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Revolutionary Youth Movements, Religiosity and Identity Politics in Egypt

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Abstract

This paper explores how the emergence of revolutionary youth movements have destabilized the different forms of political and religious identification inherited from the world of the Mubarak regime. I am interested basically in showing how revolutionary politics introduced new forms of identification that broke with the exclusionary binaries upon which Mubarak's world was based. In order to track those transformations, one needs to take a second look at revolutionary politics, its disruptive force of all existent grounds upon which these political and religious identities had root themselves.

It was almost impossible to imagine that only after two years, the *carte postal* of celebrations in Tahrir square, following the fall of Mubarak regime in February 2011, with memorable scenes of the joint prayers held on Fridays by the Copts and Muslims occupying the square would have any casual relation to the images of rubble and scattered corpses in Rabea square, the massacre that claimed more than a thousand lives at the hands of the Egyptian police forces in August 2013. The disparity of between these two set of images, that of hope, communal solidarity and promise on the one hand, and that of ruin, loss and death.

The events at Rabea square left its inedible mark on public life in Egypt. In the few months that followed the massacre, the government announced a state of national curfew for months on end. The government issued an anti-prohibition law that restricts and regulates acts of protestation after more than two years of revolutionary activity on the streets. The issuance of the law signaled the steady return of the securitization and monitoring of public space by the former regime's security apparatus.

Before the coup, that took place on July 3rd 2013, communal polarization over the presidency of Mohamed Morsi reached its highest peak when his supporters staged massive rallies in Rabea square while the opposition staged their own rallies in Tahrir square, the former iconic square of the Egyptian revolution. Back in 2011, the square inspired all forms of revolutionary youth movements.

Between those two moments, this paper is concerned more with what remains and what was apparently lost of those revolutionary youth movements. It focuses on the trajectory of three revolutionary youth movements that emerged out of the revolutionary surge on the Egyptian streets: namely, Salafiyo Costa, Youth Union of Maspero and lastly, Mina Danyal movement. I trace how these movements were able to break with the political and religious identities associated with Mubarak's world. More specifically, I ask whether they were able to inaugurate new forms of filiation and solidarity between Muslim and Coptic youth? What were the intellectual sources that inspired those new forms of solidarities?

My emphasis is to ask whether these revolutionary youth movements offered an alternative model of political community that reimagines the place of Copts in Egyptian society in light of an atmosphere of sectarian tension that marked Muslim-Coptic relations under the Mubarak regime. On another level of analysis, I am claiming that the revolutionary event has changed the ground upon which these identities defined themselves along sectarian lines (the ways in which Mubarak's world limited themselves to the political matrix of Islamist vs. Secular forces).

My paper focuses much more on the fragility of revolutionary imagination, what remains of it in the real world of political alternatives, in what ways did the political initiatives of those revolutionary youth movement destabilize religious identities upon which the Mubarak

regime based itself. The term *political imagination* refers to the array of political initiatives that appeals to an "elsewhere" which opens up the limited geography of political alternatives. To question how the revolutionary event has disrupted such modes of identification, one needs to consider how the connection between religion and politics have been pondered over in the discourses of the Egyptian state as well as the various currents found in Islamic movements. It is in this manner that we can see what variations have the new revolutionary youth movements have offered with the span of the last four years.

However, in order to see how the revolutionary event has changed forms of solidarities one needs to pay attention in the ways religiosity frames the relation with the religious other.

Revolutionary Disruptions

I devote my attention to the political-theological, which Assmann defined as 'the ever-changing relationships between political community and religious order. In short, between power (or authority) and salvation' (De Vries, 2003). I focus on the aspect of the political theological for two reasons: 1. In order see how idioms such as martyrdom became not only vehicles for mass mobilization on the streets calling for the vindication of the 'martyr's rights' but yet it also established a vision of common fate in which the protesters marked themselves as a group sharing a common experience. It is important to trace in what ways has such an idiom redefined the political. The political, in that sense, has to be redefined to allow for idioms particular to the revolutionary surge in the square. Most of these idioms have had powerful mobilizing force for the protesters throughout the duration of the revolution. Martyrdom in the context of the Iranian and Arab revolutions has captured the political imagination of youth as a mobilizing force for an alternative model of political community beyond the existent order. The very term 'political community' allows us to understand that community is not only limited to atomistic conceptions of individuals tied to one another but that for a living memory to continue it needs a lapse between generations. One of the chief mobilizing forces behind the revolutionary surge in the streets was this link between the dead and the living. In other words, how the fallen martyrs laid some claim on the parts of those living. It also established a generational link between the protesters, otherwise lost.

The political, in light of these idioms, have to be redefined in terms closer to the theological-political. It has to rethink the term following a considerable number of theoretical interventions that sought to expose the theological roots of modern-day politics (Schmitt, Lefort, Assmann, Asad, Taylor, Mahmoud, Habermas, Membe). More importantly, the target of such interventions was to expose the conditional distinction upon which the modern definition of the political rested, that is, the distinction between reason and unreason. The role of reason as the telos of the free modern moral agent. The exclusion of Unreason and its derivatives such as phantasy and passion (Membebe). In other words, political imagination opens a space beyond a field of limited possibilities/futures in an existent political field. If the

revolutionary movements that evolved out of Tahrir square have engaged in a form of identity politics as reminiscent of Muslim-Christian relations under the Mubarak regime and its limited identifying markers, it is important to see how the revolutionary event disrupted such modes of identification.

