Egyptian masculinity. Also the fact that he was neither veiled nor unveiled (as a man) gave him the appearance of neutrality vis-à-vis both groups.

The Interview Instrument

Given that my research project was exploratory in nature, I decided to design an interview instrument that would encourage women to open up and share their experiences and thoughts. My questions were designed to quite broad and neutral, not assuming any preconceived notions of an answer. They were also indirect, providing just guidance, not direction, so that respondents talk about what *they* wanted to share with me rather than what I expected to hear. In many cases, respondents provided answers that did not seem relevant. I instructed the interviewers not to correct the respondents or try to get answers to specific questions. As I looked at all answers globally, I found those "irrelevant"

answers most interesting. It was the fragments of respondents' wanderings and digressions that were most revealing during the course of my research.

A semistructured interview design was used in this study. My background as an Egyptian, and my previous conversations with friends and acquaintances in the past regarding the veil provided a good starting point regarding what I needed to know and how to extract that information in an Egyptian society. The goals of the interview were as follows:

1)   Explore the experiences of being veiled (or unveiled),
2)   Understand what prompts them to either veil or consider to veil,
3)   Investigate the scope and constraints of the women's agency with regards to veiling and not veiling,
4)   Delve into the meanings of religiosity and the veil,
5)   Investigate any perceived differences in the meanings and practices of religiosity between the current and previous generation,
6)   Decipher young women's religious knowledge and examine its homogeneous and heterogeneous constituents, and
7)   Research competing forces in the process of value construction and how they relate to the state.

The interview instrument was composed of 33 open-ended questions.[135] The first section collected basic demographic information about age, city of residence, college, work and marital status, as well as parents' occupation. These questions were intended to provide socio-demographic baseline data, the effect of which may have impact on women's dress styles as well as social and religious outlooks. Although some scholars would prefer to ask personal questions towards the end of the interview,[136] the

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[135] Full Interview instrument is listed in Appendix A.
[136] See Beth Leech, "Asking Questions: Techniques for Semistructured Interviews," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35, no. 4(2002): 666.

similarities in the backgrounds of the interviewer and interviewee meant that this would not be a problem. In contrast, it is necessary to start with these questions as they provided the interviewer with some context and leveling information that were helpful throughout the interview

The second section explored the decision-making process of the veil. It also attempted to look at the women's veil from a generational point view. Questions aimed at comparing the women's veil to their parents and looked into the role of parents in the women's choice of whether to veil or not, and the veil style they wore. The number of years of experience with the veil and the timing of the veil decision provided useful indications regarding factors that might have impacted the decision to veil, other than what they identified as immediate prompts. There were also a couple of questions about how the veil groups and ungroups people. Are friendships and social associations determined and/or affected by the veil? Does the veil constitute an axis of conflict or differentiation between women with otherwise similar social backgrounds? Answering these questions helped better understand the social dynamics of veiling practices.

The following section was designed to understand the symbols and meanings of the veil, the messages veiled women seek to send through their dress, and the functions performed by the veil that they can identify. The section consisted of a number of questions on the meaning of the veil and whether women perceived any differences in their roles and responsibilities as Muslim women after they veiled. I also probed deeper into the experience with the veil by asking question on moments of pride that the veil brought about, accomplishments they realized through veiling, and the benefits of the veil they perceived.

The fourth section of the interview sought to understand why the veil started to spread so rapidly towards the end of the 1990s. Did participants consider the veil a religious duty? If yes, why was it not followed so diligently in the past? Did they perceive the veil and dress style to be directly correlated with the person's religiosity? Did they think society was experiencing a religious revival? Did they perceive a moral revival? Did they think moral revival and religious revival were correlated andor moving in the same direction in Egypt today? All these questions were designed to see the status of religiosity and morality in Egypt through the woman's lens and understand her experiences with and responses to all the conflicts and paradoxes she is facing on a daily basis.

The fifth section examined the makeup of women's religious awareness. I asked questions on what sources of information women relied on for their religious education, how they chose those sources, how they assessed the reliability of these sources of information, and what role they thought those medium sources played in spreading the veil. These questions were devised to provide leads on how women knew what they knew about their religion and to understand what efforts they made to know more about Islam. Once the source was identified, it was decided that content analysis would be conducted on that media source to investigate the most influential inputs into women's religious awareness and the roles of these sources in re-conceptualizing the veil and religiosity in Egypt.

The religious awareness section was followed with a section on religious authority. Who did women trust for a religious opinion? Did they perceive conflicts between various sources of religious information? How did they view the role of the

state-sponsored Azhar institutions, the only official source of religious decree in Egypt? This section examined the ingredients of women's religious information and the religious authorities they trusted. The answers that women provided were most revealing in demonstrating the competition over the value construction process and the ongoing power struggle between the state and the myriad of religious preachers and groups today.

A series of questions were then asked regarding the current forms of the veil. Did the women perceive a great variety in veiling styles? Did they approve of this variety? Why did they think there were too many veiling styles today, if they did? What did this variety reflect with regards the character of the Egyptian woman? These questions were all intended to expose the relationships among religiosity, identity, and the veil and to understand more deeply the functions that the veil were currently performing (and not performing) in the Egyptian society.

Although the questions were, by and large, posed in the indicated order, the order of the answers was often different. In many instances I had to look for answers to certain questions or comments regarding particular themes throughout the entire interview. The interviewers were instructed to be flexible and to make a conscious effort to follow the interviewees' line of thought and not to ask them or direct them to follow the particular order of the interview, a recommendation offered by Jennifer Mason. Mason explains that "interviewees may be 'answering' questions other than those we are asking them, and making sense of the social world in ways we had not thought of."[137] Instead of correcting interviewees who might have misunderstood the question or did not answer it, I asked how the answer they provided related to the question and what they meant. The questions

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[137] Jennifer Mason, "Qualitative Interviewing: Asking, Listening and Interpreting," in *Qualitative Research in Action,* ed. Tim May, 231 (London: Sage, 2002).

were often interjected by follow-ups and probes which were quite revealing. In many cases, the interview that was designed to last 45 minutes took 90 minutes as women wanted to share their experiences and thoughts about a subject that touched them daily.

The interview was conducted in Arabic. Some of the women that Hind interviewed were switching between Arabic and English, a common practice among upper-middle classes. In general, the transcripts were in Arabic and I translated them. I often went back to the interviewers to ask them about my translation and interpretation and whether the interviewee could have meant one thing or another. The interviewers made themselves indefinitely available throughout the entire summer, and we met weekly via online chat programs (msn messenger) where we discussed progress, went over each interview they conducted, discussed plans and scheduled interviews for the following week and addressed any issues/concerns. We also corresponded daily via e-mail and sometimes several times a day. Their enthusiasm about the project and their thoughts on what they heard and learned through the study were quite inspiring.

The Sample

This research focused on young educated middle-class woman who were either college undergraduates or recent graduates. College students and recent college graduates were selected as they constitute tomorrow's technocratic group. Their values today will therefore shape the future of the Egyptian economy and society. They provide a lot of insight on the processes of identity formation taking place today and how these processes would likely impact the prospects of the Egyptian society in the future. This group has also been understudied in the literature on the veil. Extant literature focused mainly on the working class. Many of these views found a statistically significant correlation

between class/income and the propensity to veil.[138] The rapid proliferation of the veil among the middle- and upper-middle class, however, is a new phenomenon that emerged in the late 1990s. The veil examined here is also quite different from that of the past. It comes in a much wider variety and provides unique synergies between what is considered modern and what is traditional. It has been advanced and promoted by middle and upper-middle classes in Egypt.

The sample was selected using such criteria as age, dress style, social background, and type of college. The interview instrument asked basic socio-demographic questions, including age, name of high school, college/university, and marital and employment statuses. A description of the woman's dress style at the time of the interview was provided by the interviewer. The target was women who have at least some college training,[139] and who were between 18 and 30 years old, although a couple of the women were marginally over my targeted age.

The mean age of the women interviewed in this study was 24 years old. Over a third of the sample were between 23 and 24 years old, and 60 percent were between 20 and 25 years old (Figure 15). The vast majority (81.5 percent) of the respondents were single. The sample was roughly equally distributed among students, recent graduates who joined the ranks of the unemployed and employed women. Three quarters (50 respondents) of the respondents were veiled. Of the 15 that were unveiled, a third reported that they reversed their decision to veil. The ratio of the veiled to the unveiled

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[138] See for example Macleod, *Accommodating Protest;* El Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic"; Williams, "A Return to the Veil in Egypt,"; Sallam, "The Return to the Veil among Undergraduate Females at Minya University, Egypt"; al-Markaz al-Qawmī lil-Buḥūth al-Ijtimāʿīyah wa-al-Jināʾiyah, *Ẓāhirat al-ḥijāb bayna al-jāmiʿīyā [The Veil Phenomenon among Female Undergraduates]*.

[139] Most of the respondents were either college students or graduates. One respondent quitted college in rejection of sexual segregation. She was determined eligible to participate because she went through the college experience and her background and middle-class status, loosely defined as will be demonstrated below, were confirmed.

women in my sample is roughly representative of the ratio of veiled women in Egypt. There are no studies available regarding the incidence of veiling in Egypt, yet many observers estimate that between 75 and 80 percent of women are veiled today.

Figure 15. Age Distribution of Respondents
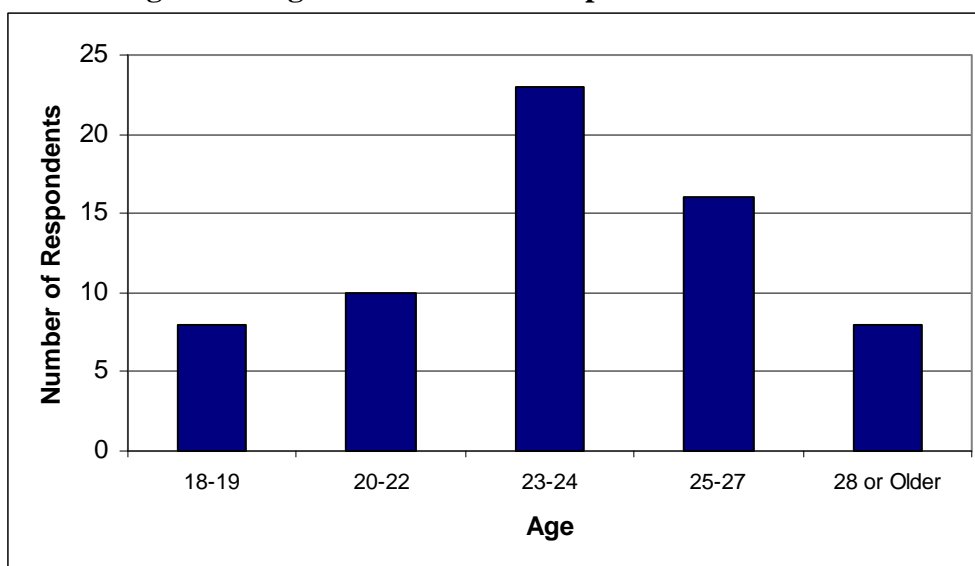
The second criterion used for sample selection was veil style. The dress style of the women was indicative of the level of religiosity that she tried to profess and provided some clues women's beliefs regarding the role, meaning, and form of veil according to Islam. A wide variety of dress styles was represented in my sample. Some women were extremely strict about the interpretation of the veil requirement in Islam and covered their entire body and face with dark and loose clothes. Others, while veiled, were dressed very liberally in very tight clothes and wore a lot of make-up.[140] I also interviewed 15 unveiled women, some of which were very conservative in their dress and others very

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[140] The rules of modesty in Islam require that the clothes not be transparent or revealing, meaning they should not be too tight that the curves of the body could be detailed.

liberal. This variety allowed for capturing the great multitude in the meanings and forms of the veil today.

For the purpose of this analysis, I grouped the styles of the veiled women interviewed into four groups: the liberal style is characterized with tighter clothes, such as tight jeans with short and/or tight shirts, flashy colors, and excessive use of makeup. The less conservative style, representing the most common type of veil, was generally characterized with a combination of one tight garment (such as pants) and a loose garment (like a shirt). Many women today wear pants with a half sleeve or sleeveless top and tight long-sleeve shirt underneath. Sometimes the shirt is in nude color, which makes the girl look almost like wearing a sleeveless dress with a scarf at a distance. The less conservative and liberal styles are much criticized by men today. Observations and conversations with people currently living in Egypt suggest that almost two thirds of the veiled women today are dressed in either of these styles.

The third group of veil form was the conservative style. This group included women wearing loose-fitting clothes that do not define the figure and that were not too bright in color. They also wore long scarves that cover the chest and/or a cloak (called *izdal* or '*abaya*) to conceal the body figure. Women in this group wore little or no makeup to confirm their abidance to Islamic modesty rules, which requires women to not make any attempts to grab attention to her. The fourth style group was the strictest, with little variance in the dress styles of women adhering to it. This group of women wore a *khimar*, a loose-fitting gown in dark nonpatterned fabric with a long A-shaped scarf covering the head and trunk area and revealing the face. Some women added a *niqab,* a white face cover that extended to the mid-chest area.

Most of the veiled women interviewed in this study wore styles that, using the above dress typology, would be classified under the "less-conservative" style group. One-fourth of the respondents were dressed in "liberal" style (Figure 16). Women belonging to the "liberal," "less conservative," and "conservative" veil forms alternate styles, and may be dressed in very liberal, tighter clothes one day and more conservative, loose-fitting styles on another day depending on their mood and/or where they are going. This made the classification fuzzy and porous. The following chart represents the spectrum of veil styles in Egypt and the style distribution of the 50 veiled respondents interviewed in this study.

Figure 16. Spectrum of Veil Styles
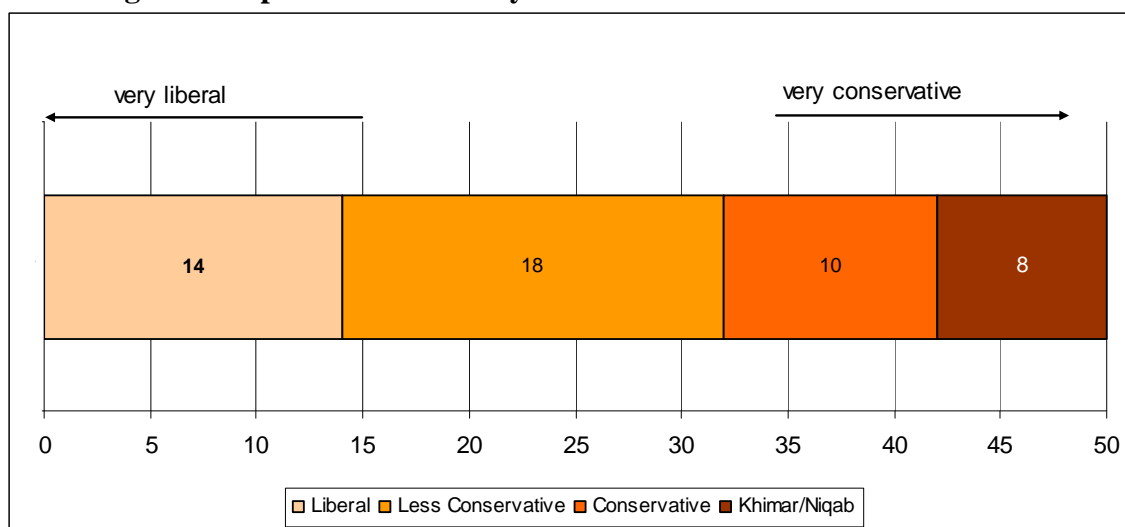
Of the 15 unveiled women interviewed, more than half were dressed in clothes similar to the less-conservative veiled women, minus a head scarf. The rest were dressed in jeans and below-waist shirts. Unveiled women in Egypt, both Christians and Muslims, usually indicate that they try to dress even more conservatively than the veiled women in an attempt to pass unnoticed in the public space. In many cases, they wear more practical,

plain clothes and little or no make-up to avoid standing out in the streets, which would be punishable by great verbal (and even physical) harassment in the streets.

The third criterion for selecting women into the sample was socioeconomic class. My target was middle- and upper-middle class college students or recent graduates. There are several class stratification systems that are offered in the literature on Egypt's social classes, one of which was coined by Saʿad Eddin Ibrahim.[141] The stratification is based on a number of factors, including income, occupation, education, and durable goods (lifestyle). Ibrahim identifies six social strata in Egypt: the lowest stratum—the destitute who live way below the poverty line (10.2 percent of total population); the low-stratum or the poor who live immediately below the poverty line (10.3 percent), the low-middle stratum or borderline who live just above the poverty line (26.5 percent), the middle stratum or the upwardly mobile composed of mid-level professionals (36.1 percent), the upper-middle stratum or the secure (15.3 percent), and finally the upper stratum or the rich, which constitutes about one percent.[142]

Using this stratification, the middle and upper-middle class would come from the upwardly mobile and upper-middle strata. They would be in 80th percentile of income, making an average annual income of \$3,275 according to income distribution data provided by the World Bank.[143] One limitation in my questionnaire instrument, however, is the absence of a question regarding the respondent's family income. Income is a very sensitive issue in Egypt and a question regarding the veil could lead respondents to get

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[141] Saʿad Eddin Ibrahim, "Income Distribution and Social Mobility in Egypt," in *The Political Economy of Income Distribution in Egypt, eds.* Guda Abdel Khalek and RobertTignor, 375-435 (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982).

[142] See Ibrahim, "Income Distribution and Social Mobility in Egypt."

[143] World Development Indicators Online. http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/ext/DDPQQ/showReport.do?method=showReport (accessed July 24, 2009).

defensive or uncomfortable, which would impair the answers significantly. In addition, I may not get the true answer for that question as respondents might refuse to answer or provide a "false" answer to conceal their class level, a common practice in Egypt. The socioeconomic profile of the woman was deduced through a number of questions: city of residence, name of high school, and whether it is a language school or not, a girls-only school or not,[144] and the occupation of the parents.[145]

Private schools in Egypt are quite expensive, and are normally only affordable by the upwardly mobile to upper classes. Language private schools (in which sciences are taught in a foreign language and a rigorous foreign language education is offered starting preschool) are even more expensive. According to the UNESCO, less than eight percent of Egyptians sent their children to private schools in 2007.[146] The ratio of private school enrollment would be slightly higher in Cairo but no governorate level data on school enrollment was available. About one-third of the respondents were women who graduated from private schools. The other two thirds had other characteristics that still indicated they belong to the upper 20th income quintile.

Another proxy question for income used in my interview instrument is the type of college from which respondents were either enrolled or graduated. As was discussed in Chapter 2, education in Egypt is essentially free through college. However, the

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[144] Because the public educational system is deficient in quality and resources in Egypt, many parents send their kids to private schools. The range of tuition in private schools is dramatic, from £.E. 12,000 £.E to £.E 65,000 a year or the equivalent of 2,500 to 13,000 USD. The name of the school parents sends their kids to is an important status symbol. Whether a school is girls-only or mixed school also tells something about the level of conservatism of the parents and whether they believe in gender segregation. In lower-class cities, parents tend to send their kids to segregated schools, while in middle and upper classes, especially in Cairo, more parents accept the fact that mixing gender is important.

[145] The occupation of the parent is an important variable as it gives an indication regarding the level of education of the respondents' parents, their income levels, and their social strata (small business, versus technocrat, versus state employee).

[146] United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Institute for Statistics, Custom Tables. http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/tableView.aspx (accessed August 1, 2009).

ineffectiveness of the public system entailed that only students with more economically comfortable pares would be able to get the grades required to enroll at a higher education institution. Accordingly, while the main determinant of the major (faculty)[147] is the student's high school grades, the ability to score high enough to go to top-tier faculties is largely determined by the student's economic resources. The faculties of medicine, pharmacy, computer science, engineering, and economics and political science, for example, are top tier schools requiring an average high school grade of over 95 percent and are more accessible to upper-class students. The second tier faculties consist of all other faculties, including faculties of arts, commerce, tourism and hotels, and require an average grade of 85 percent, and are more accessible to middle-income groups. The third tier colleges contain institutes and two-year colleges are more accessible to lower-middle-class income group. A number of respondents were selected from this group as a way to measure the role of income on constituting the meanings of the veil.

Although the target group of this study is middle and upper-middle classes, it was still important to include some respondents from the lower-middle stratum to understand the role of class in constructing the meanings of the veil. Respondents were grouped roughly into three socioeconomic groups. Lower-middle class consisted of respondents living in highly dense, urban areas, who went to public schools, and whose parents have either clerical jobs or other jobs that required a high school degree or less. The middle-income group was composed of women who lived in middle-income districts, who went

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[147] High school scores determine not only the type of college/university that the student goes to, but more importantly the major. In the United States, a student will say I go to Rutgers University, for example, and (s)he may or may not indicate the major in a casual conversation. In Egypt, the majors (or the faculties) are highly stratified and students generally provide the name of the faculty before the university/college as it speaks more to both their abilities and their socioeconomic backgrounds. On the flip-side, the student's decision regarding the higher education degree to pursue is determined less by aptitude at certain fields and more by the pressure to enroll in more prestigious faculties.

to public schools but scored high enough in their high school diploma to enroll in first-tier colleges. Upper-middle income groups were the one that went to the more expensive high schools and/or enrolled at a private university, which is typically only accessible to the wealthier parents who work in multinational corporations or have own their own businesses. Figure 17 depicts the distribution of respondents across the three class strata that I defined above.

Figure 17. Respondents by Socioeconomic Class
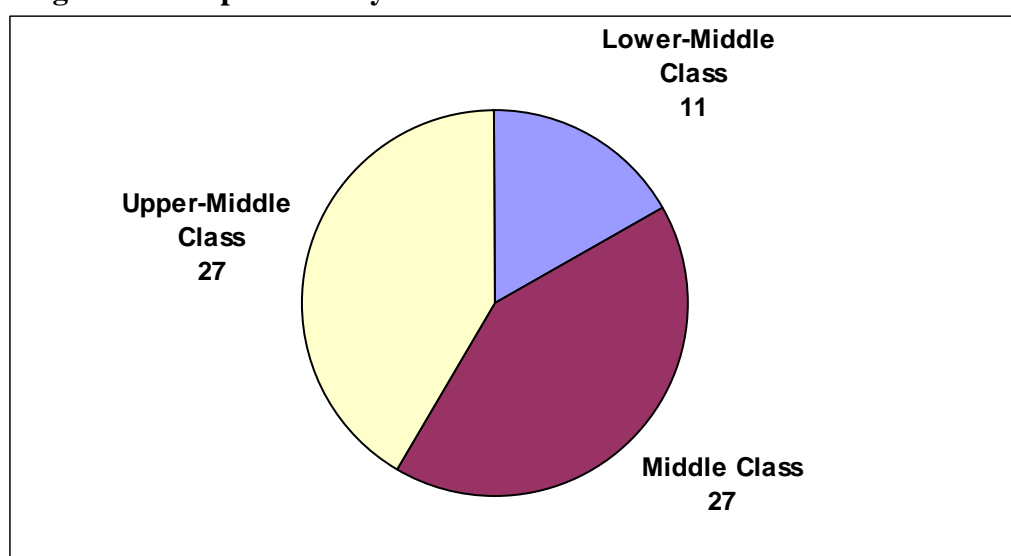
As was suggested earlier, a correlation was found between class and the veil type. For the upper-middle classes, 82.4 percent of the female respondents were dressed in liberal or less conservative veil styles, compared to 60.9 percent for middle class and 50.0 percent for middle-lower classes. This suggests that although the pressure to veil was experienced at all levels, the upper-middle classes were better equipped and/or more determined to maneuver around the requirement and construct new meanings and forms of the veil.

The topic of the study interested many of the women interviewed. Fifty-three respondents were described as willing or very willing to participate and share their

thoughts about the veil. A few women looked worried and were a bit anxious about participating, but participated out of curiosity. The rest were in a hurry but still participated to kill some time. Only one woman completely refused to participate in the study. She was an unveiled woman in the mid-twenties and indicated that she had previously gotten into trouble for participating in another study. She was sitting nearby while we were conducting one of the interviews, and seemed quite opinionated, even made a few remarks about the veil and the pressure that the unveiled women faced to wear the veil. That was why, she explained, inappropriate veil styles emerged.

Coding and Analysis of the Interview Results

Each interview transcript was read several times right after it was received. I decided not to do any analysis until I received a substantial number of responses. This was because I did not want to predispose myself in a way that I could potentially frame the answers into specific stereotypes or predetermined categories. I also wanted to ensure that I explored women's lives and answers before I started leaving any permanent marks through coding and analysis. While the interviews were being conducted, and while reading each interview as it was received, I was working on the historical analysis, during which time I was reading a tremendous number of autobiographies, commentaries, and essays written in the late twentieth and early nineteenth century. It was very interesting to compare what women said during the interview and what they said throughout the history about society, the role of women, and the veil. This too helped reveak trends at the macrolevel and provided unique context for the responses that women provided during the interview.

Having learned all that I did about the women, and having established a one-on-one relationship with each respondent through reading her words holistically, I started analyzing responses. All interview transcripts were entered into qualitative analysis software, Atlas.ti 5.2. Simple codes/variable names were created for the responses to each question. The software made it easy to aggregate responses to the same question in one location where I could identify patterns and common themes in the answers. Responses were then entered into a huge excel sheet with variables corresponding to each question.

I used a mixture of discourse and content analyses techniques.[148] My research goals and assumptions were more compatible with the ontology of discourse analysis. I believed that the mass-veiling phenomenon was historically specific, and was produced in a relational process that could only be understood through a constructionist framework. However, absent a detailed ethnographic study that followed the lives of these women for a period of time, a pure discourse analysis was not possible. Consistent and objective coding was therefore the key analysis strategy. Answers were coded into a number of categories that were outlined after a holistic reading of most of the interview transcripts. Codes were not based solely on word or phrase usage but on the context in which those words and/or phrases were used. In other words, the analysis was context-sensitive even though the context available for analysis was rather limited.

Atlas software was especially helpful in making the analysis consistent. Words and phrases were searched, and the context in which these words were said were

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[148] Discourse analysis is premised on the assumption that social phenomena and meanings are constructionist. The main goal of the analysis is to discover how reality is produced, which in turn assumes that this reality is in flux. Analysis is context-sensitive. Content analysis on the other hand assumes that there is a reality that is stable and accessible through the utilization of consistent coding and analyses techniques. Results obtained through content analyses are expected to be replicable and context-neutral. See Yoshiko M. Herrera and Bear F. Braumoeller, "Symposium: Discourse and Content Analysis," *Qualitative Methods (*Spring 2004): 15-39.

analyzed and coded. For example, words denoting the state, such as the government (*al-hekooma*), state, leaders, and Egypt were searched throughout the text and the paragraphs where they occurred were marked and coded. Also a search was done for the names of all religious preachers and religious programs. The output was then analyzed cross-sectionally to identify patterns. Variables such as views on the West and "the other" were created to analyze the links between identity constructions and the veil.

Simple cross-tabulations were conducted to examine differences (or their lack) across groups. After grouping answers to the various questions, such as the meaning of the veil, simple statistical tests were performed to identify if these meanings differed across socioeconomic characteristics, sources of religious information, types of preachers the respondent listened to, and other factors. In some instances, I provided quantitative codes and used SAS (Statistical Analysis Software) to identify trends and patterns through the use of bivariate analysis. Where relevant I used visual representations of data to show how responses clustered or diverged across particular themes.

Analysis of Religious Media

The interview results provided leads regarding the importance of digital media in promoting the veil. Respondents also directed the research to examine the types of media and preachers that women rely on for religious education. The question then was, How to analyze this site of cultural production? There is currently a massive body of literature on the role of television in the making and shaping of national identity.[149] As Abu-Lughod

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[149] See for example Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood;* Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics after Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); *James Lull,* Media Communications, Culture: A Global Approach (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); David Morley and Charlotte Brundson, *The Nationwide Television*

contends, studying television is equivalent to "examining a 'national space' rife with tensions, inequalities, and regionally configured power systems."[150] The significance of this institution makes the method of inquiry into it even more significant and problematic.

Media ethnographers insist that the most effective approach for studying television is through examining the immediate viewing context which is the best way to understand how "people encounter, use, interpret, enjoy, think and talk about television."[151] Abu-Lughod points out several problems that make this ethnographic approach less than optimal, mainly the great variety in viewing settings and viewing habits even among the same viewers. For example, a married person will interact differently with a television program if he is watching it with his friends than if he watches it in the midst of his family. Abu-Lughod, on the other hand, follows what Marie Gillepsie calls "TV talk." She identifies general themes in people's conversations that may be traced back to particular television programs.[152] The author therefore recommends viewing specific programs in an ethnographic setting and substantiating notes from these experiences with associations drawn between specific every day conversations and ideas with messages imparted in that program.

Given that media and television politics is not the main subject of this research, it was not possible to follow this rigorous method. I used results from the semistructured interview to identity the programs and channels to review. I used content analysis techniques and the qualitative analysis software to identify key nodes in women's conversations regarding sources of religious information, attitudes towards these sources,

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*Studies (*London: Routledge, 1999); Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 1994); Marie Gillepsie, *Television, Ethnicity, and Cultural Change* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[150] Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood,* 9.

[151] Ien Ang (1991) cited in Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood*, 22.

[152] Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood*, 23.

and the meanings related to religiosity and the veil that they spoke of. I then examined these sources of information closely and used the same qualitative analyses techniques to identify similar and different messages in these programs. Specifically, I followed the messages imparted by preachers that were found to be most influential in promoting the veil and shaping current religiosity. This was done through downloading and transcribing 70 religious sermons delivered by these religious preachers and made available on the Internet. Most of these preachers had their own Web sites, but the channel Web sites were also used to identify relevant sermons. I focused on sermons that discussed women, morality, and the veil. Each of the preachers had exclusive sermons on these themes.

The sermons were read holistically to identify common themes and concepts.[153] Content analysis techniques were used. Parallels and contrasts were drawn between the messages imparted by preachers and the ideas communicated by respondents. This compare and contrast approach provided a lens to understand the interactions between the religious intelligentsia and the female agents. It gave insight into the scope and domain of the female agency with respect to the veil and allowed the researcher to capture the effect of two players in the veiling phenomenon that would not be captured otherwise, namely the West and the Jews. These two subjects were central themes in all sermons, especially the ones that discussed the veil.

Study Limitations

There was one major limitation set by the identity of the researcher in this study. I am both Egyptian and non-Muslim. My name quickly reveals my identity to any Egyptian. The fact that I am doing my research in the United States of America, which, in

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[153] Herrera Braumoeller, et al. "Symposium: Discourse and Content Analysis."

the minds of many Egyptians is the new imperialist that has invaded Iraq and will invade other parts of the Islamic world, and that I am writing about Islam and politics, would set automatic and immovable barriers between the researcher and the participants. Speculations about the "real" goal of the research would be enough to tarnish the results I obtain during my research. There would also be major security issues involved had I decided to personally conduct the interviews. Any discussion about religion between an Egyptian Muslim and non-Muslim in Egypt could be interpreted in many different ways, posing many security threats to the researcher and subjects. Where direct contact with a researcher was involved, I resorted to using middlepersons in my research.

The distance from my subjects was in some cases advantageous. It offered a telescopic view of society and a unique to map a multilayered power struggle that strongly engaged the agent but also transcended her; it implied a limitation in what I could analyze, including gestures, facial expressions, or changes in voice tones and emphases. Notwithstanding my emphasis to the interviewers to record all moves and reactions to questions made by the interviewee, and the abundance of information they reported in their transcriptions of the interview responses regarding body language, I submit that I still missed considerably on this very important source of knowledge. In many instances, it was also hard to distinguish the identity of the interviewer from that of the subject. But the momentary fusion of the identities of the researcher and researched is an inevitable limitation in all research, especially qualitative research. I contend that this would still be a problem if I were to do the interviews, with the further limitation that the researcher would be less aware of this fusion and less able to objectify it.

The exploratory nature of this research project had several limitations. The interview instrument was designed to ask broad and nonspecific questions and to take clues from respondents regarding what they viewed as important or not. Some women provided specifics regarding the televisions programs they viewed, the preachers they preferred, and their views on the West. Others spoke more generally without providing any details. It was important to keep the interview neutral to avoid predisposing respondents and to cast a wide net regarding the factors influencing the veil. The tradeoff is that some women could have had some opinions regarding these factors but were not prompted. Also because I collected no identifiable data regarding the respondents—no addresses or phone numbers information was collected—follow-ups with respondents were not possible.

These tradeoffs were partially compensated through a number of research strategies. I avoided making conclusions about the absence of an opinion. In other words, commonalities in opinions about these factors, especially given the absence of any direct prompts, were taken as strong indications regarding the salience of a specific variable. The absence of an opinion, on the other hand, was not considered a significant finding. Another way I overcame this tradeoff was through substantiating the data from the interview results with data from religious sermons and programs. The consistency in the method by which I selected the preachers to be analyzed, the sermons to transcribe and the coding and analysis method were effective way to cover these gaps.

Another significant limitation in this study was the absence of an ethnographic dimension. This is particularly significant in reference to the results obtained from the satellite media analysis that was conducted here. This research would have benefited

significantly from an ethnographic study of the television programs. The setting through which I viewed and analyzed the satellite domain would be vastly different and much richer had I been more immersed into the lives of the Egyptian women viewing these programs on a daily basis. Fewer inductions would have been needed regarding the associations between specific ideas that echoed during the interview and the themes of religious sermons. Following a rigorous and consistent method of the content analysis made the inductions made during this research more reasonable and less spurious. I also followed up almost immediately when women pointed out to specific programs or shows by downloading the show and viewing it myself.

Chapter 4

Antecedents to Change

Introduction

The history of women's dress and fashion in Egypt is full of intriguing turning points. At the dawn of the twentieth century, urban Egyptian women, regardless of their religion or class, wore a veil consisting of a black cloak covering the entire body and a white face cover. By the end of the first quarter of that century, the veil was cast off. Pictures of outdoor women in my family's possessions and in magazines reveal a striking similarity between women's fashion in Egypt and Europe. After almost completely disappearing, the veil reappeared again in the Egyptian streets, and today is the norm of dress in Egypt, particularly urban Egypt.

This chapter provides a historical context of the veil in Islam and the Egyptian history. In the beginning, I discuss the mutability of religious discourse through illustrating the wide variety of meanings and practices produced by the same religious text. I then trace the history of the veil in Egypt going back to the seventh century, when Egypt was incorporated into the Islamic Empire, up until the twentieth century. The main goal is to demonstrate the nonlinearlity in the course of the veiling practices in Egypt and that the wide variety in the symbols, meanings, associated with this article. These meanings and forms are functions of various socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors, some of which are identified in this chapter. While I will survey women's dress

in Egypt since the beginning of the Islamic conquest, a major focus of the chapter will be the rise of nationalist movements in Egypt in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The chapter is divided into four sections. First, I review some of the doctrinal texts pertaining to the veil in Islamic texts. Second, I survey women's dress in Egypt starting with the Islamic conquest in the seventh century up until the Ottoman dynasty. Associations and correlations between veiling practices and socioeconomic conditions are drawn. Third, I analyze the socioeconomic and political conditions leading to the British occupation as well as the impact of that occupation on the Egyptian nationalist movement(s) and dress styles in Egypt. Finally, I examine the development of the female agency in the context of nationalism, particularly how women from various social classes internalized and utilized these conditions to claim a share in public space. The chapter relies on two sources of data: historical documents and studies on Egyptian female dress and autobiographies and life stories of women who took part in early nationalist activities.

The analysis suggests that changes in dress style have economic, political, and cultural roots. The economic structure dictates certain division of tasks across gender and classes that favor certain dress styles over others. Also the level of integration in the international and political relations is an important factor. Increased level of integration in the global economy is always a trigger for changes in identities and cultural expressions. Both the economic and political factors are mediated through a cultural sphere, a process that determines the direction of change, be it stricter or more relaxed veiling practices.[154]

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[154] Chatty, "The Burqa Face Cover: An Aspect of Dress in Southeastern Arabia," in *Languages of Dress in the Middle East*, ed. Curzon Surrey, Nancy Lindisfarne, and Bruce Ingham

The Veil in Islam: Its Status and Role

A brief analysis of Islamic texts reveals that the *hijab* has been a highly debatable issue since the rise of Islam, even among religious clerics and scholars. Some religious scholars insist that the veil was a fundamental requirement in Islam, while others maintain that it is a voluntary or preferred practice. One major source of contention regarding the veil lies in the ambiguities of language. Language in general is a very dynamic medium of exchange. When taken out of context, any sentence or statement can mean one thing in a given community, and another when transported to another era or group.

The problem of language is particularly potent in the Arabic language, which is known for its malleability and context-sensitivity. While an English word, for example, may take different meanings depending on the context, most of the time it will read and sound the same. In Arabic, however, the vowels are not spelled out in writing, and the same word may be pronounced in many different ways, and mean very different things depending on the context. This is why Leila Ahmed[155] insists that words in Arabic can take an infinite number of meanings "until life is literally breathed into them." She observes that "Arabic and Hebrew words…are not words but only potential words, a

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(Surray: Curzon Press, 1997);; Lewis "Veils and Sales: Muslims and the Spaces of Postcolonial Fashion Retail"; Shirazi, *The Veil Unveiled*; Stillman, *Arab Dress;* Charolette Jirousek, "The Transition to Mass Fashion System Dress in the Later Ottoman Empire," in *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922,* ed. Donald Quataert, 206-208 (Albany: State University of New York, 2000).
    [155] Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam,* 127-128.

chaotic babbly and possibility of meanings…And so by their very scripts these two languages seem to announce that meaning can only be here and now."[156]

This feature of the Arabic language makes the appropriation of meanings to Quranic verses and Islamic religious texts very difficult. While one expects the dynamic nature of the language to dictate a need for constant reinterpretation and contextualization of religious text, as a result of political decisions made during the tenth century, the practice of religious jurisprudence was halted. *Ijtihad,* or the process of making legal decisions based on the reinterpretation of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet of Islam, *hadith.* In an attempt to maximize and sustain its power, the Abbassid regime locked the body of legal jurisprudence that was produced until then. The rulers "closed the gates of *ijtihad.*"[157] Religious scholars were required to apply the body of legal opinion that that were created primarily between the eighth and tenth centuries.[158]

The end of Islamic legal jurisprudence, however, did not end the process of meaning constitution or legal jurisprudence. Using the same body of the *Shari'a* law, religious clerics were always able to influence and constitute religious requirements. Religious scholars continued to contextualize texts and provided varying interpretations of the same texts from time to time, although they insisted that these interpretations were unchanging. The process of interpreting the text, however, required very specialized skills, including mastering Arabic language, and the ability to read and synthesize a huge

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[156] Ahmed discussed the personal difficulties she had with the Arabic language in her personal autobiography. She did not have to study Arabic until the 1952 revolution and she struggled significantly with the language. See Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam,* 127-128.

[157] Ironically, this took place at the peak of the Islamic civilization. Most of the legal texts in Islam were produced in this period.

[158] Ahmed (1992) describes some of the social and political circumstances that led to the decision to prohibit *ijtihad*. She emphasizes that the decision was politically driven; it was a strategy used by the Abbasid regime to consolidate and perpetuate his power through assuming full monopoly over religious interpretation. (See Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam,* 89-91).

body of religious text. It should be noted that fluency in classical Arabic is a very rare skill. Colloquial Arabic is very different from classical Arabic. Even Arabic teachers today, who have specialized education in Arabic language, grammar, and literature, do not properly speak and write the language. Due to the difficulty of the language, the interpretation of religious texts was always monopolized by an elite group of religious scholars, or *ulema*, who received very specialized education. As Mernissi[159] stresses, getting an answer about whether any action is *halal* (allowable)*, haram* (illicit), *fard* (religious requirement), preferred, or a choice requires the navigation of great volumes of texts written in inaccessible language. Most of this text was written between the ninth and twelfth centuries, a period of political flux due to the fusion of Islamic and non-Islamic cultures. The result of these cultural and political turmoils was a general decline in the status of women and religious minorities.

Three verses in Quran are often cited by religious scholars and the proponents of the veil as one that legislated the veil requirement. The first verse is from the 33rd Surat in Quran and reads in the following way:

[33:53] O Ye who believe! Enter not the dwellings of the Prophet for a meal without waiting for the proper time, unless permission be granted you. But if ye are invited, enter, and, when your meal is ended, then disperse. Linger not for conversation. Lo! that would cause annoyance to the Prophet, and he would be shy of (asking) you (to go); but Allah is not shy of the truth. And when ye ask of them (the wives of the Prophet) anything, ask it of them from behind a curtain. That is purer for your hearts and for their hearts. And it is not for you to cause annoyance to the messenger of Allah, nor that ye should ever marry his wives after him. Lo! that in Allah's sight would be an enormity.[160]

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[159] Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[160] The Holy Quran, Yusuf Ali Translation. Downloaded at http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/qmtintro.html (accessed September 06, 2009).

The circumstances of the occurrence of verse are important to note. Commentators and religious scholars indicated that the verse descended during the wedding feast of the prophet of Islam, to Zeinab bint Jahsh. The tradition note that one of the guests lingered behind too long in the wedding room, which annoyed the prophet of Islam significantly. Shortly after, the verse was revealed. It instituted the seclusion rights of Muhammed's wives. In his interpretation of the verse, al-Tabari[161] narrated that the witness of the verse revelation (Aban Ibn Malek who lingered behind) says that Muhammed murmured the verse while physically drawing a curtain between the unwanted guest and Muhammed.[162]

The word *hijab* is one of the complicated words in Arabic, and its usage in Quran renders it more confusing. I stems from the Arabic verb *hajaba* which means "to hide" and the word itself literally means curtain or a screen used to obstruct from viewing. *Hijab,* therefore, may refer to any or all of the following: the object used to hide something from sight; the act of separating or marking the border in space; and an ethical dimension, referring to seclusion, or just covering up.[163] There was distinction made between veiling and seclusion in Quran. The two meanings of the veil (seclusion by descending a curtain and adopting a specific form of dress) were used interchangeably.

The other verses that referenced female clothing and/or *hijab* occurred in two different surats both revealed in the Year 5 or 6 of the Islamic Calendar.

[33:59] O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most

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[161] Al-Tabari (823-923) is one of the earliest and most reputable religious scholars in Islam. He has produced a 30-volume commentary and explication of Quran, called Tafsir al-Tabari, in addition to a 13-volume tradition book called *Tarikh al-Tabari [History according to al-Tabari]*.

[162] *Tafsir al-Tabari* cited in Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil,* 85-87.

