GUIDING THE PIOUS TO PRACTICE:
ISLAMIC MAGAZINES AND REVIVAL IN EGYPT 1976-1981

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Abstract

Scholars struggle to make sense of the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary Egypt. What are the ties that bind and divide Islamist and Statist religious visions, Islamist organizations and state institutions, and their respective constituencies? These questions cannot be answered without appreciating the centrality of the emergence of the Islamic Revival under the rule of Anwar al-Sadat (1970-1981). This dissertation uses a variety of mass media from this period as cultural artifacts that reveals both ties and tensions among religious elites and the key sites at which they mobilized their constituencies. Centering on four Islamic periodicals representing Muslim Brothers, Salafis, state-affiliated scholars and religious bureaucrats, this project charts the battle for Egypt’s middle class through articles, letters to the editor and fatwa requests. It situates these projects in relation to a longer history of religious contestation within Egyptian history and further teases out their commonalities and conflicts by exploring over 130 pamphlets, sermons and television programs of leading religious figures of this period. Whereas previous research perpetuates a narrative of separation and ideological division by focusing exclusively on either government or Islamist ideas and sites, this study emphasizes the intellectual cross-pollination among competing religious elites and the social ties among their constituencies who were employed within state offices or enrolled in public educational institutions. It highlights three particular shifts in practice: the redefinition of religious literacy, the proliferation of modest dress and conservative gender relations, and the increased performance of the early afternoon Zuhr prayer. By tracing the emergence of the Islamic Revival through these practices, this dissertation offers an alternative template for understanding the roots of competing contemporary claims to piety, whether Muslim Brotherhood, Salafis, or ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi’s government.
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This dissertation would not have been possible without the advisors and colleagues who make academic research exciting and the friends and family who give meaning to the days and months on end staring at magazines, books and my computer screen.

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to minute matters of historiographic method. Finally, Michael Cook has always taken an interest in me as an individual notwithstanding the fact that my research interests differ considerably from his. I am very grateful for all of his guidance and, of course, for NES 502, which introduced me to the Islamic scholarly tradition.

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Introduction

The Islamic Revival Today

Under the rule of Anwar al-Sadat (r. 1970-1981), Egyptians of disparate social class and geographical locations turned towards greater ritual observance, modesty and, for many, a commitment to social and political transformation. Known in Arabic as the “Islamic Revival” (al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya¹), the period of Sadat’s rule saw a decisive shift in public debate and practice: from calls for the application of Islamic law to the crowded mosques across Egyptian cities to the self-consciously modest dress and pious comportment of Egyptian Muslims, the question was not whether Islam was the answer but how it could be applied. How and where did competing programmatic visions of religious change emerge during this period, in which ways did middle class Egyptians come together with religious elites to shape this process, and what continuities exist with previous practices of piety?

This dissertation is an intellectual and social history of the emergence of the Islamic Revival in Egypt. It centers on four Islamic magazines that, collectively, served as a key site for the negotiation of particular religious projects among religious elites and between these elites and middle class readers.² The first, al-Da’wa (The Call), was the official publication of the Muslim Brotherhood under the editorship of ‘Umar al-Tilmisani (d. 1986). At this time, the Brotherhood’s grassroots infrastructure was in tatters following the repression of the Nasser period (1952-1970) and the surveillance of the early years of

¹ In this dissertation, I italicize all Arabic transliterations with the exception of words that are commonly used in English, most notably: Shari’a, ‘ulama, fatwa, Quran, Sunna, Jihad, Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr. I capitalize Arabic terms when they refer to a category “The ‘Ulama,” but do not capitalize in cases of general description (i.e. some ‘ulama claimed that…). Similarly, when I refer to a specific role (the Mufti) I use capitalization, but do not capitalize if I refer to an indefinite set of individual issuing fatwas (muftis). My transliterations follow the IJMES scheme in general terms, but exclude diacritics and a final letter hamza (i.e. ‘ulama not ‘ulama’).
² For an extended discussion of the socioeconomic and educational position of readers within these magazines, see chapter 2.
the Sadat period (1970-1976), and it lacked access to television, radio or daily newspapers. Consequently, al-Da‘wa represented the sole site where the Muslim Brothers could safely address a national audience and lay claim to a vision of Islamizing state and society through contemporary organizational forms. Yet, the Brotherhood was not alone within the religious opposition: key figures within the Salafi Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya, most prominently Ahmad ‘Isa ‘Ashur (d. 1990) and the organization’s Imam ‘Abd al-Latif Mushtahiri (d. 1995), wrote and edited al-I’tisam (Adherence). Under the intellectual leadership of ‘Ashur and Mushtahiri, al-I’tisam balanced between the Salafi-inspired ritual and theological emphasis of the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya and a Brotherhood-style commitment to socio-political transformation.

Neither was this debate limited to the Islamist opposition. The Ministry of Endowments’ Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (al-Majlis al-A‘la l-il-Shu’un al-Islamiyya) published Minbar al-Islam (The Pulpit of Islam). The magazine served to complement the Ministry’s provision of Friday prayer leaders (sing. imam, pl. a‘ima) and preachers (sing. khatib, pl. khutaba) to mosques throughout Egypt, and sought to seize the mantle of religious legitimacy from the Islamist opposition by providing religious legitimation for state policies. Finally, the Islamic Research Academy (Majma‘ al-Buhuth al-Islamiyya) at al-Azhar published al-Azhar (named after the premier Sunni

\[3\] While the period of Nasser’s rule (1954-1970) saw wide scale arrests and executions of the Muslim Brotherhood, the first half of Sadat’s rule (1970-1976) involved a comparatively modest effort to restrict public expression.

\[4\] This is not to suggest that al-Da‘wa reached a still-substantial illiterate portion of Egypt’s population. Rather, it is to claim that the circulation of this magazine, which exceeded 60,000 copies per issue, far exceeded the audience available to the Brotherhood by any other means. For a more detailed discussion of magazine circulation, see Chapter 1.

\[5\] The Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya, which was founded in 1912, in one of Egypt’s two largest Salafi organizations, alongside Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhamadiyya.

\[6\] This periodical’s title refers to Surat Al ‘Umran 3:103, which reads: “And hold tight to the rope of God (wa-a‘tasisim bi-habt Allah) all together and do not become divided.” I translate the title as “Adherence” to convey the joint emphasis of this verse on religious fidelity and unity.
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seminary located in Cairo) as it attempted to uphold the primacy of scholastic textual authority in the face of lay challengers.

It is unlikely, however, that the audience of Islamic magazines limited themselves to this media form. Instead, these middle class Egyptians and others both above and below them on the socioeconomic spectrum would have also listened to sermons and watched television programs, and a more literate segment of this group would also have also read pamphlets. Accordingly, this dissertation complements the narrative provided by Islamic magazines by drawing extensively on television programs, audiocassette sermons, Islamist-produced oral history interviews, and pamphlets. In particular, it highlights the ideas of three key public religious figures of this period who illustrate a broad spectrum of religious debate in Sadat’s Egypt: the pro-state preacher (and Minister of Endowments between 1976 and 1978) Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha’rawi (d. 1978), the anti-state Islamist preacher ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk (d. 1996) and a regime-aligned lay religious intellectual, Mustafa Mahmud (d. 2009).

To sketch the diverse religious landscape in which the respective calls of elites within the Muslim Brotherhood, Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya, Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and Ministry of Endowments were received, this project focuses on 16 pamphlets published by Mahmud during the 1970s; 22 sermons recorded on audiocassette by ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk between 1977 and 1981; and 98 episodes of Sha’rawi’s hit Quranic commentary television program that aired between July 1980 and September 1981 (known as Tafsir al-Sha’rawi).

Mahmud’s writings cast light on the vision of the most prominent lay

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7 I base this periodization on clues provided by al-Ahram’s daily television schedule. I obtained copies of this program off of a website run by admirers of al-Sha’rawi (http://www.elsharawy.com), al-Sha’rawi’s previous program, hosted by Ahmad al-Faraj, was titled Nur ‘ala Nur and appeared until July 4th 1980. On July 20th, a new program, “Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim li-Fadilat al-Shaykh Muhammad Mutawalli al-
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religious intellectual of this period, while Kishk’s sermons and Sha’rawi’s television program reveal the dueling claims—and commonalities—between perhaps the most prominent critic and supporter, respectively, of the Sadat regime. While Mahmud’s pamphlets appealed to a comparatively educated audience, Kishk’s audiocassette sermons and Sha’rawi’s television program both circulated broadly, albeit through distinct channels of distribution.8

Yet, an audience of hundreds of thousands should not be confused with the capacity to recruit an activist minority into competing projects of religious mobilization. As religious elites within magazines spoke to a literate audience, this audience responded through letters to the editor and fatwa requests. Islamic magazines tell the story of how leading thinkers from different institutions and religious approaches sought to craft the Islamic Revival’s priorities, and how middle class readers from across Egypt shaped and performed these claims.

Over the course of seven chapters, this study maps a dynamic scene of political and technological change, religious competition and local activism. The first chapter contextualizes the rise of Islamic magazines as a key site of the Islamic Revival within the political, technological and social changes that facilitated their emergence as a financially viable and popular medium. The second chapter then probes the

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Sha’rawi appears. See “al-Qanat al-Ula,” al-Ahram, 20 July 1980, p. 2. This program is distinguished by two features: it is produced by ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Mahmud (whose name appears in the credits of a program titled “Tafsir al-Sha’rawi,” and it proceeds by analyzing select verses of the Quran in sequential order (rather than thematically). The television schedules also occasionally specify which verses will be discussed; most crucially for our purposes, the September 18 1981 edition of al-Ahram indicates a focus on verses 237 to 243 of Surat al-Baqara, which is the 98th episode of this program. See “al-Qanat al-Ula,” al-Ahram, 18 September 1981, p. 2.

8 While Kishk’s sermons were recorded weekly and then distributed by audiocassette across Egypt, al-Sha’rawi had access to the state-controlled Channel 1, while also appearing regularly on state-controlled radio. For Kishk, see Charles Hirschkind, The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 58.
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socioeconomic position and geographical location of middle class participants in these magazines, identifying who participated at this textual site. The third and fourth chapters move beyond this map of religious production and participation to sketch the textual arena of Islamic magazines through an analysis of debates over the practices of editing, writing and reading, on the one hand, and the production of Islamic magazines, on the other. These chapters show the process by which the ground rules of mediation were negotiated and how these dynamics, in turn, shaped projects of religiosity during this period.

The fifth through seventh chapters turn to key popular projects of the Islamic Revival. These chapters eschew “elite” questions—whether the formation of a religious state, a system of “Islamic” economics or the application of the Shari‘a—in favor of everyday practices: the transmission and deployment of religious knowledge, modest dress and comportment, and daily prayer. In particular, they highlight the ways in which the participation and concerns of an economically heterogeneous middle class9 shaped the key popular practices that, in turn, represent the Revival’s most durable legacy.