In order to fulfill this task, I concentrate on three different revolutionary youth movements who were part of the revolutionary surge in the Egyptian streets: namely, the Youth Union of Maspero, Salafiyo Costa and the Mina Danyal movement. I particularly track how have the conditions of political and religious identification that belonged to Mubarak's life world have changed.

In order to investigate how martyrdom and eschatology have shifted exclusionary modes of religious and political identification ultimately recalibrating the youth's perception of religious institutions in relation to the state, one has to sketch out a short history of the present to understand what were the intellectual sources of revolutionary youth movements and how they capitalized on such resources, ultimately exposing the patterns of discontinuity and of political dissidence between world both prior to the revolution and its aftermath.

A Short History of the Present

In his short piece "Beyond the Religious and the Secular: The Intellectual Genealogies of the Egyptian Revolution", Hirschkind (2013) attempted to explore the intellectual sources which shaped the contours of the political sensibilities of the protesters at Tahrir square. In his analysis, Hirschkind argues that such intellectual sources beyond the secular-religious divide, which the former Egyptian regimes, notably Sadat's and Mubarak's, manipulated to weaken any opposition under their respective regimes. On the one hand, liberal and leftist forces found no threat from the collective prayers held in Tahrir square every Fridays, while on the other, the protesters' messages and slogans were not explicitly religious yet with a larger emphasis on the claims of freedom and social justice (as reflected in the slogan that was chanted in the square: "Bread, Freedom, Social Justice"). Hirschkind's central point is that the political experience at Tahrir cannot be explained in terms of the binary opposition of the secular vs. religious. Along a similar vein of thought, I investigate the different forms of issues and questions, which new revolutionary youth movements have brought up in religious publics and whether they were able to present challenging variants to the existing modes of religiosity under the Mubarak regime, which were constituted on the aforementioned binary oppositions. In his paper, Hirschkind claimed that social movements that mobilized themselves against the Mubarak regime a few years before the revolution, already tended to go beyond the binary oppositions. However, Hirschkind falls short of highlighting how those new revolutionary youth movements influenced the present modes of religiosity in the Egyptian community, whether on the side of larger Muslim community and the audience of Islamic current or on a much smaller scale, the Coptic community.

I use the term 'religiosity' not only to indicate a form of social practice but an ability to conceptualize the world. In order to understand how revolutionary politics disrupted the modes of religiosity under Mubarak, it is equally important to think that social movements have also disrupted the modes of religiosity promulgated under the Islamic current. We have to also think of how revolutionary politics disrupted a certain sensorium of the practitioner-individual, more specifically. By shifting how religiosity posed the relation of the believer to the religious other, the Copt, in the context of this paper. I argue that it has not completely changed his relation to religion but that religion in the context of revolutionary context in relation to life has taken a variant form.

On Martyrdom

One of such topics is the question of martyrdom in the context of the Egyptian revolution. In the few years preceding the revolution, the public debate over martyrdom was centered around suicide bombers that carried out their operations in the United States, Europe and Israel following the attacks of September 11th 2001. On the one hand, the chief debate took place between sheikhs and Imams of Al-Azhar mosque and the sheikhs and imams within the ranks of the larger Islamic revival movements on the other. The discussion was seeped in the 'legality' and evidentiary claims of faqihs to prove or refute the martyrdom of suicide bombers between the two camps.

In the case of al-Qaradawi, the prominent Sunni Jurist, who is affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, the public debate mainly centered around the question concerning whether the pursuit of suicide operations had fulfilled certain conditions related to Islamic fiqh. seeped in whether that the case of suicide bombers fulfilled the conditions of martyrdom. Since suicide was part of the operation and not a direct confrontation between combatants. Many theorists (Pandolfo, Mbembe, Bayat) have tried to see parallelisms between the modes of death presented by suicide bombers and those associated with the revolutionary surge in the so-called Arab spring. In my own formulation, the revolutionary surge seems to be a response to the invitation of the suicide bomber. In Mbembe's essay on necropolitics, the parallelism could be seen in their attempts to infiltrate and detonate quotidian sites such as public squares and markets. The logic of martyrdom in the case of suicide missions, the will to die is fused with the willingness to take the enemy with you, that is, with the closing of the door on the possibility of life for everyone. The logic of martyrdom in the protester's case is extremely similar. Being pushed to the edge of living, through the churning of neo-liberal policies and the securitization of public space, the protester will take the same wager of death but to a different effect. His sacrifice of his life as a wager is offered to those living after him, in other words, his plea is for the living to make a similar gesture until someone finally lives. Unlike the mode of 'eschatology now', which clearly indicated a life lived in the expectation of death, the protester might have emphasized the risk of death to create an opportunity for others' to live. If the sovereign decision is based on the right to dictate who lives and who

dies, the protesters already wishes to rob the sovereign of his decision by already stating the sentence of his/her death as a matter-less subject.

I cannot completely say that 'eschatology now' represents a mode of religiosity but I believe that since the concept of martyrdom in the context of the revolution has undergone a variation, we will find that martyrdom has found new uses in new contexts through resignification. In the following sections, I track how martyrdom have gained new uses in a manner that shifted the discursive limits of the public debate on martyrdom. The debate, I argue, has been extended to include new questions posed by social movements. How has the notion has it broken with the notions of martyrdom and inaugurated a new idiom of martyrdom, this is exactly the content of what follows.