[163] For a detailed description of the meanings of the veil in Arabic and its uses in Quran, see Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* and Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam.*

convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. [164]

[24:30-31]. Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! turn ye all together towards Allah, that ye may attain Bliss. [165]

These two verses were not directed to Muhammed's wives only, as was the case in the former verse, but to all women believers. However, there were, and still are, a lot of disagreements regarding the meaning of the verses. These two textual pieces indicate that women are required to be modest and wear clothes that are not revealing. But what constituted modest clothes was never clearly spelled out in the Quran. There is a lot of debate over what is considered "that which is apparent" or *"ma zahara minha."* Disagreements existed even among the companions of Muhammed. Some insisted that the verse meant that women cannot expose any part of their bodies other than their outer garments. Everything else, including the face, should be covered. Others suggested that women can expose their cheeks only. Others yet said that they can reveal their face and hands.[166] There were many other interpretations reported by other commentators.

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[164] The Holy Quran, Yusuf Ali Translation. Downloaded at http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/qmtintro.html (accessed September 06, 2009).

[165] The Holy Quran, Yusuf Ali Translation. Downloaded at http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/qmtintro.html (accessed September 06, 2009).

[166] Asgharali Engineer, *The Qur'an, Women, and Modern Society* (Berkshire, U.K.: New Dawn Press, 2005), 62-65.

Looking at the rest of the verse, some commentators, however, insisted that the verse referred to a very specific form of dress that were common at that time, and that Islam sought to overturn. The verse says, "that they should draw their veils over their bosoms." The word used in Quran for veils in this verse is *khimar*, and there is no unified description of what a *khimar* is. In Egypt today, the *khimar* is a long headscarf extending loosely on the chest and back, normally covering the entire trunk area. Many religious scholars take this verse literally and insist not only that *hijab* is a religious requirement (*fard*), but also that there is only one acceptable form for it, which is the *khimar*. An important historical fact, however, needs to be highlighted here. In pre-Islamic times and until this verse descended, women dressed in what was called a *khimar*, which was a long veil covering the entire back and head, but not the front or the bosom area. Accordingly, some commentators and religious scholars insisted that the veil verse came to require women to cover the bosom area, which women at that time left bare.[167]

The verse, it has been argued, isintended to protect women from sexual harassment. During that time, women, including Muhammed's wives, were harassed or teased a lot by hypocrites and rapists in Medina City. Sexual harassment was a common practice in the urban setting of Medina, much more than Mecca. It was legal at that time to harass slaves. But Medina men often harassed free women as well claiming that they could not tell from their dress whether they were free women or slaves. The verse attempted to address this problem by setting an identifier for free women for their own

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[167] See Engineer, *The Qur'an, Women, and Modern Society,* 65; Iqbāl Baraka, Ḥijāb: ru'yah ʿaṣrīyah (al-Qāhirah: Mu'assasat Rūz al-Yūsuf, 2002), 62-65.

protection.[168] Hence, the veil was a tool for racial and class discrimination rather than a religious requirement.

Before these verses were revealed, Muhammed's wives were allowed to move freely without a veil. Once uttered, only Muhammed's wives abided by the seclusion requirements. Some commentators said that Muhammed's wives, especially ʿAisha strongly regretted this new requirement and blamed it all on one of Muhammed's companions and the third Caliph of Islam, Umar Ibn el-Khattab who had been constantly nagging the prophet of Islam to veil and seclude his wives as they were getting harassed.[169] The veil requirement was not generalized to the rest of Muslim women until much later.[170]

That said, an important historical context for these verses should be noted. The three verses were revealed in Years 5 and 6 of the Muslim Calendar—Hijra. Until the Year 5 of Hijra, women, including Muslim's Prophet's wives, played a very active role in all aspects of social and political life, including war. Tradition related stories of Muhammed's wives tucking their garments in during the war, serving warriors and removing the dead and wounded. This changed dramatically following the defeat of Muslims in the Battle of Uhud[171] and an attempt by the Meccans to ally with other tribes forming coalitions or *Ahzab,* to attack Medina. In the midst of all this, and while

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[168] Engineer, *The Qur'an, Women, and Modern Society,* 62; Baraka, Ḥijāb: ru'yah ʿaṣrīyah, 56.

[169] See Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam*; Engineer *The Qur'an, Women, and Modern Society*.

[170] Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society,* 92-96.

[171] The Battle of Uhud was fought in Year 3 After Hijra, which corresponds to the year when the Muslim community emigrated from Mecca to Madina at Mount Uhud. The war took place between a force from the Muslim community of Medina led by Muhammad, and a force led by Abu Sufyan from Mecca, the town from which many of the Muslims had previously emigrated (hijra). The Battle of Uhud was the second military encounter between the Meccans and the Muslims, preceded by the Battle of Badr in 624, where a small Muslim army had defeated the larger Meccan army. The Muslims were defeated in this war, and the defeat lead to a great loss of morale as well as significant social and political instability

Muhammed and Muslim leaders were heavily occupied in war planning, rebels and hypocrites in Medina started instigating strife in Medina, especially between Muhammed and his wives.[172]

There remains one important feature about the Quran that explains why the veil was a contentious point of debate in Islam. As Leila Ahmed explains, Quran has two distinct layers, one which is concerned with the ethical and one that is mainly geared towards pragmatic issues. So while some verses in Quran emphasize equality across gender, religion, and class, others draw some boundaries in order to establish a political community. These two "competing voices" coexist in Quran and Islamic teachings, and each has some power over the process of value construction and reproduction. The literature on the pragmatic side is overwhelming and often overshadows the former; it is elaborated in the huge body of legal and political thought, most of which was produced during the Abbassid Empire, and just reproduced over time. The ethical dimension, on the other hand, has no literary evidence. Its domain is restricted to the understandings and applications of the ordinary Muslim laymen regarding Islamic teachings.[173]

The distinction can also be drawn along historical lines. In Islam, the spirit of the Quranic verses that were revealed in Mecca diverge significantly from those revealed in Madina. The earlier Meccan verses emphasized the core Islamic teachings and commonalities in divine religions. The Madinan verses, on the other hand, were more concerned with the establishment of a political community and emphasized procedures, laws, and regulations that were essential to maintain the political community. What contributes to the overshadowing of the Meccan teachings is a verse in Quran that allows

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[172] Baraka, Ḥijāb, 55-56; Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society,* 94.

[173] Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam,* 65-66.

abrogation of previous text with new text. So in theory, some *ulema* may argue that the verses that emphasized the ethical dimension were overwritten with new Medinan verses when there is perceived conflict in meanings and implications of the verses.

A Panoramic View of the History of Women's Dress in Egypt

The unveiling of Egyptian women during at the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century is often portrayed in the literature as an abrupt event that followed the dramatic act of early Egyptian feminist called Huda Sha'arawy (1879-1947. Sha'arawy publicly drew back her face veil in front of a big crowd of Egyptian men and women who came to greet the Egyptian delegation leading the nationalist movement in 1923, some of which just returned from exile. It is said that all Egyptian women unveiled following that act. The unveiling of the Egyptian women, however, was quite gradual. It took place almost over 100 years or more. Women were gradually downveiling and/or defying the veil requirement over time. One quote from a lecture given by an Egyptian feminist in 1909 illustrates this gradualism. Lamenting the virtual abandonment of the veil, Malak Hifni Nassef, known by the pseudonym, Bahithat al-Badiya,[174] noted:

Nowadays the lower half of our attire is a skirt that does not conform to our standards of modesty (hijab) while the upper half like age, the more it advances the more it is shortened. Our former garment was one piece. When the woman wrapped herself in it her figure was totally hidden. The wrap shrunk little by little but it was still wide enough to conceal the whole body. Then we artfully began to shrink the waist and lower the neck and finally two sleeves were added and the garment clung to the back and was worn only with a corset. We tied back our headgear so that more than half the head, including the

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[174] Malak Hifny Nassif (1886-1918) is an Egyptian Muslim and writer who used a pseudonym as was common for many women writers at that time. The daughter of a renowned professor of Arabic literature, she was among the few women who received formal education in a one of two public schools for women. She became a teacher but had to give up her teaching career at marriage. Yet, she continued to advocate women's advancement through education throughout her short life. Nassif strove to present an oriental version of feminism that honors and capitalize Islamic culture. She tried to highlight the discords between the oppressive traditions towards women and Islam while de-emphasizing Western values and traditions. Her strain of feminism did not gain much support as more secular versions dominated the scene.

ears, were visible and the flowers and ribbons ornamenting the hair could be seen. Finally, the face veil became more transparent than an infant's heart. The purpose of the izar is to cover the body as well as our dress and jewelry underneath… Does our present izar, which has virtually come 'a dress' showing the bosom, waist and derriere, conform with this percept. Moreover, some women have started wearing it in colors… In my opinion we should call it a dress with a clown's cap which in fact it is. I think going out without it is more modest because at least eyes are not attracted to it.[175]

While literature on the history of women's dress in Egypt is scarce, few scholars trace dress styles and patterns over time through the analysis of the documentation produced by travelers, historians and legal scholars as well as an analysis of art works from various periods. The goal of this section is to summarize the changes that took place in women's dress through an examination of secondary data, mostly existing studies on dress and fashion.

It should be noted that the task of identifying fashion and dress style trends over time in Egypt is complicated, particularly for women. Women always remained in the shadows in history books and documentaries. Another problem with interpreting the scare and sparse documents that exist is that the distinction between the dress styles across groups, communities, and classes is rarely made. Often scholars interpreting the data over-generalize dress styles. Even a cursory review of the some of the available literature suggests a wide disparity in the dress codes and styles among the Egyptian women from various classes and even across geographic regions. This explains why the literature is full of seeming contradictions regarding veiling and seclusion in different periods.

The Caliphate Period: 641-1258

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[175] Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke, *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing* (London, Virago, 1990), 232.

Whether Egyptian women were veiled or not before the Arab conquest in 641 is not clear. Literature suggests that women under the Byzantine Empire were veiled and secluded as a sign of wealth and class.[176] Many historical documents suggest that the Byzantine society was very strict about maintaining the veil and secluding women. Veiling and seclusion were considered signs of honor. One eleventh century Byzantine author proudly narrated that his mother never raised the veil from her face in the presence of men except at her daughter's funeral.[177] However, there is strong evidence suggesting that the Egyptians and Jews under the rule of the Byzantine Empire did not veil. Coptic art is abundant with images of unveiled female saints and martyrs. There is also a lot of evidence about the social role that Egyptian women played in society and how her status was quite advanced compared to other populations under the Byzantine rule.[178] Although the status of women in Egypt deteriorated through greater exposure to the Byzantine habits and culture, evidence suggests that the veil was not observed in Egypt until the Arabs conquered of Egypt.[179]

The veil requirement was never generalized during the days of the Prophet of Islam. Until the reign of the third Caliph in Islam, 'Umar Ibn el-Khattab, the veil was restricted to the Prophet's wives and a few other honorary women. The veil was promoted by el-Khattab as a way to distinguish between people with various ethnic and religious backgrounds. It was part of what came to be known as the 'Umar Pact.[180] These

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[176] Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* ; Ahmed *Women and Gender and Islam*.

[177] Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam,* 27.

[178] Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam,* 26-31.

[179] Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam,* 26-33.

[180] The Pact of 'Umar is an agreement established between the Muslim Arab Conquerors and the *dhimmis* or the Christians and Jews of the conquered lands. It stated inter alia, "We shall not attempt to resemble the Muslims in any way with regard to their dress…We shall not engrave our signets in Arabic… We shall always adorn ourselves in our traditional fashion." As cited in Yedida Kalfon Stillman, *Arab*

set of religious markers were expanded during the 'Abbasid period (750-1258 AD), a period that also coincided with the evolution of most of Islamic legal texts that are used today to inform moral religious codes and behavior.

The mass conversion to Islam that took place during that period created a period of cultural flux that necessitated the institution of physical markers to distinguish the believer from the nonbeliever.[181] This differentiation was necessary for maintaining order and preserving and/or constituting an "imagined" Islamic community (*umma)*. By prohibiting non-Muslim women from being veiled, differentiation between classes of citizen was made possible. There were few brief periods in the tenth and eleventh century that the laws of differentiation (called *ghiyar)* were not enforced. For examples, the differentiation laws were not strictly observed during the Fatimid Dynasty (909-1171 AD), as it was considered a class marker rather than a religious marker.[182] In spite of all these laws of differentiation, veiling and seclusion in Egypt were never observed by the lower and lower-middle classes, which constituted the vast majority of the Egyptian population. It therefore was a symbol of wealth that was restricted to upper classes.[183]

The Turkish Dynasties (1258-1805)

Dress: A Short History: From the Dawn of Islam to Modern (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2000), 102. The Pact was put in place to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims through dress. See Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*, 92-96; Stillman, *Arab Dress: A Short History: From the Dawn of Islam to Modern,* 104-112.

[181] Stillman, *Arab Dress*, 104-112.

[182] Stillman, *Arab Dress*, 56.

[183] Chatty, "The Burqa Face Cover: An Aspect of Dress in Southeastern Arabia," in *Languages of Dress in the Middle East*, ed. Curzon Surrey, Nancy Lindisfarne, and Bruce Ingham (Surray: Curzon Press, 1997); Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam,* 106-120; Huda Lutfi, "Manners and Customs of fourteenth-Century Cairene Women: Female Anarchy versus Male Shar'I Order in Muslim Perspective Tretises," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender,* ed. Nikki Kiddie and Beth Baron, 101 (Ninghamton: Vail-Ballou Press, 1991); Nikki R. Keddie, "The New Religious Politics: Where, When, and Why do "Fundamentalisms" Appear?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 4 (1998): 696-723.

Literature on women's dress during the Mamluk period show significant contradictions. Some travelers described women at the time as being completely veiled, looking almost like black tents. Some paintings from that period, however, portray women with their hair and faces uncovered. Others depict women with transparent face veils showing parts of the body and revealing long braided hair.[184] The problem with interpreting these documents is that the background is never clear. Women's indoor and outdoor dress was quite different at that time. Also, the paintings do not reveal whether the portrayed woman was a slave or free women. Slave women were forbidden from wearing the veil as they were not to be confused with free women.[185]

Generally speaking, upper- and upper-middle-class women were wrapped in a large sheet-like cloth called *izar* and their faces were veiled with a face cover, the thickness of which varied over time.[186] Women's dress consisted of a number of layers including a knee-length underdrawer, a long undefined chemise, a loose gown and a face cover, called *burqu.* The *burqu* that could be as long as the gown or as short as chest-length depending on the women's wealth and social status. The wealthier the women was, the greater the number of layers she put on.[187]

Lower classes in the Mamluk period, which constituted the vast majority of the Egyptian population, included peasants, traders, working class, and laborers. Because of their limited means, the outdoor and indoor dress of women belonging to this class was similar, consisting of a single layer of gown and a head scarf that they also used to cover

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[184] Amal Miṣri, *Azyaʼ al-mar'ah fī al-'Aṣr al-'Uthmaṇi* [Women's Fashion During the Ottoman Era] (Madinat Nasr: Dār al-Afāq, 1999).

[185] Jennifer Scarce, *Women's Costume of the Near and Middle East* (Sydney: Unwin Hyman), 120-124.

[186] Stillman, *Arab Dress*, 82

[187] Stillman, *Arab Dress*, 75-82; Al-Masry 1999, 70-73.

their faces. The middle class was a very narrow sliver of petty bourgeoisie and lower-level state employees. This upwardly mobile class always aspired to copy the dress styles of the upper classes. When they could afford it, they opted to veil and mimic the number layering dress styles of the upper classes.[188]

Several religious treatises written during the Mamluk period reveal the lack uniformity in the dress and indicate that women constantly challenged social customs through their dress and outdoor habits. Some Muslim scholars during that period deplored the immodest dress and behavior of many women. For example, a thirteenth century author, Muhammed Ibn al-Hajj, lamented: "Look how these norms have been neglected in our days… The [woman] goes out in the streets as if she were a shining bride, walking in the middle of the road and jostling men. They have a manner of walking that causes the pious men to withdraw closer to the walls, in order to make way for them."[189] This suggests that women enjoyed a considerable level of freedom during that time. They played active roles in the trade and crafts industries. Some received formal education, earned educational certificates, and became teachers of fiqh.[190] Afaf Marsot (1996) and Nikki Keddie (1991) suggested that this freedom in movement and dress was the result of the relative economic stability and the heavy involvement of women in trade, which was an important constituent of GDP at the time.[191]

The defeat of the Mamluks in 1517 paved the way for the establishment of the Ottoman Empire. Although part of the Ottoman Sultanate, Egypt continued to be

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[188] Miṣrī, *Azyaʾ al-mar'ah fī al-'Aṣr al-'Uthmānī*, 71-73; Lutfi, "Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women," 100-104.

[189] Lutfi, "Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women," 103.

[190] Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam*, 113-8.

[191] Miṣrī, *Azyaʾ al-mar'ah fī al-'Aṣr al-'Uthmānī*, 27-33.

controlled by the Mamluks, and the period was characterized by greater social and political instability as the Mamluks constantly attempted to increase their power and independence from the Ottoman Empire. These events were accompanied by major shifts in dress and attitudes towards women. The years of war and its aftermath were accompanied with an increase in crime rate. A rising number of women were raped and sexually harassed by the Ottoman soldiers who were prohibited from marrying, a common strategy used by the Ottoman rulers to ensure that the soldiers' prime loyalties were to the state not to their families. These conditions brought about greater pressures on women to abide by a stricter dress code and to stay at home. Several decrees were issued in 1517 that prohibited women from going out altogether. These law were slightly relaxed in 1521 when the ruler permitted woman to go out if they were accompanied by their husbands, brothers, or fathers.[192]

Some scholars noted a positive correlation between the status of women and economic conditions, particularly the unemployment rate: at times when unemployment is high, competition between men and women over job opportunities increases, and attempts are made to limit the role of women to housework and childbearing.[193] The second half of the fifteenth century witnessed a severe recessionary period compounded with rising corruption and political instability. The main cause of the recession was the loss of an important source of revenue from trade and transportation because of the

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[192] Miṣri, *Azyaʼ al-marʼah fī al-ʻAṣr al-ʻUthmanī*, 51.

[193] Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, "Entrepreneurial Women in Egypt," in *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*. ed. Mai Yamani, 33-49 (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

discovery of the path of Vasco da Gama's course, which rerouted imports and exports between Europe and India away from Egypt to an all-sea round Africa route.[194]

In her study on Arab dress, Yedida Stillman (2000) noted that the most dramatic change in dress and fashion started in the eighteenth century, when contact with Europe increased dramatically through trade and other forms of economic and cultural exchange. This change in dress was a result of the industrial revolution in Europe, which also implied the industrialization of fashion and the emergence of a mass fashion system.[195] Prior to the eighteenth century, it was difficult to identify major shifts in dress and fashion in Egypt and the Arab world as the elements of the dress remained unchanged and even if their shapes changed overtime, their names and basic descriptions remained the same. The exposure to European dress up until the end of the seventeenth century was very limited; even travelers to the Ottoman Empire had to dress in Ottoman styles. However, as trade between the Ottoman Empire and Europe expanded, exposure to Western styles increased and started affecting domestic tastes.[196] Ironically, just as veiling in the Islamic world began with the contact with the Hellenistic West, unveiling too started with increased exposure to Western culture.

The increase in trade with industrialized Europe adversely affected local crafts in Egypt, prime of which was the textile industry. The European products outperformed the local industry in terms of cost and quality, and Egyptians, especially upper classes, readily adopted European fashion products. The decline in domestic industries caused a

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[194] Vasco da Gama is one of the most renowned Portuguese explorers. He discovered an all sea path to India round the African Continent between 1497 and 1498. The story of his first epic voyage forms the single greatest part of this account, and makes him the greatest Portuguese of all time.

[195] Jirousek, "The Transition to Mass Fashion System Dress in the Later Ottoman Empire."

[196] Jirousek, "The Transition to Mass Fashion System Dress in the Later Ottoman Empire," 206-208.

decrease in the standard of living, high unemployment, widening income gaps and other structural problems. These problems were magnified for women, since the textile industry was one of few that were open for women.[197] The continuous warfare among the Mamluk rulers and the loss of many Egyptian lives to plagues in the eighteenth century all augmented the economic and structural problems facing Egypt at that time.[198]

The deterioration of the economic, political, and social conditions during the Ottoman period made its fall inevitable. In 1798, the French military forces, led by Napoleon Bonaparte, launched a campaign against Egypt and occupied the country for three years. This brief period arguably had a greater cultural impact than a political one. Egyptians were introduced directly to the French culture and European fashion. The association of the veil and wealth started to break as Egyptian women saw the French elite women wearing liberal dress styles. While some Egyptian men and women adopted European fashion, others rejected it, and the debate on women's rights and the veil moved to the center of public discourse.[199]

In summary, veiling practices varied significantly in Egypt. During the early Mamluk era, the status of women improved. Women were more integrated in the economy and there was a degree of tolerance to her dress style choices. This was mainly due to the significant role she played in the large trade economy. Later on, as economic conditions worsened, and the political climate became unstable, more restrictions were placed on women's freedom, and the veil was observed more strictly by upper-middle- and upper-class women.

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[197] Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam*, 131.
[198] Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam*, 130-132.
[199] Miṣrī, *Azyaʾ al-marʾah fī al-ʿAṣr al-ʿUthmānī*, 40-43; Chatty, "The Burqa Face Cover," 130.

During the Ottoman era, the Egyptian society faced even more acute contradictions. The worsening economic conditions and the antimarriage restrictions on members of the military corpse resulted in increased harassment and greater restrictions on women's liberties. At the same time, greater exposure to the European and fashion culture during the second half of the eighteenth century resulted in polarizing views regarding women's rights and appropriate dress. All these economic and social conditions caused a shift in the meanings, forms, and applications of the veil. The veil was associated with honor and the image of women as sexual objects dominated the discourse on women. Women were blamed for many social malfunctions and the culprits of men against women blamed on the victims who had an alluring (or *fitna*) power over men.[200]

The House of Muhammed Ali (1805-1882)

Muhammed Ali Pasha was able to usurp power from the Anglo-Ottoman power that defeated the French armies in 1801. The period preceding Ali Pasha's rule was characterized by political vacuum, which he viewed as an opportunity. Within a few years, he crushed all Mamluks and restored order and stability in the country. Shortly after, 'Ali set on a plan to industrialize and modernize Egypt through importing the "know-how" from Europe and through sending several missions of Egyptians to Europe for education. He also launched a series of land reforms aiming at centralizing land ownership, a main cause of feuds among ruling elites during that time. The irrigation schemes that 'Ali introduced significantly increased the area of cultivable land and

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[200] Chatty, "The Burqa Face Cover," 130-1; Nawāl Sa'dawi, 1986. *Dirāsāī 'an al-mar'ah wa-al-rajul fī al-mujtama' al-'Arabī* [Studies on Women and Men in the Arab Society] (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabīyah lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 1986), 831-33; Stillman, *Arab Dress*, 150-152.

increased the number of crops grown in Egypt. Extra long staple cotton was established as a cash crop, which he monopolized and commercialized besides other crops. Europe, particularly Britain, became a major importer of the Egyptian cotton.[201]

As these reforms were introduced, the standard of living of the Egyptians improved and the size of the middle class expanded, pushing down that of the lower class. However, these reforms caused a regression in the status of women who significantly lost their economic power and freedom. Afaf Marsot argued that centralization policies were often accompanied with deterioration in the status of women, even w the economic conditions in general improved.[202] Seclusion and veiling were generalized in urban Egypt. As the lower-middle class decreased in size, the veil became more predominant. The trend was still challenged by contradictory forces triggered by globalization. At that time, the infiltration of European ethos and dress styles continued to challenge traditional norms, leading to the rise of the debate on the meaning of honor, morality, and tradition. As Leila Ahmed noted, "By mid-nineteenth century, Egypt was swinging between a full admiration of European ethos and adoption of modern ways."[203] Many of the elements of the current discourse on women and the veil can be traced back to that period.

One important factor associated with changes in dress styles in Egypt were transformations in the concubine system. A key component of the aristocratic households was slaves purchased at a young age from various parts in the Balkan region and brought up in the households of the ruling elites. The aristocratic class in the Mamluk and Ottoman Empires were almost exclusively Balkan and Turkish in ethnicity. These slaves

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[201] Marsot, "Entrepreneurial Women in Egypt," 43-45.
[202] Marsot, "Entrepreneurial Women in Egypt," 43-45.
[203] Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam,* 36.

filled high ranking positions that Egyptians were banned from filling by law.[204] Egyptian upper classes sought to emulate the Turkish elites' lifestyle through purchasing female slaves of Turkish origins and establishing a *harem*, a quarter in the house that was exclusively dedicated to women and children and from which men were excluded.

Muhammed 'Ali brought about significant changes in the composition of the ruling class. In an attempt to sever links of dependency between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, 'Ali drew elements of the endogenous population into the army and state bureaucracy. As more ambitious Egyptians joined the state apparatus, and as more were able to increase their power through landholdings and education, they replaced the Turks in the aristocracy, and the structure of the ruling elite began to transform, causing significant changes in dominant value systems. Egyptians, however, were still prevented from filling senior positions in the army and bureaucracy, which later caused frictions between the ruling class and the bureaucracy.

Another factor that contributed to the shifts in the elite structure is the decline in slave trade. Several international treaties were established in the second half of the eighteenth century restricting slave trade. Most of these treaties were not enforced and had little impact on the slavery market. The greater shift came about through a decline in the supply for slaves. Slaves came from Balkan and Circassian populations under the Ottoman Empire, who led nomadic lifestyles, and sent their children as slave to secure better opportunities for them. These populations started settling down during the

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[204] These slaves were referred to as Turks, but were ethnically diverse. They came from various sources, including Albania, Circassia, Bosnia, and other areas of the Balkan region. But they were all referred to as Turks, especially that all of them learnt to speak Turkish as they were brought up in Turkish households.

nineteenth century and as they did, they were less inclined to send young send their children to the Ottoman elite structure.[205]

The demise of the slavery system and the incorporation of endogenous populations into the Egyptian bureaucracy were key factors in the structural transformation of the elite structure. Egyptians in the bureaucracy sought to rise higher in the ranks as their Turkish counterparts, but were blocked in an attempt to maintain superiority. This resulted in tensions and conflicts between the Egyptians and the Turks at the end of the nineteenth century. The laws that prevented Egyptians from filling senior positions, which were never revoked, were invoked. One conflict escalated quickly and had serious implications. Egyptian army officers, under the leadership of Colonel Ahmed 'Urabi, launched a campaign, the theme of which was "Egypt for the Egyptians." 'Urabi appealed to the British Empire under the banner of slave abolition to take their sides. The conflict escalated into a major revolt in1882, called the 'Urabi Revolt. In an attempt to curb the movement and restore order, Khedive Tawfiq requested the intervention of the British forces. The British took the Ottomans side and sent a large army to restore order. Their goal, however, was to expand their Empire and they eventually occupied during Egypt in summer of 1882. The British occupation gave ushered in the age of Egyptian nationalism which was entangled with the question of belonging and the role of women.[206]

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[205] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam,* 37, 94-102; Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 18-22.
[206] Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 18-26

British Occupation: 1882-1925

By the second half of the nineteenth century, Egyptian fashion and views on the veil were becoming polarized. Foreign intervention in domestic affairs were on the rise and central power was challenged by a weak government plagued by internal strife and sharp power competition between three different political entities namely Egyptians, Turks, and British. Effectively, Egypt was ruled by the British Empire, but had a nominal Muslim but foreign (Turkish) government in place and aspiring Egyptian upper-class that was seeking to share power. The modern educational system that Ali Pasha introduced to Egypt produced a body of educated middle class Egyptians who filled important, but not senior, positions in the bureaucracy and army and started challenging the Ottoman regime to achieve greater measures of power sharing.

The multiplicity of governments also resulted in a multiplicity of value systems, with some members of the upper-class elite looking to Istanbul, the capital of the Islamic Caliphate, for moral values and reform ideas while others looking to Europe for symbols of development and reform. As will be shown below, some nineteenth century reformers like Tal'aat Harb, for example, insisted that the root of many of the social ills in Egypt is that Egyptians forsook the authentic traditions that they inherited and strayed behind foreign and corrupt mores.[207] Others like Muhammed 'Abdou sought ways to reconcile the moral values of Islam with European inspired reform schemes.

But even Turkey, the symbol of tradition in the Islamic world, was becoming more integrated in the European mores. Turkish women preceded Egyptians on the path to unveiling. The trend started first among the religious minorities in the Ottoman Empire

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[207] Muḥammad Ṭal'at Ḥarb, *Tarbīyat al-mar'ah wa-al-ḥijāb [Woman's Education and the Veil]* (Cairo: Unknown Publisher, 1899).

and slowly tricked down to Egypt in rather subtle forms.[208] Bahithat al-Badiyya's noted, Egyptian women adopted tighter, more revealing dress styles with wider necklines and a chiffon white veil that travelers like Elizabeth Cooper[209] suggested made women look sexier.

The adoption of European ways was restricted to upper-class women. Middle-class women, who by then constituted a considerable segment of urban society, resisted the transformation, and critiqued the upper classes for abandoning their authentic values and traditional ways. A British European traveler and scholar, Elizabeth Cooper, noted that middle class women in Egypt were "the chief preservers of the ancient customs of Egypt."[210] The veil, therefore, symbolized tradition and a means to distinguish the endogenous from the foreign. Both male and female members of the middle class used various traditional symbols, including the veil, as means to affirm the authenticity of the Egyptian identity and to resist Western imperialism. The power-aspiring middle class also used these symbols to challenge and undermine the legitimacy of the westernized Turkish ruling. The use of the veil as a tool of power negotiation is thus not new in Egyptian politics, although the meanings, forms, and manifestations of those power struggles varied widely over time.

The British occupation and the nationalist movements produced a great diversity in the forms of dress and attitudes towards the veil. While upper-class women became more relaxed with their veils, ameliorating their Turkish counterparts and the European women, middle-class Egyptians became more rigid in their interpretation and application of the veil requirement. The upper classes, which frequently traveled to Europe for

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[208] Stillman, *Arab Dress,* 152.
[209] Elizabeth Cooper, *The Women of Egypt* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1980).
[210] Cooper, *The Women of Egypt,* 133.

vacation and business did not veil during their travels. In her memoir, Huda Sha'arawy described how, with no objection from her husband, she was accustomed to removing the veil and dressing in European clothes once arrived in Europe.[211] The unveiling trend was launched by religious minorities, starting with the Armenians, followed by the Jews. The Copts of Egypt were the last group to unveil and were still veiled by the beginning of the twentieth century.[212] Stillman noted that non-Coptic Christian and Jewish Egyptians abandoned the face veil almost a generation before the Muslims. These populations never observed the segregation and seclusion practices as strictly as other Muslim groups.[213]

Unveiling followed a gradual path until Sha'rawy's dramatic act of lifting the face veil in public. Baron emphasized, Sha'rawy's action ushered the end of an era rather than the beginning of a new one. Before that time, younger women either postponed veiling or never veiled. On the eve of the First World War, some travelers to Cairo noted that Egyptian women seemed more liberal than their counterparts in Lebanon and other "progressive" Arab states.[214]

There are some accounts of early feminists who appeared with their faces unveiled in the wake of the First World War. However, unveiling was still considered an act of defiance. These women were verbally harassed in the streets and stores, and women continued to challenge these forces by subverting the veil. In 1918, one woman correspondent to the feminist magazine, *al-Jins al-Latif* [The Delicate Gender], recounted how she was approached by a stranger who scolded her saying, "Muslim and unveiled!!

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[211] Huda Sha'rawi and Margot Badran. 1986. *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924* (London: Virago, 1986), 13.

[212] Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt,* 46-47.

[213] Stillman, *Arab Dress*, 162.

[214] Beth Baron, "Unveiling in Earl Twentieth Century Egypt: Practical and Symbolic Considerations," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 3 (1989): 380-82.

Aren't you ashamed?"[215] In 1919, another correspondent expressed embarrassment that Egyptians were still debating the issue of the veil in the twentieth century and noted that only 16 percent of Egyptian women wore the veil by that time, and that the Egyptian woman "has naturally rejected [the veil]."[216]

By 1925, a significant convergence between outdoor and indoor dress was noticed, with women appearing in European dress styles. The all-time famous singer, Umm Kalthoum, who came from a very traditional family and performed while veiled in the beginning of her career, took off the head scarf in 1932 and encouraged many other women to follow suit.[217] Pictures from the 1930s and 1940s showed women with uncovered hair wearing short sleeves or sleeveless dresses.[218] This was not only true for upper-class women, but also middle-class women. Unveiling was publicly sanctioned when the Azhar, the premier institution of Islamic scholarship and edicts, announced that it is not opposed to unveiling in 1937. The Azhar also indicated that one of four main schools in Islamic *Shari'a* law did not consider the veil a religious requirement.[219] This move, however, came almost ten years after women have actually given up the veil. It was just a formality. By the 1950s, the veil almost disappeared in Egypt, and unveiling was sanctioned and even promoted by the Arab socialist regime.

The Veil Debate at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

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[215] Baron, "Unveiling in Earl Twentieth Century Egypt," 381.

[216] Baron, "Unveiling in Earl Twentieth Century Egypt," 381-82.

[217] Stillman, *Arab Dress,*156.

[218] I have a personal collection of pictures from my greater family portraying this trend and had the opportunity to discuss this trend with close family members who lived during that period. In addition, there are many television drama serials that depict this period. One political soup opera was *Layali el-Hilmiyya (*Hilmiyya Nights), featured over many years in the 1980s and 1990s. This series depicts stories of Egyptian families from different classes and how they participated in nationalist movements and social action. The series

[219] Stillman, *Arab Dress,* 156.

To understand the conditions associated with the lifting of the veil in the early twentieth century, I will analyze the discourses on women's rights as well as the veil debate in the writings of various twentieth century thinkers and scholars. I begin with covering the veil debate in the writings of three writers and scholars: Muhammed Tal'at Harb, an Egyptian nationalist, Malak Hifni Nassif, a female activist and Qassim Amin, another nationalist and writer.

The debate on the veil evolved gradually, and the emphasis changed over a narrow period of time. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the emphasis of the debate was not on whether women were equal to men or not, but rather what they needed, in terms of education and outdoor exposure, to perform their duties as mothers and housewives effectively. Another focus of the debate was whether Egyptians should emulate the West in their behavior and dress, as they proved superior in their command of economic resources and abilities to advance their states, or to revive the values and traditions that Egyptians inherited from the glorious Islamic civilization. The positions on these two debate issues varied widely, and the diversions and positions reflected steep divides in nationalist visions.

In his book *Tarbiyyat al-Mar'ah wal Hijab* [Women's Education and the Veil], Tal'at Harb,[220] discussed the proper role of women in society. He insisted that women were less than men in physical and mental abilities, as manifested by the long years of male dominance in the family structure, as evidenced by the long years that men subordinated women.[221] He also insisted that the veil was a necessary requirement that protected the family from the natural shortcomings of the various members of society.

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[220] Harb, *Tarbiyyat al-Mar'ah wal Hijab.* 15.
[221] Harb, *Tarbiyyat al-Mar'ah wal Hijab,* 15.

While Harb underscored the role of Islam in defining gender roles and upholding the veil requirement, and even cited and interpreted Quranic verses that required the veil, his message did not exclude members of other religious groups. According to Harb, Christians and Jews were also required to veil according to their sacred texts. He quoted verses from the Torah and Bible that required women to be modest and to veil and to demonstrate that men had dominion over women.

Women, according to Harb, were created for men's pleasure and to serve them. Any divergence from this natural order would threaten the family structure and society overall, which was what the experience of the West demonstrated. Women who pursued equality with men gave up their natural purpose and ended up never marrying and having children. The few women who tried to become scientists or professionals either failed altogether or presented a mediocre product that was not worth the sacrifices they made. That was not to say that women did not need education, but their education, according to Harb, needed to focused on making women more effective wives and mothers. Women needed to be educated in basic literacy, history, geography, and arithmetic so they could more effectively communicate with their husbands and children. Any attempt to emulate the West in their female education was misleading and would bring about severe social calamities.[222]

Harb also warned Egyptians that it was in the best interest of the imperial West for Egyptians to adopt their customs with regards to women. Europeans, he argued, knew well that the most effective way for the West to control the Muslim world was by changing its social structure through lifting the guard off women. Once women were liberated, the Islamic World would all be captured and destroyed by Europe. The push for

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[222] Harb, *Tarbiyyat al-Mar'ah wal Hijab,* 55-57.

the liberation of women was, therefore, driven by imperial forces that Egyptians needed to protect themselves against.[223]

The author explained that the veil and seclusion of women performed a very important function, which was to protect the family from the natural instincts of jealousy and suspicion. If women were allowed to go out and integrate in society, the family would be destroyed as it would be impossible to prove fraternity. This was especially true since women, even with the best upbringing and moral education, were inclined to fall to sin. Seclusion, therefore, protected honor and the family structure.[224]

Harb's position represented a popular middle-class position regarding the veil and the role of women. His book was a response to another book written by a member of an upper-class Egyptian who was a product of European educational systems, called Qassim Amin. Amin's 1898 book *The Liberation of Women* advocated unveiling (of the face only) and the end of seclusion. He argued that the Islamic *Shar'ia* law preceded all legal codes in the declaration of gender equality and insisted that women were capable of performing all functions performed by men and were equal to men in both physical and mental capabilities.[225] The only reason that men appeared to be superior to women was that the capabilities of women were never exercised or nourished through proper education and training. *Shari'a* Law granted women perfect equality in rights and responsibilities, argued Amin.[226]

Harb appropriated a high level of importance to seclusion and veiling as they were essential for maintaining family unity and honor. Amin, on the other hand, argued

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[223] Harb, *Tarbiyyat al-Mar'ah wal Hijab,* 5.
[224] Harb, *Tarbiyyat al-Mar'ah wal Hijab,* 62-65.
[225] Muḥammad 'Imarah, ed., *A'māl al-kāmilah: Qāsim Amīn* [The Complete Works: Qasim Amin] (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1989, 322.
[226] 'Imarah, *A'māl al-kāmilah: Qāsim Amīn,* 324

that the insistence on the veil denied the power of men to control their instincts. Amin argued that restricting the veil requirement to men implicitly presumed that woman were stronger than men in controlling their sexual desires.[227] He also argued that seclusion did not guarantee female purity and that full control over anyone was impossible. The only effective guarantee of honor and purity was the woman's upbringing and morality.[228] Seclusion, on the other hand, resulted in counter results as it made both men and women more vulnerable in situations when encounters between the opposite sexes took place.

Whereas Harb called for a return to the core traditions and for expelling the foreign buds that were planted in the Egyptian society by imperialism, Amin lavishly praised the West in both their moral and economic schemes and called for adopting a Western model of reform. The reason behind the success of the West, he claimed, was that the Western woman was fully integrated in social functions. This meant that the human capital assets were fully utilized. While women could be very effective in the workplace, the purpose of their education did not have to turn her into an employee. Rather, this education would enable her to be a more informed and effective parent and housewife and would also give her the tools to survive financially if she lost her husband or family's support.[229]

In response to critiques similar to Harb's that education might cause a deformation in social morals, Amin insisted that what caused morality to fail was ignorance rather than gender integration. A person who became a slave of ignorance often had to resort to dishonesty and cunningness.[230] Ironically, women that were least

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[227] 'Imarah, *A'māl al-kāmilah: Qāsim Amīn*, 355-356.
[228] 'Imarah, *A'māl al-kāmilah: Qāsim Amīn*, 356
[229] 'Imarah, *A'māl al-kāmilah: Qāsim Amīn*, 329-334.
[230] 'Imarah, *A'māl al-kāmilah: Qāsim Amīn*, 345-347.

ignorant, according to Amin, were female peasants. These women were integrated in society and were able to contribute to their family and social well-being at maximum capacity. Upper-class women, on the other hand, surpassed all women in their level of awareness as they were idle and concerned themselves with gossip and external looks.[231] Education, the liberation of women, and morality, he insisted, were all positively correlated. The American woman experienced the greatest level of social integration, she was also the most faithful woman to her husband. He insisted that these women never looked at men in any sexual or abusive way, contrary to the Eastern women who looked and scrutinized men in the streets.[232]

Amin advocated a fundamental transformation in the social and cultural fabric of society. Women, who constituted 50 percent of social assts, should be utilized fully to become either more effective housewives and mothers or more productive members of the labor force. The key engine of this social transformation was the reform of women's conditions through the abolition of seclusion and excessive forms of veiling. He denied that what he was proposing was a blind emulation of the West but a realignment of social customs with the true essence of Islam. However, his excessive praising of the West, including Western morals and the Western family structure, was a clear indication of his full rejection of anything traditional. He also argued that Egyptians had already set on a path of progress but the West is more advanced. He projected that the Oriental woman

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[231] 'Imarah, *A'māl al-kāmilah: Qāsim Amīn*, 329-334.

[232] It is interesting how Amin portrayed this image of woman. Most literature talks about men harassing women verbally and by the way they looked at them. It is not known how popular this account of women was among upper class women, but I have not come across any similar account in the past. Amīn, *A'māl al-kāmilah: Qāsim Amīn*, 346-347.

would eventually cast off the veil, just as the woman in Europe did in the fourteenth century. [233]

The positions of Amin and Harb on the veil represented two polar views on the veil; either the veil was essential because women were weak, or it was not necessary because the male was not weak. It was either desired because it bridged the gap with a glorious past that was contaminated by Western imperialism, or it was a sign of backwardness and a curtain preventing the lights of science and knowledge emanating from the West. The positions of the women, however, were less polarized. In fact, women found the question of the veil peripheral and even demeaning to the feminist agenda. Margot Badran noted, "Unveiling was never part of the Egyptian feminist movement's formal agenda." In fact, early feminists saw the debate part of a "male discourse" that aimed at perpetuating patterns of gender dominance in new forms.[234] In some way, early Egyptian feminists used the veil to negotiate power positions, rights, and responsibilities rather than as an obstacle. The writings of Bahithat al-Badiyah were a clear exemplification of that position regarding the veil.

Bahithat al-badiya regarded the veil debate as part of a masculine discourse aiming at the reproduction of female inferiority and a way to divorce the question of

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[233] The writings of Qasim Amin inspired many female scholars and journalists to follow the same path. Feminist journals al *Fatat* (the Young Woman), established in 1908, contained many articles by "progressive" writers and commentators about the necessity of casting off the veil as a prerequisite for reform. In 1908 and 1915, another two women's magazines emerged, *al-Jins al-Latif* [the Tender Sex] and *al-Sufur* [Unveiling] which also promoted unveiling. Both magazines advocated women's rights and female emancipation. In his first editorial article, the Chief Editor of *al-Sufur*, Abd al-Hamid Hamdi argued that al-Sufur (unveiling) had a much broader meaning than just the physical cover, it referred to the unveiling of the minds, thought, and capabilities. "We are a veiled nation" he contended in his opening editorial article, and this was what he sought to address. Other than few women talking about the difficulties they faced with the veil, with disrespectful men who harass women and obscenity, the contributors to these magazines were mostly men, and the discourse was similar to that of Orientalism, which produced and reproduced Eastern inferiority. See Abd al-Hamid Hamdi, "We are a veiled nation," al-Sufur (1:1), 1915, 1. Amīn, *A'māl al-kāmilah: Qāsim Amīn*, 356-366.