Historiography

English-language histories of the Islamic Revival during the 1970s narrate a “turn” to Islam that emerged, seemingly full-formed, out of the disappointment of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the early euphoria of the 1973 war. These studies focus on the intellectual history of the period as told through the re-appropriation of medieval scholarly works in the modern period. This trend, found most prominently in the works of Emanuel Sivan and Gilles Kepel, provides a political and intellectual history by focusing on prominent

9 For more on this topic, see the second chapter of this dissertation.
leaders, most notably Sayyid Qutb and ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj, and their landmark works.\textsuperscript{10} Other studies, which examine Islamist thought within a longer time frame, focus on the Islamist movement’s aspirations to build an Islamic state.\textsuperscript{11} Collectively, these works provide a crucial history of elite intellectual development, whether that of regime-aligned scholars and thinkers or oppositional Islamist leaders, and the challenges these intellectual shifts posed to the religious legitimacy of the Sadat and then Mubarak regimes (1981-2011).

Political scientists and historians alike have responded to an overemphasis on religious elites by utilizing Social Movement Theory (SMT) to study the emergence of Egyptian Islamist organizations. Carrie Wickham’s \textit{Mobilizing Islam} explores the broader political, economic and social processes through which the grassroots educational and political apparatus of the Revival developed, while also accounting for the social contexts in which individual Egyptians came to participate not merely in acts of religious piety but also in Islamist political activism.\textsuperscript{12} Wickham challenges “grievance-based explanations of Islamic activism,” whether those of “cultural identity” or “political economy.” Instead, she argues that elites must “generate motivations, resources, and opportunities for collective action.”\textsuperscript{13} Historians have also drawn on SMT: for example, Abdallah al-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, \textit{Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt}. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Though Wickham deals with popular Islamist texts, she suggests that the Brotherhood’s vision has not changed substantially since the time of Hasan al-Banna. See p. 138.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid. pp. 6-8
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Arian’s *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Egypt* (1968-1981) explores the rise of the Islamic movement in Egypt on college campuses from the closing years of Nasser’s reign through those of Sadat. SMT-centered studies thus provide a valuable window into the centrality of local practices of outreach to understanding the spread of Islamism.  

In parallel, anthropologists have explored practices of ethical cultivation within Egypt’s contemporary Islamic Revival. These studies have cast light on the importance of audiocassette sermons, mosque study groups and ritual prayer, and the use of religious dreams to transcend the barrier between the physical and spiritual world (known as the *barzakh*). These authors and others emphasize the formation and performance of pious subjectivities across the social landscape, whether in taxicabs, mosques or homes, and the ways in which a state of moral purity is both the result of pious practice and the precondition for its further performance. This scholarship provides a crucial, yet incomplete, basis for understanding the emergence of the Islamic Revival in Egypt as a popular project that exceeded the bounds of the Islamist opposition even as it was shaped by it.

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15 See Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*.


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For all its merits, however, this secondary literature obscures the importance of particular media forms in the projects of the Islamic Revival. Though previous studies have drawn on Islamic magazines, they have not examined the dynamics of mediation within these texts nor have they explored the lines of distribution and consumption. In line with recent anthropological scholarship that highlights the importance of mass mediation to contemporary projects of piety, chapters three and four of this dissertation explore the negotiation of textual authority within Islamic magazines.

Previous scholarship also frequently occludes the local realities and practices that underlay the emergence of the Islamic Revival in Egypt. Intellectual histories rarely mention those outside the religious elite, while studies that draw on SMT or focus on pious cultivation say little about the interaction of these elites with expanding pious constituencies. What was the relationship between intellectual and social change during the Islamic Revival, and what can this reveal about the reach of scholars and lay leaders, on the one hand, and the local realities that faced their audiences, on the other? As religious movements mobilize followers, how are these followers not only the object of religious frames, but also contributors to their formation? Alongside these movements, how are pious subjectivities formed not only locally with reference to particular mosques, audiocassette sermons or dream interpreters, but also within a mass-mediated national environment?

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Introduction

The relationship between intellectual and social change, religious mobilization and local practice, and the ways in which men and women used media and religious ritual alike to form themselves as pious subjects, is obscured by previous definitions of the Islamic Revival. Saba Mahmood defines the Islamic Revival as referring:

“[N]ot only to the activities of state-oriented political groups but more broadly to a religious ethos or sensibility that has developed within contemporary Muslim societies...[which has] a palpable presence in Egypt, manifest in the vast proliferation of neighborhood mosques and other institutions of Islamic learning and social welfare, in a dramatic increase in attendance of mosque by both men and women, and in marked displays of religious sociability.”

Along similar lines, Wickham notes that “a much broader segment of Egyptian society have been touched by the revival of private faith and observance than are committed to an Islamic project of transformative social and political change.” Finally, Hirschkind notes: “[I]ts broadest section has always remained grounded in grassroots efforts to revitalize Islamic forms of knowledge, pedagogy, comportment, and sociability.” Though broadly descriptive of the shifts that underlay this change in Egypt’s religious landscape, these definitions only speak in vague terms about the key practices that emerged under Sadat, their continuities with previous periods, and the sites at which they were performed.

In parallel, intellectual histories, SMT studies and ethnographies of piety have focused on those spaces outside of the state in which piety is lived. While Islamist preachers speak to a growing segment of the population through audiocassettes, pamphlets and magazines, Islamist organizers function either on the urban periphery or

21 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, p. 3.
22 Wickham, Mobilizing Islam, p. 136.
23 Hirschkind, The Ethical Soundscape, p. 6.
24 See Wickham, Mobilizing Islam, pp. 121-5.
within “open” space provided by Egyptian universities. Similarly, projects of ethical cultivation proceed entirely at a distance from the state within a broad array of charitable and educational organizations supported by the “Parallel Islamic Sector.” While this approach valuably captures the emergence of networks of religious practice and activism, it does not attend to what participants in these projects do on a daily basis.

Indeed, while this focus represents a reasonable accommodation of the limits on research within both pre- and post-2011 Egypt, it also produces a false binary, both spatial and intellectual, between state and society. Asad, Starrett and Agrama have noted the role of the Egyptian state (like all modern states) in regulating the relationship between the “religious” and the “secular.” The relevance of such governmental institutions to a study of religious change is underscored by the breadth of their activities: the Ministry of Endowments maintained a broad network of mosques alongside continued production of print and audio products, while al-Azhar spoke to Egyptians through its national network of primary, secondary and university level educational institutions, as well as through print. An exclusive focus on extra-state sites thus obscures the role played by state institutions in the formation of the competing projects of the Islamic Revival.

State institutions matter not only as a source of ideas but also as a site of competition that the middle class participants of the Islamic Revival frequented daily. This is most

25 See al-Arian, Answering the Call, particularly pp. 105-145.
26 See Wickham, Mobilizing Islam, pp. 93-118. Though Saba Mahmood does not discuss the funding of the Women’s Mosque Movement, it is fair to assume that the same sources of funding identified by Wickham go to support these activities. See Mahmood, Politics of Piety, pp. 41-8.
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notable in the case of the Egyptian educational system and state-controlled public sector institutions, both of which had expanded substantially during the period of Nasser’s rule (1952-1970). While SMT scholars and political historians alike acknowledge the importance of college campuses to the Islamic activism of Sadat’s rule, they do not consider the role of schools and offices as formative sites of pious practice. To an even greater extent, ethnographies of contemporary piety in Egypt entirely ignore the performance of these projects within state institutions. By contrast, this dissertation foregrounds the role of state institutions—and the limits to the state/society division—as it examines the performance of key practices of the Islamic Revival on public transportation, within public schools, and within the offices of the state’s sprawling bureaucracy.

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation draws on a broader literature of textual culture, Islamic and European, to explore Islamic magazines as a mediating site underlying key projects within the Islamic Revival. In tandem, it utilizes tools of social and intellectual history to trace religious practices and the shifting assumptions that underlay these projects as their participants traversed public space and government institutions alike.

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29 A crucial exception to this statement is Agrama’s Questioning Secularism.
Study of Islamic textual culture represents a relatively marginal component of the broader literature on religious change today. This position is, in many respects, a reaction to Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1977) and its critique of the exclusive use of Islamic texts to explain the actions of Muslims. Yet, a focus on Islamic textual culture does not necessarily imply a simplistic equation of ideas and practice. Most prominently, Timothy Mitchell’s *Colonizing Egypt* charts the changing relationship between print and political authority in Egypt under British colonial control in the late 19th and early 20th century.30 Along similar lines, Brinkley Messick’s *The Calligraphic State* outlines the development of a “textual polity” in Yemen from Ottoman rule (1872-1918) to the rise of Imam Yahya (1918-1962), and finally through the establishment of a republican system in 1962.31 Lastly, in *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, Adeeb Khaled charts the Jadidist efforts at educational reform in Turkestan at the turn of the twentieth century and changing models for the social reproduction of culture that this movement introduced.32

These studies of textual and social practices, however, pale numerically in comparison to the increased study of Muslim-majority societies through ethnographic observation, on the one hand, and intellectual histories which showcase the flexibility of the discursive tradition of the ‘ulama, on the other. In the case of the former, anthropologists have highlighted the centrality of local permutations of religion (and even local “islams”)33, participatory forms of media such as audiocassettes,34 and religious

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practices that lie outside the strict realm of textual knowledge, such as charity, dress and pious behavior. Intellectual historians, on the other hand, have revamped their approach to religious texts as they countered Orientalist assumptions that the ‘Ulama were incapable of responding to contemporary developments from within the Islamic tradition. Yet these intellectual histories, while important sources of a broader understanding of the scholarly tradition, speak little of what happened “on the ground” and social histories of religious practice are comparatively rare. Similarly, I am not aware of other studies of Islam that use popular religious texts to reconstruct debates over practice, though there are several studies of religious revival in post-1967 Israel which employ this method.

This project draws on theoretical models proposed by scholars of European textual culture to intervene in sometimes overlapping debates over Islam and mediation, pious

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See Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*.

For example, Lara Deeb’s ethnography of processes of “authentication” among Shi’i women in the Dahiyyya suburb of Beirut explores how these women make public religious claims to serve the community’s interests through practices of dress, behavior and charity. It should be noted that Deeb acknowledges the role of popular textual consumption within a broader constellation of influences. See Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi’i Lebanon*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.


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cultivation, and the formation of the Islamic Revival in Egypt. As Emilio Spadola asks: “How have practices and discourses of mass-mediation as call come to establish the conditions for piety and society in twentieth and twenty-first century Muslim Modernities?” Spadola and Hirschkind have highlighted the role of particular media forms in religious subjectivity formation, while Abu-Lughod and Fahmy have explored the relationship between nationalism, subjectivity formation and media in in early and late 20th century Egypt, respectively. These studies highlight the relationship between structures of production, sites of reception and subject formation in the cultivation of both pious Muslims and loyal citizens alike.