Martyrdom of Mina Danyal

To understand how martyrdom acquired new meaning in the context of the revolution, Mina Danyal, one of the most known revolutionary protesters in Tahrir, lent his name to a young revolutionary movement that embraced liberals, Copts and Salafis among its ranks.

I do not mean to say that prior to the revolution, social movements were strictly set along sectarian lines, but that it attempted to uphold and sustain the discursive conditions of nationalist unity, which was a direct legacy of the Egyptian nationalist movement. One of such movements, in which Mina Danyal was an active member, was a Coptic movement named Kullona Aqbat (We Are All Copts!!), which developed prior to the fall of the Mubarak regime. This particular social movement centered its efforts on a rights-based approach to Coptic issues.

During the revolution, the claims to such martyrdom were not set aside in as much as it became a part of everyday life. The martyrs became quotidian figures to whom the jurisprudential conditions of martyrdom mattered little. The case of martyrdom was inclusive of all who have died on January 28th, 2011, the most intense day of open confrontations between the polices forces and the protesters.

Although national newspapers continued to seek the sheikhs of al-Azhar over the question of martyrdom. In other words, whether they fulfilled the jurisprudential conditions of martyrdom. However, the public was not dismissive of their opinion. Martyrdom had already taken a quotidian form that it allowed for various categories of people to gain its title without any reservations or deliberations between the two camps, the official religious institutions and those that oppose them within the Islamic current. The quotidian aspect opened up the category of martyrs to include a myriad number of entities from children, women to Non-Muslims. It is within that context that Mina Danyal, the Coptic young man that took an active part in the square. Most importantly, the Coptic martyr Mina Danyal who would bestow his name on a social movement that included a set of different people from liberals, Copts to

Salafis. The protesters in Tahrir used the term extensively and without reservation to describe all the victims who were either murdered among them Non-Muslims and unveiled women. The ambiguous space, in which the question of 'who's entitled to martyrdom', however, has also had its dire consequences despite that it opened a space of unprecedented inclusion. Despite that martyrdom has taken a quotidian form, the public discussion over martyrdom added to the sense of ambiguity in raising questions such as: who is exactly the martyr? Should we consider a "thug" that died during a raid on a police station, a martyr?

In the public discussion over martyrdom and the atmosphere of skepticism that prevailed following the removal of Mubarak from power, the return to the questioning of legal status of martyrs, opened an aperture of skepticism through which the counter-revolutionary discourse could sustain and rebuild itself. The question whether the martyr fulfilled certain conditions of martyrdom. It is within this context that martyrdom of Mina Danyal again would be questioned and challenged or at least subject to a deliberate overshadowing. Despite that the bestowal of martyrdom went beyond the scope of jurisprudential debate and opened itself to a quotidian use (in which everyone who had died in the confrontations between the police and the protesters a martyr). In the days that followed the fall of Mubarak, the nationalist media began to question certain stories of martyrdom (in other words, questioning the narratives of who killed the protesters).

The Martyrdom of Mina Danyal

The movement of Mina Danyal (Haraket Mina Danyal) was founded in the wake of Maspero massacre, which took place on October 9th 2011. The massacre occurred when a military squadron attacked a peaceful rally of demonstrators in Cairo. The demonstrators were rallying against a sectarian incident that took place only a month earlier in the village of Marinab, Aswan governorate in which a group of Muslim villagers burnt down Mar Girgis church, in refusal of renovations authorized by the governor of Aswan. The military attacked the rally fearing that the demonstrators would stay in the area and start a permanent sit-in in emulation of the Maspero sit-in. On the same day, Mina Danyal, one of the most famous activists in Tahrir square, died in the attack on the rally. The untimely and enigmatic death led members of his family, friends and companions from the Tahrir sit-in, to consider forming a revolutionary movement that would continue his message and realize the demands of the January 25th revolution.

The movement was inaugurated in early November 2011 a few weeks after the attack. The initiators of the movement, which included his two older sisters and his companions from the Tahrir sit-in, met in a coffee shop in downtown Cairo to work on the the movement's manifesto. agreed to establish a "movement" bears his name in order to continue with his legacy the realization of the revolution's goals, which are laid-out in its slogan *Bread, Freedom and Social justice*. Upon his death, the movement started to draw members across religious and political affiliations including salafis, liberals and Copts. The high point in terms of political

engagement and mobilization was reached in the events of Mohamed Mahmoud street. protesters gathered and started a confrontation with the ministry of interior, a few streets away from the aforementioned street. The demands presented in this event were against the administration of the supreme council of armed forces' (SCAF) of the roadmap (the period of democratic transition).

Mina Danyal's family originally came from the governorate of Assiyut in Upper Egypt. Before his birth, his parents moved to Ezzbet el Nakhl, a urbanized village on the outskirts of Cairo. As all Coptic children in his age, He attended masses and Sunday schools on a regular basis. During his years at the faculty of archaeology, he began to slowly recede from his occasional visits to the church. In the university, he was exposed to the leftist youth movement Adalah wa Horreya (Justice and Freedom), which emerged in 2005. This movement developed in the wake of protest movements against the Mubarak regime. After his graduation, he could not find a job related to his specialization so he worked sporadically as an electrician and carpenter. Although such periods were sporadic and short, yet according to R., it allowed him to further the knowledge of social worlds beyond the limits of the Coptic community of Ezzbet el-Nakhl.