[234] Margot Badran*, Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 149-150.

women from the question of nationalism through the westernization of the issues. In one of her poems, she remarked, "You ask the women to remove the veil, but where amongst you is the virtuous? The woman is afraid, not of uncovering her face, but of the corruption of men's morality."[235] "We are not afraid of air and sunlight, but we fear his [man's] eyes and tongue."[236] Dismayed with the fact that it was man who always decided for the woman everything, even whether to veil or not, Nasif said, "if [man] promises to lower the gaze as instructed by his religion, and to hold his tongue as his moral standards require" women would consider lifting the veil. She thus advised men to "mind their own businesses"[237] and stop instructing women on what they needed to do, as only woman understood the pains of unveiling.[238]

The veil that became popular in the beginning of the twentieth century, argued Nassif, was a mediocre cover that revealed more than concealed any of the beauties of the women. She lamented that women went out in tight clothes, albeit all covered, and that they filled their faces with makeup and wore too much jewelry. This, she insisted, was a disgrace to the veil and to women. She advocated that women cover their hair and dress in loose nondefining clothes. The face cover, she argued, was not necessary and not even Islamic and had negative effects on woman's health as it prevented proper breathing and sunlight.[239] For Nasif, the veil was a protector or a shield from sexual harassment and male jealousy, both of which resulted in the confiscation of women's freedom. Nasif

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[235] Malak Ḥifni Nāṣif, *Muslimah al-'aṣrīyah 'inda Bāḥithat al-Bādiyah*, *Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif* [The Modern Muslim to Bahithat al-Badiyah: Malak Hifni Nanif] (Cairo: Dar al-Ansar, 1976), 21-22.

[236] Malak Ḥifnii Naṣif, al-*Nisā'īyāt: majmū'at maqālāt nushirat fī al-jarīdah fī mawḍū ' al-mar'ah al-Miṣrīyah* [Gender Studies: A Collection of Articles Published on the Egyptian Woman, 2nd Edition] (Cairo: Multaqa al-Mar'ah wa-al Dhakirah, Agouza: Max Group,1998), 202.

[237] Nasif, al-*Nisā'īyāt*, 202.

[238] Nasif, *Muslimah, Al-'aṣrīyah 'inda Bāḥithat al-Bādiyah* , 21-22.

[239] Malak Nasif, al-*Nisā'īyāt: majmū'at maqālāt nushirat fī al-jarīdah fī mawḍū ' al-mar'ah al-Miṣrīyah* [Gender Studies: A Collection of Articles Published on the Egyptian Woman] (Cairo: Bab al-Khalq, 1910), 59.

maintained that the veil was necessary, at least for the time being because "Our men are not ready for complete unveiling, otherwise I would have been for it."[240] Women needed to focus on unveiling their minds and capabilities. In a sense, the underlying message was that removing the physical cover would stifle the core issues of the feminist question and distract women from seeking resolutions for the underlying causes behind their disenfranchisement.

Nasif was also critical of the other pole of the debate exemplified in the writings of Harb. She firmly upheld the equality of men and women in both physical and mental abilities. The current state of inferiority that women suffered from and the restriction of women's social role to domestic care giving were not ordained by any divine or earthly law. In fact, the early communities rejected this artificial law as both men and women worked side by side. This was also the case for rural societies where women enjoyed a high degree of equality of rights and responsibilities.[241]. Nasif maintained that women's first responsibility were towards their husbands and families. However, a woman would be a better wife and mother if she was at par with men in terms of education and knowledge and she would have a more positive social impact in society if she had the tools to be an active citizen, even if she did not hold a job out of home.

Nassif countered Harb and other antifeminists' arguments by asserting that women's weakness was constituted by the male discourse on women and the state of seclusion that men imposed on her, which prevented her from realizing her capabilities. It was true that no significant inventions were advanced by women, but only because

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[240] Malak Nasif, Al-*Nisā'īyāt*, 50
[241] Nasif, Al-*Nisā'īyāt*, 43.

women were barred from entering these fields. They excelled, however, in the areas where they had an opportunity, such as the field of arts.[242]

Nasif addressed two other concerns regarding seclusion and female education. The first was with regard to the effect of education on women's morality. She argued that the morals of both men and women were deteriorating, not due to education, but because of upbringing at the level of the family. She criticized Amin (implicitly) for arguing that the West was higher in their moral standards, insisting that proper upbringing was not about kissing the hands of female guests. Proper upbringing, according to Nasif, entailed the realization of both men and women of their own strengths.[243]

In response to the critique that women's education and entrance into the labor force would crowd out male job seekers, she presented an innovative argument: men were the ones that started crowding out women in their jobs by inventing the many tools and machines that reduced her duties, including the sewing machine, weaving, and the vacuum. The tools were useful, but their use resulted in a significant reduction in the time she needed to perform her duties at home. Instead of lying idle and growing sluggish, women should be allowed to participate in the workforce. After all, whether she worked or not should be her own choice, not an imposed decision.[244] She also noted that it was quite premature for men to feel threatened in their jobs, as women had just started to receive education, and it would be decades before she was ready to compete with him in the labor market.

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[242] Nasif, Al-*Nisā'īyāt*, 38, 44-46.
[243] Nasif, Al-*Nisā'īyāt*, 51-54.
[244] Nasif, Al-*Nisā'īyāt*, 39-42.

Rapid Transformation or Spurious Change?

The debate on the veil and women's rights evolved in the midst of wide-reaching sociopolitical, economic, and cultural transformations. The first transformation was related to the modernization scheme launched by Muhammed Ali in an effort to sever dependence on the Ottoman Empire for security. Muhammed Ali established a formal state education system to the local religious schools, or *kuttab*. The intent was to provide the new modern army and bureaucracy with the necessary expertise and it broadened access to education to wide segments of society. It also resulted in the formation of a middle class of endogenous technocrats who had technical skills became exposed to the nationalist movements taking place in other parts of the world. This new class initiated an Egyptian nationalist movement and pursued various political and social rights, including freedom of speech, self determination rights, and the right to organize.[245]

Kedive Isma'il (ruler of Egypt between 1863 and 1879) followed the steps of his grandparent, especially in modernization policies. He launched a series of vast state-sponsored projects, such as the construction of an Egyptian railroad in 1853 that was extended in various phases to connect Cairo with Alexandria and Upper Egypt, the building of the trams in Egypt and Alexandria, and the opening of the Suez Canal as well as several bridges and dams. Khedive Isma'il also emphasized education, and built several new public schools for both boys and girls. Among the first schools for women were the Siyufiyah and the Qirabiya, both of which were established in 1873. While upper-class elites refused to send their daughters to receive formal education, preferring

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[245] Leila Ahmed*, A Border Passage,* 35-38; Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 149-150.

to provide them with private home-based education, middle-class families seized the opportunity and sent their children, males and females, to these schools. [246]

The implementation of modernization policies catalyzed the process of nation-building and instilled a strong sense of national identity among Egyptian middle and upper classes. However, the inability of the state to raise sufficient revenues to finance these projects resulted in a profound fiscal crisis. The fiscal crisis was exacerbated with the inability of the state to implement a balanced developmental plan. The economic development projects was not backed up by the necessary political institutions that supports these developments and ensures stability and sustainability.

Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies* clarifies the antecedents of the identity and political crises that characterized the sociopolitical scene in Egypt in the twentieth century.[247] Absent a compatible degree of institutionalization modernization may cause violence and instability.[248] Institutionalization ensures the legitimization of the modernization schemes and the establishment of institutions that are capable of extracting revenues to sustain these developments.[249] The latter is closely connected with the resulting fiscal crisis which caused the state to declare bankruptcy in 1876. The 'Urabi Revolt and the British occupation in 1882 were directly linked to the imbalanced modernization scheme launched during the nineteenth century. Egyptian society experienced rapid social mobilization, but failed to develop the political institutions

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[246] Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 9-11.

[247] Huntington, Political *Order in Changing Societies.* 4.

[248] Huntington, Poliical *Order in Changing Societies.* 4.

[249] Margarete Levi's *Of Rule and Revenue* is primarily devoted to understanding how the state goes about maximizing its revenue through the provision of public goods. While the use of force is an option, it is very expensive and difficult to maintain. The most successful states are ones rely on producing quasi-voluntary compliance from its constituents through various bargaining arrangements. The Egyptian state has clearly failed to produce any form of quasi-voluntary compliance. Margaret Levi*, Of Rule and Revenue (*Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

capable of absorbing or mediating conflicts that occur among various groups. Accordingly, improvements in economic conditions, if not sustainable, produce expectations that if not met lead to violence not met.

The British administration in Egypt compounded the challenges that were already in existence by the time they invaded the country. The occupation took place during a period of relative economic prosperity in Egypt that was driven primarily by a booming export-oriented economy. By that time, the size of the lower class was diminished as more of this group joined the lower-middle and middle classes. Except for the lower class peasants, most classes and groups in Egypt benefited economically from this prosperous period. The British regime adopted a laissez faire approach that ensured that also resulted in the increase in women's participation in the economy. The administration also granted freedom of speech and women took advantage of these new rights. A number of women's magazines and journals were created during the first two decades in the twentieth century.[250] Freedom of speech, however, was neutralized by the reduction in investment in education. The British invested minimally in education, especially women's education, and never provided secondary education for women.

The following section examines some of the contradictions that characterized the British occupation and their repercussions on feminist and nationalist movements in Egypt. The life stories of two early Egyptian feminists, Huda Sha'rawy and Nabawiyya Musa, provide insight on the implications of the British occupation on the feminist movement. Sha'rawy's life represent an upper class feminist perspective while that of Musa's is representative of a middle class one. These two feminists provide two different

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[250] Baron, "Unveiling in Earl Twentieth Century Egypt: Practical and Symbolic Considerations," 372-374.

perspectives that shaped the feminist discourse in Egypt and defined the relationship between the feminist and nationalist activism.

Beams of Light in the Midst of Darkness

Huda Sha'rawy is the daughter of an Egyptian elite father who benefited from a modern education system that helped him get a high ranking job in the Ottoman bureaucracy. Following the traditions of the Ottomans, the father possessed a *harem* and married to a Circassian woman. Sha'rawy was brought up in a typical upper-class society, which observed the seclusion of women to the furthest extent. She received her education through home schooling which focused on foreign languages, home economics, and humanities. She tried to receive instruction in the Arabic language but was denied as Arabic proficiency was necessary only for working in the bureaucracy and women are not expected to work. For Sha'rawy, not being allowed to master Arabic represented a denial of membership, which made "[her] depressed, hating being a girl because it kept me from the education I sought."[251] Her hope to become an active part of society was further disappointed through an arranged marriage to her cousin at the age of twelve. Sha'rawy did not consent to the marriage but was forced to accept it.

Had this marriage continued its normal course, Sha'rawy would have lost any hope to become actively engaged in political and social domains. Her only salvation came from a clause in her marriage contract that her mother insisted on adding, which stipulated the nullification of the marriage contract should her husband take another wife. Within a year her husband violated the contract by remarrying, and Sha'rawy separated from her husband for seven years. During that time, she was able to further her education

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[251] Sha'rawy and Badran, *Harem Years,* 40.

in various fields, except Arabic. She also enriched her cultural knowledge through attending a number of home-based seminars, called salons, opera evens and many other cultural events. When she returned to her husband at the age of 21, she had already achieved a level of autonomy and independence that were difficult to revoke and she continued her cultural activities with no objection from her husband.

The differences and conflicts between Sha'rawy and her husband continued, however. What brought them together and maintained their marriage until her husband's death in 1922 was their involvement in the nationalist movement through the Wafd Party.[252] Badran noted, "The nationalist movement brought husbands and wives who normally led more separate existences in the divided *harem* world into closer contact."[253] The peak of that collaboration was towards the end of the First World War. Sha'rawy's husband, Ali Sha'rawy, was one of three delegates (the other two being Sa'ad Zaghlul and 'Abd Al-'Aziz Fahmi) who represented Egyptians before the British high commissioner. This delegation requested the independence of Egypt from the British occupation but their request was denied. The delegation was also prevented from representing Egyptians at the Versailles peace meeting. This disappointment resulted in the transformation of the request for independence to a full-fledged nationalist and the formation of the first political party in Egypt. The Wafd Party (Arabic for delegation) was a secular political movement which successfully mobilized one of the biggest national revolutions in the Egyptian history which brought together Egyptians of all class and gender groups. Huda Sha'rawy spoke fondly of this period and her active role in leading a militant female movement during the 1919 national revolution. Her husband, as

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[252] Sha'rawy and Badran, *Harem Years,* 111.
[253] Sha'rawy and Badran, *Harem Years,* 116.

well as Sa'ad Zaghlul, the leader of the Wafd Party, were both deported in an unsuccessful attempt by the British to quell nationalist fervors.

Huda Sha'rawy and other women were the liaisons between the exiled leaders of the nationalist movement and the masses. She recalled, "My husband kept me informed of events so that I could fill the vacuum if he were imprisoned or exiled."[254] She organized the movement and ensured that all women participating in the demonstrations stayed informed and that the demonstrations took place in spite of the British maneuvers to discourage the demonstration by using machine guns to block the streets. "I was determined that the demonstration should resume," recalled Sha'rawy. When a British soldier pointed a gun towards her, she still proceeded bravely, saying, "Let me die so Egypt shall have an Edith Cavell." She also narrated how the women stood for hours on a hot sunny day, saying "I did not care if I suffered sunstroke—the blame would fall upon the tyrannical British authority."[255] She spoke fearlessly of the British atrocities towards the Egyptians, sending numerous letters to women and men in Europe and the United States, thus embarrassing the British Kingdom among those who were beginning to advocate the principles of self-determination and sociopolitical rights.

Women's economic engagement was needed as well. They urged men to quit their government jobs as they were funded by the colonizer and they "took off their jewelry and offered it to government workers" as a compensation for their lost wages. She narrated talking to Egyptian men saying. "If you want money, take this [jewelry] but do not hinder our cause by going back to work under British threat."[256] In response to the second deportation of Zaghlul in 1921, the women organized one of the most effective

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[254] Sha'rawy and Badran, *Harem Years*, 116.
[255] Sha'rawy and Badran, *Harem Years,* 112-114.
[256] Sha'rawy and Badran, *Harem Years,* 120.

and far-reaching boycotts of all British services and product. They also took on selling shares of the first national bank in an effort to finance the nationalist activities and were the first to buy these shares.

As upper-class women continued their struggle to engage other women in the nationalist activities using their economic power, middle-class women benefited from another development, namely the expansion of education for both men and women. Nabawiyya Musa, the daughter of a middle-class army officer, was among the beneficiaries of the schools that were established during Khedive Isma'il. Middle-class families were eager to send their daughters to schools because they perceived education as a means to raise their status. Musa received a formal education that, at least in theory, was gender-neutral. She studied Arabic and was proud to outscored male peers who later became renowned writers and political leaders. Again, mastering the Arabic language was portrayed as an official ticket to legitimize participation in social and economic activity.

In spite of the absence of any secondary education for women, Musa studied at home and became the first to receive the baccalaureate degree in 1908. She recalled how the British officials, both men and women, tried many times to prevent her from taking the exam, but she resisted these maneuvers successfully. Alarmed by her success, the British colonizers instituted stricter rules to prevent other woman from following Musa's path. Musa recalled, "Of course, I didn't have any fellow women students. It was not until 1928 that the next Egyptian woman would sit for the baccalaureate examination."[257] This personal experience shaped one of the most profound arguments in the women's nationalist struggle. At the peak of the nationalist struggle in 1920, Musa published her

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[257] Badran, Feminists, *Islam, and Nation*, 42-44.

book *The Women and Work* where she argued for the need for women to enter the labor

force to release Egypt from its technical and economic dependency on the colonizer. In

that book she argued,

A nation cannot prosper unless its people are vital and productive. A people cannot be vital as long as half are paralyzed and isolated from the affairs of everyday life. If women do not work, half the nation is unproductive. Egypt has a great need for labor. There is no way we can keep Egypt's wealth in our own hands except through the education and training of women…First we neglect the education of women; then remain ill-equipped to work. Then we look down on them, slam the door of work in their face, and welcome foreign women into our homes, entrusting them with our basic needs. Egyptian capital is lost to foreign women, found perfect, rather than going to our own women, found wanting. Had we spent money on educating Egyptian women, they would have been able to perform these jobs, and we Egyptians would be keeping Egyptian money in Egyptian hands. At a time when we make great efforts to win our political independence, why do we lag behind in fighting for our economic independence while we have the means in our hands?" [258]

Musa also used a cultural argument. She insisted that it was not appropriate for

Egyptians to trust British women to impart values and moral codes into the youngsters as

they practically controlled the educational system. Egyptian women should be the ones to

be trusted for that task. These arguments were well-received by Egyptian nationalists,

especially the more secular ones.

Nabawiyya Musa viewed education as the only viable and sustainable route for

women's emancipation. She was critical of women involvement in militant activities,

indicating that "taking part in street demonstrations was not fitting to our dignity as

Oriental women."[259] She also insisted that "schools going on strike did not help the

country…The country is in great need of education. Teachers should be far removed from

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[258] Musa 1920 cited in Badran, Feminists, *Islam, and Nation*, 79.
[259] Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 79.

militancy in the national movement because they are performing great national work that they should not put aside for anything else, however important it might be."[260]

Throughout her life Musa strove to portray herself as a friend and promoter of Eastern tradition and customs insofar as these traditions were true to the spirit of Islam. She advocated limited sex integration, conservative dress codes, and all the manners expected of women. She maintained a very modest appearance, dressing in a black cloak and a veil even after Egyptians cast off the veil completely. Her meticulous adherence to traditional codes of dress and sex segregation were her way to gain the confidence of parents who were resistant to the idea of formal female education, and her strategy proved successful. She became the first headmistress of a girls' school in an Egyptian village, a position traditionally held by British women. She related,

At that time there were only eighty girls in the school. Most were no older than ten because people, especially villagers, were not eager to educate their daughters since they believed education would lead to corruption....However, when people saw that my attire was nearly the same as that of the village women, they stopped believing that teachers dressed immodestly and began to approve of the school. Not more than three months from the day I started working in the school the number of students exceeded two hundred. [261]

Was Nabawiyya Musa suggesting that the women's involvement in militant nationalism was premature? Were the strategies adopted by women at the time to realize freedom and equality in opposition to the social construct and therefore unsustainable? Musa's voice echoed another faint voice also trying to re-steer women's efforts, and that was the voice of Malak Hifni Nassif. Towards the end of Nassif's life, she resorted to total silence and disappeared from the literary scene almost completely. At receiving a plea to guide women who were divided and confused with no common goals, she said, "I

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[260] Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 78.
[261] Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 58.

retreated from writing, not because I lack material to write about, or due to satisfaction with the little I wrote, but because I got tired of the calls for the reform of the Egyptian woman, and the fact that the new educated class, both men and women, forsook the goal of establishing the needed Egyptian nationalism."[262]

Building national identity is a gradual process that cannot be externally induced but has to come from within through education and common sharing of experiences. The process of nation-building can be catalyzed through social mobilization, but it cannot be forged, and in the absence of institutions that will capitalize on these movements and sentiments, their effects would dissipate quickly. The insights provided by both Musa and Nassif, therefore, provide an important context to understanding the series of disappointments and failures that followed the 1919 revolution.

Disappointments and Betrayals

As more Egyptians rallied behind the goal of independence, the ability of the British administration to maintain internal stability diminished. In response to these mounting national pressures, the British proposed what was called the Curzon Plan in 1920, which was a proposal for Egyptian independence that, while giving the Egyptians some sovereignty, would still maintain the presence and role of the British colonizers in Egypt. Sa'ad Zaghlul, who negotiated the plan in London, consulted with various male members of the Wafd Party. The women section of the Wafd Party, called the Wafdist Women's Central Committee (WWCC), were not consulted. The president of the WWCC, Huda Sha'rawy, expressed dismay, and wrote an open letter to Zaghlul deploring his action. Not only did the male members of Wafd fail to engage the women

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[262] (Nasif 1998, 201. Author's translation)

who supported and promoted the nationalist activities, but the proposed plan did not include the full range of Egyptian demands. Consequently most Egyptians agreed that the independence was nominal and that the plan would have a negative impact on the Egyptian nationalist movement.

Notwithstanding protests by various segments of the population, the plan went into effect in 1922. Egypt became nominally independent with Egyptians controlling only internal affairs while the the British continued controlled foreign affairs and security.[263] Sha'rawy was extremely critical of the "independence," stating that the independence granted by the British under the Curzon Plan was "deformed and dismembered," as Sha'rawy insisted. She insisted that this independence was nothing but a maneuver by the British to "paralyze our national movement and to calm our frazzled nerves."[264] Yet, the granting of this partial independence cooled down the fervor of nationalist movements and brought about several divisions within the Wafd Party as well as within other parties.

Shortly after the nominal independence of Egypt was declared, a constitution was promulgated, which established all Egyptians, regardless of religion, gender, or class as equal. Less than a month later, however, a new electoral law was issued that restricted women from voting. This new law was a shock to female Egyptian activists who were ready to sacrifice their lives for the nationalist cause. Divisions continued between the leadership of the Wafd Party and other segments of society regarding the Sudan.[265] In addition, and in response to the assassination of the British General of the Egyptian army, the British issued an ultimatum to Egyptians. Again, Zaghlul accepted the first four

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[263] Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 81-86.
[264] Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 85.
[265] Prior to 1922, most Egyptians insisted on the unity of Egypt and the Sudan. However, Zaghlul and other politicians expressed willingness to accept the sovereignty of the Sudan, which the WWCC strongly opposed to and that caused significant divisions.

conditions of the ultimatum, while most Egyptians as well as the WWCC found it dishonoring. Zaghlul, therefore, ceased to represent the voice of the nation, and his leadership was no longer viewed as legitimate. In an open letter to Zaghlul, who was then the prime minister and party leader of the first democratically elected government, Sha'rawy declared, "Since you have not succeeded while in office to fulfill your promise by positive action, I ask you not to be an obstacle in the path of your country's struggle for salvation....I ask you to step down from governing."[266]

In the same month that Sha'rawy's letter was published in al-Akhbar newspaper, Zaghlul resigned, taking with him any hope for leadership. Leadership is one of the most essential ingredients of state and nation-building. The nationalist movement broke down to several smaller movements, including a feminist movement (eventually aligned with an international feminist agenda), an Islamic movement, a secular movement, and others.[267] Within each of these movements, personal differences emerged that made them susceptible to further breakups. The result of this was an endemically weak central government that was unable to forge and promulgate a unified vision of who belongs to the nation.

The weakness of a central government and the absence of effective institutions of conflict resolution typically generate opportunities for the emergence of radicalism. In my research on the Sudan, I found that the endemic weakness of the central government, and its failure to forge a unified vision of who belongs to the nation w primary reason behind the radicalization of the regime and the plague of civil wars the plagued the country. Busy playing sectarian politics, the constituents of the central government in the

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[266] Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 86.
[267] Notable among these new movements is the Muslim Brotherhood, founded by a teacher called Hassan al-Banna in 1928.

Sudan failed to engage opposition groups in a dialogue, thus leaving them to accuse one another of being the enemy and to mutually radicalize one another.[268] While the Egyptian regime is not radical, it has bred strong radical religious movements, the first of which emerged in 1928. The failure of the nationalist experiment in Egypt may be one of the causes of the rise of radical movements in Egypt, and may explain some of the pressure on women to adopt an Islamic dress code.

Conclusion

This chapter presented snapshots of Egyptians' dress history that spanned almost thirteen centuries. My goals was to demonstrate the continuities and discontinuities in the discourses and practices regarding the veil and to identify some of the factors that are associated with the change in the dress styles and to draw parallels between the recent change in dress that started in the 1970s but crystallized toward the ends of the 1990s and all these historic episodes.

This chapter demonstrated the role of women in reproducing the past and/or changing it. Egyptian women were treated as the face of the nation and the main agent of its cultural preservation. This is why she was always a major target in policies attempting to change the cultural fabric of Egypt. Even the colonizer attempted to establish its legitimacy and maintain Egypt's dependence by portraying the veil of women as a sign of Egypt's backwardness. The British portrayed the image of the emancipator of women. The debate on the veil during that period contained components of resistance to imperial

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[268] Unpublished Manuscript, "Identity Crisis and Radical Movements: The Case of the Sudan," 2007.

powers and parts of the discourse sought to highlight the hypocrisy that imbued that British "civilizing mission."

The use of women as a tool of transformation and preservation has been attempted almost in every period throughout the Egyptian history. However, women have also resisted attempts to control and shape her. At times, women defied seclusion and veiling regulations and subverted the veil at many times. At others, they used the veil to challenge the imperial power, insisting that they rejected the models of female emancipation that the colonizer offered. These emancipatory models would substitute one form of constraint into another more dangerous and resilient and form. Middle-class women were especially active in shaping that form of resistance.

The analysis suggested that the direction of the change in the cultural outlook of the nation through women had economic and political as well as cultural roots. The structure of the economy and economic conditions, in particular the mode of production and the distribution of economic power among groups and classes is strongly correlated with the status of women. In times when Egypt's economic engines were the agricultural industry or trade, Egyptian women were more likely to be integrated in social activities and observe less the laws of seclusion. Literature suggests that one of the main reason for the high gender equality in Egypt that lasted until the Byzantine Empire is associated with its agricultural economic structure, which necessitates that both men and women share economic responsibilities.

Through greater integration in the global economy, other nonagricultural industries were introduced, including trade and basic manufacturing. The introduction of these industries, which were highly sensitive to global conditions and domestic affairs,

resulted in high variance in the status of women. At times when the economy was prosperous and employment opportunities abound for both men and women, women's status improved. The first and second centuries of the Mamluk were exemplary periods of gains realized by women that were associated with improvements in the standard of living and the abundance of economic opportunities. The last century in the Mamluk period witnessed significant political turmoil due to civil wars and a sharp deterioration in economic conditions. These politico-economic conditions resulted in major restrictions on the dress and movements of women.

The Ottoman period witnessed an intensification of these factors compounded by greater integration in the global economy and a greater exposure to the European culture. During that period, European products caused the decline in local industries, including the textile and trade industry, both of which employed a great number of women. As opportunities declined, arguments for higher measures of seclusion and veiling mounted. At the same time, as Egyptians were exposed to European travelers, segments of the upper classes started adopting European dress. During that period, the middle class adhered more to traditional dress codes as they felt threatened by European power. The size of this class increased significantly during the reign of Muhammed Ali and thus increased the power of this class.

The discourse and path of the nationalist movements in the first few decades of the twentieth century demonstrated another important cause of the volatility of cultural expressions in Egypt and the process of identity formation. While Egypt was able to produce the charismatic leadership capable of mobilizing Egyptians, the colonizer ensured that this leadership did not take root through preventing the institutionalization of

politics. This implied the absence of dialogue among the various visions and discourses on nationalism and the lack of mechanisms for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Any disagreement regarding the path Egypt should take resulted in separations and dissolutions. The political scene in Egypt in the second half of the 1920s up until the 1950s, therefore, was characterized by fragmentation and instability, and the national identity that was at its embryonic stage never saw the light of day as petty political conflicts killed it at its birth.

The casting off of the veil in the 1920s took place in the midst of a national crisis. It was catalyzed by a desire to emulate the West and to follow the path of Turkey and Iran, both of which cast off the veil in the 1920s and 1930.[269] It was then that the discourses of nationalism and women's rights had divorced, rendering both movements superficial. The women achieved significant gains in the following years; however, the cultural fabric of society and views on women hardly changed. In addition, the feminist discourse became increasingly westernized, resulting in a limited acceptance in the beginning and finally a rejection by a large portion of male and female Egyptians. Thus, identity continued to experience a crisis. This explains why many of the gains realized through feminist activism were ephemeral or shallow.

Leila Ahmed insisted that while "the veil might go, but not necessarily the attitudes that accompanied it—the habits of seclusion and the cultural conditioning about the meaning of seeing and not seeing, of being visible and invisible."[270] This is, to a large extent, what happened in Egypt. The revolutionary transformation in dress code that Egyptians saw in the 1930s had no roots in the social and cultural fabrics. Until this day,

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[269] In both countries, a secular regime forced this change on women. This was not the case in Egypt where women chose to take off the veil themselves with no direct intervention from the state.

[270] Ahmed, *A Border Passage*, 95

Egypt had not been able to develop a unified nationalist vision. This caused the discourses on religion and politics to be taken lightly in Egypt. The sudden return to the veil in its current form, therefore, is an exemplification of such trivialization. Both pursuits were like a Faberge egg, beautiful on the outside, but empty on the inside. This internal vacuum makes the form vulnerable and easily crushable. Just as the veil almost vanished in a blink of the eye, it returned back in another blink, as identity continued to be in crisis.

Chapter 5

Voices, from the Center and the Periphery

The Identities of Veiled and Unveiled Women Explored Error! Bookmark not defined.

Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated the historical specificity of dress and attitudes towards the veil in Egypt. I argued there that the discourse of the veil is closely linked with the discourse of identity and nationalism. I also highlighted some of the roots of the current attitudes towards the veil, particularly the divorce between the discourses of nationalism and feminism and the failure to compose a nationalist vision that provides the necessary "glue" to achieve national unity. This chapter explores the meanings and symbols associated with dress styles and the veil among young middle-class Egyptian women today. It examines how respondents view the self and the other through the prism of their dress. I argue that the rapid evolution of the veil today is catalyzed by various forces of globalization, which increased exposure not only to Western cultures, but also to Arab Gulf cultures that are characterized by high levels of gender inequalities and by a limited presence of women in public space.

The analysis in the chapter is based on the results of a detailed semistructured interview that was conducted in Cairo, Egypt, during the summer of 2008. Through an interpretive analysis of the words of the women participants regarding the meaning of religiosity, their social roles and responsibility, and the status of morality today compared to the past, the chapter examines the process through which the meanings and forms of the veil are reconstructed. My main argument is that the veil today is used as an

instrument of subversion and subservience in a political struggle where women appear to be the both the targets and the agents. The veil is also a weapon of resistance in face of globalization and the perceived "War on Islam."

The Scope and Limits of Female Agency

One of the first questions posed is this research was What is the domain of the Egyptian female in the decision to veil? Are they effectively "free" to choose to veil or not? To answer this question, I asked veiled respondents regarding the main prompt of the decision to veil. I also looked at the distribution of the age when the respondent took that decision. As Figure 18 shows, there are two peak points for veiling: one at puberty and the other during college. In Islam, puberty means that the person is liable to every action he/she commits. The Muslim is accountable for carrying out all obligatory acts of *Shari'a* from that time onward. The veil is now considered one of the principle requirements of Islam. According to Sunnah, or the sayings of the Prophet of Islam, "Allah does not accept the prayer of a woman who has reached puberty unless she wears a veil."[271] In the past, this *Hadith* was interpreted to mean that women should be veiled while performing the prayer ritual or her prayer would be rejected. Today, preachers insist that the acceptance of any of forms of worship from a woman by God is pegged to the veil. The other peak point at which the probability of veiling increases is enrollment at college, normally at the age of 18. This suggests that women may experience significant peer pressure to conform to the social norms of veiling in college.

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[271] Sunnah is second most important sources of Islamic teachings after the Quran. It is comprised of the sayings and traditions of the prophet of Islam that were report by his companions. This *hadith* is cited in two of four main collections of *Hadith*s. Source: University of Southern California, Compendium of Muslim Texts. http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/*hadith*sunnah/ abudawud/002.sat .html#002.0641 (accessed May 27, 2009).

Figure 18. Age at Veiling
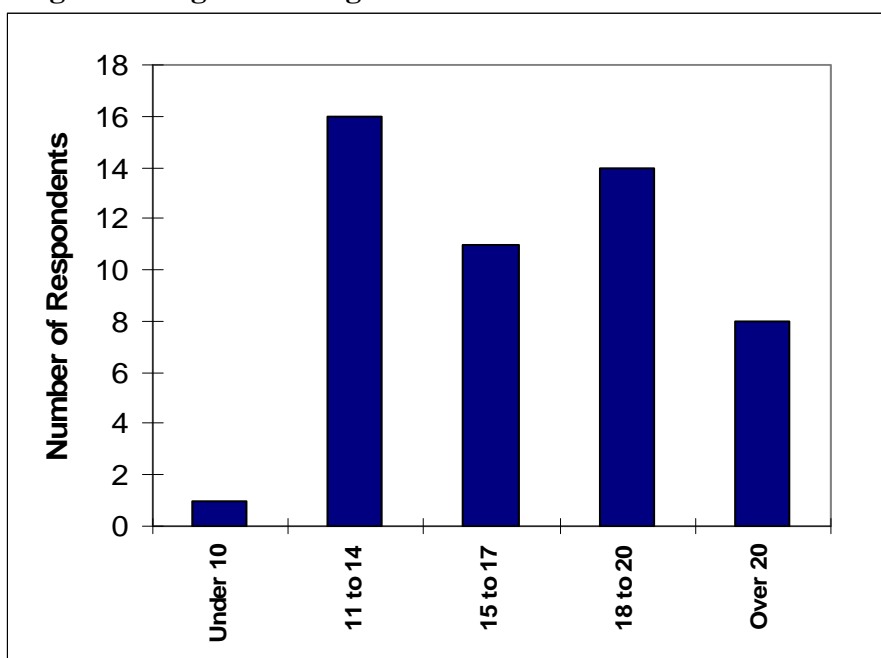
Respondents were asked to identify what personal experiences prompted them to wear the veil. Some women thought the question was strange and said, "What do you mean prompt? The *Hijab* is *fard* (a religious duty), and I have to oblige whether I am convinced or not." Ten respondents indicated that they got veiled because it is *fard,* and it is "*haram* (illicit) for a girl to reveal her hair to anyone." These answers respondents suggested an underlying belief among young Egyptian Muslims that women should not practice agency in matters related to religion. The veil today has acquired a law status in Islam and as such women were not allowed to rationalize it.

For two thirds of the veiled respondents, parents were the main force behind veiling. This force took the form of advice or a discussion regarding the veil. "My mom and dad convinced me;" "My mom convinced me after a very long discussion;" "I wanted to please God in the beginning, and secondly home (parents)." Others indicated that their mothers or fathers insisted that they wear the veil: "My dad insisted that I wear

it;" "My mom decided that I must wear it because now I am older and am about to get married." Some women indicated that they experienced a lot of pressure at home to wear it, and just wanted to stop the hassle: "I don't need the headache, and my hair is useless anyway." While the first group expressed an inner conscience force for veiling, this group alluded to some forms of social pressure for veiling that is applied by the parents.

The veil was driven by a strong spiritual drive for some women. Seven respondents indicated that they experienced a spiritual moment after a trauma, or had a need to get closer to God and just took the decision to veil.

I was not thinking about it at all at that time when I got veiled…But at a certain moment, I just felt from inside that I want to get veiled… I felt that it's the right thing to do and that I am already late. A lot of girls were getting veiled around me and I am still not veiled…. I was afraid I was going to die before I veiled.

At that time a boy at school died in a car accident and then shortly my grandfather died…Because of all these incidents I suddenly started thinking a lot about death and the fact that we were…flying a lot [i.e. traveling by plane] made me even more aware that I might die any moment. Then I'd have to face God and answer about why I didn't wear the veil.

I was at a time of my life when I felt God gave me so many good things and I needed to thank Him for all His blessings. I was trying to get closer to Him and was looking for a way. That was when I decided to veil.

For some women, therefore, the veil was a very personal matter that was driven by a strong a desire to become closer to God and a conviction that the veil is a prerequisite to building a relationship with God. However, even in those instances, the lurking impact of the religious sermons in media today that emphasized the after-life consequences of not veiling was apparent. The fear of death without receiving "salvation" through the veil obsessed many women, and it became a constant thought for

the unveiled. The following chapter analyzes the content of some of these sermons and discusses their impact on the position of the veil in Egypt today.

There were significant limitations to the women's freedom to choose whether to veil or not. All women experienced direct and/or indirect pressure to veil. The pressure in many cases was exercised by the immediate family, who in some cases advised and in others ordered the young woman to veil. Many women also internalized a lot of the teachings of contemporary preachers. While very few indicated that they veiled immediately after the sermon, the greatest impact seemed to be the resonation of these teachings during a life-crisis.

Is the Veil a Religious Duty?

The religious intelligentsia today has accumulated a lot of power over the domain of value constitution. Egyptian women, however, still retained a considerable realm of freedom in their interpretations of these sermons. They are actively engaged in the reconstitution of Islamic teachings and religion through their everyday practices. Chapter 4 reviewed some of the Islamic texts that involved the veil, and it was found that it was not clear whether the veil was a religious requirement or not. In recent years, few renowned public figures, including the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Faruq Hosny, and the Editor-In-Chief of a weekly women's magazine, Iqbal Baraka, expressed doubts about the veil requirement. Great protests broke out in Egypt against the Minister, requesting his resignation and lawsuits were also filed against him and the writer for simply denying the centrality of the veil in Islam.

Figure 19. Veiled Women Protest

Veiled women and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood chant slogans and carry signs that read in Arabic "The veil is a religious duty like prayer and fasting," and "Not my veil!" during a demonstration in the northern Egyptian city of Alexandria, 23 November 2006. The protest came against Culture Minister Faruq Hosni's comments in an interview in which he suggested that wearing the veil was regressive. Many students since, mostly veiled women demanded the minister's immediate resignation.[272]

To understand the views of Egyptians regarding the position of the veil in Islam, respondents were asked a number of questions. The goal was to investigate how deep their knowledge about their religion was and how they acted upon its perceived religious duties through various behaviors, including style selection. Their reactions towards some of the statements made by Iqbal Baraka regarding the veil and the bias against women in the media and religious teachings were also tested to analyze the depth of their understanding of their religion and their tolerance towards nonmainstream ideas.

When asked if the veil was a religious duty, all 65 respondents, veiled and unveiled, answered in the affirmative. Some even argued that not only was the veil a religious duty, but that requirement if fulfilled only by specific form of veil required by Islam, which is the *khimar* and/or *niqab*.

That is a question that does not need an answer. The khimar is a religious duty; if it is not, then why did the house of our honorable Prophet peace be upon him wear the niqab. The khimar is the correct veil but we distorted it….

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[272] Image downloaded at Daylife Publishers. Source: http://www.daylife.com/photo/ 03Jpc1k4363m0 (accessed May 27, 2009).

Of course it is fard but the problem is girls do not understand what the veil is. The veil is the khimar… the khimar is the first step then comes the niqab…. God says "draw their veils [khimars] over their bosoms." You see, it says khimar. So khimar is the correct veil….

That the veil or an article of appearance has become a fundamental requirement in religion equal in status to worshipping, giving alms, and caring for the poor, is puzzling. It was demonstrated in Chapter 4 that the veil in the past was more related to modesty and tradition, which was important concepts in Islam. It was not, however, considered the core of Islam as many respondents and preachers argued today. As the chant slogans that the above image reflects, and as suggested by many respondents in the study, the veil today has become a principal constituent of Islam, even as important as the second pillar, prayer.[273] It is portrayed as a prerequisite for earning religious credits *(thawab)* for any good deed that the woman performs.[274]

Interestingly, when respondents were asked if they knew the specific reference from the Quran and/or Sunna that confirmed this duty, most respondents could not remember the verse. This is puzzling since these two verses are cited all the time by *sheikhs* whose sermons resonate in street corridors and the cassettes of taxi and microbus drivers. We also see posters everywhere (in elevators, store walls, bridges) saying things

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[273] There are five pillars or foundations to Muslim life. These are 1) declaration of faith or the belief that "There is none worthy of worship except God and Muhammed is the messenger of God," 2) observing daily prayers five times a day, 3) observing almsgiving; 4) fasting; 5) the pilgrimage to Makkah for those who are physically and financially able. The reason why the veil is portrayed sometimes as being as important as prayer is that in Islam a woman has to veil during prayers or her prayer will not be accepted. In the past, that was restricted to the act of prayer only. But today, many preachers say that all the worship of the unveiled woman will be rejected if she is not wearing a veil.

[274] *Thawab* refers to the positive credits that a Muslim gets in return for a good action or a form of worship. Whether a person goes to heaven or hell depends on the number of good points in comparison to negative points. If the person scores a net number of positive points that person goes to heaven. This is according to verse 99:7-8 of Quran says, "Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it," The *Hadith* cited on page 12, "Allah does not accept the prayer of a woman who has reached puberty unless she wears a veil" focuses on prayers. But, as responses to the interview instrument indicated, the requirement has been generalized to all good deeds.

like "The veil to protect, or the eyes will molest," and "al *hijab* before judgment,"[275] which are often followed by a verse from Quran on the veil. I should note here that one of the few women that was able to cite the verse was unveiled and answered laughingly, saying, "I know the verse by heart because they keep saying it to me all day long." Only three women cited one of the verses correctly, and they all only cited the part of verse 24:31, requesting believing women to "*draw their veils over their bosoms.*" The word draw here in Arabic is *yadrebn*, from the verb *darb* which literally means hit. The colloquial use of the word is very different from its use in this verse. One of the women who failed to cite the verse said, "Yes it is *fard*, there is that verse that has *darb* in it." Two respondents said, "I am sure there are some religious texts requiring it." "I know there are several texts but I do not remember them."

The reason why the inability of the respondents to cite religious text is paradoxical is the fact that the appearance of Egyptian people would suggest a much deeper internalization of religious texts. Today, youth insist on using religious phrases in every relevant and irrelevant situation. Informal conversations with some male and female Egyptian friends revealed that the use of religion and religious terminologies has increased dramatically and has become quite excessive. Non-Muslims express concern regarding this excessive use of religious language in everyday conversations, indicating that the phenomenon alienates them.

It should be noted that Islam is different from Christianity in its emphasis on the unique and unchanging Arabic text of the Quran. While the Bible or Torah can be read

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[275] One poster had the picture of an unveiled woman, with hair flying wildly next to an uncovered candy that was also covered in flies. The poster says, "You can't stop them, but you can protect yourself." See Ellen Knickmeyer, "In Egypt, Some Women Say That Veils Increase Harassment, *Washington Post*, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/16/AR2008081602063.html (accessed May 27, 2009).

and memorized in any language, the Quran has to be memorized and recited in Arabic, and it has to be memorized literally and to the slightest declination and letter movement. It is actually a sin in Islam to quote wrongly a verse because the miracle of Quran lies not only in its meaning but its rhythmic prose that is enchanting and relaxing. Muslims may read translated versions of Quran, but they are strongly encouraged to learn Arabic and in all cases, when they pray, they must recite the Quran in Arabic. That said, the infinite recitations of the *hijab* verse become all the more puzzling as these women are aware that a miscitation of Quran is a sin.