My project first seeks to examine dynamics of mediation within Islamic magazines between 1976 and 1981. Like Fahmy, and in contrast to Spadola, Hirschkind and Abu-Lughod, I focus on the dynamic relationship between media producers and consumers, rather than assuming a vertical model of production and reception. To do so, I draw on theoretical models proposed by scholars of European textual culture. Roger Chartier and Robert Darnton both note the hierarchies inherent in textual communities and the ways in which printed material presents interpretative opportunities and constraints for readers. Accordingly, any study of textual culture must explore these hierarchies and the social projects that they proposed both as they were claimed in print and as they functioned outside the textual arena of the magazine. This scholarship also emphasizes the

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40 See Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood* and Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*.
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importance of material considerations in the production of print products: as Elizabeth Eisenstein notes, printing was frequently both a business and an intellectual project.43

This reception of elite claims and the broader system of social relations can be effectively traced through Islamic magazines whose structure integrated sustained interaction among editors, writers and readers. Unlike other popular media forms, whether print (pamphlets and books), audio (cassette tapes) or audiovisual (television), regular letters to the editor and fatwa sections provided publishers and writers the opportunity to gauge the reception of their efforts and provided readers with the opportunity to participate.44 Though this was certainly not an entirely autonomous space –reader participation was ultimately contingent on editorial power –it was a comparatively open space.45 While other media forms (namely newspapers) could have hosted this type of interaction, none of the leading Statist religious institutions or Islamist organizations in Egypt had access to a daily newspaper at this time.

This dissertation, though, is not only a study of dynamics of mediation within Islamic magazines, but also of the negotiation of religious practice more broadly.46 Chartier notes

44 This isn’t to deny the importance of istifta as a local practice, nor is to suggest that mass-media fatwas by different ulama for different groups were necessarily mutually exclusive. Rather, it seeks to draw attention to the fact that, unlike local fatwas, magazine fatwas were directed not only at the mustafti but also, indirectly, at the mass audience consuming the magazine. This also is not meant to impute a unique quality to magazines per se; many of the dynamics of interactivity that I identify would have been true of newspapers had they been the site of religious debate.
45 I do not want to suggest, though, that magazines were a completely “open” media form: the power of editing (including choosing which letters to the editor were featured) was one that gave elites an influential place in shaping the debate. On the dynamics of magazine form, see Laurel Brake, “Reading and the Periodical Press: Text and Context” in Brake, Jones and Madden Investigating Victorian Journalism. New York: St. Martin’s, 1990, pp. 19-32.
46 As Courtney Bender notes, the turn towards practice within religious studies refers both to “things religious people do…prayer, singing, mediating and reading….and to] a theoretical and conceptual turn to religion that emphasizes embodiment, habit, and daily activity as much as earlier generations emphasized belief, texts, and orthodox theologies proper.” See Bender, “Practicing Religion” in Robert Orsi (ed.), The Cambridge Companion in Religious Studies. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p.
the centrality of the reconstruction of “social and cultural practice, both as they were proposed in texts that dictated the norm to be respected (and sometimes even followed), and as they adapted to their own use printed matter, festive and ritual formulas, and the rules imposed by the authorities.” In a similar vein, chapters five, six and seven explore the intersection of textual and social practice, incorporating internal negotiations of textual authority and the broader projects and hierarchies in which these negotiations were enmeshed. The question of how to understand the relationship between textual and social practice, however, remains.

Peter Fritzche’s *Reading Berlin*, in turn, provides a useful model through which Islamic magazines can be understood simultaneously as sites for the contestation of textual and social practice. Fritzche documents the dizzying transformation of Berlin during the second half of the 19th century and the subsequent “narrativization” of the city between 1900 and 1914 through the proliferation of newspapers that served as indispensable “guides” to their readers as they traversed an increasingly complex city.

In early 20th century Berlin, newspapers both reflected and shaped the city. As Fritzche notes, the “word city should be regarded as a social text that simultaneously reflected, distorted and reconstituted the city.” This process was both expansive and incoherent:

“[As] an encompassing symbolic order [which] informed the city and left behind countless versions and editions….popular newspapers did more than introduce the metropolis…they fashioned ways of looking in addition to fashioning looks, and

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273. In this project, I engage with the second definition of this term. Crucially, as Bender points out, “Social life is practiced just like orthodoxy and authority are practiced.” See Bender, “Practicing Religion,” pp. 281-2.
they trained readers how to move through the streets and crowds in addition to
guiding them among sensation city."49

Without the aid of newspapers, readers were lost in the city even as the newspapers
continually sought to reshape the city through their own narratives. Conversely, the
centrality of newspapers to the life of their readers stemmed not only from
industrialization or the spread of literacy, but from the repositioning of the paper as an
“encyclopedia of daily life.”50 Through a dynamic interaction between the city as a
physical site and newspaper narrativization, editors and writers sought to guide their
readers and their readers applied this guidance with varying degrees of success.

Notwithstanding the many differences between Berlin in the early 20th century and
Egypt between 1976 and 1981,51 Fritzche’s approach productively melds textual
negotiation and social navigation and can serve as a model for the present study. Like
Berlin’s newspapers, Egypt’s Islamic magazines provided alternative guides to a diffuse
project of individual and collective religiosity anchored in urban environments; questions
of religious knowledge, modesty and daily prayer raised new challenges when performed
on public buses and subways or within state offices and educational institutions. If
newspapers provided “keys to moving about the city and thus corresponded to the ability
to master the city” in Berlin,52 Islamic magazines guided daily acts of piety in the
turbulent political, social and economic environment of Egyptian cities. Both the actual
project of urban navigation and projects of religious piety were shaped by a basic tension:
participation in the new urban world was comparatively easy, yet “it was much harder to

49 Ibid. p. 16.
50 Ibid. p. 61.
51 Inhabitants of Berlin were more literate than those of Cairo during the period and, compared to Berlin,
Cairo experienced different forms of reshaping which required alternative strategies of navigation not
contained within state newspapers. Accordingly, it would hardly make sense to write an Egyptian version
of Fritzche’s study during this period.
52 Ibid. p. 90.
find one's way or maintain a sense of permanence or stability.”53 Finally, newspaper editors in Berlin and Islamic magazine editors in Egypt faced a similar challenge: the creation of a “syllabus of texts to read the modern city in an orderly way.”54 In contrast to Fritzche’s model, however, the syllabus by which readers navigated the city and the keys necessary to master it were not the creation of textual elites alone. Instead, fatwa requests and letters to the editor provided a key means by which readers sought to mold this syllabus to their gendered and socioeconomic conditions and to provide stable ways by which they could navigate the city.

Who were the producers of Islamic magazines and how did their audiences use these texts? The editors, writers and muftis of these periodicals could loosely be grouped as a “religious elite.” This was not a straightforward economic designation: those who wrote in Islamic magazines were economically heterogeneous and drew heavily from the same economic stratum as their readers. In Bourdieuan terms, they were distinguished by the possession of a high level of “embodied cultural capital” (which assumes a process of cultivation requiring financial capital) and similarly high levels of “social capital” (i.e. access to social networks which in turn provide access to various forms of monetary capital).55 In this setting, “religious elites” were divided between advocates of Statist and Islamist visions.

54 Fritzche, Reading Berlin 1900, p. 175.
**Introduction**

The audiences of these elites, by contrast, lacked this cultural and social capital, yet their position was not merely one of an undifferentiated mass audience. Instead, they represented a slice of literate Egyptian middle class readers who aspired to both socioeconomic mobility and religiosity. Put differently, these readers sought a “religious respectability”\(^{56}\) in which they were both defined as pious subjects by religious elites and played an active role in defining their own subjectivities. This project of “educated piety,” available to a literate yet economically heterogeneous middle class, was *not* available to working class Egyptians who remained captive to a narrower set of religious prescriptions and at continual risk of “incorrect” behavior.

The choice of social respectability, rather than ethical cultivation, as a theoretical lens is deliberate. While there is little doubt that the performance of piety involves bodily practices (“technologies of the self” to use the Foucaultian term on which both Hirschkind and Mahmood draw) that orient the individual towards the Divine, the limitation of this lens is that it reveals little about the entanglement of these individual ethical projects within a broader political, social and economic context. Social respectability, by contrast, allows one to engage with piety as a practice of ethical cultivation that intersects with broader structures of class and gender. Practices of religious knowledge, modesty, and prompt performance of daily prayer, in turn, were intimately linked to literacy, class position and access to education and professional employment.

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\(^{56}\) I adapt this term from Beverly Skeggs’ 1987 ethnography of working class white women in northwest England. As Skeggs notes, “Respectability contains judgments of class, race, gender and sexuality and different groups have differential access to the mechanisms for generating, resisting and displaying respectability. See Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. London: Sage, 1997, p. 2. This approach, which draws inspiration from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, analyzes processes of subject formation that reflect, but are not defined, by capital.
A Source-Critical Approach to Islamic Magazines

This dissertation’s focus on Islamic magazines argues that Islamic magazines represent a key, though not exclusive, site for the negotiation of religious change within Egypt during this crucial period of religious change. In the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, print media was central to their public outreach and mobilization efforts as they lacked access to any other mass media form or a grassroots network through which their ideas and programs could be transmitted and refined. For other participating institutions, Islamic magazines served as an important means of participating in a public debate over the Revival, though they were not the sole means by which these participants in the conversation could spread their ideas or communicate with middle class Egyptians.\(^{57}\)

Crucially for the argument that will follow, the magazines, excluding *al-Azhar*, contained numerous letters to the editor and fatwa requests in each issue. This space provided a key forum for readers to both affirm and contest the religious claims of Islamic magazine editors and writers. *Al-Azhar*, by contrast, featured comparatively scarce popular correspondence between 1976 and 1981 though, by the end of the period, it boasted an expanded fatwa section and had begun to print letters to the editor. It is for this reason that, while the chapters that follow extensively discuss the intellectual claims made by *al-Azhar’s* writers as representative of scholars within and outside the Islamic Research Academy, they feature relatively little correspondence from *al-Azhar’s* readers.