The movement attempted to frame its own political identity based on Mina's short yet rich biographical background. Above all costs, it avoided to label itself as a Coptic youth movement. On this particular point, the movement was defined by other revolutionary youth movement. On the Islamic side, the other groups cautioned its youth to avoid Mina Danyal's movement as it was a strictly Coptic movement and on the other side, among Coptic youth movements, they cautioned their members against joining Mina Danyal's since, in their view, Mina's movement did not represent the Coptic community's interests.

Mina and the Church

On Mina's critical relationship with the church, R. affirmed that this particular period (the university years followed by his sporadic employment) "provided him with a critical eye of the Coptic social world. Basically, he saw how the church offered them (the Coptic community), more or less, a safe haven and yet a prison at the same time..". On the one hand, it remained the sole historical institution that was capable of representing the Coptic community and act as mediator between it and the Egyptian state, from the negotiation of rights to the direct representation in customary councils (magalis 'urfeyya) after every occurrence of a sectarian incident.

The monopolization of this role of sole mediator by the church also had its adverse effects over the Coptic community. The monopolization of this role also led to the return of Ottoman 'milletism' in which an ethnic-religious sect organized itself around its religious leaders to represent themselves before the Muslim ruler. Since the 1960s, the Egyptian state has only

limited representation of the Coptic community to the Church after the opposing Millet Council, a council made up of large landowning families, was dissolved.

Although he kept his distance from the church and he kept going to demonstrations that erupted after any incident of sectarian strife. More importantly, he has a decisive role in securing the Maspero sit-in, which took place in March 2011, in which a building adjoint to a local church in the village of Atfeeh, was burned down to the ground by Muslim villagers. The villagers torched down the building allegedly because it was going to be turned into a church. According to Z., another active member of the movement, spoke of the paradoxical position Mina had to endure: Although Mina was highly critical of 'Coptic' demonstrations that erupted after every burning down of a church, as it reduced Coptic grievances in the construction of new churches while silencing the deeper grievances of the Coptic community from the 'non-partiality' and 'subtle sectarianism' rooted in the machinery of the Egyptian state. Despite his criticism of those demonstrations yet he still chose to take part in them knowing the forms of injustice and communal pressure that any Coptic group would endure within the frame of customary councils (Magalis 'Urfiyya). Many of the Coptic activists in the movements under study, Mina Danyal and Youth Union of Maspero, spoke of this pressure to join demonstrations fixed solely on the reconstruction and renovation of churches after sectarian incidents since it limits Coptic grievances to only this.

More importantly, his paradoxical death is always placed in comparison to the church's position towards the rally. In choosing to die in a Coptic march, which the Church did not support and later would side with the state's account of its circumstances, he had offered himself as a marginal figure on more than one front. He is on the margin of the Coptic church, as someone who was severely critical of its relation to the laity. On this particular point, Mina criticized what he saw as corruption in the church's distribution of charity.

As a living person, he was unclassifiable in terms of the political lifeworld under Mubarak with its political conditions and its sectarian identities. After his death, the movement that formed to honor his commemoration would necessitate that the grounds upon which their political identities rested has also shifted. In his refusal of the limits of the more or less socially segregated world along sectarian lines, the social movement, which bore his name, would also refuse to formulate its own position towards identity politics on the same formulations inherited by the Mubarak regime.

This potential fear of being marked as a strictly Coptic movement proved a continuous problem for the members of the group especially since other youth movements always tended to cast doubts about its identity. The new recruits that came from an Islamic background to the movement were told from within their ranks that Mina Danyal was strictly limited to Coptic demands. On the Coptic side, Mina Danyal's movement held the reputation of its opposition to the Coptic orthodox Church.

The highest point of mobilization and direct engagement in the streets came during the days of Mohamed Mahmoud protests¹, a case in which a sharp polarization took place between the revolutionary youth movements and SCAF. At this particular juncture, the movement was able to mobilize all its members towards the realization of the revolution's demands beyond sectarian polarizations.

The Church and its Hagiography

The Coptic Orthodox church possesses a considerable set of martyrologies and hagiographies (lives of the saints) throughout its long history. The Calendar of the Coptic orthodox church begins with the year of the martyrs under the Roman emperor Diocletian, in which the martyrs of the church reached their highest number under Roman persecution. In the Coptic liturgy of St. Basil, the priest commemorates the names of the orthodox martyrs chronologically towards the end of the mass. The laity seldomly hands down the names of their deceased parents, siblings or relatives to mention at the end of the chronological order of the martyrs. In one form, it allows a sense of continuity in the Coptic community giving a lineage between saints, martyrs and the world of the recently deceased. In another sense, it perhaps reflects a form of sociality that opens a bridge between the world of the living and the world of the dead through a highly-semiological process. According to Jan Assmann, who analyses Ancient Egyptian funerary rites with their complex semiological systems, he concentrated on how the notion of sociality in the context of those funerary rites, defies the contemporary notion of the public sphere in by presenting a different historical model. The bourgeois model of the public sphere has been presented by Habermas as a domain of rational and active speakers (Assmann, 2003). On another level of analysis, it allowed the Egyptian Orthodox Church to offer a sense of continuity of identity based on resilience (throughout long historical stretches of continuous oppression).