While all women insisted that *hijab* is *fard*, as we probed further with them, several women recorded some doubts about the relevance of the veil today. Two unveiled respondents said, "Yes it is *fard*, but the girl has to be convinced of it," or else she will be just following the rest. Another veiled woman related that she was not convinced that a girl in a non-Muslim community should wear it because wearing it would be counter-productive as it would make the woman stand out. An unveiled girl said,

Yes it is fard…but frankly I do not know why Islam instituted it. The veil today does not protect the woman in any way. I thought before that the veil is a protection and raises the value of woman. Even the khimar doesn't do that. A girl in khimar walking in a dark street will still be exposed to problems just as those walking with their hair uncovered and in miniskirts.

The answers of two other unveiled women were particularly interesting:

Many scholars argue that [the veil] is fard. As for me, I think if the veil would obstruct the woman's path and prevent her from realizing her ambitions then she does not have to wear it. Today the veil is not as important as in the past. I mean both veiled and unveiled women are exposed to the same daily problems [referring to street harassment]….

Look, I really don't like this question, not because it is a bad or difficult question… Yes, it is a religious duty, but if it would obstruct other greater duties, then I do not need to do it…We cannot take religion without thinking. If I abide by the veil, I will not get from it what it was originally intended fror, like giving the woman greater respect in society.

That veil would also obstruct me from doing something greater that God wants me to do. So I am not convinced that I should veil. Plus, today women do not really respect their veils and are just wearing it in response to social and family pressure…

These two respondents had a clear idea of social responsibility and the importance of looking at oneself as part of a bigger system that they should help build and reform. The role of any person, male or female, is to maximize their social contribution and public good through their actions. If that would be through veiling, so be it. But if not, then the veil requirement should be relegated behind other requirements. Also implicit is an inner resistance the conviction that religion is an agency-free domain, where people should apply all laws blindly. They both insisted that the goal of religion is to promote the good of society and while certain religious requirements could be important tools to promote goodness at one point, they might not be at other times. As indicated, only two out of 65 were willing to rationalize religious requirements and both women faced significant discrimination and harassment in their everyday lives, as their interviews highlighted.

The Many Faces of the Veil

The previous sections demonstrated the pressure that the Egyptian woman experiences to wear the veil and the unanimity regarding the veil being a religious duty. Analyses revealed the limits to the female agency in choosing whether to veil or not. The agency of the Egyptian woman, however, was manifested in her application of the veil duty and the way she interpreted religious text. To better gauge what women considered a benchmark of appropriate veiling, and also to understand how they interacted with the religious message they received, respondents were asked what, in their point of view, was

the correct form of the veil. Respondents were not specifically asked to assess the correctness of their dress styles compared to what they view as correct but many voluntarily commented on their own styles.

Two thirds of the veiled respondents gave descriptions of the correct veil that were very similar to the styles they were wearing at the time of the interview. Their styles ranged from very tight clothes to very strict styles and anything in between. This suggested that the domain of freedom a woman enjoyed with respect to veil style was still very wide. The self-satisfaction with one's own style, even though that style in many cases diverged from most religious descriptions of the accepted form of the veil, demonstrated the role of women in constituting religious teachings. In fact, many women during the interview reported that they were encouraged to wear the veil because of the variety of styles that were available today that would allow them to stay fashionable and chic while conforming to religious requirements.

One third of the respondents insisted that the Quran literally prescribed the *khimar* at a minimum or even a *niqab*. Half of these respondents (8 respondents) conformed to that narrowly defined form of veil. Another three indicated that they were planning to conform to that "correct" form soon. "To wear the *khimar* is to wear the veil," insisted one respondent. "Thank God, there are not many forms of the *khimar*" added another. For three women, the correct veil is the *niqab*, because "it is preferred, and if it is preferred then it is better for the woman."

Fifteen women were less strict in their definitions of the correct veil (i.e., did not argue for one particular form), but still gave specific descriptions of what a veil should look like. Some recited what is now considered the basic rule of the veil, which stated

that clothes should be loose-fitting and not transparent or revealing.[276] For them, this meant that the clothes should not be tight, preferably no pants, no make-up, and some identified certain parts of the body that have to be covered like the cheeks and the neck.[277] According to some women, new styles of the veil that did not cover the neck and cheeks were "religious innovations [*bid'ah*] and are unlawful."[278]

While the majority of the women expressed satisfaction with their one style vis-à-vis religious expectations, several expressed dissatisfaction with their dress. One respondent suggested, "No offense, but the dress should be respectful in general, not transparent and not revealing. So frankly, my veil is not correct because my neck is not covered." Another insisted that the correct veil is the *niqab*, but she was described as wearing less conservative clothes. This respondent used to wear the *niqab* in the past and then took it off. Her entire family wore the *niqab*, and she seemed to be under a lot of pressure to go back to wearing it. She resisted that pressure in pursuit of a compromise between her religious duties and her social and professional ambitions. The *niqab* is generally not accepted in the workplace today. This highlights the levels of contradictions that Egyptian women suffer from and the state of inner conflict they constantly undergo and how they attempt to reconcile disparate needs and expectations from the family, society, and the professional world.

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[276] This rule is cited in every sermon about *hijab*. The rule neither came from a *Hadith* nor a Quranic verse, but from interpretations of some religious scholars.

[277] Until recently, about 90 percent of veiled women wore a scarf that covered the neck and parts of the cheeks. A new fashion came up recently, called the Spanish style, which are turban-style scarves wrapped around the head and revealing the neck and the entire face. Many women spoke disapprovingly about this style.

[278] In Islam, a bid'ah or innovation in religions is considered an alteration of the true religion and therefore unlawful. One *hadith* says, "Every new thing is an innovation, and every innovation is an error, and every error leads to hell." (Cited in Jonathan P. Berkey, "Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near," *Past and Present,* 146 (1995): 42. This verse is often cited by traditionalists, also called *salafists* (from salaf, or going back to origins) who reject any attempt to contextualize *Shari'a* and rationalize religion.

Some respondents did not provide a physical description of the correct form of the veil but rather provided a more functional than literal meaning. The correct veil was to "give up the parts of one's social life that she can't continue to have after the veil," suggested one woman. Her style was described as liberal, and she was wearing full makeup, but to her, she would be accepted by God because she "veiled" herself from inappropriate associations and places. Another affirmed that the correct veil meant to be "veiled from the inside and let your clothes reveal what is inside you." The veil here was described a liberator that allowed women to transcend the boundaries of the physical to the more spiritual realm through revealing the inner beauties. But to do that, the dress style had to be conservative and modest, which was consistent with the clothes she was wearing.

The definition of the correct veil was even looser for some respondents: "The correct veil was to cover the head. That's what I know," insisted one. "What else?!" another defiantly asked. "The correct veil is what I am wearing…. I believe it is enough to cover the head." According to this last woman, "If one girl wants to cover herself completely, let her do that. But that cannot be *fard* because it is difficult for many women." This group of respondents managed to reconcile the social pressure to veil and internal needs to appear fashionable and unrestricted. They devised unique "hybrids" of styles to find a middle way between the various forces around them. However, many of these women still faced pressure to conform to the more acceptable conservative dress as was apparent in their defensive responses to some of the interview questions.

The variations in the answers of the respondents regarding the correct form of the veil revealed some of the features and dynamics of the social arenas of the power

struggle, of which the veil was emblematic. While society made the veil an uncontested requirement for being Muslim, the female agency successfully reconstituted that veil to take an infinite number of "correct" forms. But the process of reconstituting the meanings and forms of the veil was still underway. Many respondents were struggling to find acceptable resolutions for the contradictory forces they were exposed to on a daily basis. They agreed with many of the preachers that there were specific requirements for the veil that they failed to conform to and they internalized a sense of guilt regarding their veiling practices. On the other hand, they were faced with the pressure to emulate other nonconforming women and to look modern and fashionable. This revealed the complexity and elusiveness of this new phenomenon.

Doubts: The Veil Questioned

There was a consensus among respondents that veil was a religious duty. Some questioned its importance, though, given the large divergence between its ultimate goal, modesty and women's respect, and its current forms and outcomes. To further understand the internalization of the veil duty, a quote by the Editor-in-Chief of a women's magazine, Iqbal Baraka, was recited and women's reactions to the quote were note. The quoted author rejected the connection between the veil and Islam and insisted that the veil became important because men in Egypt looked at women disgracefully. Religious clerics did not reproach men for harassing women nor asked them to "lower the gaze" in accordance to verse 24:30 of the Quran.[279] Instead they asked women to veil.

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[279] Lowering the gaze is a common concept in Islam which means that men are not supposed to look at a woman and desire her. So once he sees a woman, he should turn his eyes quickly before lust and temptation enters his heart. The verse says,

Although several respondents refused to comment on what an "infidel" or "bad" woman such as Iqbal Baraka said (8 respondents),[280] the majority of the respondents (52 percent) agreed with Baraka regarding the gender bias of religious clerics. Those who agreed said, yes, there was a responsibility on both men and woman, not just women. Yet the preachers "do tend to put the entire blame on the girl." One woman commented, "In Egypt, people would go through the roof if a girl is walking with her arms revealed, and if a guy harasses her verbally in the street, he would be considered a hero." Another veiled woman insisted that preachers would always find excuses for a harasser:

Even if a girl was veiled and respectful yet was harassed in the street, the preachers would still say, she was walking late, or she looked at him, or she breathed. Anything whatsoever, but at the end we [women] would always be to blame.

Respondents also indicated that preachers were sometimes "annoying" in the pressure they put on the woman. Some blamed preachers for their emphasis on appearance in general. "They never explain the depth of our religion. They are only concerned with dress…"

While essentially agreeing with Baraka, some women still found excuses for why preachers emphasized the role of the female. "Maybe because the male is weak and cannot hold himself from sinning," pondered one respondent. So while the bias of preachers was notable, "there is some merit because women do bear the biggest portion of responsibility… if a girl is respectful enough, no guy would come near her." Another

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"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty."
It is the verse that directly precedes the one requiring *hijab* and that is most popularly quoted. Several traditions by the Prophet of Islam suggest that a man will not be punished for the first glance at a woman because it is accidental. A common saying in Egypt is "the first glance is for you, the second is against you." This was misinterpreted and a common joke in Egypt today among men, "lengthen the first glance as much as you want, it is no sin."
[280] As mentioned earlier, anyone who doubts the veil requirement today is considered infidel.

said, "Maybe they do not see any hope in the male so they put all the responsibility on the female!"

Several women commented harshly on Baraka, saying, this was "infidel talk" and "answering to this kind of people is *haram*." "This woman wants to destroy our religion and spread strife." "She is just trying to defile to ease her conscience" for not wearing the veil. Others denied any bias from the side of the preachers in their emphasis. Surprisingly, many women gave excuses to the man and even insisted that the preachers were correct and that women were rightfully to blame for men's inability to control their instincts. "Guys are weak" and "it is the woman that draws men to harass her."

Let's imagine what society would be like if there were no veil. Then women's only concern would be to attract men. Look at the rape crimes taking place, look at bad manners…And why doesn't she take the physiological point of view then since she is so well read? A male's physiological structure is different from the female's. A male can get attracted to any woman even if she's a stranger whereas the woman can only get attracted to a man she already knows. It is not healthy for a man to always be subjected to bare flesh. Look at the West and how cheap the body is there!

Other women asked, "Is she Muslim…she must have read in the Quran the verse that says how a woman who does not veil will be hung by her hair in the afterlife."[281] The "eternal condemnation" that the unveiled girl would receive is a common theme in many sermons. Although the verses from the Quran refer to the disbelievers, a woman who chooses to stay unveiled is considered a disbeliever. While the veiled women conveyed a lot of zeal regarding the centrality of the veil in the Islamic creed, the unveiled women's voices faintly expressed how society looks at them and how the pyramid of morality and moral judgment got inverted. Several unveiled women annoyingly said, the veil "is all

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[281] The verse this respondent referred to is often cited by preachers today. The verse describes the destiny of nonbelievers and those who did not abide by the religious laws. Preachers today, however, present this verse as evidence of punishment for the unveiled. This reinterpretation of the religious texts will be examined in further detail in the following two chapters.

what [the preachers] talk about." "We are now applying religion literally, and in return, we are not concerned with morals. Morality is on a steep decline."

The analysis on the status of the veil in Islam revealed significant contradictions and revealing dynamics. The forces directing women towards veiling were undeniably formidable. While some women veiled for personal and spiritual reasons, many experience pressure from various types of preachers who insisted that God would not accept or consider any good deed from an unveiled woman and that the unveiled woman would receive the greatest torment during the Day of Judgment. This new religious discourse had a strong impact on the status and views on women. These pressures played an important role in producing the mass-veiling phenomenon. The responses of women were very diverse and in many cases ran contrary to many of the stereotypical images of women's resistance that the Western feminist discourse suggested, such as women naturally seeking their own liberation.[282]

While everybody interviewed insisted that the veil was a religious requirement, few women rejected the status ascribed to it today. Some even refused to abide by a requirement that may compromise other more important requirements. Some reluctantly and doubtfully accepted the veil but refused to accept its implications regarding the restriction of behavior and the veil style. Other women chose to "accommodate"[283] the pressure, through veiling, but used that veil as a weapon against the veil symbol through subverting it.

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[282] Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[283] See Arlene Elowe Macleod, *Accommodating Protest: Working Women, the New Veiling, and Change in Cairo*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

A fourth group completely internalized the new teachings regarding the veil, and even considered themselves as agents of its promotion and institution in society. These women participated in what Saba Mahmood called "piety movements," or movements aimed at integrating the religious experience into everyday practices. These piety movements were intended to assert women's position in society and to create a community of belonging and activism in a domain that was restricted to men. The zeal about the veil and the excessive use of religious language were important ways to achieve these goals. However, my research found limited impact for these in terms of the internalization of religious teachings. There was strong evidence to suggest that although people's religious practices have increased, their effective knowledge of religion and the text was limited.

Interpretations: The Role of the Veil in Islam

How did women reflect on religious requirements, particularly the veil? Did they perceive contradictions between the goal of the veil according to religious text and what it currently did? More was learned about the role of the veil in society through inquiring about the reason why respondents thought Islam instituted the veil requirement. The women's understanding of this requirement presumably shapes their behavior and offers insight regarding how they internalize religion.

The most frequently cited Islamic goal of the veil was the protection of women. Respondents suggested that the veil became a religious requirement to "protect the woman from anyone who wants to harm her or touch her…." One respondent explained, "The woman is the more beautiful sex so the veil protects her and raises her value." The

veil also gave women "dignity and respect." It was regarded as a purity guarantee and/or preserver by eight women (one of which also emphasized protection over purity). So long as the woman was veiled, no man would look at her and desire her; to catch a male's attention was to have a woman's purity tarnished, even if she did not intend it or realized she did.[284] One woman in *niqab* proudly said, "When I wore the *niqab*, it put a barrier between boys and me, and they no longer had anything to do with me." The true goal and meaning of the veil according to another woman was to "set a *hijab* (curtain) between a man and a woman, which means I don't just joke around with anyone anywhere."

Implicit in the language of the women who emphasized the concepts of purity, was a rejection of the male projection of an image of all women as sex objects, and therefore covering up was a strategy of liberation from the confines of the visible appearance. At the same time, many respondents were quite sympathetic to the opposite gender, who, as one respondent remarked, were "only human and have feelings… there is no such thing as a man who does not look." Setting a firm boundary between men and wom3n is highly emphasized in the language of many of today's preachers' who blame the deterioration of morality in society on women who dress inappropriately. The vices of sex integration represent another primary focus of many sermons.

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[284] In Islam, the male who fails to lower his gaze sins and accumulates negative points in his life book, but the female is condemned even more because she caused the male to sin. Verse 24:2 of the Quran says "(As for) the fornicatress and the fornicator, flog each of them, (giving) a hundred stripes, and let not pity for them detain you in the matter of obedience to Allah, if you believe in Allah and the last day, and let a party of believers witness their chastisement. " It should be noted that the adulteress is mentioned before the adulterer in the verse. Several interpreters agree that the precedence is significant because it points out that the adulteress is more at fault than the adulterer. Qortoby's interpretation of the verse was the following: "The adulteress preceded the, adulterer in this verse since at that time, adultery was prevalent among women and also because she could get pregnant, it is more harmful. It was also said that the sexual desire for women is more prevalent and dominates her more than for men…" Interpretation of the verse was obtained from a downloadable computer software program at http://quran.al-islam.com/Tafseer/DispTafsser.asp?l=arb&taf=KORTOBY&nType=1&nSora=24&nAya=2

While citing women's protection as the primary goal of the veil, some women doubted that the veil in its current form performed that function. One reason for that was the distortion of the veil from its original form. "A large number of veiled women today were wearing clothes that were very inappropriate," argued one woman. Another suggested that women were the real culprits behind sexual harassment in the street. One veiled respondent argued, "You know the problem is with the women not boys because boys are forced to harass women when they are not properly dressed. They can't help it…." The veil was a duty to "protect women from men and to protect men from women." Other respondents refused to take blame for the sexual harassment problem insisting that men harass women regardless of what they were wearing. "It is all the same," insisted one respondent. "Everybody gets harassed in the street." One veiled respondent went far enough to suggest, "If the veil today is not providing the protection that it promised, then it is not needed."

Realizing that the veil offered little protection, some women emphasized other goals. For 20 percent of the respondents, the veil was not about protection or preventing sexual provocation, but about the value of woman. A woman should be shielded because she was "not a commodity for anyone to approach because she looks good." "When something is completely revealed," argued another respondent, "you no longer wonder what's behind it" and one loses interest in it. Some even gave some tangible goals, such as preserving "the women's beauty because it protects her hair and skin."

Five respondents, two veiled and three unveiled, could not answer this question. Another two indicated that it was a duty because it was a tradition that did not need to be explained or questioned. I found no pattern of a relationship between how women

understood the role of the veil in Islam and their dress code. Some of the women that indicated that the veil was a protection were dressed quite liberally and in tight clothes. The same was true for those who indicated that the veil covered women's beauties; some of them wore a lot of makeup and tight jeans, but were still convinced that they were fulfilling this religious duty.

The above section highlighted more of the contradictions embedded in the veil. Some women appeared to be caught in a cycle of reproducing a practice without much reflection on its purpose. Others were employing this practice as a means of emancipation from their own sexuality and tool of empowerment so that they stand on par with the males in society. Some women realized these contradictions and attributed the "failure of the veil" to social bias against women. Others insisted what failed was mediocre forms of the veil rather than the veil itself. This group also aligned itself with the values of some preachers and with the Egyptian male against female distorters of religion towards. They seemed to be uniting with the preachers and the males to achieve a "greater" goal, which will be discussed in the following section.

The variations in the answers regarding the religious rationale of the veil revealed some of the features and dynamics of the social arenas of power struggle, of which the veil was emblematic. Who was the veil protecting is a debatable issue. There was a "chicken-egg" type of argument where some women represented a contemporary position that the profanity of some woman's veil was the trigger behind the enormous street harassment problem. Another position insisted that the problem was the result of male's disrespectfulness for women in general, regardless of how women dress.

The Many Meanings and Functions of the Veil

The analysis above suggested strong disagreements regarding why the veil was a religious duty. Some women were skeptical about this duty. Although all participants believed that the veil was a religious duty, the applications and meanings attributed to that duty were quite divergent. The interview instrument explored the various meanings of the veil and the many different functions it performed in the lives of various respondents. Respondents were asked what the veil meant to them. For some respondents, the veil had a very symbolic meaning, but for the majority, it was a functional instrument that did not say much about the character but rather performed a specific function, which was to fulfill a religious duty.

For half of the respondents, the veil was a religious and/or social duty. Twenty-two respondents indicated that it was a religious obligation that they were responsible for before God. Four respondents underscored that it had no other meaning beyond that. "It means nothing more to me," one respondent emphasized. "It is an obligatory from God! That's all," declared another. For four women, the frontier of the religious and traditional/cultural in the veil requirement was quite fuzzy. "It is a religious duty on one hand, and a tradition on the other." "Society requires that woman be veiled," commented one respondent. In a follow-up question, one respondent was asked if she thought it was more a religious or a social requirement. She answered,

I believe it is fard. But frankly, in my opinion, girls today consider it more of a social requirement to avoid criticism from society more rather than a religious requirement… For many girls, what comes to mind first is how to relieve oneself from the hassle around.

For other women, the veil was a fundamental requirement in Islam, without which a Muslim woman would be deficient. "It is like prayer to me," said one respondent. "If I hadn't been veiled, I would have felt incredibly short in my duties." The veil took a more

symbolic/spiritual meaning for 15 women. For these, the veil signified the respectfulness of the woman wearing it and implied that she was available for everyone. The veil was also a representation of the woman's conscience, thus holding her back from sinning or straying. "It reminds me that I must be a good role model," or else the woman would set a bad example of the veil. This article of garment gave the woman a sense of responsibility that was similar to that of married woman. "It felt like I was free [before veiling] and now I have something to watch over." For another eight respondents the veil meant "everything," "it is my identity;" "my life;" "my title;" "it is who I am." The veil to these women was an identifier that distinguished them from the non-Muslims and from the nonrespectful.

There were a myriad of practical functions that the veil performed on a daily basis. To understand these functions, we asked women if the veil helped them (or, for unveiled women, would help them) accomplish something that they would not otherwise achieve. They were also asked to identify some of the personal benefits they realized through the veil. Answers to these questions provided a greater opportunity for women to express their views about the veil and to share more about their experiences with the veil, which helped better understand the veiling dynamics.

All unveiled woman insisted that the veil would not help them realize any practical gain. Many also argued that that the decision to veil should not be made in pursuit of worldly benefits and should only be prompted by one's personal convictions and beliefs. "It will neither help me nor harm me," defied one respondent. "This is a personal matter, and it is no one's right to judge me about it." Two of these unveiled respondents indicated that the veil might actually limit their opportunities in the

professional world, as many jobs were still not open for unveiled women, such as jobs in hotels, jobs in some multinational companies, and diplomatic jobs. One respondent commented,

Whether the veil would help me accomplish something, I am not sure. But in reality, it could prevent me from achieving certain goals. For example, the big hotels and the higher state rank positions in many places are not open for veiled women.

Some women also feared that the veil might put the person in a particular "untouchable" frame that restricted her social integration. According to one unveiled respondent, if she were veiled,

Lots of people would be afraid to talk to me like they do now… I feel that plenty of doors would be closed, like if I go out and have fun people would criticize me for being veiled and not acting properly. I will be expected to act "old". There are many taboos put on the veiled girl. She shouldn't talk loud, she shouldn't joke too much, I may not be asked any more to run some of the errands I do for work because I will be viewed as a "respectful" girl. I don't want to feel so limited.

This comment better explained what one veiled woman meant when she made an analogy between the veil and marriage. The veil made the woman feel less free and more self-conscious. That mold of how a "respectful" veiled woman should behave discouraged some woman from veiling.

More than one third of the veiled respondents (38 percent) agreed with their unveiled counterparts regarding the practical functions of the veil. Several of them indicated that the veil would not obstruct them from participating in the social and professional real. "My social role is to get a good job and earn good money. I don't think the veil would prevent or promote that goal. It won't have an effect." One respondent insisted, "The veil is a form of worship not tradition, so if I am wearing it because it might help me, then it is not really a way to worship." For most women, the veil was not

an absolute requirement for achieving something in specific in the professional world. Although it did help some get certain jobs, several indicated that there were places in Egypt that did not hire veiled women.

For about 14 percent of the women interviewed, the veil performed an essential spiritual function in their lives. It helped them get closer to God and in some cases acted like the voices of their consciences constantly reminding them of how they should behave:

To me the veil is something that holds me back from doing something wrong. It reminds me that I must be a good role model and that I have come a long way and the rest of the way will be easy.

When I was unveiled, I never felt truly disciplined. I used to talk to guys for a reason and for no reason…The veil made me more disciplined…

The veil offered several women a "large sense of relief" that emanated from the feeling of acceptance by God:

I became peaceful from inside…I felt that I have done everything that God wants me to do and therefore I felt closer to God…Overall I feel that my life will be full of blessing because God is satisfied with me.

Even when the veil almost disappeared in Egypt during the 1940s and 1950s, many women veiled as a result of a deep religious conviction and a desire to realize a certain level of closeness to God. For many other the veil performed various practical functions. Several respondents expressed that the veil relieved them from the burden of an unfulfilled social duty that distinguished the honorable woman from a disrespectful one in these daus. After a long pause, one respondent declared:

In the beginning I was not very comfortable in the veil. But home was on fire because of me [being unveiled]. Now I feel I gave myself a peace of mind from the constant arguments. At the same time, I fulfilled a religious duty.

Another indicated:

I got relieved from nagging at home. I also fulfilled a duty that I should have completed a long time ago.

The veil provided many other practical benefits. Several respondents indicated that the veil signaled entrance into a new stage where the woman was treated as mature and responsible, a status that only married women realized in the past:

"I felt as if I grew up ten years and am now responsible for myself."

I felt I got kind of older and wiser. My girlfriends started to consider me responsible for them spiritually. I felt like a sheikha[285] among them, maybe because at the time when I wore the veil, none of them was veiled.

It is as if the veil helped women transition from the status of a minor, who could be easily swayed and therefore needed to be restricted and controlled, to the status of an adult. Women also indicated that the veil improved their social status and gave them respect. One woman suggested,

The veil improved the way people look at me. Most people are judgmental about others and accordingly I am sure that I would be completely misunderstood for a disrespectful unreligious girl if I weren't veiled.

This added respect also allowed several women to participate more freely in social activities. One respondent proudly said:

The fact that I am veiled is the first impression people take about me… This makes the patients feel that they are in capable hands. They trust that I will be God-fearing and just to them… Because I work in Kasr el Einy[286] my patients are all poor people. They don't trust but the veiled woman… Second, if I am in a discussion, regardless of the topic being a religious matter or not, the veil will make me more heard because they will trust me and feel that they can take an opinion from me. They can mentally trust me…. Because I am veiled, nobody will be thinking they can't take a good opinion from me …I would not manage to be taken seriously enough if I had not been veiled.

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[285] *Sheikha* is female for sheikh. It literally means the elder of a community or tribe and in everyday language it refers to an Islamic scholar

[286] Kasr el-Einy is the state hospital of Cairo University's School of Medicine. It is a free hospital; patients without insurance receive free treatment there.

In other words, the veil legitimized women's participation in the male-dominated professional world. The veil, therefore, had a very empowering effect in some cases.

The veil acted like a protector for a number of women. One girl remarked that the veil protected her because "our society looks at the veiled girl in one way and at the unveiled girl in a totally different way." Another respondent noted, "I stand out less now that I am veiled. I do not get as harassed in the street as before when I used to get my hair done." One respondent proudly said, "When I wore the *niqab*, it put an obstacle in front of boys, and they no longer had anything to do with me."

The multivocal meanings associated with the veil became apparent by this analysis. At one pole, the veil represented a tool to satisfy a religious and social requirement with little or no implications regarding the women's character. At another pole, the veil was an important symbolic marker of the woman's identity as a Muslim. There was little variation in the distribution of the meanings ascribed to the veil across social class. The only difference found was with respect to the probability of restricting the meaning of the veil to the duty it performed. More respondents classified as lower-middle class suggested that the meaning of the veil was limited to the duty it performed (70.0 percent compared to 47.6 percent for middle class, and 50.0 percent for upper-middle class). The difference was, however, not statistically significant.

A number of interesting facts were revealed from the responses regarding the benefits and accomplishments from the veil. For some women the veil was a very personal and spiritual matter. For the majority, however, the veil represented a social duty, the absence of which exposed them to much pressure that might lead to their marginalization. The fulfillment of the veil requirement, on the other hand, gave women

social status and helped them realize the social rights that she gained during the Nasserite regime, which were not accompanied with the structural changes needed to sustain them.

As was discussed in Chapter 2, women's participation in the labor force has been increasing since the late 1990s, following a period of decline between 1989 and 1998 (Figure 4). While it is beyond the scope of this study to understand the correlates of these changes, data suggest that Egypt experienced significant changes in attitudes towards women during the 1990s. Interestingly, a minor reversal in this trend started towards the end of the 1990s, which also marks the period when veiling rates increased. This suggests an association between veiling and the assertion of women in public space and the labor force.

Analyses also suggested that for many middle- and upper-middle-class women the veil was a tool that helped them get by in a society that did not fully accept their right to participate in various social activities and was generally biased against the working woman.[287] As Macleod suggested, the veil helped women deal with these social biases against women. The veil also helped women deal with the decline in economic opportunities available for both genders. It provided a religious rationale for their unemployed status. They were unemployed because they wanted to abide by proper religious standards on the mixing of sexes rather than for lack of talent.

The veil today has become an essential power tool. It simultaneously liberates and imprisons, confines and releases, sanctions and disempowers. It helps women carry out many functions that they were only able to carry out on a limited basis in the past. At the same time, it limits their ability to perform other functions and sets some limits on their

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[287] Macleod suggests that the veil provides an instrument for dealing with gender biases against working women. Lower-middle-class women are forced by economic conditions to go out to work, yet society still view working women as less honorable. See Macleod, *Accommodating Protest.*

behavior s well as social expectations. In short, the veil represents the convergence point of highly paradoxical forces in society and provides a strategy for dealing with all these contradictions.

Moments of Pride

In addition to discussing the meanings and functions of the veil with participants, I explored with them if they explored any special moments since they got veiled. Specifically, respondents were asked if they could recall a specific incident that made them proudest about veiling. Twenty-eight respondents said nothing specific happened or nothing happened that they could recall at the time of the interview. Many of these respondents, however, insisted, "I am always proud of my veil."

Three main types of incidents made veiled respondents proud about their veil: when they were part of a group and felt they were better-mannered and more respectful than others, when they felt the veil protected them from harassment/excessive harassment, and when they felt distinguished as Muslims. One respondent narrated that she applied for a job as a secretary to a business person. She was the only veiled applicant, but she was the one selected for the job. "[T]he employer trusted me because I looked trustworthy and committed to my religion and so will also be committed to my work." Her selection for the job made her "extremely happy" that she was veiled. Respondents also felt proud when they were in a place where everyone else is acting inappropriately (for example drinking alcohol or wearing swimsuits). At that time, women reported feeling "very proud that my veil shows that I am not like those disrespectful people." Another woman recounted, "When any girl looks at me, I feel she says I wish I were like her. If she does not, then she doesn't know anything."

The image a person projects in society and how others think about the person was quite important to respondents. Many looked for approval or confirmation from society that they were better. Sometimes the confirmation came from complete strangers, which was extremely significant for some of the respondents. One woman spoke about an incident at a water park, when all women were in swim suits and having fun while she was the only veiled girl. She narrated, "A stranger passed by and said, 'You are better than all of these girls.'" It is quite common today that complete strangers approach women commenting about their dress, either praising or condemning. As several respondents pointed out, men, even those who do not approach the unveiled or harass them, speak disrespectfully about unveiled women, and that made some women proud as they looked "respectful."

There was also a lot of interest in preaching and "witnessing" for the veil as a form of *jihad*.[288] Muslims are required to attempt to correct the behaviors of the nonconformists at least through providing advice. Two respondents spoke proudly about their preaching and witnessing activities and how what they said was more believable because they looked like somebody who "walks the talk." Today, many women consider themselves ambassadors for the veil and seek every opportunity for advising others to correct their ways, as will be discussed further below.

Sexual harassment in the street has become a very common problem. Many women expressed the limitation this problem set on their movements and self-respect. Some research suggests that 83 percent of Egyptian women today are subjected to street

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[288] The concept of *jihad* is very fluid. It takes many forms and meanings depending on the socioeconomic and historic context. One important dimension is spreading Islam. During the early years of Islam, this meant waging war against the nonbelievers. But another important dimension is witnessing for God through one's good deeds and through preaching. *S*triving to become more virtuous and to resist sin are also considered forms of *jihad*.

harassment on a daily basis.[289] In some cases, the harassment is limited to verbal obscene flirtations but in other cases, it is physical. Verbal and physical sexual harassment in the street is another thing that makes the veiled feel proud, either because they are subjected to lower degrees of harassment or are exposed to harassment less often. "The unveiled girl is subjected to much more humiliating harassment than the veiled girl," maintained one respondent, and that made her proud. These functions that women associated with the veil, however, may not be necessarily accurate. A recent study conducted by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights on the phenomenon of sexual harassment suggested that the veil did not protect women from harassment. On the contrary, veiled women were found to be more likely to get exposed to street harassment.[290]

The third reason for women's pride in their veil is the mark it gave them as Muslim women. As one woman stated, "When a stranger sees me, he knows right away that I am Muslim. I am recognized as a Muslim anywhere I go." There is some kind of stigma today associated with the concealment of a woman's religious identity. "I really don't like to be asked if I am Muslim or Christian," recalled one respondent. She told a story about a male acquaintance who was interested in an unveiled friend of hers, but he never approached her because he assumed she was Christian (since she was not veiled). Another respondent recalled, "I worked in an all-Christian company, and I was the only Muslim, and I was veiled. I felt I was really proud to be a veiled Muslim." This is less of a factor in pride today, according to some women, because everyone is veiled. One respondent indicated that the veil no longer distinguished between women in Egypt today because "all girls are veiled, so I really do not feel that great difference." The difference

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[289] Shahla al Menufi, *Al-Tahharush: Al Saratan Al Ijtima'i* (Cairo: Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, 2008).
[290] Al Menufi, *Al-Tahharush: Al Saratan Al Ijtima'i*

would be abroad, where Muslims are minorities and where the veil becomes more of an identifier.

Most respondents could not recall a specific event that gave them pride in their veil, although many of these insisted that the veil gives them specific dignity and pride. The feeling of pride was strongly correlated with the feeling of respect that unveiled women lack. There are mounting pressures on women to limit their appearance in the public space. The veil legitimizes the woman's existence in public space and empowers her to participate more fully in a society that has redefined the concept of respect to mean covering up. It protects the woman not just from harassment, but from being a subject of male conversations where she is viewed as disrespectful. The veil also gives woman access to the domain of what Leila Ahmed (1999) calls official Islam, in which a few "elite" clergy have the right to deliberate in matters related to Islamic teachings. By virtue of veiling, many women are seen as knowledgeable enough to start deliberating on religion and even preaching Islam. In a sense, the veil provides a weapon for resisting forces aimed at pushing women aside from arenas of existence to which she has gained access in the past. It is also provides a link to other arenas where she was historically not accepted.

The Responsibility of the Veil

The previous discussion illustrated some of the expectations set on the woman she veils. In addition to the expectation regarding dress and behavior, the veil adds a a sense of responsibility towards other unveiled woman. Once veiled, many woman attempt to spread the veil. In many cases, that means taking a more active role in preaching the *hijab* to the unveiled to correct their ways. Witnessing for the veil involves a range of

strategies, such as striving to become a role model in appearance and outward behavior and finding opportunities to preach to other women to correct their ways. Through projecting a proper image of piety, some women felt that they effectively preached the veil, even if silently: "Any girl that sees me will consider wearing the veil now. So you can say I have become like a symbol in Islam." Another woman recounted, "When any girl looks at me, I feel she says, I wish I were like her. If she does not, then she doesn't know anything."

The active role that women played in spreading the veil greatly enhanced their confidence and expanded their agency. To demonstrate this, respondents were asked if they felt responsible for their unveiled friends. They were also asked how they acted upon that sense of responsibility, if they did. Almost three quarters of the respondents (73 percent) indicated that they did feel a sense of responsibility towards others. The remaining 27 percent insisted that every person was responsible for his or her own actions, and/or that they did not feel comfortable in probing into other people's personal matters.

The way the responsibility towards the unveiled translated into action varied significantly from one woman to another. While feeling responsible for other women, some reported that they never tried to preach either because they did not think they had the right to do so or were too shy. Another group of respondents indicated that they might give advice to their friends but would not nag and would not impose the conversation on somebody. One woman indicated that her inability to preach enough about the veil gave her a sense of guilt: "Naturally, any good veiled person would like to advise others… But I don't do that." Other women's sense of responsibility dictated them to preach and

advise others whenever opportunities arose. Some expressed a commitment to do everything it took to convince their friends to veil. Some felt a distinct sense of pride at succeeding at convincing an unveiled woman to adopt the veil. Some would even talk to strangers if the opportunity availed itself.

Whenever I find an unveiled girl, I do not leave her until I advise her and provide proofs from everywhere. It is haram that I see something wrong and not correct it.[291]

Islam required jihad from me and I have to go to any unconvinced girl…and try to convince her. I have not succeeded yet in convincing anyone. But I probably changed the ways of thinking of some. Unfortunately I had to let go as they were stubborn and did not want to be convinced.

I have a responsibility towards all the girls that I see and to whom I could talk to about the proper female Muslim attire and the proper way to behave. I have not succeeded before but may God reward me according to my good intentions.

It should be noted that Islam is a very communal religion. According to one *hadith*, "A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other."[292] That is why many Muslims feel responsible towards other fellow Muslims; all body parts have to be healthy for the body to be healthy. It is every Muslim's duty to try to get others to follow the correct path. The application of this requirement and the definition of what is correct and what is evil and/or objectionable varies from one time to another. At this present time, there appears to be a lot of emphasis on dress and rituals.

While the sample size did not allow for detecting statistically significant correlations between that sense of responsibility and other characteristics, the

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[291]One of the traditions of the Prophet of Islam requires all Muslims to correct the evil and objectionable either by hands, tongue, or at least in one's heart.

[292] The tradition says that the prophet of Islam clasped his hands with the fingers interlaced while reciting this *hadith*. The *hadith* was narrated in al-Bukhari Authentic *Hadith* Collection (*Hadith* 3:626). Translation was downloaded at http://muslimonline.org/cgi-bin/*hadith*.cgi (accessed February 1, 2009).

distributions of responses suggested a relationship between social class and the level of responsibility that women felt and how women acted upon it. Middle- and lower-middle-class women were more likely to express responsibility towards their unveiled peers. Three quarters of middle- and lower-middle class respondents felt responsible for others, compared to 64 percent for upper-middle-class women. Middle-class respondents were more likely to act on that sense of responsibility than both lower-middle- and upper-middle-class women. Seventy percent of middle-class women indicated that they acted upon that sense of responsibility that the veil dictates, compared to 50 and 44 percent for lower- and middle -class respondents, respectively. This demonstrates the active role the middle-class plays today in reconstituting social and religious values in Egypt.

The analysis suggested an important role for the veil in the Egyptian society. It provided women with a sense of meaning and value in their existence which other social circumstances undermined. While the economic and social conditions were reducing the tremendous human capital in Egypt into "surplus labor," or "social burden," women were using religion and the symbol of the veil to assert their worth and derive the perception of being active participants in social life. They were also using it to demonstrate their religious agency and their autonomy. They countered the idea that they were forced to veil, for which this research found significant supporting evidence, by actively engaging in the production of these forces.

The research also detected a lot of concern about maximizing religious credit points through adopting various behaviors, including preaching. Many of the religious sermons that women listened to emphasized religious credit and the various activities that might help the Muslim earn them. These credit points also appeared to compensate for

the lack of social and monetary reward for one's efforts through the labor market. The promise of an after-life reward help many men and women cope with the social and economic difficulties that they face on a daily basis.

Styles, Varieties, and Perceptions

The variations in the answers of the respondents regarding the correct form of veil highlighted some of the features and dynamics of the social arenas of power struggle of which the veil is emblematic. While society made the veil an uncontested requirement for the Muslim woman, the female agency has successfully reconstituted that veil to take infinite number of "correct" forms, and the process of reconstituting the meanings and forms of the veil is still ongoing. Many respondents were struggling to find acceptable resolutions for the contradictory forces they were exposed to on a daily basis. They agreed with many of the preachers that there were specific requirements of the veil that they failed to conform to, an acknowledgement that made them feel guilty. On the other hand, they were faced with the pressure to emulate other nonconforming women and to look modern and fashionable. This revealed the complexity and elusiveness of this new phenomenon. The variety also suggested that the variety had some implications on the perceptions regarding nationhood and the concept of Egyptianness, which was further demonstrated through a question on what the variety in the forms of the veil said about the Egyptian woman. The question allowed the researcher to take a journey into the women' minds as they sat back to reflect on what was happening around them and, more importantly, why it was happening.

Most of the women took the question to refer to the less conservative types of the veil today. The majority of the respondents (65 percent or 42 respondents) thought the

variety said something negative either about the veiled women or about society in general. Respondents indicated that the inappropriate styles that have mushroomed recently gave a bad image to the veil and Islam. "Some people misunderstand the *hijab* thinking it just means covering the hair," indicated one respondent. "This reflects very negatively on Islam." This, for another respondent, "gives a chance to the unveiled woman to criticize the veil by saying, look at how she's dressed. I'm dressed better than she is, and I'm not veiled…" All these new forms "are totally non-Islamic" and were induced by "cable and television" that Egyptian women "just imitate blindly." Some women also blamed the parents for not enforcing the correct veil on their daughters.

While 20 respondents focused on why the variety was negative, the remaining 22 focused more on the implications of this variety. Some women commented that the great variety of styles was indicative of the high level of confusion in Egypt today. "There is a lot of confusion today about what is right and what is wrong," said one respondent. "Today girls wear the veil because of pressure not because they are convinced." One respondent argued,

A girl that is not convinced finds all girls around her veiled, and they face discrimination and pressure until they veil. The father and mother force their daughter to veil no matter what. The most important thing is that the girl covers her head, and then she can wear a ton of makeup and even have hair bangs.

The media was cited as a dual force in the veiling phenomenon. On the one hand, women "face pressure from the media to veil." This referred to religious media, which is analyzed in the following chapter. On the other hand, nonreligious television channels "distort the veil by offering many forms of it that are non-Islamic." Pressure from the males around the woman was also cited as an important factor in inducing the state of confusion, and the submission of the women to the pressure to veil. Another important

implication of this variety was the superficiality of religion in Egypt today. One unveiled woman commented,

Everybody has narrowed down the veil to mere appearance. A girl would veil and wear whatever she likes so long as her head is covered…The veil has lost its meaning because of how much people talk about it. It bothers me when I am dressed more respectfully than a veiled girl and yet she's categorized as "respectful" and am not.

The variety, for some women, was a sign that the Egyptian woman was "hesitant," "confused," "unreligious," "uncultured," "has no personality," and even "Westernized." For one unveiled respondent, these forms also suggested that the Egyptian woman "has no confidence in herself due to the chaos that we are experiencing with regards to religion and the proliferation of strict preachers." Another veiled respondent commented,

[The variety] speaks of the many contradictions that [the Egyptian woman] faces in her life and how torn and mixed up she is between all of them. I'll tell you a story. One day a colleague of mine at work took "misconduct" because she wasn't wearing makeup. You get that at work and then on the street you are treated like an unmannered girl if you do wear makeup!