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\(^{57}\) By contrast, television, audiocassette sermons and radio, while powerful tools of mass diffusion, lacked an easy structure of audience feedback.
The use of letters to the editor and fatwa requests to represent reader participation also necessitates consideration of whether these sources were actually composed by readers. Previous scholarship on fatwas has highlighted the practice of muftis creating questions for themselves to answer.\textsuperscript{58} It appears unlikely, however, that editors of the Fatwa and Letters to the Editor sections in these three magazines would have done so again and again—over 2,000 times among the three publications—in correspondence that often included numbered street addresses throughout Cairo, Alexandria and the Nile Delta. If anything, editors had insufficient time to \textit{read} all the letters, let alone to fabricate them.\textsuperscript{59} The issue was not only logistics but also practical goals: the letters to the editor and fatwa sections of \textit{al-Da’wa}, \textit{al-I’tisam} and \textit{Minbar al-Islam} served as a crucial means for religious elites to gauge the grassroots reception of their projects; in the case of the Brotherhood, their magazine was the \textit{only} means of doing so. These projects, premised on not only popular outreach but also the crafting of practical programs, depended on readers to report the successes and the failures of their programs locally. Audio and audio-visual material from this period, in turn, allow us to sketch a broadly diffused conversation \textit{among} religious elites that was transmitted to a broad swath of Egyptians, yet it does not enable a study of vertical negotiation of key religious ideas and practices.


\textsuperscript{59} For example, \textit{Minbar al-Islam} editor, Fu’ad Hayba, apologized to readers in March 1979 that he had not read, let alone had time to select among, all their letters. See “Ma’a al-Qurra,” \textit{Minbar al-Islam}, March 1979/Rabi’ al-Awwal 1399, p. 174.
Conceptualizing Statism, Islamism and the State

In his classic study, *Seeing Like a State*, James Scott chronicles the rise of “High Modernism” from the mid-19th century on as an ideology of state-directed social and economic transformation that sought to bring about “huge, utopian changes in people’s work habits, living patterns, moral conduct and worldview.” A variety of states – colonial and revolutionary, communist and capitalist, Western and non-Western – adopted this philosophy of change, also known as Statism.

In the aftermath of the 1952 Free Officers’ Revolution, Egypt was one such revolutionary state. In alliance with the Soviet Union, another example of High Modernism, Nasser embarked on an ambitious vision of mass social and economic transformation that used technology and state access to (and seizure of) capital both to attempt to remake Egyptian society in its mold and to sideline pre-revolutionary elites.

An overlooked element of the Nasserist period, however, is its religious ambitions: Nasser did not merely seek to repress religion (though he did clamp down violently on the Muslim Brotherhood), but to actively shape it.61

Though Nasser’s ambitious effort to transform Egyptian society shaped Sadat’s rule, the Free Officers did not constitute the beginning of ambitious state-sponsored projects of transformation. Instead, the battle that would follow between state institutions and Islamist organizations emerged out of the Egyptian state’s late 19th century modernization

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61 Scholarship on the religious role of state institutions under Nasser is virtually non-existent due to a scarcity of sources from this period and due to the broader perception that Nasser’s reign was “secular” while that of Sadat was “religious”. A crucial exception to this rule is Malika Zeghal’s study of Azhar’s ‘ulama during the second half of the 20th century. See Zeghal, *Gardiens de l’Islam: Les oulémas d’al-Azhar dans l’Egypte contemporaine*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 1996. For a limited discussion of the politics of religious education under Nasser, see Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, pp. 77-80. Crucially, both Statist periodicals of the Sadat period, *Minbar al-Islam* and *al-Azhar*, were also published under Nasser.
project. Alongside its goal of strengthening Egypt politically and economically in the face of European encroachment, this project sought to achieve “political order” and to cultivate national identity through the creation of institutions (most notably, the army, the school and the factory) which would produce “the modern individual…. as an isolated, disciplined, receptive and industrious political subject.”\textsuperscript{62} The school, in particular, sought to model social order more broadly as “[s]tudents were kept moving from task to task, with every motion and every space disciplined and put to use.”\textsuperscript{63} At the same time, though, practice frequently deviated from state planners’ hopes; whether within army barracks or state factories, Egyptians frequently evaded the demands of supposedly inescapable disciplinary systems.\textsuperscript{64} Both Sadat and the institutions under his control, as well as his Islamist competitors, were heirs to this project of order and disorder.

State institutions sought not only to impart a particular conception of order, but also to subordinate religious identity to political exigencies, most notably the promotion of nationalism or signature ideological campaigns. As Gregory Starrett has shown, late 19\textsuperscript{th} century British-led educational reforms involved a process of “objectification” that rendered Islam as a concrete set of pronouncements. This objectified religious tradition was then utilized in the service of concrete political goals: the British used it to socialize the population against political revolt, Nasser to justify scientific socialism, and Sadat to argue that the state (and not the Islamist opposition) possessed an authoritative claim to religious legitimacy.\textsuperscript{65} This process of functionalization, by which religion came to be associated with particular social and political ends and practices, produced a new

\textsuperscript{62} Mitchell, \textit{Colonising Egypt}, p. xi.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid. p. 71.
\textsuperscript{64} See Fahmy, \textit{All the Pasha’s Men}, particularly pp. 199-238 and Shehata, \textit{Shop Floor Culture in Egypt}, pp. 58-93.
\textsuperscript{65} Starrett, \textit{Putting Islam to Work}, pp. 77-86.
understanding of religion itself: “[T]he ideas, symbols and behaviors constituting ‘true’ Islam came to be judged not by their adherence to contemporary popular or high traditions, but by their utility in performing social work...”\textsuperscript{66} The state-sponsored religious subject was a citizen whose religious obligations mirrored nationalist priorities and regime interests.

Egypt’s defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and changing international political winds helped to shape a different, yet not wholly discontinuous, vision of Statist transformation under Anwar al-Sadat (r. 1970-1981). On the one hand, the control exercised by state institutions over political and economic processes decreased: Sadat’s 1974 \textit{Infitah} increased direct foreign investment and privatized previously state-owned companies, while his 1976 introduction of political platforms (\textit{manabir}) opened up new space for limited political debate. Though Sadat allowed Muslim Brothers and Salafis of varying shades to publish and, to a lesser degree, organize during the second half of his rule, he also utilized state-based religious figures – whether scholars at the Islamic Research Academy or bureaucrats within the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs – to facilitate a vision of regime-led religious transformation.

The expansion of mass media complemented the educational system’s emphasis on the nation state by creating a mass-mediated national community in which religious discourse and practice were transmitted and debated. State institutions used a variety of organs- television, radio, and print – to reinforce the “nation” as the primary frame of identity and to reaffirm the religious credentials of the ruling elite.\textsuperscript{67}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid. p. 62.
\textsuperscript{67} Charles Hirschkind notes this dynamic in 20\textsuperscript{th} century Egypt more broadly. See Hirschkind, \textit{The Ethical Soundscape}, p. 7. Emilio Spadola makes a similar observation regarding contemporary Morocco. See Spadola, \textit{The Calls of Islam}, p. 7.
\end{flushright}
mass-mediated nation in which bureaucratic order sought to organize society, and religious interpretation and practice served to affirm the legitimacy of political elites, multiple religious projects took shape.

Islamism in Egypt developed in parallel to Statist visions of political, social and economic transformation. I follow Euben and Zaman in defining Islamism:

contemporary movements that attempt to return to the scriptural foundations of the Muslim community, excavating and reinterpreting them for application to the present-day social and political world…Islamists may be characterized as explicitly and intentionally political and as engaging in multifaceted critiques of all those people, institutions, practices, and orientations that do not meet their standards of this divinely mandated political engagement. 68

This relationship between Islamism and the “present-day social and political world” does not assume that Islamism developed as a mere conceptual mirror of Statist claims to religion, only that it was shaped by the extensive claims made by this project to guide the religious thought and practices of the Egyptian population. Other influences during the first half of the twentieth century included competition with the Palace, British colonial rule, and the threat of Christian missionaries. The Brotherhood’s historical emphasis on popular proselytization reflected both this foreign religious threat and the political restrictions of the period.69 The Nasserist period, in turn, impressed upon Egypt’s Islamist movement the importance of state power,70 and a tension between political power and

70 Nathan Brown notes that, over the course of the 20th century, questions of the application of the Shari’a came to be increasingly focused on the state-based legal reform rather than the traditional context of juridical reasoning. Though claims that French law was culturally inappropriate first emerged in the 1930s, they did not become popular within the Islamist movement until the 1960s and 1970s when “calls for the application of the Shari’a had moved to the center for Islamist movements of all stripes…as a set of identifiable rules…” See Nathan Brown. “Sharia and State in the Modern Middle East,” International Journal of Middle East Studies, 29/3 (1997), pp. 370-1. Along similar lines, Talal Asad argues:
preaching has remained a key (if productive) tension within the Muslim Brotherhood to this day. Accordingly, this project treats the Statist and Islamist claims to social and political transformation as spatially and ideologically linked rather than as diametrically opposed visions.

Statism as an approach to religious change, however, was not intellectually uniform. Though the two magazines affiliated with the Egyptian state, *al-Azhar* and *Minbar al-Islam*, shared the assumption that the Egyptian state should control religious interpretation and regulate religious practice, *al-Azhar* sought to uphold scholarly interpretative authority while *Minbar al-Islam* embraced an instrumental mode of religious interpretation geared towards providing religious justification for political policies. In this regard, *Minbar al-Islam*’s approach had far more in common with that of the Muslim Brotherhood than with its Statist peer, while *al-Azhar*’s intellectual vision of a religious elite were similar to those of Salafi scholars within *al-I’tsam*.

The boundaries between Statist and Islamist elites blur further when one examines these trends from a sociological perspective. Many writers published in both Statist and Islamist publications; most notably, the Shaykh of al-Azhar, ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmud, appeared in all four magazines, as did Anwar al-Gindi, an Islamist layman. This is not to suggest, however, that the divisions within this textual universe were easy for all to cross. Scholars had the greatest flexibility: ‘Abd al-Latif Mushtahiri, Jabir Rizq, ‘Ali Jirisha, Muhammad al-Ghazali and Yusuf al-Qaradawi all wrote in both Islamist magazines and *al-Azhar*. By contrast, *Minbar al-Islam*, devoid of any claim to scholarly authority, was

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“Islamism’s preoccupation with state power is the result not of its commitment to nationalist ideas but of the modern nation-state’s enforced claim to constitute legitimate social identities and arenas.” See Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, p. 200. This state-centered focus and belief in the efficacy of legal reform and state power in social transformation are thus inextricably tied to the ideological claims of Nasserism.
both less accessible and less attractive to Islamists and only the Statist scholar Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha'rawi (d. 1988) appeared in both *al-I'tisam* and *Minbar al-Islam*. Though we lack information on the identity of readers, the similar socioeconomic and geographical profiles of readers in these magazines (see chapter two) provide tentative support for a similar blurring of boundaries.