Following the Maspero massacre, the Coptic clergy denied any relation to the rally. The chief spokesman of the church, Anba Armia, affirmed that the protesters marched against the guidance of the church. Despite their denial of any relations with the march, the church inaugurated a massive funerary mass at the Coptic Patriarchate in Cairo (perhaps. In the inclusion of Mina Danyal, as a martyr, the inclusion was perhaps made to secure the victims of the Maspero massacre as part of the Church's martyrology. There is a confession on the part of the church, that those victims were martyrs to become part of the memory of both the church and the Coptic community. Yet from the perspective of Mina's family, they inferred the church's role as complimentary to the Egyptian State in an attempt to cover the case and introduce a skeptical perspective on the incident.

¹ The Mohamed Mahmoud protests started in November 18, 2011 with mass demonstrations in Tahrir Square and other major cities in Egypt. The protests demanded for an immediate transfer of power from the military council (SCAF) to a popularly elected council. The political party that represented the Muslim Brotherhood, Freedom and Justice Party, denounced the 'demonstrations' and called for the resumption of the 'road map' (the original democratic transition plan as envisioned by SCAF) and resume preparations for the upcoming parliamentary elections then.

In all of the conversations that I have conducted with his companions, who had known him as an active participant in the sit-in of Tahrir square, Mina Danyal seemed to them to be a figure that inhabited several margins. "As if he was on the margins of everything, disfranchised on more than one front" affirmed R., an active member of the movement and one of the chief writers of the inaugural manifesto of the movement. The brief political biography of Mina Danyal reflects a multi-layered map of grievances, which cannot be reduced to a singular interpretation that fully exhausts the reason behind his participation in Tahrir square. I could also argue that this multi-layered map of grievances allowed the movement to draw in members of different affiliations with different reasons of their own. The event of his martyrdom drew in several members that ranged from university students with a leftist orientation to former members of Islamic Jihadist movements.

When Mina tried to go beyond or trespass a social world marked by subtle sectarian segregation, the event of his death also invited, others to make a gesture of their own. This gesture did not demand any claim of its members towards a total conversion but it yet hinted towards a shift of perspective (Ru'yya) on the part of those new participants.

Z. and the unsettlement of identity

It is that open gesture to the outside that Mina remains part of his own community, yet also outside of it. In that same gesture, we could understand the consequences of his relation to Zein whom he had met during the first sit-in in Tahrir square. More importantly, before Mina's death, Zein barely knew any Christians aside from very passive relations (in his own words) as school colleagues, distant neighbors and nearby grocers.

In the interview, Zein, an active member in the Mina Danyal movement, explained to me that with the loss of Mina, he had undergone an experience of spiritual conflict. Zein met Mina during the Tahrir sit-in. They were part of the committees that was entrusted with the guarding of the square's entrances against Mubarak's police forces and thugs. In the beginning, conditions of working together allowed to engage in conversations about Christian-Muslim relations, the shared mutual representations of the other religious communities (in other words, how each community perceived imagined the customs and daily practices of the other community). This mutual discovery of the other community and their practices perhaps reflects the deep sectarianism in the Egyptian society in the last thirty years. In the words, how of a prominent member of the movement, Mina would attempt to know and sustain his relation with other protesters and activists in the square. Zein, at that time, was a member of a salafi-based group. In the beginning, they were assigned posts in the security checks on the gates. Mina would try to know him but Zein would always push him back.

In the end, I argue that Zein, in his encounter with Mina, no longer remained the same person. In his interviews, he faced the ultimate test with Mina's death in order to understand how he could understand or take a distance between faith and judgement.

The Eschatology of the Protester

In his book, *The Ethical Soundscapes*, Hirschkind outlined how the circulation of Islamic khutbas and lessons on cassette engrained a Muslim thanatology in which thin bridge between life and death is brought up consistently in those sermons. The Khutabaa (preachers) entranced their listeners to experience and perceive life in a novel manner in which the listener-practitioner perceived and lived his life on the inescapable presence of death in life or its ever-present proximity to it. In other words, the listener/practitioner lived his life as if he/she is in continuous preparation for death. The circulation of sermons, which a considerable part of its content centers around the Islamic themes of resurrection from the tomb and intricate details of the day of judgment, engrains the listener's consciousness with the experience of living life as if in preparation for one's inevitable death. Hirschkind labelled this sensory experience-practice, eschatology now.

Throughout his book, Hirschkind rarely refers to how such sermons refer or bring up the themes of dealing with ahl al-dhimma (Non-Muslims living under the guardianship of Muslims) in daily life. In other words, what kind of ethical dimension that governs social relations and daily interactions with Non-Muslims as informed by this way of life? Did the revolution as a disruptive event offer a variation on this way of life?

It is extremely important to see how salafi-leaning revolutionary youth groups retained this legacy of thanatology and in which ways has it broken with it. In the following sections, I am going to focus on the movement of Salafiyo Costa. A youth movement, which emerged only a few months after the eruption of the revolutionary surge on the streets. The movement, alternatively, tried to bring the relations between Copts and Muslims into the forefront of its agenda.

Salafiyo Costa

The group was founded in April 2011. In the words of its founder, Mohamed Tolba, the group includes Salafis, Copts and liberals among its ranks in an attempt to retain the 'spirit of unity' as found in Tahrir square. However, the main reason for forming the group initially was to challenge the negative preconceptions about Salafis that were circulating in public media under the Mubarak regime. More specifically, Tolba initially formed this group to challenge the negative image that portrayed Salafis as reclusive, fanatic and overly zealous in the practice of their beliefs. The group aimed to change this preconceived image in the atmosphere of freedoms in the first year of the revolution (2001) where the grasp of securitization of public life loosened.