What troubled many of the respondents about the variety of the veil was that "we look awful among other Islamic countries." "We are an Islamic country, and what is happening here is *haram.*" "If we continue this way, we will be like any other non-Islamic country." The variety "makes us look like belly dancers. [Arabs] think we are neither religious nor well-mannered" One response was particularly interesting:

For me, there is no such thing as an Egyptian woman. The Islamic society is one nation. There are many issues and problem in our society and the only solution is religion [Islam].

The Egyptian identity experienced significant transformation after the First Gulf War. This transformation is partially the result of the increase in the rates of inter-Arab

migration that followed the war and the proliferation of satellite television. Both of these phenomena brought closer citizens across the different parts of the Arab world. The variety in veils, therefore, is illustrative of an identity crisis that Egyptians face today. This crisis has triggered a polarization of dress and a trivialization of religious discourse as the meanings of existence has dissipated amidst the social and political disarray that Egyptians are facing.

The multiplicity of the veil forms was not disconcerting to all respondents; some saw something positive about this variety. For some, it meant that the Egyptian woman was "creative," "fashionable," and knew how to reconcile the various contradictory forces that she faced on a daily basis. For others it suggested that "people are able to tolerate differences." One respondent commented that the innovation in dress styles implied that the Egyptian woman was not like other Arab woman "who are forced to wear the *niqab* and are oppressed." Rather she is "free to choose her own styles." In other words, the variety, while illustrative of many contradictions and pressures, was also a manifestation of the Egyptian's women resilience, power, and agency.

The Status of Religiosity and Morality in Egyptian Society

Many scholars insist that the Islamic world is experiencing a religious revival. The interview instrument was used to test this hypothesis and to find out if the veil was emblematic of this phenomenon. Respondents were asked whether they thought Islam was experiencing a revival and if this revival could be detected in people's manners and the status of morality. The core of any religion, in essence, is morality, and the role of religion is to provide guidance on relationships and how to behave towards the other to maintain peace and order in society. Was the apparent increase in religiosity also

associated with moral reform? If not, how did the divergence between the two come about and how do respondents deal with that paradox?

Initially, the majority of the respondents (60 percent or 38 respondents) thought that Islam was experiencing a revival as evidenced by the increase in the number of men growing beards and women wearing the veil and the vast increase in the number of religious programs and channels on cable television. All except six of these respondents, however, saw that morality was on the decline. These six respondents indicated that "since Islam is on the rise, also morality is on the rise." But in general, the vast majority of the respondents did not see an empirical reflection of the increase in religiosity on morality. Eight of the women that acknowledged the divorce between morality and religiosity found it "really strange". "I hope you'd ask a sociologist and come let me know please," requested one puzzled respondent. One of them, however, insinuated that the religiosity of some was not real: "I don't know, go ask the men who got religious and but are still harassing women in the street." Another thought there was a possibility that morality would eventually follow religiosity. "Maybe we just need more time for this religiosity to be demonstrated in behavior…"

While religiosity increased, according to some respondents, temptations also increased even at a higher rate, and that explained the paradox. Sources of temptation included obscene media scenes as well as Westernized women. For some respondents, this meant that society got polarized between a group that was religious and susceptible to the positive influence of increased religious awareness, and another group that fell prey to temptations and negative social influences such as deteriorating economic conditions

and exposure to the West. "It is as if society got split into two major groups; one very religiously conscious and one very corrupt," meditated one respondent.

A significant proportion of respondents (40 percent) suggested that the religiosity of people was superficial. "I told you, this religiosity is all superficial." "Not everyone growing a beard and wearing the veil is religious." "Lots of people are very strict with their appearances, but they don't heed the more important things." "You don't find real fear and love of God." The answers of these women were very similar to those of another 13 women, who while indicating that religiosity had increased, still insisted that that religiosity was artificial. "Yes, you see many religious programs on cable" and "many people growing beards and getting veiled, which is a good thing," but it is only because people "like to appear religious but are not applying religion correctly."

One respondent noted that this form of religiosity was a reaction to secularism. "When religion becomes the ruling system, morality improves," claimed one respondent. According to this respondent, the government was not able to control crime because its laws were still not founded on religion. This respondent took Iran as a model case for an Islamic state where *Shari'a* Law was applied accurately and that resulted in significant reductions in crime rates. Her answer was indicative of the second level of power struggle that the veil represented, or the struggle between state and society. Some respondents did not consider the current political regime legitimate because its laws were secular. They declared their rejection of the state through adopting forms of dress and religious practices that were discouraged by that state, particularly the *niqab*.[293] Their

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[293] There is a great ongoing debate regarding the *niqab* today. On October 8, 2009, Al-Azhar banned the *niqab* in all its affiliate girls-only schools, educational institutes and dormitories. The ban has resulted in severe attacks on the Azhar and stirred up a big debate which demonstrated the legitimacy problems that the state official religious authority, al-Azhar, is having,

resistance, however, is obstructed by the state that rejected this version of religiosity and refused to submit to popular demand for the effective application of *Shari'a* law, which is thought to be the root behind the collapse of the moral scheme in Egypt.

Reinventing the Past: My Mother and Me

One of the prime questions of this research is why the veil has been elevated to the highest levels of importance among religious duties today when very few people talked about it or observed it in the past. Respondents were asked, if the veil requirement was so clear-cut in Islam, why then the previous generation did not observe that requirement when they were their age. Many of the respondents shared with me their bewilderment about the phenomenon. Eleven respondents could not answer the question but insisted that the lack of veiling among the previous generation did not reflect negatively on its morality. "They were much better than us," asserted one respondent. "If you hear any stories about the past you would feel a great difference in their morals."

The answers of the 54 respondents that took the challenge could be broadly grouped into two classes: one that emphasized something positive about the past that made the veil unnecessary (26 respondents), and another class of answers that highlighted something good about the present that brought about this positive change (20 respondents). For the first group, the emphasis was on the moral standards of the previous generation and how they treated one another with respect and without judgment.

They did not need the veil because they were more respectful. Respect was defined from many different angles not just appearance like today.

The world was very different then. My mom and dad would rarely hear about a rape or harassment incident. Today, we hear about it every day. People feel that the only way to protect women is to veil them. But you know, this is just wishful thinking; everyone is

subject to harassment today, I even heard one time that a woman dressed in niqab got raped. Could you believe that?

The generation of my mother and grandmother was more religious. They protected their honor [didn't commit adultery] much better…The difference is today women just get veiled but in response to social pressure rather than religious calls. That caused so many social problems.

They did not have as many materialistic problems that preclude marriage, which made the incidence of harassment much less….

They think the spread of the veil will force girls to be better. But today, the girls that are wearing the true veil are quite rare.

People in the past, according to some respondents, were "less nosy," "less strict," "less judgmental," and "did not do anything against their will." One respondent insisted, "Today girls find everyone around them veiled and still doing whatever they want, and that is not the correct veil. I really think today the unveiled woman is much better than the veiled." "We are not more religious… We are still discussing basics." The previous generation was also less exposed to media pressure, and there were not as many preachers as there are today who "talk about the veil all the time."

Respondents also cited social and media pressure as two possible reasons why this generation is veiling while the previous one did not. The previous generation did have preachers, argued some respondents, but "the preachers did not talk about the veil then." Also "[the] media emphasized things other than religion, and there were more moral religiosity then." "Our parents had a better understanding of religion. Today we apply religion literally and in return, our morals are in steep decline."

Many respondents also remarked that the rise in immorality today was behind the increased emphasis on appearance. They believed that many women were using the veil to cover their immorality and appear "pious." The veil and increased religiosity were seen

as reactions to the outburst of moral corruption in society and the increased need for religion as a savior or coping mechanism. Several respondents saw a direct connection between the veil and Western imperialism. "The infidels outside are trying to corrupt our youth. That's why people got awakened and launched *jihad*." One respondent asserted, "*Jihad* takes many forms…The veil and the *khimar* especially is one." But this reactionary behavior, according to one woman, resulted in many forms of extremism. "You rarely find moderate people in our society today. It is either very corrupt people or very religious people." Many women were very perplexed with both questions regarding the spread of the veil today and its absence in the past.

Forty-three percent of the respondents thought the proliferation of the veil was the result of the increase in religious awareness, which was lacking in the past.

They had nobody to advise them.

Many preachers were lazy, and there was no cable TV like today.

God sent some good people who made us more aware of our religion.

Nowadays, the number of preachers increased dramatically, in the past they were very few,

They did not know the punishment awaiting the unveiled like today and what will happen to the woman that leaves her hair uncovered.

During their time, there was no religion. Everything was appropriate, not appropriate, not halal and haram.

Two respondents also argued that the unpopularity of the veil in the past was due to the control of the government over the media and the anti-religious sentiments at that time. "You know the government has no religion," and religious people experienced significant oppression from the state at that time. It should be noted here that were no

significant differences in answers to this question across dress styles: many veiled women thought that the fact that their mothers did not veil reflected something negative about society today. Some unveiled women also thought it said something positive about this current generation.

The widespread perceptions of women regarding the cultural change shed light on other dimensions of the contradictions that women are facing. These contradictions are further exacerbated by women who were constantly reinventing the past and reconstituting the present. While some rejected the transformations, others endorsed and celebrated them. This is what gave the veil its special hybridity and complexity. But what was the main trigger behind this cultural shift and the mass adoption of the veil by modern, educated women? The question was posed to the female respondents.

Women were asked what, in their opinion, caused the widespread use of the veil towards the ends of the 1990s. The majority of the women interviewed (26 respondents) thought that the shift in trend was due to an increase in religious awareness. "Religious awareness increased and women started realizing that the veil is a religious duty." This, for many respondents, was mainly due to the proliferation in religious media and the widespread religious campaigns. "Anybody who needs to know something about religion does not need to go to the regional preacher." All one needs is to watch one of the religious channels for just an hour a day, "and you will understand everything about religion." Respondents also indicated that there was a lot of discussion on religious programs about the veil, "which made many parents put pressure on their daughters to veil."

Another factor that contributed to the spread of the veil was social pressure. Almost one third of respondents cited social pressure coupled with a superficial understanding of religion, which resulted in this clear transformation in attitudes towards veiling. Many women suggested that today's religiosity in Egyptian society was "superficial" and people today "are only concerned with outward appearance." Another veiled respondents said the veil spread widely today "so that girls relieve themselves from the negative remarks by men…" An unveiled respondent argued this pressure was "why many veiled women are quite immoral today." Another respondent insisted, "I really think the spread of the veil in that manner is not a good indication. On the contrary, it distorts the image of Islam and turns it into a religion of appearances."

In addition to social pressure from family and society at large, women were exposed to intensive media pressure. Some women saw the proliferation of religious media as a positive trend, while others maintained that the media exerted excessive pressure on women to veil. This impact was exaggerated among the poorer and less educated segments of society as it "increased violence against women either by their husbands or other family members." This respondent urged preachers to watch for the unintended consequences of what they said. "Many people today are taking advantage of religion to release their psychological complexities." Another unveiled woman remarked,

All what the preachers care about is outward appearance. We all have spiritual needs and we reach out to preachers so that they teach us how to fulfill those needs. But all they tell the woman is go get veiled, so she does. What makes it even worse is that they don't tell us where to go from there.

One respondent claimed that some media channels received foreign funding to "spread religious intolerance." The perception regarding the introduction of a "Gulf"

version of Islam is not uncommon today. Several prominent intellects and scholars subscribed to this view. For example, a renowned screenwriter and journalist, Osama Anwar Okasha, argued during an interview on an Egyptian satellite channel program that the current proliferation of the veil, especially among famous female artists and actresses, was the result of religious campaigns orchestrated by Wahhabi movements that are strongly linked to the Gulf countries.[294] The following chapter provides evidence regarding the links between some of the versions of Islam that have gained popularity in recent years and the Gulf countries.

The contradictions and conflicting forces that the Egyptian woman is facing today are quite enormous and are leaving them all confused and indecisive about whether the veil is a good thing or a bad thing. The answers of respondents also elucidate the current forms of struggle that women are engaged in. At one level, they are using the veil as a weapon of "self-defense" against moral corruption. At another, they are using it to resist the forces of their marginalization. At a third level, the veil has become a strategy for confronting globalization and Westernization. All these new functions are performed simultaneously, resulting in the manifested contradictions in perceptions regarding the veil today.

Bridges and Boundaries: The Veil and the Other

Dress and appearance play a constitutive role in the cultural makeup of the Egyptian society today. To explore the scope and limits of this role, women were asked if

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[294] The interview was aired on Dream TV on April 07, 2007. It was downloaded at http://www.free-christian-voice.net/kwares-stalite.html (accessed April 1, 2008).

a woman's dress gave an accurate indication of her religiosity.[295] Forty-four percent (29) of respondents answered that it did. For many women, dress was an important yardstick for religiosity: the more conservative a woman was in her dress, the more religious she was assumed to be. Answers of the respondents ranged from a categorical, "Of course it does" to a less positive yes. "If she is dressed in really tight clothes then definitely she is not religious." "Only if she is wearing a *niqab*, then she is really religious." Some insisted that there was some correlation between dress and religiosity but the correlation was not perfect. Others insisted it was a very reliable indicator. A number of respondents were asked a follow-up question on how accurate their judgment was. They responded "My judgment is usually spot on 85-90 percent of the time" or "[my judgment] is very accurate." According to several respondents, "a girl that does not care about her dress style is not religious." "The more respectable the girl is," argued one woman, "the more she would try to conform in her dress to what God requested." Other responses were noted:

Definitely a girl that does not want to veil either knows she is wrong and does not care or is not concerned, and in all cases, it is haram.

Of course, you would notice that the veiled girl is relatively more disciplined and is more scrupulous than an unveiled girl. If she is not veiled, how would you know if she is Muslim or Christian?![296]

How would you know if a girl is Muslim? …I can tell if a girl I see is good or not through the way she dresses first and second through her behavior… The first step for a girl to be respectable in my opinion is through her appearance…

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[295] This question was reserved for the veiled respondents, although some unveiled women responded to the question without being asked.

[296] The importance of being distinguished from a Christian girl was a common theme in the responses. This is emblematic of the deteriorating interreligious group relations in Egypt; many riots and violent conflicts have erupted recently between the Muslims and Christians of Egypt. This could have played a role in enforcing the role of visual symbols in expressing religiosity today.

More than half the respondents, however, insisted that there was no correlation between dress and religiosity. Some were even annoyed by the question and remarked, "Only judgmental people do that." "If you do that, then you would not find any religious person in Egypt." Unveiled women were not asked this question as it could be misperceived. However, a couple made statements that lead the interviewer to ask about dress and religiosity in a follow-up question. These women said:

"[Dress] has nothing to do with religiosity. I consider myself a religious person [although am not veiled!"

"No, a woman could be veiled and not religious. And just because she is veiled doesn't mean she is well-mannered."

After a long pause, one respondent answered:

"No. Sometimes I see a girl who is very properly dressed but it doesn't necessarily tell me that she has better morals. I used to dress very inappropriately before I got veiled, yet I was more religiously strict than I am now.

For many women, the importance of dress lied in the fact that it provided an important marker distinguishing the "good" from the "bad", the "real" Muslim from the disingenuous one. In recent years, it has become increasingly important for Muslims in Egypt, especially Egyptian women, to strive to remove any doubts regarding their religious identity. This is partly why the veil has occupied such an important status today. However, in spite of all the propaganda regarding the veil, the majority of the women insisted that the veil and religiosity were uncorrelated and still refused to accept the veil as a yardstick for manners or religiosity. These doubts were not specific to any one class. Analysis revealed that the distribution of responses to this question was very similar across the three groups represented in this sample.

The following two questions in the interview further probed the link between the impressions generated regarding a woman's morals and her dress. Respondents were asked how many female friends they had were veiled and how many were unveiled. We did not openly ask if they would take a friend that did not look like them, but many of the respondents took the question to mean that way and were not offended. Most unveiled women indicated that it did not matter to them whether a girl was veiled or not. They reported that half their friends or a bit more were veiled. One of the unveiled respondents, however, indicated that all of her friends were unveiled: "But not because I prefer unveiled friends, it just happened..." For another girl, she did not have veiled friends because veiled women are prejudiced. Another unveiled respondent said:

Look, frankly, my unveiled friends are more, maybe because the veiled girls do not like to befriend unveiled girls. But I really think this is utter stupidity. As for me it does not matter. What matters is how the girl treats me. Oftentimes in our society I feel the veiled girls do not like to associate with girls like me not to be embarrassed. One time at college, I had two girls that I knew well, they were veiled. When I wanted to go get something from my car off campus, they told me, no you go alone and we will wait for you here. I knew that they were ashamed of the way I dress. I know that the way I dress is not quite appropriate in this society but it is no one's business, or elsewhere is that personal freedom they talk about?

Thirty eight veiled women reported that the majority of their friends were veiled. Twenty-three of all veiled respondents affirmed that they preferred their friends to be veiled. "Every girl likes the girl that thinks like her," commented one respondent. "Frankly, when I see a girl unveiled I feel she is not one of us, she is not natural." Another woman noted that it was important for many veiled women to befriend the veiled to be sure that they think alike. One woman wearing the *niqab* revealed, "The veiled, especially if she wears the *niqab* would not like to walk in the street next to one with an uncovered head." She added, "It does not matter for unveiled girls; they befriend anyone;

they have no objections whatsoever" as they did not care. Another respondent described as wearing less conservative clothes enthusiastically answered saying, "You know what? I never befriend a Christian, and if a Muslim is unveiled, I don't trust her."

Twenty-seven veiled respondents indicated that it did not matter whether a girl was veiled or not. One argued, "On the contrary, I sometimes like to befriend unveiled girls because I pity them. Maybe if I become her friend I can help her become veiled." Even if the woman chose to befriend an unveiled woman, the veiled woman would make it her mission to get the unveiled to change her ways and veil: "I heard a veiled friend of mine said once that we must not leave our unveiled friends without trying to talk to them about the veil, especially if the girl was good from the inside."

Analysis revealed a strong correlation between class and patterns of association among veiled and unveiled women. Eighty two percent of the middle-lower class affirmed that they'd preferred to befriend women who looked like them, compared to only 11 percent for upper-middle class and 52 percent for respondents classified as middle-class women. This might suggest that the level of tolerance with regards to dress was greater among higher socioeconomic groups.

The analysis revealed the importance of dress in determining social associations and barriers today. It divides society between preachers and preached to, moral and immoral, and honorable and disrespectful. These neat categories help women deal with the contradictions they face every day, thus bringing some order to a world that has become quite chaotic. But in so doing, dress draws boundaries between people and results in the exclusion of certain groups, namely the unveiled women, as "unreligious," even non-Muslim. The stigma and peripherization that the unveiled respondent

experience today are quite significant. The following section further manifests these difficulties.

Voices from the Periphery: Unveiled Women Speak

The previous section demonstrated some of the challenges of staying unveiled today. Throughout the interview, unveiled respondents talked about the difficulties, even oppression, they faced in a society that rejected them as an ill-mannered and peculiar to society. This became even clearer as we asked a random sample of 30 male respondents whether they would consider marrying an unveiled girl. Twenty-seven men were asked. Of these, 18 indicated that they would either prefer a veiled woman, or would never marry an unveiled woman. For those who preferred the veiled, they remarked that they would do everything to veil their wives after marriage. The comments regarding the unveiled made by young men in Egypt were quite significant:

I would never marry an unveiled woman.

Of course my wife has to be veiled.

She must be veiled at the very least; I could never love an unveiled woman.

I would never marry an unveiled girl. I could sleep with one but will never marry one.

I do not respect unveiled girls. I would never marry one to start with. That's impossible.

There is no rational woman who would reject the veil. And I wouldn't go marry a devil…

A couple more stories related informally by some of the unveiled girls I know are even more revealing. One woman narrated,

One day I was sitting in my car and a woman wearing a niqab passed by me with her young daughter. Suddenly the woman started pointing to me so her little girl would see and then she asked her daughter "You know where this woman will go in the afterlife?"

The girl answered her mother "to hell." And her mother said "Good answer. Do you know why she will go to hell?" The girl said "Because she is not veiled."

Another incident revealed the boundaries that the veil sets between the girl viewed as respectful, and the disrespectful. The female interviewer narrated this story

Last year at school we had some time to kill between two lectures. Some of our Christian friends (boys and girls) began to play a certain game. They looked hilarious so I joined with another two Muslim veiled women. We were laughing out loud and having a ball, but then later when we were going up for the lecture, a male friend stopped two veiled girls (and not me) and rebuked them about their inappropriate behavior. He even went as far as to say that, "Where do you think you are? You are on campus." He provoked Marwa so much that she stayed mad about it for a week and even cried, saying, "What does he want us to do? Sit on a bench for two hours so we could look mannered?"

While the veiled woman was mad that a male friend tried to impose a certain code of behavior on her, the unveiled felt excluded. She recalled,

I am not even considered in the league of mannered girls that are worthy to be part of a discussion on manners. So it is not a surprise for an unveiled i.e. ill-mannered girl like me to act inappropriately. I am not even susceptible for reform since the very first rule of being mannered, that is the veil, does not apply.

Street Harassments: Its Extent and Its Implication

Street harassment is a strong and inexplicable force shaping the behavior of Egyptian women and parents today. Several respondents and observers (like Iqbal Baraka) suggested that the shift in dress and the spread of the veil were direct outcomes of increased harassment in the street. A recent study published by the Egyptian Center for Egyptian Women found that at least four in five women are subjected to street harassments on a daily basis. The report also suggested that veiled respondents could be more provocative to men as the veil could raise men's curiosity.[297]

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[297] al Menufi, *Al-Tahharush: Al Saratan Al Ijtima'i.*

Several interviews were conducted with a variety of women that were exposed to sexual harassment. In one interview, a woman, Noha Roshdy, narrated an incident that took place in June 2008. A truck driver stretched his hand out of the car and grabbed the woman's breast until she almost fell. The man was about to flee, but another car cut off the truck and forced the driver of the truck to halt. Noha was able to grab the harasser, and she insisted on reporting the man to the police. Strikingly, as she expressed her determination to take the man to the policy station, everyone started rebuking her, saying, "Don't you see what you are wearing." When she went to the police station, the police officer tried to dissuade her and her father from filing the report saying, "You are a respectable family, the name of your father would be tarnished with this." The police officer also refused to send the man to the other station to complete the procedures. Her father had to take the man in his own car to the other station.[298]

Women in Egypt are always blamed for being harassed or sexually abused. One rapist was interviewed on April 22, 2005. The interviewer, a veiled woman, first asked him what his crime was. The second question was What was the woman wearing? The rapist explained that the woman was wearing provocative clothes. The interviewer showed sympathy to the rapist and cast all blame on the victim. The way the woman was dressed was seen as making her deserving of the crime. The interviewer went on to ask him, would you do that with a girl who dressed modestly and the rapist answered, "Even if it kills me. I would free her."[299]

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[298] The interview was conducted on the Mehwar Channel on October 15, 2008. On October 26, 2008, the man was sentenced to three years in prison. This is quite an anomaly as most sexual harassment cases go unreported and police officers oftentimes discourage victims from filing harassment complaints.
[299] The interview was downloaded at http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/ 671.htm (accessed November 28, 2008).

Conclusion

Looks and appearances play an important in role in categorizing and even tiering the members of society in Egypt today. There is a strong need to be recognized as Muslim and religious. People are being ranked according to a discrete yardstick of what is acceptable and what is not. In the absence of a similar study conducted in the past, it is hard to tell if the emphasis on appearance and physical expressions is new to this society. However, it is clear that appearance and dress brings certain types of people within the same community together and others apart, regardless of compatibility of backgrounds and ways of thinking.

Research also revealed some interesting intergroup dynamics. There is a heightened sense of responsibility to preach. This new activity that many women are engaged in today gives them pride and adds meaning to their existence. In the lack of opportunities for asserting the person's worth, this has become one of the main survival strategies. The promise of reward in the afterlife for witnessing further encourages this trend and compensates for the absence of return on human capital investment in Egypt. However, these activities give some a sense of superiority and others a sense of inferiority. Many groups in society, particularly the unveiled, feel alienated and marginalized by these activities. Some lament the fact that deep inside they could be much more religious than the veiled woman preaching to them, and that religiosity in Egypt is now reduced to mere appearances.

While much of the research on the veil today associate it with what is now termed religious revival, this research decoupled the relationship between religiosity and the veil. Many respondents saw today's religiosity as superficial, and saw that society today is

actually experiencing a steep set back in its moral and religious standards. Also, more Egyptian woman found this generation to be less religious and more morally corrupt than the previous generation. The veil today therefore functions as an instrument of resistance and accommodation functioning at least at three interrelated arenas of power conflict.

At the first level, women are using the veil in response to new forms of male dominance that has emerged over the last two decades. One Egyptian scholar suggests that this phenomenon is caused by "three decades of incitement against women."[300] Sexual harassment of women in the streets is one manifestation of this phenomenon. Also the portrayal of unveiled women as disrespectful, even deserving of violent crimes against them is another illustration of these gender politics. These forms of oppression today are sanctioned by religion and are playing a prominent role in spreading the veil across all income and class groups.

Many women today are forced to veil as they want to avoid nagging, disgraceful harassment in the street, and the stigma of being unveiled. However, the research illustrated very unique and interesting forms of agency that women still enjoy. The Egyptian woman is actively engaged in a dialogue regarding what religious laws mean, a domain traditionally monopolized by men. The diversity in the forms of the veil and the interpretation of what the veil means and looks like in Islam are some of the expressions of her agency today. The assertion of her agency has been confirmed through an examination of labor force statistics. The spread of the veil has coincided with an increase in the female participation rate in the labor force. Egyptian women are

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[300] The scholar is Muhammad El Sayyed Said, Director of the Center for Political and Strategic Studies at al-Ahram Institution. See Magdi Abdelhadi, "Egypt's Sexual Harassment 'Cancer.'" BBC News, July 18, 2008, sec. Middle East. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7514567.stm (accessed November 28, 2008).

successfully responding to the many conflicting forces acting on them to conform, modernize, Westernize, traditionalize, and to exit the public space through employing a mix of submission and resistance strategies.

These two underlying forces are constitutive of the social arena of conflict. One is related to a state-society struggle aiming at redefining the role of religion in society and the version of Islam that the state should adopt. Women's responses provide some clues regarding this level of power struggle. Some women have suggested that the veil is a response to the perceived secularization of the state and social laws, which resulted in a social disintegration. The following chapter provides more evidence on this arena of power contestation.

A third arena of power that is shaping the meanings and forms of the veil is related to globalization and technological advancements. The recent revolution in digital media coupled with a freer movement of goods and people across the borders of the Arab world brought closer very diverse Islamic cultures and produced new forms of Islamic activism. One particular event that catalyzed this process was the First Gulf War, a war that resulted in the dislocation of massive number of Arab people who resided in the Gulf Countries prior to the war. The fusion of distinct cultures in the Arab world was accompanied with the importation of "foreign" attitudes towards women and the emergence of antifeminist sentiments targeting the confinement of women's presence in public space.

The veil is also used as an instrument of identity assertion and a weapon against the forces of globalization that are threatening to impinge on traditional culture that is defined more along religious rather than local/Egyptian culture. My research revealed a

cultural and identity shift whereby Egyptians see themselves as belonging more to an Islamic nation rather than an Egyptian culture. Again, inter-Arab migration trends that emerged over the last three decades played an important role in this cultural shift. In addition, the proliferation of Arab satellite media channels, many of which promoted specific versions of Islam, is another factor behind this identity shift. In short, the veil is symbolic of two simultaneous battlefields. An internal battle whereby social problems are projected on women. Women respond by veiling as a to adjust to and resist these social issues. The veil is shown to be a manifestation of these power dynamics and a weapon for resisting them. The external battlefield is one whereby women are active warriors in a struggle against a state that is losing its legitimacy and a foreign imperial force that is threatening the traditional culture. This external power struggle will be demonstrated further in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

The Transformation of Religious Discourse in the Age of Satellite

Introduction

The discourse on globalization took shape during the post Cold War era. Much of the discourse focused on the political economy of global forces, and how globalization resulted in the reconfiguration of economic structures.[301] Other elements of the debate discussed the effect of globalization on state sovereignty and power.[302] The literature expressed anxieties regarding the "globalization of culture" and the decay of local cultures as globalization tools such as the Internet, satellites, and cable television dissolve away cultural boundaries and transform local identities.[303] This globalization literature emphasized the effect of the intersection of two opposite cultures; the Western culture on one hand, and the local culture an the other. Little or no literature discussed the effects of globalization on interactions among non-Western cultures.

The following two chapters shed some light on how globalization has also catalyzed intraregional interactions and resulted in significant identity transformations. I argue that globalization results in the fusion of cultures that are stereotypically grouped under the same brand (e.g., Islamic, Asian, Arabic). These dynamics are still constantly traversed by interregional and "intercivilizational" forces, thus further compounding the complexity and elusiveness of globalization. They also produce novel state-society

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[301] See for example, Hardt and Negre, *Empire*; Haggard and Kaufman, *The Politics of Economic Adjustment*.

[302] Ohmae, *The End of the Nation*; Wriston, *The Twilight of Sovereignty*.

[303] Fernandes, *India's New Middle;* Kellner, "Globalization, Terrorism, and Democracy."

relations and new forms of social movements. The multifaceted nature of the veil is a strong demonstration of these rich, unexplored arenas of globalization. Specifically, I will examine the impact of the emergence of the Arab satellite television on the forms and meanings of religiosity as well as perceptions regarding women and the veil in Egypt. I also demonstrate how these new forms of technology affected state legitimacy and its power over the domain of value constitution in Egypt.

The chapter starts with an overview of the digital media industry in the Arab world. This is followed by an examination of some of the primary components of religious awareness in Egypt, as suggested by responses to a detailed questionnaire with veiled and unveiled Muslim Egyptian women conducted during the summer of 2008. These interview results provided evidence regarding the centrality of the digital media to the mass-veiling phenomenon. As such, the analysis proceeds to assess these new forms of media through conducting a content analysis of the various messages and programs featured on these media channels. Two genres of religious media are analyzed. This chapter focuses on the first type, which emerged towards the end of the 1990s and took a quasi-liberal, more lenient form. In this analysis, this type of media is referred to as the new-age media. The second type, the neo-traditional media, is stricter in its interpretations of Islam and emerged half-a-decade into the history of exclusively religious media. It is analyzed in detail in Chapter 7. The constitutive effect of these media channels is explored through discourse analysis of religious sermons delivered by some of the most influential preachers in Egypt today, as highlighted by the responses to the interview instrument.

Overview of the Arab Satellite Media Industry

One of the most troubling political crises in the Arab world during the last few decades was the invasion of an Arab country, Kuwait, by a neighboring Arab country, Iraq. The invasion shocked the entire Arab world, as citizens could not fathom the fact that two "sister" Muslim countries could go to war against one another. The Gulf War was covered in the media almost exclusively by the American cable news networks, most prominently the Cable News Network (CNN). The coverage was perceived in the Arab world to be biased and ethnocentric. While the demand for CNN increased significantly in the region during that time, there was a growing rejection of American imperialism that was able to dominate the entire world not just through its military power, but also its cultural hegemony and its monopoly of media technology. The citizens of the Arab world were dismayed by the absence of any Arab channel that have the technological capabilities to present the news effectively but from a regional, "less biased" perspective.

This was an opportune moment for some wealthy Saudi businessmen who were closely related to the regime to enter the market of satellite media. The first businessman to venture into this market was Walid al-Ibrahim, a brother-in-law of King Fahd. Al-Ibrahim established the Middle Eastern Broadcasting Center, or MBC. MBC started in 1991 as a news and entertainment channel. Shortly after, the satellite television media industry mushroomed in the Arab world and attracted many investors. Toward the end of the 1990s, new exclusively religious channels emerged and captivated the attention of young Muslims thirsty for information about their religion. These young youth were also eager to dispel the images of shame that the Western media created about Islam and Muslims in the late 1990s. The demand for exclusively religious media was confirmed

through surveys in different parts of the Arab world. The channels filled a clear demand gap and soon became the primary source of religious knowledge and education.

The emergence of religious satellite television was closely correlated to another phenomenon, namely the rise of what is now called the "new-age" Islamic preachers. These were nontraditional preachers who were not part of the "institutionalized Islam," or the Islam of official Islamic institutions like al-Azhar University,[304] and whose main platform for preaching was the mosques. New-age preachers, on the other hand, did not receive any religious education or training; they were, for the most part, secular people[305] who had the gift of public-speaking and had self-educated themselves in religion. They were also relatively younger and many of them even had other full-time jobs that were not related to religion or preaching. Satellite television gave an extraordinary forum for these new preachers to become like stars in the Arab world. These new preachers also contributed to the success of these new religious media.

How They Know What They Know?

In the qualitative study conducted in Egypt in the summer of 2008 regarding the veil, many respondents cited the media as the principal factor in the increased incidence of veiling among Egyptian women today. Almost three quarters of the respondents indicated that the media was their main source of religious information. Of these, 80

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[304] In Islam, a preacher is expected to receive specific religious education that starts at a very early stage. Many of the preachers in the past were brought up in local mosque-affiliated educational system, called *kottab*, where they memorize the Quran. They then receive scholarly education in Shari'a and Islamic jurisprudence at an Islamic institution, such as al-Azhar. This was the expected background of religious preachers in the past, but the new-age preachers significantly altered that.

[305] By secular, I mean they are not part of any formal religious institution. In the past, preachers dressed in traditional Saudi-like male clothes (loose-fitting gown and a hair cover), but now, many preachers who belong to the formal religious institution have started wearing ordinary clothes, including Western suits, and some do not grow a beard in order to appear more contemporary.

percent reported that media was their only source of religious information. When asked whether they read any religious books to learn more about Islam, the vast majority (77 percent) indicated that either they did not, or they read very little. Twenty-one respondents said they did not like reading or had no patience for reading. The responses of some of the women illuminated the domain of control that the digital media have today on religious awareness today. Respondents said,

Religious programs on television are almost the only source….

I do not have the patience for reading. I prefer visual and audio media.

I got used to the computer screen. Getting quick information through the net is better than reading the entire book.

Honestly, I do not read at all. I do wish I could sit and read for more than five minutes before getting bored.

Since the Internet entered my house, books became a store for spiders.

I like the media most of all. I'm too tired after work to read and just want to lie down in bed and watch television [Laughingly]...I read about two pages per week.

I should read more, but I do not manage to understand from books like from television

Respondents considered digital as a good substitute for books that were not accessible to readers either due to their content or language style. To some women, it was an alternative to no religious education at all. Traditional preachers and religious scholars normally targeted older people and spoke formal Arabic, which, as explained before, is very difficult to understand and sounds almost like a foreign language to many Egyptians. They also only focus on reading and interpreting the Quran, but do not incorporate religion in everyday life. Many of the preachers on religious programs today are more successful in relating to youth through a new content focus and through the utilization of innovative presentation techniques. The programs presented on religious channels are

"easy to understand and close to the youth," and the preachers "speak our language and know how to address the youth," which is quite a change from the near past. Respondents appreciated the fact that many of the preachers are young and dynamic and make sure to address the interests and concerns of the young and discuss the issues that they deal with on a daily basis.

To assess the level of power that digital media had on people's religious ideas, respondents were asked if they trusted the information they received through this medium, if they found any contradictions in the material presented to them, and if they developed special mechanisms to deal with any contradictions. Forty percent of respondents indicated that, for the most part, they trusted *all* the material presented on their favorite shows. These respondents insisted that it was important to trust the preachers presenting on television. "If we do not trust our preachers, then where else would we learn our religion from?!" The questioning of the trustworthiness of these preachers, as this question might have suggested, caused distress among some respondents. "Of course I trust the [preachers on cable television] very much, and it never occurred to me before that what they are saying might be wrong," asserted one respondent. Another remarked, "Why are you asking that question? Just sit and watch them yourself and you will find that all preachers presenting are respectful and knowledgeable." One annoyed respondent added, "It has become fashionable these days to question our preachers. Of course the ones that are questioning them are all wrong." These respondents were of the opinion that "the principles and foundations of Islam are well-known, and no one could alter or distort them." They asserted that all preachers constantly referred to passages from Quran and Sunna, which are unchangeable. There

was no reason to doubt that the information imparted was accurate because the source of information, religious texts, was eternal.

Responses of some women suggested that they trusted the preachers because they needed to. "I really do not know how to answer this question. But what would make us distrust even our preachers…Maybe some lack the ability to impart the information, but why would we doubt that they are making the information up?!" The chaos and confusion that respondents were experiencing in their lives created a need to have a stable pillar on which to lean and for many women, that pillar was the source of religious information through which they make sense of the world. These preachers were filling a specific void represented by a lack of vision and direction, a function that the state traditionally provided.

Some women trusted the preachers, but were not sure why. "I do not think any of the preachers would be saying anything wrong. Don't ask me why!" For some women, there was some sort of a "hidden hand" that filtered out bad preachers and information. The nature and the authority of that hidden hand was not clear, but to some it could be fear of embarrassment that other preachers might come out and refute what a given preacher said. Others alluded to some authority that scrutinized the information presented and the credibility of the presenter. That might be the authority of the management of the channel or the state, but that was also not clear. What was evident here was that the level of trust for the material presented on the digital screen was high, but there was still some doubt about the material presented.

The level of trust was conditional on certain factors for many (39) respondents. Some women only trusted those preachers who were "similar to me in thinking and

belief." Others trusted the ones that everyone else trusted and those who were least controversial. "If a preacher is not good, you will find a million bad rumors about the person." The market field provided some guarantee that good preachers remained trustworthy through maintaining a good name. A number of respondents admitted that they did hear some information that they found strange. But they attributed the strangeness of the information to "one's ignorance" rather than the preacher's incompetence.

It should be noted that over the years, and in an attempt to maintain their authority, many preachers propounded the idea that questioning what they say was equivalent to questioning religion and to being unfaithful. The human mind, they argued, could not comprehend everything God commanded. Another complicating factor here is that while Muslims are encouraged to read the Quran, they are taught that they do not have the power or ability to interpret it. They therefore have to rely on accepted interpretations of Quran and Sunna provided by certified Islamic scholars. Only people with specific credentials are authorized to interpret the Quran and provide "*fatwas*". As discussed in Chapter 4, during the Abbasid period, it was decided that the body of Islamic jurisprudence was complete and eternal. This gave a body of laws created during a specific period the status of immutability and permanence.

There is a very fine and fuzzy line in Islam between seeking more knowledge about religion and questioning it. Many Muslims are afraid to ask or understand why a certain teaching in Islam has become a law, even if that law sounds unreasonable or contradictory to the essence of Islam. Many Muslim youth in Egypt are trapped between the desire to know more and the risk of letting the reign of the mind go too loose to lead

to disbelief. The solution that many preachers present is to "have faith," and not question the material they presented, a solution that gives the *ulema* considerable power.

Not all respondents perceived a "hidden hand" that ensured that "truth will always triumph." Some expressed concerns about the contradictions and narrated various mechanisms for dealing with them. Some listened only to the preachers they knew and trusted. Others said that they could always sort out bad information from good information through an honest conversation with the heart and soul as one's conscience always had the right answer. "Ask your heart," one respondent recommended. "I pray for guidance," another remarked. A third suggested, "I go with what I feel is right." Finding answers to religious questions inside one's heart is a very basic principle in Islam. In one of the traditions of the prophet of Islam, it is recommended, "Consult your heart even if you receive an official *fatwa*." This principle stands in stark contrast to the rigidity portrayed in the process of *fatwa*-making, and Shari'a interpretation regarding who has the power and authority to do either and how the religious teachings are eternal.

The filtration of information appeared to be more complicated and disconcerting for another group of respondents. These insisted that there were many contradictions in what they saw on television, and some "don't know how to tell who is right." Several respondents suggested that the platform of digital religious programs was full of preachers "seeking fame and money" and many misrepresented or bent religion. Some of these preachers presented a very rigid and radical version of Islam because there was a market for it. Others "sculpt religion" to make it more lenient and attractive for young people. Respondents also indicated that for these religious channels to attract the greatest

number of young audience, they needed to "present religion in a fast and superficial way," which did not allow for a comprehensive understanding of religious ideas.

Several respondents regretted the recent confinement of the domain of religious education to cable television and thought that the source was either insufficient or unreliable. "I hate it when I hear something on one of the programs and then later discover that it was wrong," remarked one woman. "I hate these contradictions!" These respondents, therefore, still preferred books because they were not "people's opinions." But these were a minority (only five respondents) among middle- and upper-class groups that were well-educated and are expected to be tomorrow's technocrats, entrepreneurs, and policy makers.

The shift to a screen culture is a global youth phenomenon not restricted to Egypt. The problem is that in Egypt this television culture is coupled with an educational system that emphasizes memorization over understanding. The result is the loss of critical thinking and a tendency to reduce the world into binary categories of bad and good, *halal* and *haram*. This seems to play an important role in the phenomenon of the trivialization of religion that Egypt as well as many other parts of the world are experiencing today.

Assessment of the Effectiveness of Religious Programs in Egypt

To assess the impact of the new media forms on shaping the meaning of the veil and religion, we asked the participants in the qualitative study two questions: 1) "Do you think the media is giving sufficient coverage to topics related to the veil?" and 2) How about the essential morals of Islam, do you think they are adequately covered by the media? Forty percent of respondents indicated that the coverage of topics related to the veil was enough while 44 percent insisted that it was still insufficient. The remaining 16

percent were not sure. All unveiled respondent insisted that the coverage was enough or more than enough. The variation in the responses to this question came from the veiled respondents. Those who thought it was enough referenced the fact that "many girls are getting veiled today," while others insisted that there were a lot of programs related to the veil, but the effect was sometimes offset by bad media and programs that featured improperly dressed women.

Several respondents argued that the coverage on television was extreme: "Many women veil and then shortly unveil" due to media pressure, suggested one participant. "This pressure makes women veil even if she was not convinced and then she takes it off when she feels bridled with it." One woman critiqued the way the veil was preached. "They need to eliminate those programs that present the veil in a terrifying way," demanded one unveiled respondent. "They probably talk about the veil more than anything else," noted another unveiled woman. She continued, "I don't want the veil to be the only concern of Egypt tomorrow!" A veiled woman shared this same concern and noted that the coverage was "excessive to a depressing point."

Some respondents did not think the coverage of the veil topic was sufficient. They agreed that the issue was receiving lot of attention but "we need more" or that not all segments of society are reached through the current media because "not everyone has dish." Some suggested that while the coverage was "way too much," it was not effective because the coverage is superficial. Some emphasized that more programs should target men "to realize the value of the veiled women." This recommendation is in reference to the problem of street harassment, which both veiled and unveiled women alike suffered from.