That the sociological borders of Statist and Islamist magazines were fluid, however, does not take away from their conceptual distinctiveness. Magazines did not serve as mere empty vessels filled by the articles and rulings of their writers and letters and fatwa requests of their readers. Instead, editors in each publication maintained a distinctive textual approach and set of political priorities, and both writers and readers wrote differently within these ideologically distinct contexts.71

The current approach towards Statism as a religious project stands in stark contrast to previous studies that have neglected the role of state institutions in religious change during this period. This is not due to a lack of notice of the “official” religious politics of the Sadat period; indeed, Kepel, Sivan and al-Arian all note the ways in which Sadat used Islam as a tool of political legitimacy.72 Instead, the lack of theorization of the conceptual approaches of state institutions lies in the assumption, sometimes implicit and at other times explicit, that the religious claims of the Islamist opposition, particularly the Muslim

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72 Al-Arian’s omission is particularly notable in this regard. He calls the Sadat regime a “key actor in the rise of the Islamic movement,” yet limits its actions to “consciously creating the political space to allow the growth of a religious trend, or by constricting its movements, thereby pushing many of its members to the margins of society, where they would wreak havoc in the form of violent contention against the regime.” See Arian, *Answering the Call*, pp. 7-8. Arian further notes how Sadat, “[m]ining Islam’s rich legacy as a defining facet of Egyptian culture… utilized religion as a legitimating force for [his] policy realignment.” See Arian, *Answering the Call*, p. 86.
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Brotherhood, are authentic while those of state-affiliated writers are mere instrumental religious politics. This study, by contrast, takes the latter scholars and laymen seriously as religious actors who, like their Islamist competitors, articulate specific priorities while also acting in accordance with narrow political considerations that often produced intellectual inconsistencies.

Just as importantly, varied state institutions served as key sites of contestation. The Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and the Islamic Research Academy represent arenas in which scholars and laymen alike operated (and from whose resources they drew) as they transmitted their particular ideological priorities. In tandem, a disenfranchised vocal minority of Jama’a Islamiyya activists, and leading voices of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya, engaged directly with open spaces within the Egyptian state, particularly educational institutions and offices, to craft alternative projects of religious piety. Accordingly, this project takes state institutions seriously as sites of religious contestation even as it focuses on projects that were not dependent on state power.

Chapter Overview

The seven chapters of this dissertation trace the intellectual and social shifts that underlay the emergence of the Islamic Revival in Egypt through an in-depth study of Islamic magazines from this period. Collectively, editors and writers sought to make competing projects of piety legible to an audience that traversed bus lines and train cars and as they made their way through state education and bureaucratic employment. In turn, the middle class readers who made up this audience sought to form themselves as pious and educated subjects.
Chapter one sets the stage for the emergence of Islamic magazines as a key site of textual contestation and the negotiation of pious social practice. It argues that magazines emerged as a central medium through contingent political, economic and social shifts and strategic (mis)calculations by political elites. In doing so, it pays particular attention to the finances of magazine publishing and shows that advertisements undergirded by the *Infitah* and the Gulf oil boom were crucial to the ability of Egypt’s Islamist opposition to publish independently of state patronage. Barred from access to daily newspapers, radio or television, Islamist elites used magazines as an essential site of outreach. Such opportunity, however, was crucially dependent on domestic and international economic shifts and a decision by advertisers to support them for both commercial and/or ideological reasons. These material shifts undergirded the ability of Egypt’s Islamist opposition to not only transmit programmatic claims of piety which challenged those of state institutions, but also to adjust these claims in response to the daily socioeconomic and political challenges faced by its readers.

Chapter two takes advantage of the information offered in the author line of letters to the editor and fatwa requests to construct a geographic and socioeconomic profile of readers who participated in the pages of *al-Da‘wa*, *al-I’tisam* and *Minbar al-Islam*. Due to limited information in *al-Azhar*, this study excludes these readers. Based on this geographic and socioeconomic profile, chapter two argues that, although previous scholarship has acknowledged the role of the Delta in Islamist mobilization, such scholarship implicitly also locates key intellectual shifts of this period within the Islamist elites of Cairo and Alexandria. The geographic profile of participants in Islamic magazines underscores the role of middle class participants in cities both within and
outside of Cairo and Alexandria in the negotiation of key issues of the Islamic Revival. These descriptive statistics further suggest that readers across the Statist/Islamist divide had similar socioeconomic prospects, thus complicating previous studies that have suggested a link between socioeconomic disappointment and Islamist mobilization. The chapter concludes by seeking, through a close reading of periodical advertisements, to broaden the bases of the readership profile beyond the letters and fatwa requests that appeared in the magazines.

The following two chapters center on dynamics of mediation and authority within Islamic magazines. Chapter three examines practices of editing, writing and reading as they were debated within the magazines, and explores how participants of all three categories claimed textual authority. It argues that claiming authority in a self-consciously “popular” medium pushed editors and writers to justify their attentiveness to the interactivity of this medium, while providing readers with a basis to critique elite textual practice.

Chapter four complements this analysis by analyzing the Islamic magazine within a broader marketplace of religious goods and textual universe of scholarly publications. It shows how editors, writers and readers all sought to construct this medium as both religious and popular through religious articles and imagery, on the one hand, and high-quality printing and layout, on the other. It then explores the contradictions that emerged out of this dual claim to religious authority and mass diffusion, with particular attention to the relationship between religious status and commercialization. These two chapters thus lay out the textual culture of Islamic magazines and the dynamics and sources of tension within this print hierarchy.
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Chapters five through seven then trace the emergence of three key projects of the Islamic Revival as they were transmitted by and negotiated in Islamic magazines. Chapter five explores the rise of competing projects and conceptions of Islamic education between 1976 and 1981. Far from a story of ideological polarization, Statist and Islamist elites first sought to achieve religious educational reform through Ministry of Education-controlled public schools, before turning to the creation of independent sites of religious transmission. In parallel, middle class participants in the Islamic Revival asserted their prerogative to acquire the religious literacy necessary to apply Islam to their daily lives. Yet the turn away from this state institution was easier than a clear break from its guiding assumptions: both religious elites and their readers reproduced the modernist claim that education could transform society, even as they sought to craft alternative social visions.

Chapter six turns from practices of knowledge to those of gender relations. It traces the emergence of competing projects of public morality, highlighting the similarity in how religious elites defined gendered visions of modesty with reference to the Quran and authenticated narrative of the Prophet Muhammad, known as the Sunna. Moving from theory to practice, it shows how Statist writers struggled to respond to local circumstances, while Islamists offered programmatic structures to realize these expectations. Finally, it examines how middle class readers formed themselves as pious Muslims as they moved on buses and subway cars and sat in public schools and government offices, and the challenges and contradictions that these sites posed.

The seventh and final chapter examines the transformation of the early afternoon Zuhr prayer into a key practice of political contestation within schools and government offices. In contrast to previous studies which focused on the Friday (Jum’a) prayer, its
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accompanying sermon, and the battle between the Ministry of Endowments and Islamist opposition to control mosques across Egypt, this chapter foregrounds afternoon prayer as a site of daily Islamist challenge in Sadat’s Egypt. While Islamists successfully gained access to state institutions, equally significant were the ways in which Statist conceptions of order, discipline and subject formation transformed the temporal assumptions at the core of this daily ritual.

Yet before these issues of textual and social practice could be negotiated, Islamic magazines had to become viable technological, economic and social products. The following chapter traces the emergence of this key site.
Chapter 1

The Medium Before the Message: the Rise of Islamic Magazines in Egypt

In February of 2013, I traveled around Cairo in search of Islamic bookstores, publishing houses and magazine editorial offices. I spent time at the offices of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in Garden City as well as the Islamic Research Academy’s sprawling complex in Nasr City. Upon entering both, when I explained that I wished to interview editors and writers from *al-Azhar* and *Minbar al-Islam*, I received confused looks: “What do Islamic magazines from the 1970s have to do with understanding the Islamic Revival (*al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya*) in Egypt today? They are religious, not political” (*hiya diniyya mish siyasiyya*). I similarly shuttled around the city to reach Brotherhood and Salafi-affiliated bookstores and publishing houses. I made multiple visits to two in particular: Dar al-Tawzi‘ wa-l-Nashr al-Islamiyya and Dar al-I’tisam, both located within walking distance of the Sa‘ad Zaghlul metro stop in downtown Cairo. Here, too, I was met with some confusion. As ‘Abd al-Salam Bashandi, who ran Dar al-Tawzi‘, asked me: “[W]hy do you want to study Islamic magazines? They aren’t political.”¹ Though one might dismiss these responses as a strategy to ward off state repression, Bashandi and others also expressed triumphalist excitement over Muhammad Mursi’s rise to power. Still, the perception that the “political” is limited to national party-based competition and that these magazines were merely “religious” remained.

Between 1976 and 1981, however, these same ostensibly “apolitical” magazines served as a key site at which scholars, preachers and religious intellectuals in both official institutions and Islamist organizations sought to shape a popular outpouring of religiosity known as the “Islamic Revival.” This shift which emerged out of the disappointment of

¹ ‘Abd al-Salam Bashandi, Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt: 20 February 2013.
the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the early euphoria following the crossing of the Bar Lev line six years later during the Ramadan/Yom Kippur war, was initially spontaneous. Yet, its consolidation as a specific set of practices, supported by institutional structures, also emerged out of Anwar al-Sadat’s (r. 1970-1981) decision to pursue an interventionist religious policy that bolstered certain Islamic organizations in order to counteract the appeal of Socialist and Marxist groups. In this context, Sadat opened public debate in unprecedented fashion to religious actors: scholars, laymen and individuals with varying levels of religious training from within the Muslim Brotherhood, Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya, Islamic Research Academy and Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs came together to propose new solutions to the transform not merely the Egyptian state but also the deepest recesses of society.

The state’s “official” publications, al-Azhar and Minbar al-Islam, at times hewed to the regime’s line, yet cannot be reduced to mere puppets. At different times, each supported regime policies explicitly, yet in other instances one or the other reserved comment as the Islamist opposition challenged Sadat or challenged other state institutions in a manner that hinted at the President’s responsibility to restrain such deviation (inhiraf) from Islam. Instead, these official publications are best conceptualized as Statist periodicals, committed to top-down control over textual debate and ritual practice with a

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variety of priorities in realizing such control. Neither were religious intellectuals and scholars in state institutions the only groups to benefit from this policy: Sadat also facilitated the early activism of the Islamic Student Movement (*al-Jama’a al-Islamiyya*), permitted the Muslim Brotherhood to begin publishing *al-Da’wa* once again in July 1976, and stood by as *al-I’tisam* shifted from a quietist Salafi publication to greater Islamist sympathies.

The return of the Muslim Brotherhood’s magazine, *al-Da’wa*, signaled the beginning of a brief period between 1976 and 1981 in which Statist and Islamist elites engaged in heated efforts to shape a religious revival in Egypt. Religious change, as these proprietors of Islamic publishing told me, was not political; yet, the fact that writers in these magazines consciously sought to shape “religious” issues which cut to the core of the Sadat regime’s claim to political legitimacy underscores the intersection between religious change and political authority in 20th century Egypt. Islamic magazines both emerged and were transformed as Statist and Islamist institutions sought to shape society.