Along this vein, the first inaugural event that launched Salafiyo Costa to public attention was a football match played between a group of Christians and Salafis in the summer of 2011. According to Tolba, the event itself coincided with the short period in which the national security apparatus (amn al dawla), lessened its grip on public space and the monitoring of public life in the few months that followed the removal of Mubarak from power. The event itself would have been impossible to hold under Mubarak due to the close securitization of 'sectarian' files.

According to Tolba, the choice of the football match was to establish a mode of interaction between the participants that goes beyond the static image of "national unity", a public image of religious harmony between Muslims and Christians in Egypt. This particular public image has a problematic legacy since it emphasizes a message of solidarity between the Muslim majority and the Coptic minority nearly after every sectarian incident. The televised programs that brought together a sheikh and a priest embracing and kissing one another in national occasions as an image that reflected the sense of national unity that existed between the Muslim majority and Christian minority.

The group chose to host a football match between Copts and Salafis to bring social interaction beyond the formalities expressed by the public image of national unity. One could attribute the idea to "ice-breaking" games in managerial formalities. However, the choice of the game also wanted to break with the false image of 'national unity' to an activity that brings the two groups, Muslims and Copts, in an open, a face-to-face encounter beyond social formalities. "Only in the football match" affirmed Tolba "the relation between the two teams will develop such a certain rivalry that will eventually compel everyone to go beyond pretension".

One could relate this inaugural social event as closely resembling Chantal Mouffe's notion of agonistic politics: namely, a form of politics in which difference and argument could be practiced without slipping into conflict. Agonistic politics opens a space of contestation and argument yet with a mutual recognition between the competing groups that they share a symbolic space.

In Tolba's own terms, the group was formed to establish a common ground between different minorities that endured marginalization under the Mubarak regime. The group offered a common ground for all the 'minorities' of the Mubarak regime. As Copts and Salafis were a marginalized minority that suffered under Mubarak's authoritarianism as well as the negative preconceptions in the media, they could be brought in a face to face encounter after the securitization policies suffered under Mubarak. From that 'minoritarian' position as victims of the Mubarak regime, Tolba attempted to establish a common ground with Copts and liberals coinciding with open encounters as reminiscent of a similar experience in Tahrir square.

Ethics in/of the Interlude

Another important aspect of agonistic interactions in Salafiyo Costa is that the two religious groups firmly believe that the afterlife excludes the other. Heaven, according to Tolba, is not an eschatological space of mutual co-existence. Both groups firmly believe that the other group follows a false doctrine of beliefs. However, if both groups firmly believe that each party will end up in hell the question ultimately becomes: What to do in the meantime, that is, the interlude between the present time and the afterlife?

The whole point is to establish an atmosphere of benevolence and tolerance (in the words of Salafiyo Costa's founder) until the day of judgement between peoples' of different faiths. In the meantime, the whole point is to establish a congenial relation between the two groups. The two groups partake fully in all matters of socialization but refrain from touching upon matters of belief. Religious criticism becomes the only red line in which all members refrain from. As aforementioned, Salafiyo Costa plays on the theme that the Mubarak regime considered the two groups as "minorities". With the removal of the Mubarak regime, the metaphor of openness between different groups in the square is being reinvented.

Aside from socialization activities, the group also engages in charity activities administered by the movement members. In Salafiyo Costa, one finds an interesting amalgamation of human development literature (faith-based development), Salafi literature devoted on the ethics of daily interaction with dhimmis (Non-Muslims living in predominately Muslim communities).

Politics and Eschatology

As previously mentioned in an earlier section, Hirschkind (2006) describes how an ethical discourse in the culture of cassette sermons, aims to imprint the 'overwhelming existence of death and the hereafter on mundane existence' (pp. 174). He traces a certain sensibility towards death, that has been augmented by the culture of Islamic cassette sermons, in which a living subject is continually reminded of the nearness of death. In many ways, he emphasizes the rise of the 'funerary' homiletic tones in the cassette sermons in which death was always being summoned as to have a visible imprint on life.

In the interview, Tolba explained the exigencies of experiencing living within proximity of death. However, we witness a slight inversion, in which death as judgement is postponed. The space is not marked by skepticism or a relativity of faith between people of different faiths. In other words, such deferral is not dependent on a relativism of faith that is left to God's final judgment between them. On the contrary, Salafiyo costa's would argue that 'each group is *certain* that the other group will be eternally condemned to hell'. The problem, as Tolba would argue, is to think of what to do in the interlude between now and the afterlife. In that space between now and the afterlife.

The Ends of Charity

In its beginning, Salafiyo Costa was founded to change the negative image of Salafis that circulated in the public media under Mubarak's regime. However, as the movement continued to flourish, it opened its ranks a multitude of other political and social factions, including Copts, liberals and left-leaning cadres. In its mandate, it had clear-cut goals: the promotion of communal cohesion, the

In 2012, several members started working on a conference that discusses the challenges to education in Egypt. More specifically, the conference opened up issues pertaining to the liberalization of education in Egypt. A leftist member affirmed that the conference began to inaugurate a new language of social claims that ultimately redefined the ranks beyond sectarian or religious identification.