Those who deemed the coverage insufficient compared the air time of religious shows to that of entertainment shows. According to several respondents, entertainment constituted a major temptation to Egyptian youth today and created a greater need for more shows discussing how to face these temptations. "Of course they are not enough," asserted one respondent. "We need a lot more." "All these video-clips and movie channels and you tell me the coverage is adequate?" "So long as we have bad shows on television, we will need more coverage on the veil." Others were resentful that there were still many female program presenters and broadcasters who were still not veiled, "Many young women today take these women as role models," which neutralized the effect of the good programs.

There was less variation among respondents regarding the coverage of topics related to morals. The vast majority (81 percent) thought the coverage was not enough. Some of those who were not sure about the level of coverage of issues related to the veil were more positive that the coverage of morality in religious media was not enough. "We need much more coverage in this area in particular." Twelve women thought the coverage of morality was enough. They said, "Yes, it is all they talk about…." If that does not translate into improvement in morality, it is because the media "is full of contradictions. There are channels that broadcast very good religious shows, but then you find the same channel broadcasting entertainment shows with inappropriate video-clips." One respondent went far enough to request that "*all* non-Muslim channels be eliminated" for a satisfactory coverage of morality to be realized. Respondents also noted that even if the amount of air time was sufficient, the timing of the programs gave it limited

viewership. One woman thought that the increase in religious shows was very recent and had not taken root yet. "We need more time to gauge its impact," she suggested.

For several respondents adequacy and effectiveness were entwined; respondents deduced that the coverage was not enough because "people are not behaving on a moral level." So "without watching" one respondent concluded that the programs were not adequate as evidenced by the state of social morality. One respondent noted that the coverage was very random and reactive. "They don't talk about morals unless there had been a certain accident or crisis" that was too striking and therefore warranted media coverage. A frustrated unveiled woman said, "I really hope they focus more on morality and the moral values like honesty, fairness, etc." One puzzled respondent thought, "maybe it is not enough, but what would the media do? Issues related to morality are quite intuitive?" Implicitly, this respondent was suggesting that the domain of morality was still a private family issue that did not need to be discussed on the media. The veil, therefore, was an exceptional topic of morality that needed to be covered because of a noted deficiency in this less intuitive requirement. Morality, on the other hand, did not need preaching because what is right or wrong is obvious.

Perceptions about media coverage of religious topics were quite divergent. While all respondents were exposed to the same types of media, their experiences underwent significant mental and cultural processing and translated very differently for each respondent. This divergence suggests a number of facts. First, it is not clear whether supply created its own demand or the opposite. We do not know whether the preachers have created a demand for religious programming or whether the market gap in religious media has been in existence and these programs have just fulfilled these gaps. Previous

survey research suggested great demand for religious programming.[306] This could be on explanation for the proliferation and success of religious channels on television. However, the lack of religious media does not explain the success of particular versions of Islamic media programming. It may be argued that the version of Islam adopted and promoted by many preachers today thrives on a perceived cultural war between evil and good, authentic and foreign, traditional and Western. The contradictions and complexities that society faces contrast starkly with such simplified binary framings, such as, "Islam is the solution" and "The veil before judgment."

The discussion also demonstrates that private religious programming, in many women's minds, has become a substitute for the state in providing a very important function: setting values of right and wrong. Within a short span of time, private preachers have built up the requisite legitimacy to be a value provider. Responses suggest that the state, through the state-sponsored Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU), continues to provide entertainment and drama shows that are perceived to be morally corruptive. Private media, on the other hand, are offsetting this corruptive influence through airing religious programs. At the same time, the "corrupting" effect of the secular media is clear and perceived to be long-lasting: the majority of the respondents insisted that social morality has deteriorated, and attributed that deterioration to bad media. The positive impact of the religious revival movement orchestrated by the media is not yet realized, according to the participants in this study. This is partly because the cultural war between "good" media and "bad" media is very intense.[307]

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[306] See for example al-Markaz al-Qawmī lil-Buḥūth al-Ijtimāʿīyah wa-al-Jināʾiyah, *Ẓāhirat al-ḥijāb bayna al-jāmiʿīyāt.*

[307] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood.*

Participants' responses also highlight the importance of private media today in constituting values and shaping attitudes towards the veil. To understand the process of value constitution through the media and to assess the ingredients of religious discourse in Egypt today, I reviewed the channels and programs that respondents cited most often. I also conducted a content analysis of the sermons of preachers that were most frequently cited and who are featured on these channels. The following section reviews one strand of religious media, while the following chapter reviews another more recent strand.

Iqraa Channel

Iqraa Channel was selected to represent moderate, new-age religious streaming today. As one of several other moderate channels,[308] it is by far the most frequently cited by the participants in this study. It was also the first exclusively Islamic satellite channel in the Arab world. The channel, created in 1998, is owned by a Saudi businessman, Sheikh Salah Kamal, who is also the owner of another well-known media conglomerate, The Arab Radio and Television (ART) Network. In the beginning, the channel did not charge viewers any fees. If they owned a dish, viewers were able to tune in for free. However, as the financial situation of the channel became tougher, additional sources of revenue were sought, including membership fees, sponsorships, donations, and gifts. Iqraa is headquartered in Saudi Arabia, but it has a main office in Egypt.

Iqraa started broadcasting after very detailed field studies to identify the needs and current market gaps in religious programming. The channel management also surveyed viewers regarding the program designs and formats that they preferred most. One survey was conducted in 1998 with 500 male and female respondents from Egypt,

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[308] Iqraa literally means "recite" Iqra, which means read in Arabic, was the first word that the archangel Gabriel spoke to the Prophet of Islam, *"Iqraa in the name of Allah who created!"*

Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait. It revealed the need for a specialized

Islamic channel as no satellite channel at that time tackled Islamic issues with sufficient

depth. Respondents demanded that the new channel be balanced, tolerant, credible, and

modern. They also recommended that it provide a wide variety of programs, including

cultural, recreational, political, and even sports programs. Based on the survey, Iqraa

revolutionized the format of religious and cultural broadcasting through adopting modern

techniques and tackling contemporary and controversial issues freely and courageously.

Many controversial issues are discussed that public broadcasting in general avoid, such as

the concept of deviant women (nashez or pariah) in Islam,[309] women's political rights,

male dominance, and others.[310] The mission declared by the management of the channel

is:

To help Muslims apply the teachings of Islam that call for tolerance [and to create] a Muslim society whose members will be able to positively interact both on the local and international levels. Iqraa Channel also aims at presenting the true moderate face of Islam to people in the West where media does not present an objective view on the Islamic Law.[311]

One of the main goals of the channel is to provide an alternate type of

entertainment medium tp that promoted by the West. It also seeks to dispel the

misconceptions and accusations against Islam that prevailed in the 1990s and 2000and to

"develop the feelings of attachment to the unified cultural identity of the *ummah* [Islamic

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[309] Shari'a Law has a clause on women who rebel against their husbands. Rebelling against husbands is a punishable civil crime. Husbands are allowed to put the women under house arrest if she was declared *nashez*.

310 Abdul Qader Tash, "Islamic Satellite Channels and Their Impact on Arab Societies: Iqra Channel- a Case Study," *Transnational Broadcasting Studies Journal* 13 (2004). http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Fall04/tash.html (accessed May 28, 2009).

[311] Source: Iqraa Web site at http://www.iqraa-tv.net/En/Channel.aspx (accessed January 22, 2009).

nation]…[through creating a] spirit of dialogue among individuals of the nation."[312] This last objective is fulfilled through a number of programs that stress the commonalities among Arabic-speaking Islamic countries. It broadcasts in many Arab countries and is especially popular in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf countries. Journalists interview persons from all over the Arab world, region. Iqraa is the first channel to do so and has succeeded remarkably in that regard. Its success in Egypt in particular is notable since Egyptians are in general biased to their dialect and are not very good at understanding non-Egyptian dialects. So there is a significant shift in culture and that was clearly reflected in some of the comments of the young women interviewed regarding the Egyptian identity. There is also a strong emphasis on women issues in Iqraa. The channel seeks to "take care of the Muslim woman and affirm her role in building a sound society."[313] This last focus was further emphasized after the year 2000 when programming directed to women and family increased significantly. The increase in family/women programming time is associated with shifts in dress and perceptions about women as will be demonstrated in the following sections.

Until 2004, the channel practically monopolized the market for specialized religious programming in the Arab world. In 2004, it was the most viewed satellite channel in Egypt. According to a survey conducted by the Egyptian Cabinet, this channel was viewed more than any of the entertainment channels broadcast on the Egyptian satellite.[314] Today (2009), Iqraa continues to market itself to the audience as the only

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[312] Abdul Qader Tash, "Islamic Satellite Channels and Their Impact on Arab Societies."
[313] Abdul Qader Tash, "Islamic Satellite Channels and Their Impact on Arab Societies."
[314] Ethar El-Katatne, "The Business of Islam." *Business Today Egypt*, July 2008. http://www.businesstodayegypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=8058 (accessed February 1, 2009).

truly moderate Islamic channel. In an interview with one Internet Islamic Web site called IslamOnline, the executive manager noted:

Iqraa is the only channel that has a moderate religious outreach mission. This contrasts with other satellite channels, be it entertainment channels, which destroys the family and social structure, or even the Islamic channels. I believe society is made up of male and female, and it cannot function without the interaction of both, given appropriate Shari'a regulations. This contrasts with other Islamic channels that present "Wahabi" ideas.

The executive manager is implicitly referring to channels, such as al-Nas, and al-Hekma, which advocate total segregation between men and women and a very confined role of women in social life.

Iqraa was cited by 13 respondents as a prime source of religious information. It was the most preferred medium of information for upper-middle-class women as they were able to connect with the preachers featured on the channel. Most of the preachers come from very similar backgrounds and some, for example, a rising star, Mo'ez Mas'ood, even speaks in English, which makes him able to connect with this strata of the society whose Arabic language skills are limited.[315] Iqraa programs are "easy to understand and close to the youth." Moreover the religious instructions and duties imparted through the channel programs are simple and easy to follow. In general, it is less strict than other religious channels in its interpretation of religious texts.

Although they strongly emphasize tolerance and moderation, many Iqraa programs could be labeled anti-Semitic. In May 2002, for example, a veiled female presenter interviewed a three-and-a-half-year-old girl and asked her if she liked the Jews. The girl answered, "No." When asked why, the girl responded that Jews were "apes and

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[315] Again, classical Arabic is very different from colloquial Arabic. Understanding the Quran and relating to traditional preachers are difficult for many respondents. Preachers on Iqraa were able to break that language boundary and simplify the message.

pigs." When asked how she knew that, the girl answered that the Quran said that. The interview ended with a hail of praise to the girl as she demonstrated herself as a true Muslim and to her parents for their great upbringing. The final note was, "We must educate our kids now while they are children, so that they turn into true Muslims." Other similar comments made by various preachers cast serious doubt on the moderation of Iqraa. But the use of such rhetoric can be explained by the fact that it ignites a lot of Muslims in the Arab world today, which in turn results in greater viewership for the channel.

Iqraa Preachers: Amr Khaled

This section analyzes the sermons and programs presented by one of the pioneers of new-age preaching, Amr Khaled. Because of his emphasis on women's issues, and his liberal, "pro-women" discourse, many people today refer to Khaled as the "preacher of women." This preacher was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1967 and has an upper-middle class social background. He graduated from the Faculty of Commerce, Cairo University in 1988. In 2001, he received a diploma in Islamic Studies from an unknown Islamic Institute[316] and is currently studying for his doctorate degree at Wales University. He started preaching in the late 1990s on a small scale, giving lessons at the Shooting Club in Cairo. This club is visited by mid- to upper-class youth who are looked at as Westernized youth with little or no interest in religion.

Khaled accrued a great number of fans at the Shooting Club and then moved to preach at mosques located in affluent districts in Cairo. One of these was a very large mosque called al-Hosary. The mosque has a maximum capacity of 40,000 people and is

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[316] I tried to find the institute that granted Khaled his diploma but found no reference to it.

located in the outskirts of Cairo. Most of the people who go to the al-Hosary Mosque live at a great distance from the mosque. In spite of the long commute, thousands of youth flocked to Khaled's sermons from various parts of Cairo. By some estimates, about 40,000 people attended his sermons.[317] It was at al-Hosary that his star rose and his name became a household brand among youth and even parents. Soon after the management of Iqraa offered him a program of his own. Many other channels invited him to host his own shows, including al-Resala TV, al-Mehwar, Dream TV, and Abu Dhabi TV.

Khaled's style is simple, yet sensible and captivating. He has practically revolutionized Islamic preaching in the Arab world. Contrary to the long beard and Arabian-style loose-fitting white robes that traditional preachers wear, Khaled is usually dressed in trendy casual clothes, is well groomed, closely shaved, and speaks in colloquial Arabic like a typical middle-class person in Egypt. He is also relatively open-minded, welcoming arts and culture in general. This again is in sharp contrast with the styles of many "religious" people today who insist that the arts are "*haram*." He welcomes, even encourages, female participation in society, so long as it does not interfere with their prime responsibilities towards her family and children. He portrays himself as an ordinary person who is able to break the barrier between youth and religion that was characteristic of the past. One of his greatest achievements is propagating *hijab* among middle and upper-middle-class women. One participant in the qualitative study suggests:

Only Amr Khaled had the influence [on the veil]. We've always had Sheikh al-Shaʿrawy and other Azhar preachers on television. What did they accomplish? It was only with Amr Khaled [that the change in attitudes towards the veil has come about].

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[317] Ethar El-Katatne, "Amr Khaled: A Religious Rock Star," *Egypt Today (*October 2007), http://www.egypttoday.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=7718 (accessed February 1, 2009).

Khaled was cited by 23 respondents as a source of religious information that they relied mostly on and/or trusted. In his teachings, he focuses on moral and social reform. The logo of his Web site is "Development through Faith," and that, to a large extent summarizes his discourse. He argues that the Islamic nation is lagging behind the world in prosperity and development due to the current state of divorce between religion and society and the failure to abide by the true principles of Islam. In one of his sermons he asserted "God made you more special than any other creature so that you take on the role as His successor." As God's successor, the person should focus on the development of the earth, the implementation of justice, and the spread of righteousness.[318] He also initiated a large charity campaign, called the Makers of Life, which turned into a popular show on Iqraa, the aim of which was to recruit youth to volunteer in community service projects in the name of Islam.

One of the techniques that Khaled uses is the accentuation of the Islamic identity as a source of pride and empowerment. He declares, "This generation is the hope of Islam that will be able to change the bitter state of Islam in the world today." There is a lot of emphasis on the image of Islam in the West and the need for youth to "show the world" that Islam is the best religion and the engine behind any sustainable development, only if people abide by it. "Oh Mohammed's *umma*," he laments on one of his episodes:

When shall we stand tall? We cannot be degraded. We have to be an umma that raises its head high among other nations. God is allowing our degradation now so we can come back to our senses.[319]

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[318] From a program he delivered on Iqraa TV in 2004 called Kenouz or Treasures. The sermon was entitled "Adam's Succession on Earth" and was downloaded at http://www.amrkhaled.net/multimedia/multimedia537.html (accessed January 1, 2009).

[319] Amr Khaled, "Don't Degrade Yourself," *Al-Kenooz Program [Treasures]*. Delivered in 2003. Downloaded at Amr Khaled's Web site: http://www.amrkhaled.net/multimedia/multimedia276.html (accessed January 15, 2009).

Lacking any confidence in their culture and identity, Egyptian youth were very susceptible to this new and different message.

Many critics of Khaled claim that his preaching style and a lot of his ideas originate in Protestantism, especially his focus on social reform through self-realization.[320] In his sermons, Khaled proposes a utility function for adopting a certain virtue, behavior, or outlook. The language he uses is similar to this: "Each time you do so and so, you will add to your balance of merit such and such." To encourage youth to read the Quran, for example, he says,

 Each letter in Quran is worth 10 merit point. If you read one of the thirty parts of the Quran, you are reading about 1,000 letters. If you do that in Ramadan, you get 70*10 fold the merit. Imagine, 1,000*10*70. This is around four million points of the merit points collected in half an hour!

Just as great as the merit for adopting the veil, the cost of not adopting it is also great and should deter the people from not adopting it. A woman who chooses not to veil, for example, keeps accumulating sins every time a male stranger sees her.

There is a significant obsession with accumulating merit points in Egypt today, and Khaled played an important role in promoting that obsession. The following incident took place during one of the interviews and illustrates this obsession better. The interviewer was about to throw some paper in the garbage (Egypt does not recycle paper and plastic). At that point the interviewee noted that she knew a specific charity

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[320] Some people claim they saw Khaled in a Protestant church in midtown Cairo attending sermons for a very charismatic Evangelical preacher, and they draw a lot of parallels between the ideas and style of that pastor, called Dr. Sameh Mouris and those of Khaled. Khaled's emphasis on building a personal relationship with God, for example is very untraditional in Islam. See Shifaa, "Amr Khaled's Evangelical Roots," *Shifaa: Personal, Political, Proactive.* October 30, 3006. http://shifaa.blogspot.com/2006/10/amr-khaleds-evangelical-roots_817.html (accessed January 29, 2009).

organization that recycles paper into something useful. She suggested that the interviewer should give that paper to that organization. The interviewer, a pharmacy student, responded that she would not want to do that as she knew these types of organizations turn this recycled paper into tissue paper used on the face, which spreads germs.[321] The interviewee looked puzzled, and responded, "It doesn't matter what they do with the paper. What matters is that I will add to my merit balance (*thawab*)." On further investigation, we did find that the charity organization the woman referred to recycled paper into tissue paper. I do not have any evidence that Khaled promoted this particular behavior. However, the conversation confirms that there is a lot of obsession with utility maximization through collecting merit points without reflection on the implication of the person's action, and this has been promoted by Khaled in his sermons.

In recent years, Khaled has given more attention in his programs and activities to the family. He produced several programs on the family, including "Paradise in our Homes," which was featured during the month of Ramadan for two consecutive years. Khaled's prime commitment is still social reform, but in recent years he has moved away from the emphasis on the individual to a family approach. According to him, the family is the main nucleus of society and the most effective gateway for social reform. The switch in focus may be a strategy by Khaled to distance himself from the Protestant individualism of which many people have accused him. However, given that many other current programs also emphasize the family unit, it is apparent that there is a greater demand for family programs in the Muslim World today.

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[321] There are very poor health and safety regulations in Egypt.

In his lectures and sermons, Khaled provides many parables and examples of early Muslims and Prophet Contemporaries. He goes back to the compilations of traditions and contextualizes the text, drawing a lot of parallels with the current situations to provide answers to questions such as "What would the prophet do?" What would 'Aisha (his favorite wife) do? Have other favored Contemporaries been faced with the same situation, and what did they do? He reconfigures the past to show that it is still very relevant. He always draws attention to the moderation and tolerance of the early fathers to show that going back to the core of Islam does not involve going backward in time and rejecting modernity with all its positive implications. However, many commentators and critics note that Khaled often misconstrues, even bends, historical facts to arrive at certain conclusions. His version of Islam is referred to as an "air-conditioned" version because it seems too easy and not necessarily accurate. [322]

A 2007 Islamonline.net survey found one of Khaled's programs on Iqraa, called "Paradise in our House," as the best show on television. The show was successful mainly because of its practical approach, which made it more accessible and relevant to viewers. Another survey conducted by the same portal also found Amr Khaled to be the best Islamic preacher in the Arab world today.[323] Three hundred-fifty Arab youth participated in the survey, the greatest number being Egyptians and Moroccans. Participants attributed Khaled's success to a number of factors, including his emphasis on youth issues and concerns, his simple presentation style, his practical and realistic outlook, his concern fpr

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[322] Patrick Haenni and Husam Tammam, "Egypt's Air-Conditioned Islam," *Le Monde Diplomatique*. September 2003. http://mondediplo.com/2003/09/03egyptislam (accessed February 01, 2009).

[323] Rooda Abdel-Hameed, "Behasab Gumhuur Islam On Line: "Al Ganna," "Khawaater," "Al-Qudsiyya" …al-afdal in 1428" [According to the Audience of Islam on Line: "Al Ganna," "Khawaater," "Al-Qudsiyya" … The Most Preferred Programs in 1428 Hijra (2007)] *Islam On Line,* January 16, 2008.

issues related to capital development as well as the overall development of the *umma,* and his appeal to passion and feelings as resources for enforcing religious passion. In spite of his great popularity, he also received the highest number of identified weaknesses and demands for improvement. Participants demanded that Khaled work to improve his knowledge in Islamic *Shari'a*, and to move beyond pulling on people's emotional strings to more substantial topics.[324]

Amr Khaled and the Veil

Between 1999 and 20002, Khaled spent most of his time preaching at the al-Hosary Mosque. His Web site contained an audio library of these lectures, and it is classified into six categories: morals, worships, guidance, heart reform, the stories of prophets, and Jerusalem. The veil was classified under the morals series, along with virtues like honesty, faithfulness, and patience. Appearance and virtue, therefore, are strongly associated in Khaled's discourse. Most of the women who participated in the qualitative interview insisted that appearances are good indicators of virtues, and Khaled might have had some influence on this too. He was not the first to portray that association, but he definitely strengthened the perceived correlation between the two. "[Harassers] can't see your heart," he argued. "But they can see the veil which says the person is respectful and doesn't deserve to be harassed."

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[324] Yasser Mahmoud, "Khaled, Abdel Kafy, and Hassan, The Better in 1428." *IslamOnLine*, January 8, 2007. http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1199279368818&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout (accessed February 01, 2009).

Khaled rationalizes the association between the veil and morality. For him, modesty[325] is the greatest and most important virtue a woman possesses. Men too should have this virtue, but if it is an obligatory onefold for men, it is expected a hundredfold more of women. Women, according to Khaled, have much greater power over men. He argues, "A 100 men will not be able to get a women attached to any of them, but only one woman can have a very significant impact on a man…If a woman straightened her way, all society would be reformed too. If a woman loses her modesty, the entire society would as well. The greatest sign of modesty is the veil.

Amr Khaled had a profound impact on the spread of the veil between 1998 and 2001. This was a clear finding from the qualitative interview. While media was cited as having an indirect impact on the spread of the veil, Khaled's sermon on the veil was cited by many respondents as an immediate and direct prompt for veiling. "I don't think anyone ever watched a show about the veil and then decided to veil," suggested one respondent. "Only Amr Khaled's tapes I suppose had that much influence." "Amr Khaled's cassette tape about the veil had a real influence," insisted another respondent. Apparently, Khaled's prints on dress style were easily traceable. He advocated the veil, but also elegance and gracefulness. Some women even suggested that certain veil styles in Egypt during the early 2000s could be traced directly to him. One respondent noted:

There came a time when the veil started to spread fast. I was at school [326] and even though my school followed the British system,[327] the hijab started to spread in it too. You could even tell if the girl got veiled because of Amr Khaled's sermons. The girl's veil

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[325] The Arabic word for modesty does not have an exact match in English. It is a mixture of shyness, meekness, and abashment. Muslim women are expected to be shy, with low voice and try not stand out.

[326] The respondent was 22 years old, so that must be four to six years ago.

[327] That is to say the school is an upper-class school that is well-aligned with the British system and is sympathetic to the West.

would have a particular look; chic clothes…I used to walk up to the newly veiled girl and ask "Amr Khaled?" and she would say "yes."

The fact that one preacher could have such a marking effect is quite significant. This is not purely because of the styles of the newly veiled, which were very elegant, but also because he truly broke into the upper-middle and upper classes, which associated more with the Western culture. The quality and style of a woman's clothes says something about her class. When the clothes look "expensive" and Islamic, then it is easy to trace them to the preacher of the upper classes, Amr Khaled. As indicated before, Khaled was found to be most popular among upper-middle and upper classes. He was less popular, however, among middle and middle-lower classes who preferred more conservative, more traditional preachers like Mohammed Hassan.

Khaled's discourse heavily emphasizes the Muslim identity. His speech is full of "show the West" message, aiming at demonstrating to the West that the Muslim culture is superior and that the Islamic moral codes, when applied honestly and wholeheartedly, will lead to the social, economic, and political development necessary for Muslims to regain their pride and political power in the region. He proposes a number of visual as well as spiritual moral markers for that demonstration of the uniqueness and superiority of the Islamic culture. The veil, at least in essence, combines both. According to Khaled, the *hijab* is an effective way for gaining moral advantage over the West; it is a symbol of Islamic morality and identity. In his famous veil sermon, he says,

Isn't the real reason behind a woman not wanting to veil is to imitate the West? I tell you the West has defiled the image of the woman. They can't even sell a matchbox without

putting a picture of a naked woman on it. Islam elevates the woman and the West degrades her.[328]

The veil is then an easy way to gain independence from the Western culture that has invaded the Muslim world and corrupted it. It is also an effective means for reforming the entire society. Khaled argues,

The most important thing for a woman is her modesty and the best form of modesty is the hijab. I swear that if the women had modesty, all of society would be straightened. That's why when Anti-Islamists try to gain ground over our society they attack women first. [329]

The idea that the veil elevates the value of women has always existed in the Muslim culture. However, Khaled reinforced that idea and transformed that value meaning by linking it to the Islamic identity. Islam, according to Khaled, freed the woman from the sexuality of her body and gave value to her moral beauties. "Before Islam, the symbol of beauty was the body. Islam elevated the value of woman's beauty to her morals and emotions." Many respondents mentioned that the veil makes them feel like precious gems that need protection, and that idea was promoted by Khaled. "A gem should be kept safe. Not anyone is allowed to see it," argues Khaled, and along with him many other women interviewed during the summer of 2008 said the same thing.

Khaled also enforced the idea that the veil "protects the women from the harms of strangers in the street who would keep away when they see she is veiled." But while prior preachers focused on the function of the veil as a tool to cover the woman's beauty, Khaled proposed the idea that the veil is a tool to unravel her morality. He insists that strangers and harassers, "can't see your heart; they can't tell that you are good from inside to keep away from harming you. But your veil will tell them so." This exact idea

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[328] Amr Khaled, "Al-*Hijab*," Amrkhaled.net, Mosque Sermons: Section on Morals. Sermons delivered between 1999 and 2001. http://www.amrkhaled.net/multimedia/multimedia91.html (accessed February 1, 2009).
[329] Khaled. "Al-*Hijab*."

resonated in some of the respondents' words. Khaled successfully portrayed the veil as a lens to the inside of the woman, even a beautifier of the soul, which gave the veil significant momentum and attraction

In the veil sermon, Khaled presented another compelling case for why Muslim women must veil. The veil is a form of submission to the will of God; the literal meaning of the word Islam is precisely that, submission to the will of God. The veil is an integral element of Islam, and people cannot pick and choose in religion. Even if a woman prays and does all her duties, she could never be sure at the end that her "good deeds would outweigh her bad deeds." If women are concerned about getting hot when they veil, they should think of hell and how much hotter it would be, for that would be the undisputed result of unveiling. He recited a *hadith* [330] about the Judgment Day:

On that day, people awaiting the final judgment will be standing hot and thirsty. They would flock to the Prophet seeking to quench their thirst.

He proceeds:

The unveiled woman would do that, but the angels would stop her. The Prophet of Islam would say, leave her, she is a member of my umma, but the angels would say, you do not know what she has done after you. As the Prophet learns that she was unveiled he lament,s stay away, stay away, stay far, stay far!

This *hadith* referred to anyone who did not follow the commands of the prophet. The part about the unveiled woman is Khaled's interpretation. Assuming that the veil is one of those commandments, then that interpretation is applicable. This *hadith* in particular had a chilling effect on many women and was mentioned by some respondents during the interview. Khaled also warned the unveiled woman saying that every time any male sees her, even if he did not lust after her, she added to her sins. Jokingly he said,

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[330] Khaled. "Al-*Hijab*."

"Imagine now if she takes a public bus one day, or attends a lecture in a large auditorium. That would be a disaster [in terms of the number of men who sees her]" So even if a women fulfilled all duties and was very good but is unveiled, the "mountain of sins" that she accumulated while unveiled would prevent her from going to heaven as her good deeds would most probably not be sufficient to cover all these sins. [331] According to Khaled, husbands would be bearing the sin of their wives if they were not veiled and had the responsibility to advise their wives and provide for them the spiritual environment that was conducive for taking the veil step. He did not advocate that men force their wives into veiling, but he still put much of the onus on them.

It should be highlighted that Khaled never called an unveiled women non-Muslim or a disbeliever as many of the new sheikhs today do. Once a new Sheikh fiercely critiqued Khaled on television because Khaled received a call from a woman who said she was unveiled and had a certain question and Khaled just said, "God does not care for your veil," which for this sheikh was a grave mistake that Khaled committed, a mistake that spoke to Khaled's ignorance and the misguidance he caused.[332]

To be sure, Khaled always insisted that the veil is a *fard* (religious obligation). However, that duty would not absolutely bar a woman from entering Heaven, although it more than likely would. For Khaled, the veil was a *fard* and was also a clear demonstration that the woman "loves the prophet to the extent that she can't walk the streets without a veil." Apparently, some of the women who attended his sermons were unveiled. He did not reject them but rather implored them to veil at least during the

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[331] In Islam, so long as the good deeds are greater than the bad deeds at the end of life, then the person will go to heaven. This is why there is a lot of emphasis on collecting positive points, called *hasanat,* to increase the probability of entering Paradise.

[332] The sermon by the preacher was found on YouTube. http://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=aq5ddzEKXvse (accessed February 1, 2009).

session. In one of his early sermons he noted, "It pains me a great deal that some girls come to the sermon wearing inappropriate clothes. For the safety and protection of everyone in attendance, all women should wear a scarf at least till the end of the lesson, which is also necessary to "keep the angels in our presence."[333]

At the time that Khaled delivered the veil lecture in 1998-99, the majority of upper-middle class young women (between 18 and 35) were unveiled. That is why in many of his sermons he talked to women who were afraid to stand out in their family or among other friends who were not veiled and were therefore "ashamed" to get veiled. He urged women to fear the shame they would feel on Judgment Day for not veiling. In less than five years the majority of this class adopted the veil. The spread of the veil was one of the biggest influences that Khaled had on the youth. Even Islamic preachers who were critical of Khaled still agreed that he was the greatest motivator behind the spread of the veil among Egyptian women.

Khaled and Women

The emphasis on women, their issues, and their rights in Khaled's discourse is a total break from the past. His sermons narrates many stories of early Muslim women who participated in war, occupied senior positions in government, and played heroic roles in the battlefield. "We want Muslim women to be successful in their professional lives," advocates Khaled. The Prophet and the first Khalifas hired a lot of women in important positions, many of whom were married. He goes further by addressing women saying, "Being successful in your work is part of your religiosity. We need women's input in

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[333] Amr Khaled, "The Biography of Prophet Mohammed Sermon." AmrKkhaled.net, Mosque Sermons: The Biographies of Prophets Series. Delivered between 1999 and 2001. Downloaded at http://www.amrkhaled.net/multimedia/multimedia168.html (accessed January 21, 2009).

society. But of course if it stands in the way of your home, then your home is the priority." Balancing responsibilities is, according to Khaled, expected more of women. However, "both men and women alike" need to "try to balance between work and home." The difference is that the first priority for men is to support the family financially, then to provide emotional and moral support. For women, working is a third priority, and it is not framed in terms of financial support.

According to some interpretations of Islamic texts, women have fewer ritualistic and worshipping expectations than men. Men pray and fast more because a menstruating woman cannot pray, fast, or hold the Quran. Men are required to pray in the mosque on Friday at a minimum and are strongly encouraged to perform other prayers at the mosque. Women, on the other hand, are expected to stay home as much as possible and are generally discouraged from going to the mosque.[334] The Prophet of Islam joked one time to one of his wives saying women are "deficient in intelligence and religion," and that joke has been taken out of context and used to limit the role of women in society and portray her as inferior. The fact that women were discouraged from going to the mosque and were excluded from the arena of public religious practice and interpretation, according to Leila Ahmed, created duplicity in the understandings of Islam between the "official Islam" and "women's Islam." The official version is based on religious texts, most of which were created during the Abbasid period, a period characterized by cultural influx and anti-women sentiments.[335] Khaled attacked this schizophrenic understanding

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[334] The second caliph of Islam, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab (634-44) instituted several laws that sought to confine women to their homes and to prevent them from attending prayers at the mosques. He was not successful, however, in doing that. Instead, women continued to go to mosques but prayers were segregated and led by separate imams.The following Caliph, Uthman Ibn 'Affan, revoked those laws. Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam,* 60-61.

[335] Ahmed, *A Border Passage*, 120-121.

and advocated some level of gender equality and integration that were quite a break from the past. "Women, don't get caught up in cooking and forget to worship," he urges. "We want the mosques to be full of women in Ramadan."[336]

Whenever he goes into one of his charismatic moments of encouraging people to rise up to change themselves for the betterment of society, he addresses men and women separately to ensure that he does not exclude either sex. "Strive yourself, resist, so that you be a true man….Strive yourself to be a true woman, do not give yourself any excuses for not performing midnight prayers.…" Women even have a role in freeing Palestine, a very prominent topic in Khaled's sermons. The most successful armies, including the army that scored victory over the Crusades, had active female participation. He also talks a lot about how the Prophet of Islam treated women with reverence and appreciation and describes in detail the intimacy of the Prophet of Islam had with one of his most favorite wives, 'Aisha. Mohammed, according to tradition, chose to die on 'Aisha's chest and always admitted that she was his greatest love. She was also the one chosen to announce the death of Muhammed. "She! A woman!" he emphasized. "What a great place Islam gives to the woman."[337]

Khaled's discourse reveals the great diversions in the interpretations and practices that prevailed in Islam over time. There were times, including the times of the Prophet of Islam, when the interpretation of religious texts were very liberal with regards to women and minorities. Other times were more restrictive and less favorable to both groups. While many of the traditional preachers use text generated during the Abbassid period to

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[336] Amr Khaled, "Al-Omran Sermon." http://www.amrkhaled.net/multimedia/multimedia168.html (accessed January 1, 2009).

[337] Amr Khaled, "'Aisha Sermon." Amrkhaled.net, Satellite Programs: And Beloved Meet." Sermon Delivered between 2001 and 2002. http://www.amrkhaled.net/multimedia/multimedia369.html (accessed January 10, 2009).

issue religious decrees, Khaled uses text that predates that period, with a great focus on the first few decades in the history of Islam. As such, he is able to highlight the moderate, pro-feminist, face of Islam, which is one of his primary concerns. Some of the examples he uses do not sound quite liberating to the Western reader; however, relative to the prevalent interpretations, they are quite liberal, especially with regards to women's rights. That is how he gained his popularity among upper-middle class women.

In spite of his "feminist" discourse, it is doubtful that Khaled's ultimate purpose is to promote gender equality. While the greatest proportion of his sermons are addressed to women, and while in many cases he insists that women "hold the keys" to social reform, his discourse indirectly reproduces the gender power gaps that are currently in existence and further reinforces them among upper-middle classes who have distanced themselves from these patterns. He ultimately blames women for the spread of sexual immorality in society and ascribes a very high value to the virtue of modesty/shyness, which is only expected of women.

For example, in recent years, many youth, embroiled with economic barriers to starting a family, have resorted to some sort of relationship between a man and a woman, which is less than marriage but is somehow condoned by religion. Rather than going through official marriage, the couple sign a piece of paper that says they are married and get it signed by two witnesses. In such cases, the sexual relationship between the two is not defined as adultery in Islam.[338] This is considered by some a way around taking a boyfriend or a girlfriend in the West, which is not acceptable in the Muslim tradition but is becoming more popular. Khaled is very critical of these practices and insists that these

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[338] Premarital sex is a form of adultery and is considered an honor crime. This form of contract is a way around that. There are a lot of conflicting religious opinions about this relationship and whether it is elicit or sanctioned by Islam.

inter-sex relationship models are imposed by the West. He holds women responsible for promoting them. The woman gets the lion share of the warnings and direct talk in these and similar sermons about morals. According to Khaled, women need to be loved and cared for more than men. This makes them more vulnerable to entering into such types of relationships. Secondly, they have the power to stop these relationships from the start. "I address the girls more because the key is in their hands.[339] Do not sell yourselves cheap!" he entreats women.

This explains why many "modern," upper-middle class women who participated in the qualitative study blamed themselves and/or other fellow women for many of the social degenerations that society is experiencing today. In the absence of similar data from a prior decade, I cannot confirm that upper-middle class women today are more likely to accept and accommodate these patterns of male-dominance and to hold themselves responsible for men's lack of respect for women. However, as a person who lived in Egypt prior to 2000, who is a member of the upper-middle class, and who interacted very closely with women with similar demographic characteristics ten years ago, I contend that Egypt, and especially the upper-middle class has experienced a cultural shift. Khaled successfully repackaged existing forms of gender power gaps and presented them in very modern wraps that made his message particularly appealing to many women from that class. This explains the seeming paradox in the speeches of most of the respondents that illustrated a great level of internalization of male dominance and the idea of male being "victims" of corrupt media, Westernized women, and economic hardships, while still declaring the empowering even liberating benefits of the veil.

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[339] Taking a boyfriend/girlfriend in Egypt is socially unacceptable. It is considered a form of moral perversion.

Khaled and Jerusalem

The religious discourse in Egypt is abundant with calls for Muslims to rise up in *jihad* to liberate Palestine from the Jews. Although Khaled preferred not to openly discuss politics, the call to liberate Palestine has been common in many of his speeches. Liberating The Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem is one of the goals that greatly galvanize Muslim youth. The most significant illustration of that fervor is the unprecedented numbers of Arab Muslims that rose up to protest their governments for letting Israel invade Gazza and kill the Hamas Mujahedeen in December 2008. Khaled uses the heated passion of youth, both male and female, towards the Palestinian cause to call for a total reform. In one of his lectures he outlines the characteristics of the person who would liberate Jerusalem.[340] That person would be like the awaited Messiah for the Jews, humble, yet powerful and very successful.

Khaled often draws analogies with earlier Muslim leaders and warriors who were victorious in wars against the nonbelievers. He often cites the example of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, the Kurdish Muslim Leader who led the Muslim armies against the Crusaders and victoriously entered Jerusalem. He cites other examples of ordinary Muslims who were able to turn their lives to become heroes, including al-Ayyubi.[341] He urges every Muslim to follow that model and start leading purposeful lives. "I am offering you a goal for your lives," calls Khaled. "Liberate Palestine!" If youth uphold that goal, they will be able to turn their lives around because it requires a lot of work. The person who liberates Palestine has to be religious and has to have the personal skills to attract others to the

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[340] I found many similarities between the description of the Muslim leader who would liberate Jerusalem and the awaited Messiah in the Jewish tradition.

[341] This may not be historically accurate. Al-Ayyubi comes from a Muslim family that always served in Muslim armies, and al-Ayyubi was trained since his childhood in military tactics.

religious path. "Make your friends religious; teach ten of your friends to read Quran." The person also has to be successful in his/her professional life and academics. That person should also be physically fit and strong. In other words, according to Khaled, the Palestinian cause is in perfect sync with the social reform cause. Whereas it is hard to mobilize Muslims around the social reform agenda, the Palestinian cause has an electrifying effect and may be a more effective route to reform.

Khaled relies on anti-Semitic language to give Muslims all the greater reason to fight the Jews. He provides examples from the Old Testament and from the Quran regarding the Jews lack of faith to fuel hate for the Jews. In spite of all the miracles that were performed before them, they still did not believe. He exclaims,

Are those people human? Are the people who kill unarmed women and children human? What type of people are those Jews? They were the only people who were sent so many prophets and seen so many miracles and ...yet they kept killing the prophets. ... We have not seen even one-quarter of the miracles they saw and yet we believe. Truly Muslims are a great nation.

Khaled provides examples of the inclination of the Jews to betray and break their promises, as they did with the Muslims during the Battle of the Trench.[342] The Jews betrayed the trust of Muslims and broke a treaty with them. After the victory of the Muslims over the infidels, the Jews came asking for forgiveness, he narrates. But the Prophet did not forgive them and decided to "kill all their men, take their women as slaves and take all their belongings" as this was the "verdict of God." Khaled adds, "See Islam is very forgiving but not with the heads of evil, not with treason. Those people

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[342] The Battle of the Trench took place on 627 and was the war after which Muslims conquered Madina City.

must be gravely punished." This is why Muslims should never trust the Jews and should seek to take revenge for the Prophet for all the crimes they perpetrated over the centuries.

The topic of Israel and the Jews is one that most Egyptians are very passionate about. Khaled's discourse on the Jews bonded him with young Egyptians. He retooled their passion towards the topic and gave youth hope and purpose in life. The economic situation coupled with political apathy, and socio-political marginalization have all led to a loss of identity and purpose. Khaled was able to draw a different picture of what could be, which found great reception among youth, especially the ones with more resources and better prospect in society due to their social capital.

Critique on Khaled

Khaled is one of the most controversial figures in Egypt today. While a lot of people acknowledge his impact on religious discourse, many others are skeptical of his motives. Others question his legitimacy as a religious preacher as he did not receive proper religious training. The Azhar clergy and many other Egyptian sheikhs accuse him of being ignorant and even disrespectful of Islamic verses. It was also quite disappointing for many young Muslims to see Khaled topping the *Forbes* magazine list of the richest Muslim preachers, with over $2.5 million net income in 2007.[343] Many respondents expressed their disillusionment with Khaled and one said:

This guy wants to be famous at the expense of religion. He is talking like a sheikh or someone who understands the foundations of religion when he is actually distorting religion…. What can I say, Hasbuna Allahu wa ni'ma al-wakeel ("God is sufficient for us and the best Disposer of Affairs")[344]

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[343] Sonia Farid, "Amr Khaled Richest Islamic Preacher: Forbes." Al Arabiya News Channel. February 28, 2008. http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/02/28/46255.html (accessed February 3, 2009).

[344] Hasbuna Allahu wa ni'ma al-wakeel is a verse from Quran that Muslims recite when they are disappointed especially at another person that they trusted or when they experience unfairness and/or great loss. In Islam, the verse is said to move the throne of the Lord to defend the rights of the victim against the perpetrator. So it is like a curse in some instances, a legitimate curse.