Yet, before we can sketch a textual arena of religious contestation or the real-world implications of competing projects of religious change, respectively, a comparatively modest question beckons: why did Islamist organizations choose magazines—rather than another media form and rather than another means of mobilization—as they sought to

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4 Sadat’s claim to political authority was premised on his role as a leader of both national and religious community. The category of “religion,” in turn, functioned as a safe space in which political opposition could be voiced without being seen as entering the (illicit) domain of national politics. In Egypt, this is very much a post-1961 phenomena: Malika Zeghal notes the ways in which scholars, appointed by the state as religious “experts” (thus delineating a specific domain of “religion”) appeal to this secular division even as they do not, in principle, accept any separation between religion and state. See Malika Zeghal, “Religion and Politics in Egypt: The Ulema of al-Azhar, Radical Islam and the State (1952-94),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31:3, pp. 371-399. Muhammad Qasim Zaman makes a similar point in the context of Colonial India. See Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 60-86. In the case of *al-Da’wa* and *al-I’tisam*, the category of “religious” serves a similar function, albeit with a different relationship to the Islamic scholarly tradition than in the case of the studies of either Zeghal or Zaman.
mobilize Egyptians at the dawn of the Islamic Revival? Previous scholarship on this period of Egyptian history provides two basic explanations for the rise of Islamist magazines. First, this was an elite-level political decision by Sadat through which he curried religious legitimacy by allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to publish again. In this narrative, al-’Itisam is often described as a Muslim Brotherhood publication; its continued publication under Nasser is left unexplained. The second explanation, by contrast, focuses on the Infitah and the Gulf oil boom that undergirded the development of a “Parallel Islamic sector” of private mosques, Islamic voluntary associations, Islamic publishing houses, medical clinics, and Islamic banks and investment companies.

Collectively, these explanations point to the role of elite decision making and macro-economic shifts in expanding the religious content of public debate generally and in allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to speak to a broad audience for the first time since the dawn of the Nasser period (1952-1970). This narrative, however, is incomplete, both substantively and analytically. Substantively, it focuses solely on the Muslim

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5 For the attribution of al-’Itisam to the Muslim Brotherhood, see Hirschkind, The Ethical Soundscape, p. 58. Kepel, on the other hand, incorrectly states that al-’Itisam was officially tied to the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya until 1977 before moving into the Islamist ranks (though how this position related to the Brotherhood is left unclear). See Kepel, The Roots of Radical Islam, p. 104. Arian clarifies that al-’Itisam emerged from the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya but does not note that the official break from the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya had already occurred in 1960. See al-Arian, Answering the Call, pp. 179-80.

6 The Infitah is a blanket term for a series of legal changes to encourage foreign investment and trade proposed by Sadat and passed by the People’s Assembly (Majlis al-Sha’b). In May 1971, under Sadat’s direction, the Assembly stripped the government of the right to seize private property. In October of the same year, in what came to be known as the “Foreign Investment Act,” it gave citizens of Arab states exclusive rights compared to other foreign investors to purchase real estate in Egypt. In this context, Arab investment in Egypt was streamlined through the Egyptian Investment Authority, while non-Arab investment was subject to approval first by a committee of Ministers and then by the Egyptian president. These early rumblings of economic shifts increased in the aftermath of the 1973 war and Sadat’s 1974 “October Paper” sought to “bring together (mainly Western) industrial and agricultural technology, the capital reserves of the Arab oil countries, and Egyptian manpower and physical resources.” This shift was enshrined into law by statute 43, which was approved by the People’s Council in June 1974. See Gil Feiler, Economic Relations between Egypt and the Gulf Oil States, 1967-2000, pp. 42-3, quote on p. 42.

7 For a discussion of these broader economic shifts, see Wickham, Mobilizing Islam, pp. 93-118, especially p. 97. For a specific discussion of advertising, see Arian, Answering the Call, p. 179 and Kepel, The Roots of Radical Islam, p. 110. While all of these studies tell part of this story, none elucidate the broader infrastructure through which such magazines were published or the specific motivations of advertisers.
Brotherhood, neglecting the broader universe of Islamic publishing and the dynamic exchange between audiocassettes and popular Islamic texts, whether magazines or pamphlets. Further, it occludes the material infrastructure underlying this network of intellectual transmission. Statist and Islamist magazines competed based not merely on ideas, but also on production, price and distribution.

Analytically, these explanations explain why Islamic magazines were available to the Islamist opposition, but say little about the choice to use them. Political explanations obscure the importance of both short and long term technological, social and economic shifts to the attractiveness of Islamic magazines to both Islamist elites and their audiences. Along similar lines, macro-economic explanations establish the existence of new sources of funding, but do not explain why it was spent on Islamic magazines. Far from constituting mere extensions of political, economic or social shifts, the emergence of Islamic magazines as a key site for Egypt’s Islamist opposition between 1976 and 1981 was a product of specific choices both by those who led these organizations and by those who supported them.

The significance of this story stems from the ways in which historically contingent technological change can decisively shape crucial ideas and social practices. Technological change is neither inevitable nor merely a means of transmitting existing ideas. Put differently, we cannot understand why certain discussions could happen at specific historical junctures or their internal dynamics without investigating technological change.

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8 Technological change can play a key role in intellectual shifts. For a discussion of the relationship between technological change and changing timekeeping practices in Colonial Egypt, see On Barak, *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt*; Berkley, California: University of California Press, 2013, particularly pp. 22-26. Barak argues that the introduction of the steamer, railway, telegraph, tramway, and telephone shaped the formation of alternative Egyptian counter TEMPOS that challenged the colonial order’s emphasis on a dehumanizing speed and efficiency.
changes that underpin these changing intellectual debates and daily practices. In this context, technology is not simply “used” but rather utilized strategically: between 1976 and 1981, editors, writers and readers alike shaped Islamic magazines as a dynamic medium as they sought to form, guide and consolidate an Islamic Revival.

This chapter begins by situating the four leading Islamic magazines within the media and political dynamics of this period, and the longer history of the publications themselves. It then historically contextualizes the emergence of this media form within a series of contingent economic, social and technological developments, highlighting the post-1973 oil boom in the Persian Gulf, Sadat’s Open Door economic policy (known as the *Infitah*), the increasing spread of high-quality printing, and longer term developments of communication, transportation and banking infrastructure in Egypt. It concludes by arguing that these material shifts were necessary but not sufficient, with the final portion of the chapter exploring why advertisers supported Islamist magazines and why religious elites, Statist and Islamist, also embraced them.

I. The Islamic Revival in Egypt and the Role of Islamic Magazines

Religious revivals, though reactions to specific events, are not born fully-formed and must be negotiated not merely among elites but also between these religious leaders and their audiences. The question then becomes where such change is to be disseminated and negotiated. Certainly, the Islamic Revival was not limited to media-based outreach; mass and small media proceeded in tandem with the preaching (*da‘wa*) efforts of Muslim Brothers, Salafis, the Jama‘a Islamiyya and unaffiliated Islamist preachers. Just as

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9 Mass media includes newspapers, books, television and radio, and requires substantial infrastructure, while small media includes audiocassettes and leaflets and requires limited investment.
important were state organs, including the Islamic Research Academy and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs.

This landscape of media outreach and grassroots activism, however, was intentionally structured to limit the ability of the Islamist opposition to spread their ideas to a mass audience. Leading thinkers and activists in the Muslim Brotherhood, Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya and the Jama‘a Islamiyya had little to no access to television, radio or daily newspapers. By contrast, Sadat harnessed these mediums to transmit “correct” religion, using state television to stage “public dialogues” in which a state-approved representative – whether from al-Azhar or even a lay preacher\(^{10}\) – was given the opportunity to “to set out the issues properly for the benefit of those confused or ill-informed Muslims who might have come under the unhealthy influence of fanatics.”\(^{11}\) Similarly, radio functioned, as it had under Nasser, as a means of outreach to a population some 60 percent of which was illiterate. Crucially, both mediums were not only subsidized but in many cases, such as Radio Cairo and Sawt al-‘Arab (a pan-Arab station), directly funded and controlled by the regime.\(^{12}\)

Islamists had access to two distinct media forms, the first of which was the audiocassette. Sermons of oppositional preachers, most prominently ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk (d. 1996), could be recorded during the Friday sermon and then copied and played in tape players. As Charles Hirschkind notes, “by the mid-1970s, Sheikh Kishk’s taped

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\(^{10}\) This was part and parcel of the Egyptian state’s greater reliance on laymen during this period, particularly in mosques, in an attempt to exercise greater control over public religious speech. See, Patrick D. Gaffney, “The Changing Voices of Islam: The Emergence of Professional Preachers in Contemporary Egypt,” *The Muslim World*, p. 46.


sermons had become a ubiquitous part of the Cairene soundscape, his sharp criticisms of the Sadat regime echoing from stores, taxis and buses, and private balconies and living rooms throughout the popular quarters.”\textsuperscript{13} Yet, the Ministry of Endowments was not content to let this challenge pass unopposed and it thus promoted the sermons of “approved” preachers such as Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha’rawi, and even advertised cassette tape players in \textit{Minbar al-Islam}.\textsuperscript{14} During the same period, al-Sha’rawi took advantage of state controlled mass media, whether radio or television. Most notably, he appeared regularly on Channel 1, first as the chief guest of \textit{Nur ‘ala Nur} alongside the presenter Ahmad Faraj, and then as the stand-alone host of his own Quranic commentary show, \textit{Tafsir al-Sha’rawi}. The regime, Statist religious institutions and the Islamist opposition all turned to mass media as they sought to shape the Islamic Revival.

This auditory medium, while easily recorded and disseminated, had clear limitations for the Islamist opposition. Most notably, it was essentially unidirectional: though preachers could be confident their message had reached thousands of listeners, literate and illiterate, they had little means of assessing the reception of this message or communicating further with their audience.\textsuperscript{15} By contrast, Islamic magazines, though limited to Egypt’s literate middle class, appealed to religious elites because they provided them with an opportunity to expound on their religious visions while also providing space

\textsuperscript{13} Hirschkind, \textit{The Ethical Soundscape}, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Minbar al-Islam}, October 1969/Sha’ban 1389, back cover.
\textsuperscript{15} This isn’t to say that no feedback is possible as the audience could conceivably send letters to the preacher in question. Moreover, preachers often took the audience into account: In \textit{The Roots of Radical Islam}, Gilles Kepel analyzes a 1981 sermon of Sheikh Abd al-Hamid Kishk, and notes how his use of medical metaphors was specifically oriented towards his audience. See Kepel, \textit{The Roots of Radical Islam}, pp. 181-196, particularly pp. 193-4. Indeed, as Hirschkind notes, “the refashioning of the sermon in commodity form and the increasing recourse to conventions used in the production of other media products…[have led to] the introduction of titles, or prefatory statements about the subjects to be discussed, into the body of the khuṭba.” See Hirschkind, \textit{The Ethical Soundscape}, p. 144. Yet, speaking in the language of the age and adding new structural elements is a very limited form of feedback compared to a continual process by which readers can not only express their opinions regarding recently published articles but also suggest questions of ritual practice.
for audience feedback through regular letters to the editor and fatwa sections. Just as importantly, this space provided this audience with an opportunity to participate, albeit within limits, in Islamic textual culture and the negotiation of religious change.