Maspero Youth Union (Harakit Shabab Maspero)

In my interview with its media liaison, Maspero Youth Union defines the movement as "a pressure group that is concerned with the problems of the Copts in the public domain" (Aly, 2015). The movement emerged out of the Maspero sit-in which took place after the incident of Atfeeh church. The sit-in lasted for 14 days, during which the negotiations took place between the representatives of the SCAF (Supreme Council of Armed Forces) on the one hand and a representative group of Coptic protesters that took part in the sit-in. Father Mityas Nasr led the group on the negotiation table. The negotiations ended with the implementation of the first two demands: the reconstruction of the church as well as the dismissal of the Coptic detainee, Sister *Mary Ragheb*. According to estimates by the actors, the number of protesters reached the ten thousand people, mostly Copts in solidarity with some Muslims with the case (Aly, 2015).

However, in addition to the above, the sit-in resulted in the very formation of the "Union of Maspero Youth" as a group concerned with the defense of the Coptic issues within the framework of 'the rule of law'. The group's main emphasis was centered on citizenship issues and religious discrimination.

The Maspero Sit-in

The most important eye-opening event for the young people, who took part in the Maspero sit-in, was their openness to a different encounter with Muslims. Most of them who had come from villages or informal quarters knew Muslims through distant quotidian relations. In the last thirty years, the socialization between Muslims and Christians became extremely limited. Although they might meet on transportation, markets or other sites of quotidian relations, however, most of my informants affirmed that those who come from villages rarely saw the kind of direct encounter, especially Muslims who rallied for Coptic rights or even visited the sit-in to express solidarity. In their eyes, the direct face to face encounter with Muslims in the

openness of the square provided a different experience of affiliation. Through my fieldwork experience, many interviewees, including one of my main informants, Rami, affirmed that the sit-in allowed the protesters to “see that the world was larger than they had perceived it to be. They discovered ‘other’ Muslims beyond those who have dealt with them in their locality. Muslims who were sympathetic to their demands”. In my understanding, the protesters discovered the possibilities of the square as an open space for making demands.

In a previous paper, I have highlighted the circumstances that led the Maspero youth movement to choose to host the sit-in near the Egyptian national television building known as Maspero rather than holding it in Tahrir square, the iconic site of the Egyptian revolution. The choice of the sit-in’s location is pivotal in understanding the ways in which the youth union sets itself apart from other revolutionary youth movements that have emerged in the wake of the January 25th revolution. According to the media coordinator of the youth movement, the Revolutionary Youth Union (RYU) refused to host the event in Tahrir because of its ‘sectarian tinge’. In the context of the first year of the revolution (2011), the RYU refused to host the demonstration (that would develop into a sit-in) because it has labelled it as a ‘sectarian demand’ since it revolved around the investigation of a burnt-down Church by Muslim rioters. The demonstration was refused on the grounds of national stability. At this juncture in time, the RYU did not want a direct confrontation with the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF). According to another member of the political bureau, the first few months following the revolution were extremely sensitive for the RYU believing that the SCAF would fulfill the aims of the revolution given that the RYU speaks in the name of national interests. The RYU, in other words, would not support a Coptic demand (for the restoration of the church).

The refusal of RYU forced the Coptic protestors to think of the location in which their cause would be heard. Through the Mubarak regime, sectarian events would be marginally featured in the national media. Hence, the choice of ‘Maspero’ (the national television building) in order to voice out their demands: more importantly, the restoration of Atfeeh church and an investigation of the circumstances that led to its burning. Another important reason was that the union of youth movements declined the Coptic youth movement plea to host the sit-in in Tahrir claiming that the iconic square must remain devoid of sectarian demands. Some of the Maspero Youth Union have even voiced the opinion that the Muslim Brotherhood was behind this refusal. Other members have suggested that the Alliance of Revolutionary Youth Movements refused the hosting of the event in respect of the Supreme Council for Armed Forces (SCAF).

Another important aspect of how Coptic identity is represented and formulated into a language of claims within the Maspero Youth Union is the legacy of former social movements that operated under the Mubarak regime. It is important to investigate how the members of Maspero youth union formulated through the political trajectories of its more senior

members (more specifically, the members of the political bureau, who either partook in the Egyptian association for change under the leadership of Mohamed Baradie or joined earlier Coptic movements such as Kolena Aqbaat).

The Maspero Massacre

Maspero massacre represents an important stage, not only in the history and the legitimacy of the Maspero Youth Union, but also with regard to the context of political transition in general in Egypt. At the national level, these events came as a warning to civil society groups protest about the possibility of the return of the Mubarak regime, but the military junta and the willingness to use violence to suppress any protests anticipated. As for the Coptic mobility, came those events to recast the repertoire act of protest movements Coptic in general and specifically Union, is noted for example, the emergence of a new revolutionary groups represent a new type of participation of Copts in the public domain, first and foremost, "Mina Daniel" movement, and that in same time as the Union began to rebuild part of its work and interpretations of actors faithful to the meaning of mobility, which represent avoid taking counter positions of the church and the tendency to return to the general obligation Line Coptic mobility who founded his Pope Shenouda III, since the seventies of the last century, a protest under the cloak of the church.

Revolution, Religious Tradition and Revolutionary Youth Movements

How could revolutionary youth movements communicate with one another 'in spite of' religious orientation? In my view, the question is already loaded with assumptions about the exclusive nature of religiosity and religious tradition. In his essay on the Egyptian revolution, Talal Asad affirmed that the revolution failed to inaugurate a tradition of its own. He referred to the failures of the political forces to inaugurate and preserve a tradition related to the revolution and revolutionary outcome.