Some of the conservative religious sheikhs bitterly criticize Khaled for his "lenient"

position regarding sex integration and scorn him for allowing unveiled women to attend

his lectures. One of the neo-traditional sheikhs, who is frequently on a competing

religious channel, al-Nas, describe his lecture halls as a "harbor for lovers" and a place

for men and women to meet and socialize, which, according to these sheikhs, is strictly

forbidden in Islam.[345]

Despite all the oppositions that he faces both on the moral and scholastic level,

Khaled still enjoys great popularity and influence on the Egyptian people. He became a

pioneer in a new style, and he was followed by several other preachers, including Mo'ez

Mas'oud[346] and Moustafa Hosny,[347] who also attracted a lot of fans today. Most

importantly, it is Khaled who created the demand for religious programming and

religious teachings among the richer, more modern segments of the Egyptian society. He

has been cited as one of the most immediate triggers for the cultural shift in dress and

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[345] Ali Abdel Aal, "Al-Salafiyyun wa-Qanat Al-Nas: Al-Da'wa fi Shasha Hassab al-Talab" [Salafists and al-Nas Channel: Preaching on a Demand-Driven Screen] *IslamOnine:* Islamic Movements Section, May 7, 2008. http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1209357345783&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout#***1#***1 (accessed January 17, 2008).

[346] Moez Masoud is a 31-year-old preacher who comes from a very liberal background. He graduated from the American University in Cairo and is known to mix theology with other disciplines including philosophy and psychology in a way to rationalize religion. He speaks English fluently and usually preaches in English thus targeting upper class Egyptians as well as Muslims living in Europe and the United States of America. Mo'ez describes his youth teenage and early twenties years as being reckless, all revolving around parties and drugs. He got a "wake up" call when his friends were killed in an accident and he was diagnosed with a tumor. This series of traumatic experiences changed his life 180 degrees. His strong memory helped him memorize the Quran and his social science background gave him a different perspective on its interpretation. Moez owns an advertising agency and hosts programs on Iqraa as well as other Egyptian Channels, including Dream TV and al-Mehwar.

[347] Mustafa Honsy's background is very similar to Khaled's and is also one of the "new-age" preachers. He is a young preacher, 31 years, who received a secular education and then received a diploma from the Islamic Studies Institute in Egypt. He started his career as a salesman but changed his direction into fulltime preaching after he had reached the position of sales manager. He preaches in several mosques, including Al Hosary Mosque, which also witnessed the rising star of Khaled. His programs on Iqraa Channel are very popular and he also hosts several programs on Egyptian satellite channels, including Dream TV and Mehwar TV.

religious orientation among this social group. Prior to Khaled, youth did not habitually watch or follow religious programs, mostly because of the styles of the preachers, and the irrelevance of the topics they discussed to youth. Khaled changed that pattern and created a new market for religious teachings, which has brought about success not just for this new-age style, but also for the newly emerging religious channels that thrived on characters like Khaled.

Conclusion

This chapter explored some of the untested dynamics of globalization. It revealed the effect of the interaction among intraregional cultures. Through investigating the content and some of the processes involved in the less than two-decade-old Arab satellite industry, and through focusing on exclusively religious channels, I brought to the fore some of the dynamics of resistance and acquiescence to inter- as well as intra-regional globalization. The intrusion of many of the Saudi and Gulf customs and values into the Egyptian society through media have resulted in significant cultural shifts and produced new attitudes towards women among middle and upper-middle classes in Egypt.

This chapter focused on the first wave of religious streaming via satellite television in the Arab World. This was more liberal and targeted mainly the middle and upper-middle classes. Iqraa, like many other Arab satellite channels, is Saudi in origin, but has one of its primary offices in Egypt. It relies heavily on popular new-age Egyptian preachers to relate with young Egyptians. The discourse of the new-age channel and preacher demonstrate the impact of the perceived Western attacks on Islam and Muslims on religious culture today. These cultural wars are compounded by myriad of

contradictions and complexities experienced at the domestic level in the Muslim World that give rise to binary identities and meanings, whereby self is defined as that which is non-Western. The programs featured on the channel and the new attitudes towards women and the veil reflect these complexities.

The support for Iqraa channel stems from the fact that it is the first exclusively religious channel and is the face of moderate Islam. Iqraa provides a different strategy for countering and dealing with globalization, which is the utilization of the tools of globalization for advancement, while emphasizing the uniqueness of the Islamic identity. The use of satellite television is one example and the innovations in veiling styles is another. Both of these tools are used to reconcile the homogenizing forces of globalization with the need to assert and celebrate one's identity. Arab entrepreneurs took advantage of the satellite technology to develop a new hybrid feature, namely exclusively Islamic channels. Women too are using global fashion icons like Gucci and Levi's and mixing Western garment articles with newly invented clothing articles that were appropriated to Islam such as headscarves and body tights. In this way, the woman appears fashion-forward and yet in adherence to traditional values. Iqraa channel sanctioned and even promoted these fashion hybrids.

Through analyzing Khaled's sermons, one can better understand some of the dynamics of three arenas of power examined in this study, namely the gender struggle, the state-society struggle, and the global struggle. At one level, Khaled was able to re-introduce patterns of gender dominance that were previously repressed among upper-middle classes in Egypt. Khaled affirmed acceptable forms of male dominance but concealed them in new wraps that were appealing to upper-middle class groups. Instead

of arguing that women were inherently seductive and deficient in religion in intelligence, for example, he argued that they were the more emotional and sensitive and thus wanting for protection through the veil. Men, on the other hand, were portrayed as the weaker sex, with less control over their desires, and therefore in need of women's help through adopting the veil. This "new wrap" of gender dynamics, however, resulted in similar patterns of gender politics, with women expected to abide by specific confinement regulations. These patterns of confinement were uncommon among upper-middle classes a decade ago.

Khaled also gave women some tools for resisting these new confinements and provided ways to turn one level of confinement into a new form of liberation. The preacher introduced wide varieties in the veil styles that allowed women to resist the gender struggles they faced. These new "chic" styles were condoned, even encouraged by Khaled not just as a means of creating acceptance for the veil among upper-middle classes, but also as a conduit to demonstrate to the West the superiority and sophistication of the Muslim women. Creating acceptance for the veil among a segment of society that previously aligned its values and life styles with the West also declared a forceful message of rejection of Western values. The veil simultaneously put a barrier between the value system promoted by the state and the social values that young people adopt. The upper-middle class, which was largely reconstituted by the state during the last fifty years, had rejected some of the primary modernization values that the state promoted, unveiling being one of which. The analysis of new-age religious media thus helped comprehend the triangulated power struggles that women take part in which were codified by the veil.

Chapter 7

The Neo-Traditional Religious Wave and Satellite Television

Introduction

The previous chapter provided insight into the development of the first type of exclusively religious television broadcasting that came about during the last decade. This chapter investigates another wave of religious programming that emerged in response and competition to the first kind of streaming. This new genre of religious programming is stricter, more conservative, and "puritan" in outlook, calling for a return to the fundamental set of behaviors and practices in Islam, which was essentially promulgated during the Abbasid era. I argue here that neo-traditional religious media is a perfect site for analyzing particular forms of interaction between social groups and the state that have shaped the current forms of religiosity and the veil. I use Migdal's state-in-society approach, which examines the process of identity formation as a product of that interaction.[348] The current forms and meanings of the veil is analyzed through exploring the interaction among three specific social groups: religious intelligentsia, individual female agents, and the state.

The State-in-Society Approach

Migdal's primary concern in his *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* is to problematize the boundaries between state and society and to demonstrate the fuzziness of these boundaries. He emphasizes the role of social groupings not only in constituting identities, but also in

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[348] Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society*.

setting and enforcing binding rules. The state-society framework that Migdal offers illustrates the recursive nature of the relationship between state and society, which results in mutual engagement, constitution and transformation. Through studying the politics of the veil at the site of exclusively religious, neo-traditional satellite channels, the analysis demonstrates the intricate conflicts between various social groups and the state and the struggle of these groups to expand their power through controlling the domain of value constitution.

One of the primary goals of the Egyptian Republic at its inception was to reconstitute the Egyptian identity through instituting a number of policies, including rewriting educational curricula, redefining gender roles women in society, and providing a new conception of religiosity. The Egyptian woman was a primary target in these identity reformation efforts. Modernizing women was viewed as the key to projecting an image of a modern state. The modern woman was educated, socially integrated, at least nominally, and unveiled. The previous chapter demonstrated how Iqraa and Amr Khaled challenged this framework among a social group that aligned itself with the "modern" outlook that the state until a decade ago but then rejected it. This transformation involved a struggle among new-age religious preachers and channels, individual agents, particularly women, and the state. For the most part, the struggle was subtle and submersed. As the neo-traditional media emerged, that conflict became more acute and overt. Neo-traditional preachers started to attack the state more openly. It capitalized on the anti-West sentiments that had intensified after September 11.

In this research, neo-traditional Islam is defined as a form of religious interpretation that calls for return to traditional Islamic laws and texts portrayed as ahistorical and immutable. The texts used as a foundation for this new version of Islam, however, were selectively picked based on a hidden socio-political agenda. The promoters of this religious vision are critical of the state of corruption, economic deprivation, and inequality and are selecting texts and text interpretations that support their agenda. T

The Emergence of Neo-Traditional Religious Channels

The first wave of exclusively religious channels was quite successful and invited significant competition. In a few years, several other channels emerged, including "al-Risala" (the message), "al-Nas" (the people), "al-Majd" (glory), "al-Fajr" (dawn- and is the title of the first of the five prayers in Islam), and "al-Hikma" (wisdom). In the beginning, many of these channels were living in the shadow of Iqraa, presenting very similar types of programs. However, within a few years, the demand for more conservative, anti-Western religious streaming emerged and gave rise to several strict channels, one of which was al-Nas Channel. These channels relied on religious preachers that received proper religious education and were closer in looks to traditional religious preachers, speaking in formal Arabic dialect and dressed in Saudi-like male clothes.

Shortly after these channels came into existence and took form, a campaign against Iqraa and new-age preachers was launched. One of the preachers featured on these channels released a *fatwa* (religious edict) that people should not listen to channels that "mix poison with honey, presenting a fragile version of true Islam and resorting to

unvirtuous paths."[349] Many viewers also rejected the first wave of religious media and accused it of bending religion to make it appealing to youth. In an anonymous letter posted on a Web site called Arab Forum (*al-saaha al-arabiyya*), a writer sent a letter to the owner of the channel saying,

Fear God…I am writing this letter as a testimony to you on Judgment Day. What are these programs you present on the channel and what are these travesties and mockeries you created on this channel …. Why are you presenting such an image of Islam when you know that Muslims want to know the true Islam.[350]

Al-Nas Channel

Established in January 2006, al-Nas was primarily an entertainment channel. Its initial goal was to attract a wide audience through providing various services to the public with a focus on lower-income groups. Among the programs it featured in its primary stages were wedding announcements, dream interpretation, financial counseling, and p candidates running for parliamentary elections. Some legal and medical counseling services were also provided. The channel relied on connecting directly with the audience through providing toll-free numbers for service and consultation access. The logo of the channel then was appropriately, "People's channel for all people", [*Qanat al-Nas le-kul al-Nas*]. Al-Nas is also owned by a Saudi businessman called Mansour Bin Kadsah.[351]

The channel portrayed itself as a gateway for young talent. It invited many young media professionals and amateurs to volunteer and demonstrate their talent to the public.

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[349] Mohammed Abd Al-Rahman, "Why Mickey Mouse Must Die, and Other TV Fatwas," *Menassat,* October 17, 2008. See http://www.menassat.com/?q=en/news-articles/4895-fatwas-war-erupts-again-between-satellite-tv-sheikhs (accessed February 1, 2009).

[350] This quote was posted on 06/29/2001 by an anonymous author. The quote was downloaded at http://www.alsaha.com/sahat/3/topics/52481 (accessed February 1, 2009).

[351] Abdel Aal, "Al-Salafiyyun wa-Qanat Al-Nas: Al-Daʿwa fi Shasha Hassab al-Talab." For a discussion in the Arab satellite television and the role Gulf country entrepreneurs, see Sakr, *Arab Television Today*; Sakr, *Satellite Realms*.

Management of the channel declared that due to its modest financial means, it would not be able to pay these volunteers. Despite the lack of financial compensation, many recent graduates and talented people flocked to the channel in pursuit of an outlet for their talent and abilities, which has become very rare in Egypt. At that time, the channel was not considered religious and most of the programs it featured were nonreligious.

The transformation in the identity of the channel came about with a solid realization that with its limited means, it could not compete with the myriad of channels that were offering the same services using much more advanced technologies and higher capital. Unless it changed its strategy and identity and unless it provided a product that was unique and in demand, the channel was not able to survive. The clear market gap that manifested itself to the management was a stricter, more fundamental version of Islam than the "air-conditioned version" represented by Iqraa. There was a clear demand for a "purer", more tradition version of Islam that was more as portrayed by specific interpretations of religious texts produced during the Abbasid period. However, that form of Islamic teaching was provided in a modern capsule that was still attractive to young people.

In August 2006, the management changed the logo of the channel to "The Channel That Will Take You to Paradise," and took a number of aggressive moves to quickly project this new image. First, all female broadcasters were laid off under the banner that in Islam, "the female's voice is a form of *awra* (nudity)." When asked about the decision to fire all female presenters, the managing directors of the channel, Atef abdel-Raseed indicated that he took that decision at the request of the viewers who

demanded the channel take an ideal outlook and realign itself closely with the days of the prophet of Islam.[352]

Three religious scholars were recruited, each having impressive credentials from renowned Islamic institutions. The three preachers laid the foundation of what may be called neo-traditional Islam in Egypt. All three preachers were already popular as mosque preachers. Many youth attended their sermons, and the channel management capitalized on their popularity. The three preachers were Mohammed Hussein Ya'qoub, Mohammed Hassan, and Ishaq al-Huwainy. All programs presented on the channel became strictly religious, and nothing in contradiction with Islamic *Shari'a*, as narrowly defined by the triangle of neo-traditionalism, was tolerated. At the request of the three preachers, all music programs on the channel were banned. Its policy was to "present all what promoted religious, moral, and patriotic values with no music"[353] because music and the arts in general are considered illicit (*haram).* Accordingly, religious hymns replaced all songs and music featured on the channel. The three preachers became highly influential, having the power to approve or disapprove any program. They also had the lion share of air-time on the channel.[354]

This complete transformation proved very successful; the channel became the number one religious channel in Egypt. IslamOnLine.com estimated that about 70 percent of Egyptian satellite viewers today prefer al-Nas Channel.[355] It was also the channel most frequently cited by female respondents during the interview, even more popular than Iqraa Channel. The phenomenal success of this new line of satellite

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[352] As discussed in Chapter 4, the complete sex segregation was never observed during the time of Prophet Muhammed Ahmed, *Women and Gender and Islam,* 41-63.

[353] www.alnas.tv/

[354] Abdel Aal, "Al-Salafiyyun wa-Qanat Al-Nas."

[355] Abdel Aal, "Al-Salafiyyun wa-Qanat Al-Nas."

streaming provided strong evidence of the high demand for a strict religious media discourse, which in turn invited two other similar channels to follow its footprints, namely al-Hikma, established in 2006, and al-Rahma, established in 2007. Thirty-two of the 54 respondents (60 percent) that cited a satellite channel as their main source of religious information cited one of these three nonmoderate channels.

Programs Featured on al-Nas

After the radical shift in the identity of the channel, it continued to provide various social services for free to the public, but all these services were dressed in a new religious cover. The channel featured programs aiming at the promotion of religious, health, and social education in layman language. It targeted a variety of age groups, including kids under 12 years old, teenagers, and parents. A number of respondents indicated that their parents watched the channel regularly, a clear demonstration of the breadth of the viewership base of the channel. The channel declared that its content was apolitical, and that it was respectful of all religious factions. However, there was a heavy anti-Semitic discourse in the channel and subtle anti-regime remarks. The Palestinian question today is viewed more as a religious rather than political question in Arab public discourse. That is why most apolitical channels were not shying away from taking on the Palestinian issue.

There is a lot of emphasis on social issues in the channel. One program called The Court discusses various social issues and problems through interviewing specialized experts on the topic as well as people with relevant personal experiences. The goal is to identify possible causes and solutions for the problem. Another social program called The

World and Religion, or *Donya wa Din*[356] explains how any simple person can fully integrate religion into their everyday lives and worldly decisions, such as choosing an academic major, a friend, a partner, or a job through consulting religious. The theme is that the person can make all these decisions while making religion the center of their lives.[357] Many of the programs are aired directly, and a call-free number is always provided so that the audience gets a chance to participate in the discussion, relate personal experiences, and ask questions. This feature that has given the channel a lot of popularity.

The main source of revenue to the channel is commercial advertisement. The advertisements sometimes feature unveiled women and music. This source of revenue has been criticized by many of the women interviewed in this study, and has also been a main source of contention between the channel management and the three conservative sheikhs. One of the participants in the qualitative interview commented on al-Nas Channel saying, "right after the religious show, they would feature an advertisement to promote a commercial product. I find this really irritating."

Because of its latent political agenda, the channel received many indirect threats of closure from the state. In a maneuver by the state, the Egyptian Minister of Information signed what is called The Document on Satellite Broadcasting. Several other Arab Information Ministers took part in the drafting and endorsement of this Document. The goal was to regulate the content of programs aired on satellite television and

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[356] The word world and religion share the same stem in Arabic because the literal meaning of religion is a guiding principle for life.

[357] As Saba Mahmoud demonstrated, many Egyptians rejected the perceived divorce between religion and life and took concerted efforts to marry these two domains. See Mahmoud, *Politics of Piety.*

implicitly to assert the state power.[358] The government also shut down another less popular religious channel, called al-Baraka, to send a message to all channels deemed radical that the government is still omnipotent. Shortly after these state maneuvers, the managing director of the channel interviewed Amr Khaled on one of al-Nas shows fighting drug addiction. The perceived goal was to project an image of tolerance and moderation The three religious preachers protested the move vigilantly, and all three withdrew from the channel for accommodating what they regarded as mediocre religious scholarship.[359]

Whether this is a signal of another shift in the channel identity or just a strategic business move to counter threatening messages from the state is still not clear. What is clear is that there is significant competition in satellite realms, and this competition has had significant implications on religious culture during the past decade. The competition involves states, peoples, and private actors, a fact that complicates an analysis of its full implications and scopes. It feeds on globalization and yet counters its forces using its own devices. Through the use of global technology, these three sets of actors new hybrids of religiosity and the state, and transformed the meanings and forms of many cultural symbols.

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[358] This document was issued in 2008. The government claims that the goal is to protect the consumer from obscenity and violence. See Masrawy, "Wazeer al Iʻlaam: Watheeqat al-bath al-fadaʼey tahmy al mogtamaʼ men al-ʻury wal ʻonf." [Minister of Information: The Document on Satellite Broadcasting Protects Society from Nudity and Violence.] *Al-Masrawy.Com,* March 1, 2008. http://www.masrawy.com/News/Egypt/Politics/2008/march/1/minster.aspx (accessed May 31, 2009). The Syndicate of Journalists, however, finds this Document an assault on freedom of expression. Al-Moheet, "Watheeqat al-bath al-fadaʼey kaarethah Iʻlaameyya waqaʼat belfeʻl" [The Document on Satellite Broadcasting: A Communications Catastrophe Already in Place." *Moheet.com* April 6, 2008. http://www.moheet.com/show_news.aspx?nid=109354&pg=62 (accessed May 31, 2009)..

[359] Mustafa Sulliman, "Qanat al-nas: Men al-salafiyya lel-tadayyun al gadeed" [Al-Nas Channel: From Salafism to New Religiosity] *IslamOnline.com: Islamic Movements Section*, May 7, 2008. http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1209357320618&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout (accessed February 9, 2009).

Al-Nas channel cited by 25 female respondents in the interview. Eighteen of these women were classified as middle- or lower-middle-class respondents. Respondents from the middle and middle-lower classes were found more likely to cite al-Nas as the main source of religious information: almost half (47.4 percent) of the lower and middle-lower respondents cited al-Nas as their most preferred channel, compared to 26 percent for upper-middle classes. The channel was also the most criticized and/or rejected by respondents.[360] Four respondents indicated that they hated this channel. This comment was not made regarding any other channel. Some of the negative remarks about the included:

I do not like to watch the new religious channels because I feel they are channels that "will take you to hell" not Paradise…like al-Nas Channel…and the like. They feature preachers that come and cry and scream and they take advantage of simple-minded people.

My mom once told me that some of the programs on al-Nas are strict to a repulsive extent… She also told me that they teach kids wrong things and things that are not their age…[361]

I just want to say that if there is something unique about Islam that we would like to communicate to the normal citizen, then the communication method currently used is the worst because of the horrifying levels of intolerance that are blended with the religious message. I have been watching al-Nas channel lately, and I found that they are trying to impart religious information to the viewer through hatred and intolerance, and so I stopped watching these programs altogether…

There is still a lot of acceptance among respondents and viewers of the version of Islam endorsed by al-Nas. Much of that acceptance however, is driven by a desire to support what might have been the "unheard voice." The state has repressed any voice in

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[360] The interview did not directly ask about the media channel that they preferred most. Respondents were only asked to list the most preferred medium of religious information, which could include religious channels, books, sermons, etc. When the respondent listed a channel, I coded it, otherwise the preferred channel variable was coded none.

[361] I am not sure what this participant was referring to but some of the programs aired on television interview kids and ask them about their attitudes towards the Jews and promote hatred, which might be what she was referring to.

Islam that it deemed extreme, and that level of marginalization resulted in the radicalization and trivialization of Islamic discourse simultaneously. However, the forces acting to trivialize and radicalize the discourse are neither linear nor mono-directional. There are countering forces exercised by women, as well as other agents, to circumvent these forces through a myriad of strategies, one of which is today's veil as will be discussed further in the following sections.

Al-Nas Preachers: The Discourse of Sheikh Mohammed Hassan

Mohammed Hassan was born in 1962 in a small Egyptian village in the Delta area. He received his early education at a mosque-affiliated school (*Kottab)* where he memorized the Quran at the age of eight. He also memorized several collections of *hadith* at a young age. He started preaching in his local mosque at the age of 13. After graduating high school in the village, he studied mass communication at Cairo University. At graduation and after fulfilling the military service requirement, he went to Saudi Arabia to receive his doctorate degree in Islamic studies at al-Imam Muhammed Ibn Saud Islamic University. When he returned to Egypt, he started teaching at various Islamic Studies institutes in the Delta area. He was recruited by al-Nas Channel in 2006. Since then, other similar religious satellite also recruited him.

Hassan presents himself as a traditional preacher. He only wears Arabian-style robes with a white head scarf and a long beard. This dress code is modeled after the Prophet of Islam. His sermons are in classical Arabic, and this further enhances his image as a very knowledgeable preacher.[362]   In his early sermons, Hassan's language was rigid.

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[362] The Arabic language is considered the second most difficult language after Chinese. Its grammar rules, in particular, are very complicated; a slight movement in one of the letters would make a great difference in meaning. To figure out the movement that one should give the last letter of the word,

Over time, his preaching style became more relaxed, and he developed a sense of humor that the audience found quite amusing. His more recent sermons contained a mix of colloquial and formal Arabic, with a distinct sense of humor, concealing a very strict religious message.[363]

Because of his social background and style, Hassan relates well to middle and lower-middle classes. In contrast to Khaled, Hassan focuses on answering the "what," rather than the "why" question. He is interested in relating what the "official" religious texts say rather than rationalizing them. When he conveys religious regulations, he is always fully armed with a vast body of religious texts to support his religious opinions narrated in a matter of fact style. He appeals to the natural sense of faithfulness that Egyptians have and their God-fearing nature. He ends every sermon with a fervent prayer calling for repentance and reminding people of the horrors of Hell that await the disbelievers and the unfaithful.

Hassan is known to be honest and blunt; he relates what he knows from Quran and Sunna plainly and with no attempt to "package" the message in a way that would make it either more appealing or more practical to the audience. He presents religious texts and their interpretations as an eternal and unchanging body of literature that should be followed to the letter. In his opinion, if daily life is not in synch with pure religious teachings (mostly the body of text that was produced during the Abbassid period), then

one has to make a lot of calculations in his or her mind regarding where the word is falling in the sentence, its meaning, and its context. Arabic language gurus, such as my mother, compare Arabic language to sophisticated mathematical functions that need to be solved in one's mind. Because of its difficulty, and the deteriorating education, it has become very rare to find a person, even an Arabic language teacher, who speaks proper classical Arabic. Because of the strong connection between Arabic and the Quran, speaking classical Arabic eloquently is also considered a sign of knowledge in religion.

[363] As explained in Chapter 3, I analyzed the content of the preachers' sermons over time. Sermons delivered at various times were downloaded, transcribed, and analyzed to trace developments in speech, style, and religious message.

this mode of life should be rejected and changed altogether until it fits the religious requirement, narrowly and literally interpreted. An attempt to modernize or contextualize any part of religion is for him blasphemous. That is a common accusation that Hassan has had against Amr Khaled and other "new-age" preachers.

Hassan employs various tactics to covertly delegitimize the state. One tactic is attacking the co-education system at the higher education level. While Khaled and other moderate preachers accept the practice of sex integration but advise men and women to "mix wisely," Hassan totally rejects sex integration and insists that there is no such thing as "wise mixing". He accuses public higher educational institutions in Egypt, except the segregated al-Azhar University, of promoting sexual immorality. These universities, according to Hassan, allow "boys to be sitting next to girls" in the lecture halls thus causing "the poor boy's body to rage with desire because of the girl sitting next to him. How will he ever understand or concentrate!?"[364]

No form of sex mingling is tolerated by Hassan, not even to learn the Quran. Even mixing among relatives is considered unacceptable. He is not completely against female participation in the labor market; in fact the only way that complete sex segregation could be realized is through incorporating women into the labor force. That way it would be possible for females to receive the types of product and services they need in a male-free environment. Similarly, males would receive all the services and products they need in a female-free environment under such setup. Although he avoids overt talk about politics, by criticizing acceptable and long-standing cultural practices, he declares rejection of the state that is un-Islamic and is promoting pro-Western, un-Islamic practices.

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[364] Mohammed Hassan, "al-*Hijab*," Mohamedhassan.org: Women's Section. http://www.mohamedhassan.org/Womans%20Part/SaveFiles.aspx?hAudVidID=810&hRateID=1. Delivered 2004/05 (accessed February 9, 2009).

Many women interviewed showed some acceptance of idea of setting limits in the relationships between men and women. When asked if they felt there were moral standards that were unique to Islam, some respondents proudly confirmed, "The limits in the relationships between a male and a female is unique. In Islam there are manners among people not like other religions." The respondent made the comment while looking disrespectfully at a Christian woman sitting nearby. In spite of nominal acceptance of Hassan's ideas on sex segregation, very few fully internalized and implemented his views. The majority accepted the educational setting provided by the state, and the levels of sexual integration in the professional world.

Hassan talks about issues related to jurisprudence quite comfortably. His task is to relate the rules and regulations prescribed by *Shari'a*. He believes that the human species will not, and should not seek, to understand God's reason. Questioning or even seeking to understand the rationale behind religious requirements, in Hassan's point of view, in the path of blasphemy and disbelief. This is a common position among traditionalists and neo-traditionalists. In one of his sermons entitled "Knowing God," he recites a verse in Quran, "the merciful sat upon his throne" (Quran 20:5) and interprets the verse saying,

God sits above place and whereas the act of sitting in itself is understandable, the method is unknown to us; it is an obligation that we believe and not ask how because asking would be a religious innovation (bid'ah—i.e. a sin),[365] ... One must cut the inner greed to know God with a knife of faith because knowing God completely is not possible.[366]

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[365] In Islam, a *bid'ah* is an innovation in religions and is considered an alteration of religion. One *hadith* says, "Every new thing is an innovation, and every innovation is an error, and every error leads to hell" (cited in Berkey "Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near," 42). This verse is often cited by traditionalists, also called *salafists* (from salaf, or going back to origins) who fight any attempt to contextualize *Shari'a* and rationalize religion.
[366] Mohammed Hassan, "Kayfa nata''arraf 'ala allah" [Knowing God]," Islamway.com. Lessons and Sermons Section. Delivered 2006. Downloaded at http://www.islamway.com/?iw_s=Scholar&iw_a=lessons&scholar_id=28 (accessed February 9, 2009).

There is a strong and declared affiliation between Hassan and the Wahhabi discourse. Other than receiving his religious education in Saudi Arabia, Hassan also promotes and preaches Wahhabism. In one of his lectures, he discusses the three foundations of Iman Muhammad bin Abdel-Wahhab, who is the father of Wahhabism. Wahhabism is the main school of thought on which the Saudi Islam is founded. He presents this version as the true version of Islam containing all the quintessential elements of the religion. This demonstrates the strong links between the neo-traditional wave and the Saudi Islam, and suggests that the competition over the domain of value constitution involves state as well as sub-state actors. Further research is needed to fully trace these links and understand their implications.

Hassan and the Veil

According to Hassan, the veil is a foundational requirement in Islam. It is part of the laws and regulations instituted to prevent corruption and the provocation of desires in the Islamic community."[367] In Islam it is important to "prohibit naked flesh…and perfumed woman who provoke desires."[368] The veil, therefore, is important to protect the male from falling into sin. There is strong emphasis in Hassan's sermons on the weakness of the male and his susceptibility to sin and lust. Even he himself, "*a sheikh*" is not immune to that. Hassan was on a show one time, and he was sarcastic of Iqraa because it

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[367] Hassan, "*Hijab* Sermon." Downloaded at
http://www.mohamedhassan.org/Womans%20Part/SaveFiles.aspx?hAudVidID=811&hRateID=1 (accessed February 1, 2009).

[368] In Islam, wearing perfume is considered seductive and therefore elicit. One *hadith* by the Prophet of Islam states, "Any woman who applies perfume and then goes out among the people so that they could smell her fragrance is an adulteress." See
http://www.tamilislam.com/ENGLISH/BASIC/Prohibitions_taken_lightly.htm#27. The *hadith*, however, is considered weak; it was not cited in one of the four main compilations of *hadith*. (Imam Ahmad)

employed unveiled (or inappropriately veiled) women. The following is an excerpt of the transcript of the show that was retrieved from YouTube:

They asked me to come speak on Iqraa Channel…. I just stepped a feet in the studio and then I saw, you know, I really don't know where they get these pretty girls from… Just from the first glance[369]…Even the first glance would kill you!... Are you going to philosophize and say am a sheikh![370] Impossible! I would be the biggest liar and imposter. The Prophet said so, "I have not left my umma (nation) a greater fitna (harm) than women."[371]… I pray for every woman who did not taste the sweetness of the veil to taste it…I know myself I am a weak person and a sinner. You get there and you see pretty women sitting in front of you without even a curtain…. You want me to sit here and say, God said, the Prophet said, that would be a total scam!

Because of her seductive power, the woman should veil herself from the eyes of strangers either through staying behind a "curtain"[372] or getting veiled. The veil is a more practical solution given that women do need to go out for education and work. If the woman chooses the veil, then all body parts from head to toe, including the face, should be covered. If she does not stick to that dress code and goes out even with her face or hands uncovered, then she would be sinning. The only acceptable veil for Hassan, therefore, is the *niqab,* or the complete coverage of the entire body including the face. The Azhar declares that the *niqab* is desirable but not obligatory, but Hassan strongly disagrees. In his sermon on the veil, he says,

There is a common misconception that the khimar means a long scarf that reveals the face. This is not true… The correct definition is what the woman uses to cover her face. That interpretation is found in Quran, hadith, and the writings of religious scholars"[373]

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[369] There are several traditions by the prophet of Islam indicatinging that a man will not be punished for the first glance at a woman because it is accidental. A common saying in Egypt is, "the first glance is for you, the second is against you," and people joke about that saying, "lengthen the first glance as much as you want, it is no sin."

[370] Found on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NE5u68Epy4g. This excerpt was added on YouTube on November 02, 2007.

[371] The Muslim Online Bukhari and Muslim *hadith* search translates it as "After me I have not left any affliction more harmful to men than women." The *hadith* was cited in *al-Bukhari Hadith Collection*, *hadith* 7.33 and Narrated Usama bin Zaid. Retrieved at http://muslimonline.org/cgi-bin/hadith.cgi.

[372] The literal meaning of the veil is a curtain dividing two objects. See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of the meaning of *hijab* and its uses in Quran.

[373] Hassan, "*Hijab* Sermon."

For Hassan, the face is much more tempting than the hair and has to be covered for the veil to achieve its goal. This is especially true in the midst of all this corruption that young people are experiencing.[374] He criticizes some women who wear the *niqab* today because the opening for the eyes is too wide, "that you could even see her eyebrows and cheeks," which he considers a serious source of temptation for men.[375] Hassan also expresses great frustration regarding the discrimination against women wearing the *niqab*. While unveiled women go to college everyday with no obstruction, "the pure girl in *niqab* is stopped at the door. Is that logical?" This comment is a subtle critique of the state which laws do not conform to *Shari'a*.

There is a lot of sympathy among women interviewed to the idea that the "male is weak and cannot hold himself from sinning," and that it is "the girl that draws men to harass her." "Men look first then lower the gaze. This is their culture and we have to do our part." The veil, therefore, is necessary, "to help the boys lower the gaze." All except one woman who rationalized the veil on the basis of the weakness of the male cited Hassan as their primary source of religious education. There is less internalization of the idea that there is only one acceptable form of the veil, which is the *niqab*. While 10 people cited Hassan as their source of religious education and 24 cited other neo-traditionalist preachers who share with Hassan the opinion the requirement of the *niqab*, only three women thought the only acceptable form of veil is the *niqab*. This reflects the level of autonomy woman have in terms of selecting what to internalize, what to ignore, and what to reject. It also reflects their active role in reconstituting the religious message.

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[374] Hassan, "*Hijab* Sermon."
[375] Hassan, "*Hijab* Sermon."

Hassan's discussion on the rationale of the veil is very brief: it is a necessary clothing article for protecting society from the provocation caused by the male's natural sexual desires. In contrast to Khaled's sermon which is dedicated entirely to the question of why women should veil, Hassan only devotes the first four minutes to that purpose. The rest of the sermon provides various proofs from Quran and *hadith* that the veil is *fard* and that its correct form is the *niqab*. In response those who question it, Hassan says, "You should rather say, 'convince me of Islam' because if you are a Muslim then you will believe in *hijab*."[376] Hassan considers an unveiled woman non-Muslim, an idea that resonates strongly in the responses of many women. Many respondents suggested that the veil is as important as the five pillars of Islam and commented that an unveiled woman looks "unnatural" or "non-Muslim".

Following the *hijab* sermon, Hassan gave another sermon entitled, *"Dressed yet Naked."* He started this sermon by reciting a *hadith* regarding the signs of the ends of time:

In the latest part of my umma, there will be men riding into boxes on the saddles of their beasts that look like houses and will step out the doors of mosques. Their women will be naked yet dressed and will be the like the beast's mane ... Curse those women for they are cursed and if there had been another umma after that umma then their women, the dressed yet naked, would be their slaves.[377]

Hassan explains that the *hadith* is a revelation by the Prophet of Islam regarding many things we actually see today. The boxes that men ride represent the forms of the cars that are looking more like houses with all the DVD players and even refrigerators that cars

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[376] Hassan, "*Hijab* Sermon."

[377] Mohammed Hassan, "Kaseyaat 'areyaat" [Dressed yet Naked Sermon] Mohamedhassan.org, Transcribed Sermons. Downloaded at http://ww.mohamedhassan.org/Womans%20Part/SaveFiles.aspx?hAudVidID=817&hRateID=1--. (accessed February 9, 2009).

have today. These men would be religious, visiting mosques regularly; however, their faith and deeds would not be accepted because their wives would be dressed but naked (i.e., not veiled). He then warns men to not be "one of those men who leave their women to go out undressed. It is the male's responsibility, therefore, to "clothe your woman and not leave her unveiled." He warns and reproaches parents who leave their daughters to go out "dressed in tight in inappropriate clothes to go to college." According to Hassan, "this cannot be a house that contains a man…. I do not even mean a religious man; I mean a real man who has jealousy and pride."[378]

Hassan then asks women, "Sister, can you stand hell?" He recites verses describing hell and the great torture that people who end up in hell would experience:

Seize ye him, and bind ye him, And burn ye him in the Blazing Fire, Further, make him march in a chain, whereof the length is seventy cubits! "This was he that would not believe in Allah Most High. And would not encourage the feeding of the indigent! [379]

As explained in Chapter 5, this verse as well as all the verses that Hassan cited regarding hell-fire is related to disbelievers not the unveiled women. Hassan and many other preachers, however, argue that an unveiled woman is not obeying God and will go to hell. This type of deductive reasoning is never clarified to the audience. The only message imparted is that if women do not veil, they will be subjected to severe and unfathomable forms of torture. Apparently this message has had a significant impact on women's decision to veil.

Hassan's Views on Women

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[378] Hassan, "*Dressed yet Naked Sermon.*"
[379] Quran 69:30-34.

Hassan has a whole Web page on his site on women containing 17 sermons. These sermons cover a variety of topics, including the veil, commingling of sexes, and a number of lectures detailing woman's duties and responsibilities towards her husband, her children. He also covers the topics of magic and superstition under the theme.[380] There is also a sermon regarding the rights of the wife, prime of which was access to the appropriate environment for worshipping and knowing God. A husband, for example, who prevents a woman from veiling, is not a man. If he is not instructing his wife to be diligent in fulfilling her religious duties, he is failing his responsibilities towards her. Similarly, a man who introduces cable in his home is failing as a husband because he is "opening fire on his entire household with corruptive television shows."

Hassan elicits another three types of rights: the right for kind treatment, the right for nonstringent financial support, and the right to sound jealousy. It is the woman's right, according to Hassan, to have a husband who is not a "cuckold." A man who lets his wife show her beauty and wear full makeup on her way to work "for strangers to see" is not a man and is berated harshly. "I swear that every time you let your wife go out looking like that, you will be judged in front of God," he warns. Jealousy should be used sensibly; a man should not suspect his wife if she is "pure and wears the *niqab*, and is good." An unveiled woman, in contrast, and one that is wearing the correct veil is deserving of restriction from her husband because she is not abiding by the proper rules of purity and respectfulness. Hassan's arguments regarding the right to a jealous man are predicated on a *hadith* by the Prophet of Islam that states that women are more likely to go to Hell because they curse, are ungrateful to their husbands, and are "deficient in

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[380] Many lower- and lower-middle class women (and men) believe in black magic, superstition, and the power of spells. Some unorthodox sheikhs live off manipulating uneducated people by making them believe they can cure disease and control fate, even read into the future through black magic.

intelligence and religion." [381] That deficiency has to be made up by a strong man who is capable of guiding the woman to the right path. Without a jealous man, a woman would go astray.

Hassan rejects all arguments about gender equality. He argues that Quran states that the male gets twice the share of women in heir and is therefore superior. The fact that woman today go out to work in mixed settings is the underlying cause for all temptations, lust, and doubts from which this generation is suffering. The solution to all this corruption is to go back to "mobile seclusion" or the *niqab* and to reject all forms of cultural habits that were imposed by the West. [382]

Hassan, the Jews, and the West

Hassan's popularity is founded on three successful preaching strategies: 1) the appeal to people's God-fearing emotion enforced by the portrayal of a corrupt and falling society in need for a return to a vengeful God; 2) portraying self as an encyclopedia of religious text; and 3) his constant hitting on the great hatred of the Jews and Israel's God Father, the United States. Hassan gave a number of sermons on Israel, the chronically unfaithful Jews, the inevitable decline of the American hegemony, and the terrorism of the West. In addition to all these exclusive sermons, there are constant references to the

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[381] The *hadith* is found in Bukhari, Chapter 1:30. It reads:

"Once Allah's Apostle went out to the Musalla (to offer the prayer) o `Id-al-Adha or Al-Fitr prayer. Then he passed by the women and said, "O women! Give alms, as I have seen that the majority of the dwellers of Hell-fire were you (women)." They asked, "Why is it so, O Allah's Apostle ?" He replied, "You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you. A cautious sensible man could be led astray by some of you." The women asked, "O Allah's Apostle! What is deficient in our intelligence and religion?" He said, "Is not the evidence of two women equal to the witness of one man?" They replied in the affirmative. He said, "This is the deficiency in her intelligence. Isn't it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses." Source: Muslimonline, downloaded at http://muslimonline.org/cgi-bin/*hadith*.cgi (accessed January 29, 2009).

[382] Mohammed Hassan, "Al-Shahwaat" [Lusts], Mohamedhassan.org, Transcribed Sermons. http://www.mohamedhassan.org/alkhotab%20wa%20aldoros/written/khotabmaktobahDt.aspx?hRateID=5&hAudVidID=1537 (accessed January 29, 2009).

"filthy Jews" and "the infidel West." Hassan never misses a chance to talk about the veil, and the West/Jews.

Hassan's sermons seek to deflect the image of the Muslims as radicals and terroristic on the West. He demonstrates that Islam is a very forgiving religion and that the violent acts by some few Muslims do not compare to the long anti-humanitarian records of the West, particularly the United States, including the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan and the brutal attack on the Sudan "that meek, peaceful country whose only sin was the implementation of Shari'a Law and the rejection of the Western hegemony." He also relates some of the "disgraceful" anti-humanitarian crimes committed by the United States, including the "crimes" the U.S. committed against the Native Indians and African Americans, the killing of civilians during the Mexican war, the killing of children during the Somali war, and starving innocent civilians through random embargoes in many parts of the world.[383] He points out the double-standard of the international community and the Security Council, saying "So long as the perpetrator of terrorism is the United States, it is not terrorism!" The same Security Council also failed to take any action against the terrorist attacks of the Jews on the Palestinians and Southern Lebanon and the Serbian attacks on Bosnia and Herzegovina, all of which were forms of genocide. These actions sharply contrast with the noble acts of Muslim leaders during war, especially in relation to women, children, and minorities. He narrates several stories about the justice and civility of early Muslim leaders towards the Copts and Jews in the

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[383] Citing the United States as a model of brutality and inhumanity is quite recent but has become very common in Egyptian folk. In one Egyptian movie, *Noqtat Regoo'* [Return Point], one actor demonstrates the brutal tactfulness of one of the characters by comparing it with the acts of the Americans against the American Indians. See Ibrahim Hamed and Mahmoud Hamed, *Noqtat Regoo'* [Return Point], DVD, Directed by Hatem Fareed (Cairo: Film Clinic, 2008).

newly acquired lands and declares that shame and indignation are in fact due to the West

and that Muslims should proudly:

Lift up your head as high as the Gemini Star, for Islam is the religion of peace, stability, and hope. I will declare it openly, that the Jews and Christians have never tasted the grace of security, peace, and stability except under the shadows of Islam and the laws of Mohammed bin Abdullah Peace be on him. History will be our judge. I will not need to reference our early Muslim Imams, but the Western authors will provide the truth regarding Islam and history.[384]

Hassan provides a number of ways to achieve salvation and avoid all these atrocities. The first is the pure application of *Shari'a* Law. The contamination of the social and legal codes in the Muslim world with foreign social codes lies behind all the deviation and deterioration in the Muslim world. The only solution is to "reform ourselves, our women, our daughters, and our sons in accordance to the righteous laws of Islam." Second, Muslims should launch a *jihad* campaign against the perpetrators of injustice. In one of his sermons, he prays for one Muslim leader to rise up "after repenting and conciliating with God to implement the Shari'a of God in his state." He promises that once this happens "the apostate Orient and the infidel West would tremble … because they know that this would lead to the lifting of the Flag of Islam on all parts of the world, just like it did before. He urges all Muslims to completely boycott all American and Jewish products, which would bring down their economies and ensure the success of the campaign against the West and Israel.