In July 1976, the Muslim Brotherhood reemerged on the national stage. The Brotherhood had first published *al-Da‘wa* on January 3, 1951 and continued to do so until a 1953 split between Salih ‘Ashmawi and Brotherhood Supreme Guide Hasan al-Hudaybi. With the exit of ‘Ashmawi, who held the publishing license for the magazine, the Brotherhood lost its legal right to publish. This issue, though, was soon rendered moot: the October 1954 arrest of hundreds of Muslim Brothers following an attempt to assassinate Nasser, known as the Manshiyya incident, ushered in a 22 year period of exclusion from mass media in Egypt. The wave of arrests following this incident, however, did not include Salih ‘Ashmawi, who subsequently maintained his own personal publishing license over the coming 20 years by printing “issues” as short as four pages to provide to the National Archives. By the mid-1970s, rapprochement was afoot between ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, in his capacity as the Supreme Guide (*al-murshid al-‘amm*) of the Brotherhood, and ‘Ashmawi, who brought his publishing license back to *al-Da‘wa*. Though Sadat could have conceivably found a legal pretext to deny this maneuver, at this time he chose not to do so.

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17 This story appeared in *al-Sihafa al-Islamiyya fi Misr* in general terms. It was corroborated and expanded upon in interviews with Usaama Hassan, the editor of the Brotherhood-affiliated Dar al-Shihab publishing house, and with Badr Muhammad Badr, an editor of *al-Da‘wa* magazine between 1979 and 1981.


19 By 1980, Sadat’s preferences had changed as he amended the printed materials (*Qanun al-matbu‘at*) law to stipulate that publishing licenses could no longer be passed down upon the death of the licensee. As a result, the government simply refused to process al-Tilmisani petition to publish again until his death in 1983, at which point they declared the matter closed (and the license void). The Brotherhood succeeded in obtaining another license from Fatima Hamza, the daughter of the license holder for *Liwa al-Islam*. (who
Chapter 1

The Medium Before the Message

Al-Da’wa joined al-I’tisam, led by Jam’iyya Shar’iyya scholars ‘Ahmad ‘Isa ‘Ashur and ‘Abd al-Latif Mushtahiri, the latter of whom became the President (Ra’is) of the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya in 1976. First published in August of 1939 as the mouthpiece of Ahl al-Sunna, a Salafi charitable society, al-I’tisam became the official journal of the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya in 1952 when its license holder, ‘Ashur, joined the organization. Initially, it did not belong in the Islamist camp as the founder of the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya, Sheikh Mahmud Muhammad Khatab al-Subki (d. 1933), had always steered it clear of politics (and publishing) in favor of organized social work. Tensions emerged between al-Subki and ‘Ashur in the early 1930s, as the former was concerned that the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya’s standing as a charitable society would be threatened by political activism. These tensions came to a head in 1961, however, and, al-I’tisam ceased to be this Salafi organization’s official mouthpiece. Despite this split, however, the cover of each issue stated that al-I’tisam “follows the principles of al-Jam’iyya al-Shar’iyya” (tasir ‘ala mabadi al-Jam’iyya al-Shar’iyya). This informal connection to the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya would persist throughout Sadat’s reign.

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22 Abdullan al-Arian incorrectly suggests that al-I’tisam maintained official ties to the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya throughout the 1970s. See al-Arian, Answering the Call, p. 179. Instead, this magazine was published by the ‘Ashur family, themselves associated with the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya. Al-I’tisam was initially published as the mouthpiece of the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya, but from the mid-1960s on, was officially independent even as its editors remained members. See Hasan ‘Ashur, “al-I’tisam al-Jadida wa Sanat al-Tatawwur,” al-I’tisam, January 1961/Rajab 1380 in Muhammad Mansur Hayba, al-Sihafa al-Islamiyya fi Misr, p. 202. This was further corroborated by a former magazine employee, Muhammad Madbuli. Madbuli, Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt: 24 February 2013. Al-Arian also falls into a common confusion as to the concept and sociological boundaries of Salafism, suggesting that both the Brotherhood and the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya were “Salafi”. See al-Arian, Answering the Call, p. 179. For more on the distinction between the Afghani/Abdulw line of Salafism and a parallel genealogy that emphasizes creed and ritual practice, see Bernard Haykel, “On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action,” Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, pp. 45-6.
This Islamist opposition, however, was not alone as it laid claim to an educated yet economically heterogeneous Egyptian middle class, which increasingly looked to religion for solutions to political, economic and social challenges. Organs of the Egyptian state published two journals: *Minbar al-Islam* and *al-Azhar*. The former, initially produced by the mosques division (*qism al-masajid*) of the Ministry of Endowments, shifted to the control of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (*al-Majlis al-`la l-il-Shu`un al-Islamiyya*) upon the latter’s establishment in 1960. During the second half of Nasser’s rule, the magazine served as a source of religious legitimation for the regime’s policies, both at home and abroad.\(^{23}\) On the domestic front, the Ministry of Endowments was also concerned with using the mosque system to support the state’s policies; accordingly, the magazine was regularly distributed to state-controlled mosques, through those who work in the state institutions (*al-`amilin bi-l-jihaz al-idari l-il-dawla wa-l-qita` al-`amm)*, as well as through kiosks that were set up in Cairo’s center and suburbs and in provincial capitals.\(^{24}\) The Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA) was more interested in influence than profit and the goal of publication was to provide printed Islamic materials to the entire population, with most sold at far below the costs of production.\(^{25}\) In tandem, SCIA organized monthly meetings at the Council’s headquarters to deal with challenges faced by “the Muslim reader” (*al-qari al-Muslim*).\(^{26}\) Abroad, *Minbar al-Islam*, alongside

\(^{25}\) Ibid. pp. 104-5.
\(^{26}\) Ibid. p. 95.
the Islamic Research Academy, challenged the Saudi-funded Muslim World League (MWL).\(^{27}\)

*Al-Azhar* was similarly funded by the state, and operated out of the office of the Rector of *al-Azhar* (*Mashyakhat al-Azhar*) until 1972, when it shifted to the Islamic Research Academy (*Majma‘ al-Buhuth al-Islamiyya*).\(^{28}\) The latter institution was tasked, according to Nasser’s 1961 reform program, with serving as the “highest body for Islamic research” (*al-hay’a al-a‘la l-il-shu‘un al-Islamiyya*) in contrast to *al-Azhar* mosque (*al-Jami‘ al-Azhar*), which was to focus on higher education.\(^{29}\) Yet, this publication also exercised more intellectual independence than its Statist peer, *Minbar al-Islam*, and included Islamist scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926) and Muhammad al-Ghazali (d. 1996).

Indeed, the diversity of contributors to all four magazines challenges strict separations between Statist elites and Islamist opposition or between different Islamist approaches. Both the Sheikh of *al-Azhar* ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmud (d. 1978) and the Islamist historian Anwar al-Jindi (d. 2002) appear in all four periodicals. Key laymen such as ‘Isa Abduh (d. 1980), ‘Ali Jirisha (d. 2011), Jabir Rizq (d. 1988) and ‘Umar al-Tilmisani (d. 1986), contributed to both *al-Da‘wa* and *al-I‘tisam*. Similarly, ‘ulama of the likes of ‘Abd al-Latif al-Mushtahiri (d. 1995), Muhammad Najib al-Mutti‘i (d. 1980), Muhammad al-—


\(^{28}\) *Al-Azhar* was never had the mass appeal of a newspaper or even a popular magazine such as *al-Musawwar*. Given that it didn’t feature advertisements, is doubtful that it could have published without substantial state subsidies. This situation persists as of present: ‘Adil Rafi‘i Khafaji, the journal’s current managing editor, (Murid al-Tahrir) explained that costs are covered by the budget of the Academy for Islamic Research, itself funded as part of al-Azhar by the state. ‘Adil Rafi‘i Khafaji, Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt: 26 February 2013.

Ghazali (d. 1996) and Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1926-present) wrote in both al-Azhar and al-Da’wa. Neither al-Azhar walled off from Minbar al-Islam even as their respective institutions fought over religious authority within the Egyptian state\textsuperscript{30}; the two magazines shared ‘ulama such as Mustafa al-Hadidi Tayr (d. 1988), Muhammad Rajab al-Bayyumi (d. 2011), Abu-l-Hasan al-Nadawi (d. 1999), ‘Abd al-Mu’ti al-Bayyumi (d. 2012), and the Pakistani religious intellectual Abul A’la Mawdudi (d. 1979), who straddled the line between scholar and layman.\textsuperscript{31} These intersections and interpenetrations, intellectual and personal, both among Statist organs and between them and the Islamist opposition, reflect the ties among leading voices of the Islamic Revival in Egypt during the second of Sadat’s rule.

Nonetheless, magazines also maintained specific agendas, and the reemergence of al-Da’wa in 1976 catalyzed the terms of this magazine debate. Despite –or perhaps, thanks to –the repression of the Nasser years, the Muslim Brotherhood remained a premier claimant to Islamism, unspoiled by political compromise or cooptation.\textsuperscript{32} The Brotherhood’s return and its challenge to the Sadat regime’s claim to the mantle of religious legitimacy would push other Islamic magazines, Statist and Islamist, to engage more closely and critically with the religious credentials of the Sadat regime and the popular expressions of religiosity in Egypt. Challenges to open religious activism,


\textsuperscript{31} The scholar/laymen dichotomy fails to account for individuals who had undergone multiple processes of intellectual formation and melded multiple approaches. Mawdudi is one such individual, as are Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, both of whom studied at Dar al-‘Ulum teachers training college. For more on Mawdudi’s educational formation, see Seyyed Reza Vali Nasr, \textit{Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism}. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 12-14. For more on Qutb and Banna in the context of Dar al-‘Ulum, see Hilary Kalmbach, \textit{From Turban to Tarboush: Dār al-‘Ulūm and Social, Linguistic, and Religious Change in Interwar Egypt}. Unpublished dissertation, Oxford University, 2011, pp. 122-143, 283-6.

however, remained. In contrast to narratives that paint Sadat’s rule as one of unrestricted activism by Islamists, political prisoners belonging to the Brotherhood were released slowly over the course of the first half of the 1970s. Even with these releases, however, grassroots activism was still restricted: though the Brotherhood sought to spread its call at independent mosques and on university campuses, it did so subtly so as not to arouse the regime’s fears.