By Way of Conclusion

Throughout the paper, I have tried think how It would be extremely problematic to think of a political vision that takes terms such as the afterlife, ethical labor and martyrdom to describe how social movements engaged with the question of the place of religion in public space. More importantly, how the revolution has redefined the boundaries of existing modes of religiosity, ultimately, shifting modes of identification with the religious other.

Throughout its course, revolution inaugurated a very strong hagiographical tradition that mobilized and captured the political sensibilities of younger generations on the streets for a long period of time. The stories of martyrs, their origins, pictures of their mourning families, the representations of their faces shimmered in graphic limbos in street graffiti, mobilized

them for a long period of time, throughout the duration of the revolutionary surge on the streets to be exact, to seek the vindication of martyrs. Vindication provided them with the mobilizing force to continue their confrontations on the streets in a sense that those living continued on the part of those already fallen. More importantly, this mobilizing force provided a generational link between the protesters as a communal bloc with a shared experience on the streets. The generational, is understood in Karl Mannheim's terms, not only as a group belonging to a similar age-group that share a 'similarity of location' amongst them but, more importantly, a group that have undergone a common collective experience with its own imprints that forms the contours of a shared memory. In the course of the Egyptian revolution, despite their different political and religious orientations, revolutionary youth movements perhaps shed light on the 'limitedness' of religious and political modes of identification, which existed under the Mubarak regime. On the Coptic side, the ways in which Coptic youth problematized the dangers of the monopolization of Coptic identity. Mina Danyal, as one example, realizing the need to go beyond the 'pastoral' life of the church and think of its restrictions on the larger Coptic community. On the Muslim side, the recruits of social movements coming into an open, face-to-face encounter with Coptic youth during the Tahrir sit-in. In other words, the square becoming a site of open encounter that shed light and stood in the face of the securitization of public space under Mubarak.

The second reason, in the face of the revolution's constant upheaval under the different administrations of SCAF, Morsi and Sisi, the revolutionary 'bloc' found itself in the position that must create an alternative to the two contenders for power, SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood (that perhaps both contenders represent the same person in the eyes of God perhaps reflecting the same motifs found in the short story of Jorge Luis Borges' *The Theologians*). It would be extremely simplistic to consider that those revolutionary youth movements aimed at forming a new political order because many of their initiatives could be considered reformative (as they remained political forces that acknowledged and made demands to SCAF as a legitimate authority).

Through all the short interviews I have conducted with the members of youth movements, it allowed me to view the kind of problems, which revolutionary movements faced in their formulation of solidarity, communication and affiliation within their ranks? How to create new forms of solidarities and filiation in light of the evident sectarianism found under Mubarak? More importantly, what forms of ethics do such forms of association and solidarity necessitate?

After Rabea square, it is completely legitimate to ask what remains of those 'promising potentials' of revolutionary youth movements? If those revolutionary movements promised the constant decentering of political and religious identities under the Mubarak regime, opening terrains for new forms of filiation and solidarity, why haven't those new forms of solidarities withstood the test of Rabea square? In other words, why such new forms of

solidarities could not avoid the extreme polarization in Egyptian society prevalent shortly before the Rabea massacre under the labels of "Islamic vs. Non-Islamic"?

However, the aftermath of the massacre did have its effects over all those movements (and Egyptian society at large. The consequences remain unconceivable in the present time). As an example, Salafiyo Costa faced threatening challenges by the sharp differences among its members over Rabea square leading to a considerable loss of its members in the process. The Youth Union of Maspero, which was founded on a strict identitarian frame of reference, faced grave differences over the representation of the Coptic community.

If we think of further consequences for the short journey of the revolution, those social movements have offered new terrains for transcending existing modes of religiosity under the post-colonial state. In literature devoted to the dhimmis, the more radical branches of Islamic current, such as al-jamma' al-Islamiyya, viewed Copts as a fifth column for imperialism. In other Islamic currents, there were always refutations and sincere efforts to understand the status of dhimmis under the guardianship of Islam as a historical construct. Those bodies of literature attempted to appropriate and critically engage with reinforcing the modern values in sharia by focusing on the equality between Muslims and Non-Muslims under the rule of the Islamic state (Qaradawi, 1984).

In this paper I have to tried to show that the very material conditions of identification has changed to allow for new forms of affiliation and filiation within the larger revolutionary bloc (which remains without an independent world-view of its own) between Christians and Muslims. In her book on the roots of sectarianism in Egypt (2015), Mahmood has criticized the secular legacy of the Egyptian nationalist movement in which it transformed the religion of the majority as a determinant of public order in Egypt. However, she draws very little on how the larger Islamic revival movement has contributed to a literature on Copts that either treats them as a fifth column, a vehicle for western imperialism or in their more moderate treatment (El-Beshri, Howeidi, El-Awwah), yet they never attended to the question of ethics in relation to the Coptic community, as Saba Mahmood and Hirschkind would ponder over in their analysis of the Islamic movements and their ethical approach to politics.

ABOUT ARI

The Arab Reform Initiative is the leading independent Arab think tank working with expert partners in the Middle East and North Africa and beyond to articulate a home-grown agenda for democratic change. It conducts research and policy analysis and provides a platform for inspirational voices based on the principles of diversity, impartiality and social justice.

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