Competing Visions, Competing Markets

This chapter analyzed one of the religious satellite channels that started during the last five years. Similar to Iqraa, al-Nas is also owned by a Saudi businessman. However, its profile and mission was quite different from that of Iqraa. Saudi Arabia was a pioneer

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[384] Mohammed Hassan, "Samahat al-Islam wal-Irhaab al-gharby" [The Magnanimity of Islam and the Western Terrorism." Mohammedhassan.org, Transcribed Sermons Section. Downloaded http://www.mohamedhassan.org/alkhotab%20wa%20aldoros/written/khotabmaktobahDt.aspx?hRateID=5&hAudVidID=1490 (accessed January 1, 2009)..

in the satellite television industry which mushroomed after the First Gulf War. It was the first to launch a privately owned satellite channel, and also the first to establish an exclusively religious channel in the Middle East. Other channels owned by Egyptian and other Gulf countries followed, but the impact of the Saudi channels remains strong.

There is strong rivalry among Arab satellite television channels. This rivalry is not limited to business rivalry, but it involves state rivalry as well. Media plays an important role in transforming attitudes and identities. The entity that owns the most influential media is assumed to also own the greatest power over the domain of value constitution. There is strong rivalry between Egypt and other Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, regarding religious interpretation and who owns the most legitimate and/or acceptable religious and moral code. The struggle sometimes takes the form of competition among religious ideologies, others the form of competition between business entities over market shares, and yet others between groups regarding who has greater authority to issue religious opinions.

While religious satellite media have become very popular among all social segments in society, the middle and lower-middle classes were found to be more receptive to conservative channels. More than three-quarters of respondents preferred al-Nas and/or other channels with similar profiles. New-age religious channels were found more acceptable among upper-middle classes; a little more than half respondents from this class relied on these types of channels for their religious education. It is even more significant to find that 50 percent of upper-middle-class women tune to neo-traditional religious media. This class is the epicenter of the struggle between state and society as well as the struggle against globalization. There appears to be fragmentations regarding

the vision to adopt in those struggles, with some members adopting a moderate approach while the other a stricter approach. Regardless of the ideology adopted, the struggle is becoming more intense.

This research found new applications for Migdal's state-in-society argument regarding the identity formation process. It was found that the identities of organizations too are products of interactions among various groups. The current identity of al-Nas is the result of the interaction among the management of the channel, its audience, the state, and competing channels. In pursuit of greater market shares, the management of these channels is constantly looking for ways to attract greater audience through responding to changes in public opinions. These channels have sensitive barometers to changes in audience orientations, but they also have strong constitutive role on these orientations. As the analysis above demonstrated, the channel started as an entertainment media channel, then turned 180 degrees to become a purely religious channel with a strict neo-traditional outlook, and may now be undergoing yet a third shift in identity as it attempts to become more moderate. This explains the complexity and elusiveness of the study of the veil, which is undergoing a constant process of evolution due to the interaction among all these players.

Religious Authority and Individual Agency within Satellite Realms

The competition over value formation in Egypt today is both acute and multifaceted. The competition between versions and opinions is seen as disturbing contradictions that women are not able to resolve. In many instances, however, these contradictions act like green lights for unleashing the female agency with regards to the

interpretation of the religious message. One woman suggested that contradictions don't necessarily mean one opinion is right and the other is wrong. "Both preachers are right but speaking from their own perspectives." This, to some, legitimizes yet another perspective, which is their own. Many women insist that they use their personal judgments when selecting a religious opinion. Some women do not go to anyone for a religious opinion, insisting, "Now I trust myself more." Throughout these ongoing struggles to redefine religiosity, the state continues to swing between the meanings of religiosity promoted by all these social groups. This multivocal struggle gave rise to a multifaceted veil that is modern, authentic, emancipatory, confining, defensive, offensive, all at the same time.

Women's responses suggest that the result of that competition is still undetermined. Religious preachers and channel management today make critical remarks regarding the versions of Islam promoted by competing channels and preachers. Each channel looks to differentiate itself from others and to tactfully align or divert from the state version of Islam to promote its own goals. The state is actively involved in this power struggle: concerted efforts are made by state officials and state organizations to debut some of the material and provide a different version of Islam through its religious programming. It also uses its authority to control, or project the ability to control, which channels stay active and which not. Given that most of these channels are transmitted through the state-owned satellite (Nilesat), the state does have some control over all satellite channels.

While the authority of the state has been challenged by these new satellite realms that the Egyptian citizens are now exposed to, the result of the power struggle between

the state and nonstate versions of Islam is yet unresolved. The state is still, for many respondents, the "last resort" for an official religious opinion (*fatwa*). One third of the women interviewed during this study would take a religious *fatwa* only from al-Azhar. "Azhar is the primary reference… It is the *fatwa* source." "al-Azhar is the only institution authorized to provide *fatwas*." Some women stated that they sought al-Azhar because it is the only institution authorized by the state to provide a *fatwa*. "In Egypt, *fatwa* is only taken from al-Azhar;" "The entire country takes its *fatwa* from al-Azhar." Some of these women reject the variety in religious messages offered and insist, "I don't really trust anyone. I prefer to ask more than one sheikh and they must be Azhar graduates." "I don't trust the media. The Azhar is the most reliable source of *fatwa*."

Conversely, many womeneither do not consider going to al-Azhar, or completely reject its authority. One woman commented, "al-Azhar has gone totally crazy! They have lately been saying crazy *fatwas* like nursing adults and other crazy *fatwas*." "al-Azhar sometimes come up with very strange things. That's why I trust the preachers that come on television more."[385] For some women, the only legitimate source of *fatwa* is Saudi Arabia. "Saudi Arabia! If I take a *fatwa* from there I'd be certain it's accurate." "I trust Sheikh Mohammed Hassan and another source from Saudi Arabia." Just as the competition among satellite realms transcend borders, so does the competition over religious authority. It is an ongoing struggle that is very complex.

The role of the female agency inn constituting religious meanings was confirmed in this analysis. Even when women indicate that they trust a particular preacher, their agency appears to be still active. Their power over the domain of value reconstitution stems from their active role in reinterpreting and even molding the message. For

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[385] This respondent indicated that she watches Hassan and Khaled mostly.

example, many women insist that they endorse the teachings of Mohammed Hassan. This preacher adamantly criticizes all forms of sex integration, and rejects all non-*niqab* veils as unacceptable. Many of the women who watch Hassan and promote his programs among their peers are active in society, have relationships with the opposite sex, and do not believe that the *niqab* is the only acceptable form of the veil. As they promote the teachings of a preacher that they do not conform to in practice, but insist they endorse in words, these women are active agents in the reconstitution of the religious message they receive via satellite channels. Their peers follow their practices and also ascribe them to the teachings of the preachers. As such, they are achieving two goals: they are declaring rejection of the West and the state and at the same time maneuvering and resisting the domestic forces pushing them to the margin.

The analysis in this chapter and Chapter 6 is limited to channels that have originated in Saudi Arabia. This is because these were the channels that respondents to the interview instrument considered most influential. Both channels are also considered the pioneer and most representative prototype of satellite religious streaming. There is no exclusively religious state-owned channel in Egypt. However, the state has increased its religious broadcasting over the last few years. The state religious programs swing between the two types of religious media. For example, respondents reported that Al-Azhar preachers featured on some of these state-owned channels promote a very strict type of the veil, which several respondents thought were unpractical. Many state religuous programs also feature new-age preachers who are more flexible and lenient. More analysis is needed to understand the dynamics of the competition among all these cross-border inter-state struggles and the simultaneous state-society conflicts over the

domain of religious authority. It is clear, however, that these forces of competition have resulted in significant transformations in religious identities today and that the identities of all these actors are quite interdependent.

Conclusion

An examination of the Arab satellite industry provides a unique opportunity for exploring three ongoing levels of struggle taking place in Egypt today. We see how women are dealing with the forces acting to peripheralize their role in society and how they are able to turn these forces into sources of empowerment. We also see the dynamics of the state-society relationships and test the hypothesis regarding the effect of globalization on state power and authority. The state still has significant power over the domain of value constitution. This power, however, is challenged and contested all the time. The attempts by the state to curb and repress its opposition have resulted in an increase in resistance and the creation of a hiatus between people and government. These two arenas of struggle are circumscribed by global forces, which redefine these struggles, and reconfigure their processes.

One of the factors that impacted the nature of all three levels of struggles is the fusion of the Egyptian and Arab Gulf cultures as a result of the emergence of the Arab satellite industry. This merging trend started shortly after the 1991 Gulf War, but was catalyzed through the emergence of the Arab Satellite industry. Since religious satellite media was cited as one of the principal triggers of the mass veiling phenomenon, one may deduce that this fusion in Egyptian and Arab Gulf cultures had a significant impact on the current forms, meanings, and practices of the veil, particularly among middle and

upper-middle-class women in Egypt. Some women looked favorably at this convergence as it realigned the Egyptian religiosity more closely with the "purer" Saudi Islam. Other women, however, saw this as a sign of confusion and cultural erosion.

The question of the West was also fond to be a central theme in the neo-traditional religious media. New-age media promotes a form of resistance to the Western forces accepts the premises of global integration but is predicated on the idea that Muslim youth are different but equal. It presents Islam as a progressive and flexible religion that thrives on interaction with the Western and non-Islamic cultures. The neo-traditional religious discourse, on the other hand, emerged as a result of a perceived failure of the integration policies, as demonstrated by the anti-Muslim discourse that surged after September 11. It promotes the view of Islamic laws as eternal and unchanging. There is a strong emphasis in this discourse on what is different between Islam and other religions, including the veil and sexual segregation. This difference makes Islam in some instances incompatible with other cultures and therefore in need to be shielded from the West.

Young Egyptian women are navigating this binary digital world and creating their own hybrid strategy and internalization of the meaning of being Muslim vis-à-vis the West. This strategy is based on a mix of isolation and integration approaches: on the one hand, they are declaring boycotts of McDonald's and other American products. On the other, they are keen to adopt the latest American fashion lines in their dress and to ameliorate Western styles of living. The veil in its current forms is a compromising strategy of differentiation from and alignment with the West. They adopt the veil to

affirm their identities. But their veils are modern and in some cases are imported from the West. As such, women are declaring that they are modern and open to the West.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This study examined the intriguing phenomenon of the rapid adoption of what is called Islamic dress among middle and upper-middle women in Cairo, Egypt. The main questions that this study analyzed were Why has the veil become the norm among modern middle and mid-upper class women, a class that has generally rejected the veil until recently? and What are the meaning(s) of the veil that are shared by this group and what are the different functions it has for them and the society at large? Although the phenomenon has received a lot of attention in the literature, very few of the extant studies sought to understand why women veil. Most of the literature has examined what *hijab* represents, not what it is. These analyses regarding the representations of the veil were also flawed with misconceptions and fallacious assumptions, which this study sought to correct.

The study revealed that the veil derived its meanings from the functions it performed. It functioned as an instrument of power used in various ways at three inter-tension zones. At the social level, the veil was used to counter the recent forces to redefine women's social and economic roles in society. At the political level, the veil was used by several actors, including women and the religious intelligentsia, to challenge the state's moral authority. At the global arena, women engaged in informal solidarity movements to reject Western moral codes and to resist Western cultural encroachment. All these tension zones are influenced by new patterns of immigration in the Arab world and by new forms of intra-regional globalization fostered by a newly emerging Arab satellite industry.

Historical evidence and empirical research both suggested strong synergies in the meanings of the veil and the processes of identity formation. As the different nationalist visions developed, different views on the veil emerged and clear differentiations in its forms evolved. This started at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The veil then represented an axis of conflict regarding nationalist visions. Upper and mid-upper class nationalists advocated lifting the veil and adopting European models of social and political reform. Middle-class nationalists, on the other hand, promoted an "authentic" reform model, which is founded on Islamic teachings and emphasized the veil as a strong identity marker. This dichotomous view of reform obstructed the creation of a unified nationalist vision, which lies at the roots of an identity crisis that Egypt continues to suffer from until this day.

This study was exploratory in nature. The researcher did not start off with a clearly defined hypothesis regarding why modern educated Egyptian women veiled. It was therefore, not possible to follow a predetermined research design but used an investigative approach. Starting with the subjects and objects of the research, a detailed questionnaire was conducted with young women. The questionnaire instrument was designed to be broad and the questions were inviting, provocative, but neutral. That way, women were given the opportunity to relate their personal experiences with little or no limitations on how they interpret the questions. The results of the interviews revealed the contradictions that women face, the pressures they experience on a daily basis, the functions the veil performs in the women's lives, and its diverse meanings and representations. The interviewed women also pointed the research to an illuminating site of analysis, namely satellite television. The examination of the content of satellite

television helped unravel some important dynamics of globalization and power politics. Using a triangulated method of research, it was possible to recognize three arenas of power struggle that the veil symbolizes.

The Functions and Meanings of the Veil at the Social Level

The veil was found to perform various functions in today's society. Rapidly deteriorating economic conditions, dwindling availability of work opportunities, and greater exposure to the Gulf culture resulted in new pressures on the Egyptian woman to give up many of the rights and liberties she gained over the last few decades. She was expected to conform to the dress codes acceptable in specific versions of Islam and to make room for men in the workforce by exiting the labor force. The new dynamics, which catalyzed after the first Gulf War, resulted in temporary losses in the status of women, as measured by decreases in women's participation in the labor force from 1994 and 1998.

To comprehend fully the effect of these new dynamics and how the veil was used to respond to these dynamics, the research tuned to the voices of women to understand the various functions and meanings of the veil, and how it relates to women's overall social responsibilities. Quick surveys were also conducted with men to assess their opinions regarding unveiled women, and whether an unveiled woman could receive his consideration as a future wife. The women interviewed during this study were career-oriented. They had strong professional ambitions to work and excel in their fields, but most of them also saw their roles as mothers and wives as their most important social role. Many young men, on the other hand, viewed unveiled women as cheap and loose.

Society in general viewed women without the *hijab* as disrespectful and deserving of violent crimes against them. Without the veil, a woman was generally considered unable to perform her duties as a wife and mother.

In view of this new conceptualization of respect in society, many women faced significant limitations on their agency with regards the choice to veil. They experienced direct and indirect pressure to veil, and that pressure was exercised mostly by the woman's family. Islam strongly advocates marriage. In fact, a person who gets married is considered to have fulfilled "half his religion" in Islam. An unmarried woman is suspected in society as being immoral or not worthy of marriage. Today's housing crisis and the deteriorating economic conditions complicate matters even further by making marriage for a typical middle-class person almost impossible. While men who fail to fulfill the religious duty of marriage are excused for not having the necessary financial resources, unmarried women who advance in age are looked at as deficient morally and behaviorally.

Women have little choice today on whether to veil or not. An unveiled woman is marginalized, even stigmatized in society. Family and society exercise various forms of pressure on women to veil. Another source of pressure is religious media. Interview results suggested that conservative religious media that either originated in the Gulf or was controlled by preachers educated in the Gulf educational system were becoming very popular and causing major shifts in perceptions regarding women and respect in society. Although more popular among middle and mid-lower classes, almost half of the upper-middle class women interviewed were regular viewers of these conservative programs. These programs and preachers advocate a social system that is fully segregated based on

sex and that promoted extreme forms of male dominance. The husband, according to this system, iss held responsible for his wife's sins. He is expected to fully control her actions and movements, or else he would be considered unmanly.

All these forces explain why the veil today has become the norm not only among lower-middle classes but also middle and upper-middle classes. It is a tool that has surfaced as a result of pressures to redefine and limit the role of women in society. However, women today have created many hybrids of this essentially confining tool and transformed it into an emancipatory weapon. They use the veil to gain some of the rights and privileges granted to men alone. The veil gives women the image of respect and maturity, which entails that greater freedom in their movements and choices. They use it to realize a sense of emancipation from the restrictions placed by the family on women. An unmarried woman in Egypt experiences significant restrictions on her movements and choices. Women interviewed indicated that the veil elevated their status to a mature woman who knows what is right and wrong for herself.

The veil also helps women actuate their roles in economic and professional activities and legitimizes women's participation in the male-dominated professional world. It also provides some protection against street harassment and creates the image of sexual segregation in the street, which many women need to continue to have access to public space. In addition to all these practical functions, the veil gave many women a spiritual meaning for their lives, and helped them cope with the contradictions they face in society on a daily basis. The feeling of being approved before God compensates some of the disappointment that many young Egyptians face today with regards to their educational and professional pursuits.

The role of the veil in the professional world is particularly interesting. The veil is not viewed as an absolute requirement for effective participation in this world. Many veiled and unveiled woman insist that the veil would have or had little or no impact on their careers. Some even suggested that it would limit their opportunities in the labor market as many large employers such as multinational companies, large banks, and certain state agencies are biased against the veil. Accordingly, in its traditional form, the veil could have resulted in the exclusion of women from the work space. However, through the many innovations in the veil fashion, many veiled women are able to present themselves as modern, fashion-forward, and professional, which diminishes work discrimination against veiled women. Once admitted to the work field, the veil gives women an image of seriousness and respectfulness that helps them advance in their careers.

The variety in the veil forms coupled with the invitation of women to participate in the domain of preaching through promoting the veil has opened new doors of participation for women. Many women insisted that they subscribe to very conservative versions of Islam. They blamed themselves and other women for men's sins and agreed with conservative preachers that women bore the greatest share of responsibility for the problem of street harassment. The preachers they listened to promoted very rigid interpretations of the veil requirement and advocated a completely sexually segregated social system. The behavior of these women and their dress choices, however, did not correspond to the versions of Islam to which they declared adherence. While dressed in very liberal veil styles, they insisted that their dress styles conformed to the Islamic religious requirement. They were also set on preaching and admonishing unveiled women

to change their ways and to listen to preachers like Mohammed Hassan and Mohammed Ya'quob to know the right way. They became the voices of these preachers among their peers, and as such they reserved the power to reconstitute their religious teachings. The fact that the liberal and less conservative forms of the veil were the most common among many of the women who felt a great responsibility towards other unveiled women was indicative of this constitutive power that the woman agency possessed.

The Political Functions of the Veil

The veil today codifies a rejection of the version of Islam promoted by the state that is deemed too "secular." The state provided a nationalist vision that attempted to synergize religion and modernism. The veil and other cultural practices that were not deemed "modern" were suppressed. The Egyptian republic was created at a time when the new international system was evolving and it emphasized individual rights and freedoms and promoted women's equality. The state at that time saw the projection of a modern woman an easy way to gain legitimacy in the international system. The unveiled, highly educated woman became the face of the nation in the international arena and guaranteed recognition by the international system. It also overshadowed other signs of human rights breaches that the Egyptian citizens were exposed to during that period.

The veil, therefore, is not just a religious movement; it is a silent but profound political movement against many of the symbols of statehood that the regime ascribed to itself. Today the champions of the dress transformation are middle- and upper-middle-class women, who constitute the backbone of any mobilization activities and play a very important role in the reproduction of the cultural system of society. They are also the

main targets of the identity transformation and nation-building during the last fifty years. The veiling movement has started three decades ago, but the middle- and upper-middle-class women remained predominantly unveiled until roughly a decade ago. The middle-to upper-middle-class veil thus constitutes a significant threat to the authority and legitimacy of the state. The veil became a symbol of solidarity with competing visions and acted as a silent political movement against the state authority.

Digital religious media was selected as a site at which these hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces were analyzed. Today young people rely almost exclusively on digital religious media for their religious education. This was a notable diversion from the sources of religious education that previous generations relied on; until the late 1990s, people relied on religious books, programs featured on the state-owned Egypt Radio and Television Union (ERTU), and local mosque preachers. Before 1998, there were no exclusively religious channels in the Arab world, and before 1991 there were no satellite networks in the region. The site of religious media is therefore a novel, rapidly evolving site for studying these new power struggles. Each religious channel was found to represent a form of religiosity that currently circulates the Egyptian religious culture. By examining prototypes of these channels, the study presented a model of religious culture transformation and showed the interconnection between the veil phenomenon and other sociopolitical conditions in Egypt.

Responses to the detailed interview suggested a number of facts. First, women were exposed to a wide variety of religious views and opinions. There were strong contradictions between the views of public preachers working for al-Azhar Institute on one hand and those of the private preachers presenting on various satellite channels on

the other. Women also perceive contradictions within the same private and public entities, which many found quite disconcerting. Embedded in these contradictions were silent power struggles and a direct challenge to the vision of nationhood and citizenship that the state proposed. Women were playing important roles in these struggles. The veil was in instrument of liberation of new and old forms of social restrictions on women. Women were also using their veil to challenge the regime, particularly the perceived secular model of nationalism. Furthermore, women were, at least on the face, accommodating certain forms of their own subjugation in the social arena to realize specific political gains vis-à-vis the regime and the West. The veil in its many forms were performing all these social and political functions simultaneously.

Two counter-hegemonic discourses of religion were examined in this study. The first was the liberal version which was sponsored by Iqraa Channel and represented in the teachings of new-age preachers such as Amr Khaled. The neo-conservative discourse was represented by the programs of al-Nas Channel and the teachings of Mohammed Hassan. Both Hassan and Khaled insisted that they have no political agenda and avoided any open critique on the regime. The covert statements they made, however, were very powerful. Khaled attacked the hollowed vision of nationalism that the state offered and the inability of the state to effectively utilize its rich human capital resources. He attracted many supporters through promoting ideas of social reform through volunteerism, self-realization, and the cultivation of an Islamic nationalist identity. He urged every young Muslim to set a goal in life which was to liberate Palestine. On face value, the attack was targeted at Israel and Palestine. But his language contains undertones regarding the failure of the state to confront the Jewish enemy and a critique on the neutralization

policies that the state promoted. Khaled had a deep impact on young Egyptian men and women, many of whom considered him a role model. Threatened by his popularity and by the rising power of his counter-hegemonic discourse, the regime expelled Khaled twice.

The other channel investigated in this study, al-Nas, represented a conservative version of Islam. There were significant parallels between this version and the Wahhabi version endorsed by Saudi Arabia. Egyptian officials have made significant efforts to prevent the infiltration of Wahhabism into the Egyptian political culture. That it now has an acknowledged and powerful presence in religious discourse is quite significant. Al-Nas was found to be the most popular religious channel today. The support was driven by an increased acceptance of the Saudi version of Islam that many respondents deemed to be purer and closer to the teachings of the prophet of Islam. The views of this version on Israel and the West also increased its attractiveness.

The wide diversity in the forms of the veils indexed the strength of the struggle among these competing visions. It also highlighted the many contradictions experienced by women today. Few women declared full acceptance of the version of Islam promoted by al-Nas. For example, al-Nas advocates a very rigid form of the veil. Women who endorsed al-Nas and its preachers, however, generally wore conservative, but Western forms of dress. They appeared to be making conscious efforts to find middle ways among the many versions of Islam circulating the country, including that currently promoted by al-Azhar. Some even wear very liberal clothes, demonstrating their confusion regarding all these competing discourses and/or their determination to transcend that struggle altogether. Women appeared to adopt a subtle but potent strategy to offset the

antifeminist discourse in al-Nas Channel. By nominally accepting a set of values and norms promoted by one or more of the discourses yet not abiding by their teachings, they were able to reconstitute these religious messages. The dynamics of these power struggles were demonstrable. However, the results and future implications were not fully realized at this time.

The Functions of the Veil at the Global Arena of Power

The veil provides an ideal surgical tool for dissecting the forces of globalization and understanding its many overlapping and conflicting layers. This study examined the two of these many layers. The first involved the reduction in perceived distances among cultures at opposite sides of the global hemispheres because of the revolution in information technology. "Oriental" cultures today are more exposed to the styles of living and the cultures of the West through the Internet and satellite media. But the exposure is very selective and limited. Young people watch shows like "Real Housewives of Orange County," and movies that overemphasize infidelity and moral corruption, and they generalize what they see as a representation of Americans. They also attempt to distance themselves as far as possible from what America and the West represents. The veil was found to be one way for confirming the distinction, and declaring rejection of what the West was perceived to stand for.

The theme of resistance against the West, and the need to launch *jihad* was a common one among the women interviewed in this study. More significantly, the religious discourse today is imbued with anti-West sentiments, and enticements for every Muslim person to lift up the veil of passiveness and hopelessness and stand up to the

Western enemy. Before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the discourse on resistance was more symbolic, emphasizing identity assertion vis-à-vis the West through the adoption of various visible religious expressions, most prominent among which was the veil. Today, the call for resistance is taking more concrete physical forms.

The veiling among middle- and upper-middle class women was a demonstration of the vehement rejection of Western values. The state feminist discourse was perceived as a conspiratorial attack on traditional Muslim values. As was illustrated in Chapter 4, the divorce between the feminist and nationalist discourses in Egypt in the 1920s resulted in the fragmentation of the nationalist movement and had long-lasting impacts on the Egyptian identity. The religious clergy, therefore, emphasized the dangers of the state-sponsored discourse on women and the hidden "Western" agenda embedded in the "universal" feminist agenda. They called for women, particularly the middle and upper-middle class women, to declare to the West their outright rejection of all their values. The adoption of the veil by classes that were most connected to the Western culture was a powerful visible statement that alarmed the West to the new "veiled threat" that the *hijab* constituted.

This movement of resistance, however, was neither all-encompassing nor unchallenged. Young Egyptian women adopted many Western expressions and values. Their dress styles were much closer to the Western fashion than the traditional veil fashion. They also followed Western movies and shows on satellite television and movie theaters. Western -style malls are very common in Egypt today, including Arkadia, City Stars, and others. These malls have very familiar American and European stores, such as Banana Republic, Gap, Esprit, Guess, and others. They also have movie theaters, exotic

restaurants and a host of entertainment options that are very similar to the mall ambiance in the United States. The veil fashion itself is a mosaic of Western and traditional fashion styles. It is this fusion of the standardizing and differentiating forces that make the study of globalization most interesting and elusive.

This aspect of globalization, involving the West and the "other" is the most common field of research in the literature today. Other nuances of globalization, involving the importation of global modes of communication and its utilization at the regional level have not received adequate attention in the literature. This study examined the impact of the rise in the satellite industry on religious culture in Egypt. Using their great financial resources and access to state-of-the art technologies, many Arab businessmen originating in the Gulf countries launched a new business in the Arab world, namely religious satellite channels. In the beginning, these satellite channels stressed the moderate face of Islam and the most commonly accepted values in the Muslim World. The new media channel became very successful and attracted a wide array of audience from all parts of the Arab world. Slowly but surely, this new source of religious education substituted other traditional sources, including state-sponsored religious programs and religious books.

After September 11, 2001, however, and the invasion of Iraq by the United States and its allies, the discourse on religion shifted significantly. There was an identifiable demand for a "purer" discourse that is more distinct from the West and that had roots in the Wahhabi version of Islam. Women were called upon to reject all forms of sexual integration and to cover their bodies completely with a *niqab* because women in general are the greatest source of temptation for men. Surprisingly, many young modern middle

and upper-middle class women accepted this message at various degrees. They took responsibility for the explosion of harassment and sexual crimes in Egypt, and they launched a campaign to get every woman they met to conform to this new vision of Islam. It was already demonstrated, however, that their acceptance of this vision was quite cursory. But why did they feel the need to impart the appearance of full acceptance of this new form of Islam? It is because these women sought proclaim their complete defiance of the Western values, even the values of equality and freedom that the West promoted and represented. Through accepting their partial subjugation at the social level, modern young Egyptian women strove to liberate themselves from what they perceived as Western imperialism.

The Arab digital media promoted a specific form of Islam that until the near past had been endorsed predominantly by the Gulf countries. This new view was portrayed as the only acceptable version of Islam by al-Nas and was becoming more popular and an increasing number of young people were beginning to reject the more moderate versions as presented by channels like Iqraa. The neo-conservative Islam was portrayed by preachers as unchanging yet suppressed by the regime. The creation of the impression of permanence and eternity in a religiosity model that had been uncommon gave the imparters of that model a great level of authority over religious culture, which made it even harder to challenge.

The acceptance of the neo-conservative form of Islam by middle and upper-middle class Egyptians is a new phenomenon in Egypt. About two-thirds of the women interviewed who specified the name or type of religious channel they watched preferred this new version of Islam; there were quite a few "converters" in the sample, or women

who used to watch conservative channels but stopped because of their discomfort with the discourse. Even the management of some of these channels attempted to undo the image of extremism that the channel cultivated through its programs and began to invite moderate preachers to some shows. The demand for this discourse grew rapidly over a short period of time, but there is some evidence to suggest the volatility of that demand. Accordingly the impact of this new discourse on the path of identity politics in Egypt could not be determined at this time.

Study Limitations

The methods employed in this study had its limitations. First, the interview instruments in some cases were not specific enough so as not to predispose respondents in any way. Second, the fact that the author was not the interviewer meant that she had to rely on the observations and interpretations of the interviewers. One way Io overcome these constraints was through using an integrated method and complementing data from the interview results with historical analysis and qualitative data on digital religious media. The consistency in the method and analysis were effective ways to cover these gaps.

Another limitation in this study is related to the examination of the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces that the veil represented. The study covered the views on the state and its prime religious institution of the state, al-Azhar, from the women's points of view, and from those of the preachers that these women preferred most. I did not, however, cover the state religious discourse as it was not the main focus of this research. This is particularly problematic given that it has become increasingly difficult to draw lines between a state discourse on religion and other discourses. The state has recently

increased the amount of religious programming on the media channels that it sponsored. Many of these programs feature preachers representing the various streams of thoughts. Although ERTU staff have never invited Amr Khaled or Mohammed Hassan to speak on any of these religious programs, many other preachers with similar profiles and outlooks on religion have been invited. Moreover, even among the state-sponsored preachers, there are significant diversions in opinions. Some Azhar preachers promote values and ideas that are very similar to Hassan's views, others promote more moderate views like Khaled's. It was not possible through the confines of this study to fully analyze these interesting nuances. Future research is invited to cover these virgin areas of study.

I do not claim that this study provides all answers regarding the veil phenomenon. Neither do I allege that the dimensions I explore in this study are fully exhaustive. There are limitations in my methods and my findings. I do contend, however, that my study offers a very useful critique of contemporary theories of religiosity and the veil and offers a new model of analysis that is both expandable and useful. It also provides a unique reconceptualizaiton of the meanings of the veil and an elaborate understanding of the processes that are involved in reconstituting those meanings. It also proposes a research agenda that will enrich the literature on religion and politics and enlighten both academicians and policy makers regarding the dynamics of their interactions, which are particularly important given the recent Western policies to spread democracy in the Muslim World.

It should also be stressed that the three tension zones that this study identified are strongly interconnected. Any shifts in power at one level of struggle would necessarily result in shifts at the other two levels. Although the analysis in this study might be guilty

of compromising the coherence of the social structure into three imagined levels, reality is in fact much more complex. This is further complicated by the fact that the attitudes towards the veil, women, the state, and the West are in a state of continuous flux today. Some observers have noted that a phase of unveiling has begun among women with similar socio-economic profiles. Several antiharassment movements are underway, and many women are disappointed today in the ineffectiveness of the veil, especially as a tool of protection. There is also significant optimism, even euphoria, in the Muslim World regarding the United States' new administration and the concerted efforts of President Obama to reach out to the Muslim World and to establish more cooperative relationships based on trust and mutual respect. This may change the attitudes towards the West in the long-run and result in the emergence of new identity politics. Also recently in Egypt, several open social protests have taken place, some of which were tolerated while others were crushed. This may be an indication of new trends in the political climate in Egypt, which were not adequately analyzed in this study.

Recommendations Regarding Future Research

This study was the beginning of research on the significance and symbolism of the veil today. The research demonstrated the multiple facets of the veil and how it is closely linked with three different forms of power struggles in which Egyptian women are actively engaged. The veil proved to be a perfect prism to understand the various forms of informal activism that are taking place in Egypt, and arguably other parts of the Muslim World, but that currently fall under the radar of social movement studies. It is

recommended that research be done to examine the revival of various cultural symbols as forms of activism in various parts of the world.

This study focused on the case of Egypt. Comparative historical analysis was conducted, but a cross-country comparative analysis was not possible at this time. It was important in this research to understand the depth and breadth of the phenomenon. This was not only done through the integration of several data sources and methods, but also through capitalizing on my background as an Egyptian-American who was immersed in the Egyptian culture for the greatest portion of my life. These dimensions were important to indulge in since the main research goal was to understand the process underlying the spread of the veil rather than to understand its causes. It would be interesting, however, to use similar methods to understand how the Egyptian case is different or similar to other Muslim countries and what these similarities and differences tell us regarding Muslim activism, Muslim-Western relationships, and the future of Muslim states.

This research utilized quasi-deductive methods to identify the domains of research. The principles of the logic of discovery guided many elements of this project. I started at the level of the female agent to explore the intricacies of the phenomenon and then followed leads from that research regarding the dynamics at the structural/discursive level. It is recommended that future research address each of the three levels of conflict that the veil symbolized in greater depth. This prospective research should use novel and more focused integrated methods to understand the dynamics taking place at each level and to also monitor their progressions. A cross-gender analysis is also invited as a way to better understand the differences in the meanings and functions of the veil for males and females and how the veil relates to the identity process. Ethnographic studies could help

delve deeper into these dynamics and understand how the economic, housing, delayed marriage, and other social problems are affecting group identities and behavior.

There are also many nuances in the state-society relationship that were not adequately addressed in this research. What is the role of the state in the proliferation of the veil? This is directly related to the question of the boundaries of the state. Which part of the state is causing which impact? Research findings suggested that the state for many years attempted to contain the veil phenomenon. Until today, veiled women are barred from many high rank state jobs. Also the wives of high ranking state officials in many cases are forbidden from veiling. At the same time, the state owned al-Azhar has become a strong proponent of the veil. Teachers at public schools also play an important role in spreading the veil. Many programs on state-owned channels promote the veil. As such, Joel Migdal's state-in-society approach[386] is very relevant as It seeks to understand the "anthropology" of the state and state power through stratifying it into its different parts and layers. It is recommended that future research builds further on the methodology and explores the dynamics change promoted by the multifocal nature of the state.

The struggle to remove the bonds of the West is another area of research that should be revisited. Specifically, the dynamics of the interregional and intraregional globalization are ripe for further investigation. This suggested research agenda should more closely study the origins of the various discourses on the veil, how the discourse travels from one area to another, and what effect the interaction of these discourses with various cultures has on the cultural fabrics. A study of the dynamics of the fusion of capital, technology, personal and political agendas in satellite realms would provide great

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[386] Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society*.

insight on the process of identity formation in Egypt vis-à-vis other Muslim countries as well as the West.

Appendix A: Interview Instrument for Veiled Respondents

General Observations and Demographic Data

Comments on respondent's style and how willing (or not) she is to participate in the

study?

Age:
City of residence:
High School:
College:
Marital Status:
Work status:

Interview Questions

1. How old were you when you began wearing the veil? And how long ago was that?

2. What prompted you to begin wearing the veil? What was the most important event

   that made you wear the veil? (did you see a dream or?)

3. Does your mother wear the veil? If so, how long ago did she start? What style of veil

   does she wear?

4. Did you and your mother ever disagree about veil style? If yes, tell me about that

5. How many of your friends wear the veil? How many do not wear the veil?

6. Do you feel that in our society women who wear veils prefer friends who also wear

   veils?

7. Likewise, do you believe that girls or women who do not wear veils prefer friends

   who do not wear veils?

8. Do you feel you have a responsibility towards your unveiled friends? Do you try to

   convince them of the veil? Tell me an incident that you are most proud of.

9.   Does a girl's dress style give an accurate indication of whether she is religious or not? Scrupulous or not? How?

10. What does the veil mean to you?

11. What benefits do you get from wearing the veil?

12. Could you think of an incident that made you proudest of being veiled?

13. Do you believe wearing the veil has helped you accomplish something that you would not have been able to accomplish without it?

14. What effect does wearing the veil have on your social role?

15. What does it mean to be a modern woman? Do you want to be seen as a modern woman? If yes, how do you express your modernity? If no, why not?

16. Do you see a conflict between modernity and Islam?

17. What, in your point of view, is the correct veil?

18. What do you think about the wide variety of veil styles? Why are there so many style choices?   Do you like the fact that there is such a variety? Does it bother you at times?

19. What does this variation say about Egyptian women?

20. Some texts say that women need to wear khemar (long scarf covering the chest) or gelbab (loose garment). Do you agree? Why or why not?

21. Why do you think the veil started to emerge as a religious duty especially in the 90s?

22. Do you think this generation is more religious than the previous one that did not veil?

23. Does the Quran or Sonna say that it is a woman's religious duty to wear the veil? If yes, what passage tells you so? If yes, why does Islam say that wearing the veil is a woman's religious duty?

24. If Islam's religious texts decree that women must wear veils, why do you think our mothers did not observe it when they were our age?

25. Lately, some people, like Iqbal Baraka, insisted that the veil is not a religious duty. What do you think?

26. In a show on Cairo Today (Al-Qahira el Youm), and citing a verse from Quran, Iqbal Baraka also says,

{Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty} *(Surat Al Noor <24:30-31>).* She says, men in Egypt look at women disgracefully, and sheikhs do not adequately ask men to lower the gaze, instead they ask women to veil. What do you think?

27. What is your most preferred medium to learn about Islam, media, books. Religious sermons, other?

28. Do you read any religious books? Do you feel you should read more religious books?

29. Do you believe that Islam is experiencing a revival? How?

30. If yes, so how is it that there is a religious revival but in the same time a decline in morals? Who is to blame for that?

31. Do you think there are moral standards that are specific to Islam? If yes, what?

32. Do you think the media has had an influence on the spread of the veil? How?

33. Do you think the media is giving sufficient coverage to topics related to the veil?

34. Do you see enough coverage of the essential morals of religion (forgiveness, peace, giving, etc) in the media? Tell me more.

35. What are the most trustworthy sources of fatwa (religious edict)?

36. Do you think there are any contradictions between what the Azhar says about the veil and other religious organizations? Could you think of an example?

37. Do you attend any sermons? Do you watch any religious shows?

38. Do you trust that these shows provide accurate representation about Islam?

39. How do you determine whether the information you get from sermons and TV shows about religion truly reflects Islamic beliefs??'

40. Before the 1920s all Egyptian women wore the veil, regardless of religion. Do you believe this was a good practice? Why or why not?

41. In these times, only women who are Muslim wear the veil. To your knowledge, are there other religions that used to require women to wear the veil but that do not observe that requirement today?

42. Any comments? Any story or comment about the veil that you would like to share with me?

Interview Instrument for Unveiled Respondents

General Observations and Demographic Data

Comments on respondent's style and how willing (or not) she is to participate in the study?

Age:
City of residence:
High School:
College:
Marital Status:
Work status:

Interview Questions

1. Did you ever think of wearing the veil? If yes, how long ago was that? If yes, what stopped you from taking that step?

2. Does your mother wear the veil? If so, how long ago did she start and what style of veil does she wear?

3. Did you and your mother ever disagree about clothing styles? If yes, tell me about that.

4. How many of your friends wear the veil?

5. How many of your friends do not wear the veil?

6. Do you believe that, in general girls or women who wear veils prefer friends who also wear veils?

7. Likewise, do you believe that girls or women who do not wear veils prefer friends who do not wear veils?

8. Sometimes people approach others to persuade them of the veil. What do you think about that?

9. Could you think of an incident that made you most eager to wear the veil?

10. Do you believe wearing the veil would help you accomplish something that you would not be able to accomplish without it?

11. Likewise, would it prevent you from accomplishing something that you would be able to accomplish without it?

12. What effect, if any, does wearing the veil have on her social role??

13. Do you feel you have a responsibility towards your unveiled friends? Do you try to convince them of the veil? Tell me an incident that you are most proud of.

14. What does it mean to be a modern woman? Do you want to be seen as a modern woman? If yes, how do you express your modernity? If no, why not?

15. Do you see a conflict between modernity and Islam?

16. What, in your point of view, is the correct veil?

17. What do you think about the wide variety of veil styles? Why are there so many style choices?   Do you like the fact that there is such a variety? Does it bother you at times?

18. What does this variation say about Egyptian women?

19. Some texts say that women need to wear khemar (long scarf covering the chest) or gelbab (loose garment). Do you agree? Why or why not?

20. Why do you think the veil started to emerge as a religious duty especially in the 90s?

21. Do you think this generation is more religious than the previous one that did not veil?

22. Does the Quran or Sonna say that it is a woman's religious duty to wear the veil? If yes, what passage tells you so? If yes, why does Islam say that wearing the veil is a woman's religious duty?

23. If Islam's religious texts decree that women must wear veils, why do you think our mothers did not observe it when they were our age?

24. Lately, some people, like Iqbal Baraka, insisted that the veil is not a religious duty. What do you think?

25. In a show on Cairo Today (Al-Qahira el Youm), and citing a verse from Quran, Iqbal Baraka also says,

{Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty} *(Surat Al Noor <24:30-31>).* She says, men in Egypt look at women disgracefully, and sheikhs do not adequately ask men to lower the gaze, instead they ask women to veil. What do you think?

26. What is your most preferred medium to learn about Islam, media, books. Religious sermons, other?

27. Do you read any religious books? Do you feel you should read more religious books?

28. Do you believe that Islam is experiencing a revival? How?

29. If yes, so how is it that there is a religious revival but in the same time a decline in morals? Who is to blame for that?

30. Do you think there are moral standards that are specific to Islam? If yes, what?

31. Do you think the media has had an influence on the spread of the veil? How?

32. Do you think the media is giving sufficient coverage to topics related to the veil?

33. Do you see enough coverage of the essential morals of religion (forgiveness, peace, giving, etc) in the media? Tell me more.

34. What are the most trustworthy sources of fatwa (religious edict)?

35. Do you think there are any contradictions between what the Azhar says about the veil and other religious organizations? Could you think of an example?

36. Do you attend any sermons? Do you watch any religious shows?

37. Do you trust that these shows provide accurate representation about Islam?

38. How do you determine whether the information you get from sermons and TV shows about religion truly reflects Islamic beliefs??

39. Before the 1920s all Egyptian women wore the veil, regardless of religion. Do you believe this was a good practice? Why or why not?

40. In these times, only women who are Muslim wear the veil. To your knowledge, are there other religions that used to require women to wear the veil but that do not observe that requirement today?

41. Any comments? Any story or comment about the veil that you would like to share with me?

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