*Al-I’tisam*’s position, on the surface, had far more in common with its Statist counterparts than the Muslim Brotherhood as it was published and distributed throughout the Nasser period. Within the periodical, though, changes were afoot in the mid-1970s, both material and ideological. Nineteen seventy five signaled a shift from a journal with modest production values and essays pitched at a highly educated audience to a picture-filled magazine focused on a broader audience that dealt with issues of state and society. As the second half of Sadat’s rule progressed, *al-I’tisam* also grew increasingly critical of the regime and, absent the cover title, could have been confused with *al-Da’wa*.

33 Gilles Kepel’s classic study of Islamism during the Sadat era, *The Roots of Radical Islam*, provides the typical narrative: “The Brothers suffered havoc under Nasser's socialist government in the 1950s and 1969s, were puffed by Sadat who wanted to use them against leftists while he was turning Egypt's back on the USSR in the early 1970s, and kept at bay by Mubarak who feared that they would steal away from his regime the pious middle classes, he coveted.” See Gilles Kepel, *The Roots of Radical Islam*, p. 16. Similarly, Carrie Wickham states that: "Sadat…rehabilitated the Muslim Brotherhood, which had suffered years of repression under Nasser. Brotherhood leaders were released from prison shortly after Sadat took office, and others were allowed to return to Egypt from exile.” See Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, p. 214. Wickham amends this claim in her most recent work. See Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood; Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013, p. 30.

34 *‘Amr Shamikh, al-Waqi’i al-Ikhwaniyya*. Cairo; Egypt: Dar al-Tawzi' wa-l-Nashr, 2012, p. 83. In an interview, ‘Abd al-Salam Bashandi, a lifelong member of the Muslim Brotherhood (and a member of parliament in the most recent elections) echoed that the Brotherhood didn’t feel free to speak publicly until after all the political prisoners from the organization had been freed in 1974. Bashandi, Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt: 20 February 2013.

35 For example, ties between the Brotherhood leadership and the emergent Islamic student associations (*al-Jama’a al-Islamiyya*) were often kept secret so that both parties could avoid being seen as threatening Sadat. See Abu-l-Futuh, *‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abu-l-Futuh: Shahid ‘ala Tarikh al-Haraka al-Islamiyya fi Misr, 1970-1984*. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2012, p. 75.

36 Al-Arian ties this shift to the ascent of Hasan ‘Ashur, son of Ahmad ‘Isa ‘Ashur, to leadership of *al-I’tisam*. See al-Arian, *Answering the Call*, p. 179. It is also possible that shifts within the Jam'iyya
Despite the challenges that would follow, however, these magazines were nonetheless dependent on a state-sponsored infrastructure of production and distribution. The following section will examine these pathways as a means of understanding both the vulnerability of the Islamist opposition to state repression and the technological, demographic and economic shifts that underlay the viability of Islamic magazines as a form of outreach.

II. A Burgeoning Publishing Infrastructure

Though political shifts shaped the rise of Islamic magazines as a key site of religious debate, these shifts are insufficient to explain how such periodicals reached the population. During this period, the Islamic publishing industry was in its early stages of growth. This was partially a function of Nasser’s “Import-Export Substitution” policies, which had prevented Egypt from keeping pace with technological advances. To quote a 1978 United States Information Service (USIS) report, “Egypt was plunged into [technological] isolation” and continued to use letter-press printing even as photo-offset printing had become the norm among periodicals globally.37 In 1975, during the second year of the Infitah, new photo-offset printers began to arrive in Egypt in large quantities, a shift that coincided fortuitously with a growing export market for Arabic books for Egyptian printers as a result of a decline in Beirut printing production relating to the

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beginning of the Lebanese Civil War.\footnote{Ibid.}

By mid-decade, a print industry had seemingly been transformed. Indeed, by 1975, al-Ahram, Ruz al-Yusuf, al-Akhbar and Dar al-Ma‘arif all boasted top-notch color-offset printers.\footnote{Fourt, “A Survey of Printing Facilities in Egypt,” p. 14.} Yet, even the best printing houses suffered from a shortage of trained personnel and limited raw supplies, particularly high-quality paper.\footnote{Fourt, “A Survey of Printing Facilities in Egypt,” p. 12.} The limited resources available to Islamist printing in particular could be seen in the sharing of office space among publishers. For example, in the late 1970s, Dar al-Da’wa (which published the magazine of the same name) shared two separate offices in succession with Dar al-Tawzi‘ wa-l-Nashr al-Islamiyya.\footnote{Both offices were located in Cairo, the first in Sayyeda Zainab Square and the second on Suq al-Tawfiqiyya streets. See Badr Muhammad Badr, *Sutur min Hayat al-Da‘iyya al-Rabbani ‘Umar al-Tilmisani*. Cairo, Egypt: N.P, N.D, pp. 16-17.} It is possible, however, that such shared space also facilitated intellectual exchange.

Neither did such magazines have access to their own printing infrastructure; instead, Islamic magazines, both Statist and Islamist, all printed through state-run periodical presses. In the case of the former, *Minbar al-Islam* had printed through Matabi‘ al-Ahram al-Tijariyya since 1971\footnote{See back cover of November 1971/ Ramadan 1392 issue of *Minbar al-Islam*.} and al-Azhar shifted among government-affiliated printers during the 1970s, including Matabi‘ Ma‘arif and Matabi‘ al-Ahram al-Tijariyya, until finally settling on Matabi‘ Ruz al-Yusuf.\footnote{Ibid.} Islamist magazines drew on many of the same printers. *Al-Da‘wa* was published through al-Akhbar (also known as Mu‘assasat Akhbar al-Yawm), based on an agreement that the distribution company received 30% of the profits.\footnote{It does not appear that the use of color-offset printers was uniform, even at state-owned printers. For example, *al-Azhar*, though it published through Matabi‘ al-Ahram al-Tijariyya, didn’t have color photos on the cover until the June 1980 issue (at which point it was affiliated with the Matabi‘ Ruz al-Yusuf printers).}
the cover price of the magazine.\textsuperscript{45} Similarly, \textit{al-\textacute{I}t\textacute{i}sam} printed through Matabi‘ al-Ahram al-Tijariyya (a weekly offshoot of the state-owned \textit{al-Ahram} newspaper)\textsuperscript{46} and benefited from the shift to color-offset printing in 1975.\textsuperscript{47} Like \textit{al-Da‘wa}, \textit{I‘t\textacute{i}sam} paid a third of its cover price “to the storehouse of the government distribution company…”\textsuperscript{48} Though one could distribute illegal pamphlets without the benefit of a technologically-advanced printing house, sustained high quality printing was impossible without state permission.

Despite uneven state infrastructure and vulnerability to censorship, Islamic magazines printed regularly throughout the 1976-1981 period; indeed, only \textit{al-Azhar} had to skip more than one issue during this period. Along similar lines, the first issue of \textit{al-Da‘wa} apologized for a delay in printing the issue based on “reasons out of our control.”\textsuperscript{49} Publishing was more likely to be unstable for political reasons, even as \textit{al-Da‘wa} and \textit{al-I‘t\textacute{i}sam} navigated this landscape deftly. There were exceptions to this, though: editors of the September 1978 issue of \textit{al-I‘t\textacute{i}sam} apologized to readers for a similar delay due to the “difficult times,”\textsuperscript{50} and both magazines skipped issues during the spring of 1979 due to an open conflict with Sadat.\textsuperscript{51} The printing infrastructure available to Islamist magazines was thus a product both of a degree of cooperation with the regime and of

\textsuperscript{45} Badr Muhammad Badr, Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt: 24 February 2013.
\textsuperscript{46} The November 1975/ Dhu al-Qa‘da 1395 issue of \textit{al-I‘t\textacute{i}sam} is the first to have color photos on the front cover. Incidentally, \textit{al-I‘t\textacute{i}sam} printed from Dar al-I‘t\textacute{i}sam printers in the early 1970s but for unclear reasons switched to Matabi‘ al-Ahram al-Tijariyya printers in 1973, thus putting itself in the position to benefit from upgrades in printing technology three years later. For information on this switch, see \textit{al-I‘t\textacute{i}sam}, December 1972/Muharram 1392, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{47} The November 1975/ Dhu al-Qa‘da 1395 issue of \textit{al-I‘t\textacute{i}sam} is the first to have color photos on the front cover.
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{al-I‘t\textacute{i}sam}, February 1980/ Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1400, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{al-Da‘wa} July 1976/ Sha‘ban 1396, inside cover. This was more likely for technical rather than political reasons. The Brotherhood had yet to challenge Sadat explicitly at this point, and it is plausible that this delay was part and parcel of the challenge of bringing a new publication to the market.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{al-I‘t\textacute{i}sam}, September 1978/ Shawwal 1398, p. 11. This delay may have had to do with criticism of Sadat that followed his trip to Jerusalem. Given that the Camp David Accords were signed in September 1978, these “difficulties” may have been a political pressure tool used by the regime against the Islamist opposition in the period preceding the agreement.
\textsuperscript{51} For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see the sixth chapter of this dissertation.
technological changes afoot during the second half of the 1970s.

The emergence of Islamic magazines as key sites of debate, however, was equally a product of longer-term processes of urbanization, expanded transportation, and the development of an international banking system. Broad diffusion of these magazines – indeed, their very potential to serve as a means of mass outreach – depended on easy access to print. During the quarter century leading up to 1976, the proportion of Egyptians living in urban areas nearly doubled from 22.9 percent to 43.9 percent, and the number of Egyptians living in cities grew from 6.2 million to 16.09 million, an increase of 159 percent. Just as importantly, the 1947-1976 period saw a 24% increase in the number of literate Egyptians, from 8.4 to 10.41 million. Though population increases were centered on Greater Cairo and Alexandria, they were not limited to these two central cities and included the Delta governorates of Sharqiyya, Daqahliyya, Gharbiyya, Monufiyya and Beheira. It was in this context that an unprecedented number of Egyptians had regular access to print products.

Urbanization and increased literacy were complemented by an expanding communications and transportation infrastructure. Egypt’s postal service had originally developed during the 1860s, when Reuters initiated a wire service and postal system in response to rising demand for a system that could carry print products, including magazines and newspapers. This system then received another boost between 1952 and 1974, as 841 public post offices mushroomed to 1531 public offices and 2,675 private

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53 Ibid.
The postal system, however, was of limited use without an easy and safe way to receive subscription payments. All four magazines drew on the Egyptian banking system to structure such payments. Initially, al-Da‘wa, al-I‘tisam and Minbar al-Islam used International Reply Coupon (kubunat barid).⁵⁷ Though al-Da‘wa first accepted bank draft checks (al-shik al-massrafi), by January 1977 it had shifted to routing subscription payments through banks.⁵⁸ In July 1977, the magazine provided ‘Umar al-Tilmisani’s account number at Bank Misr to facilitate wire transfers of subscription fees.⁵⁹ Like al-Da‘wa, al-Azhar used bank draft checks for subscriptions, both domestic and international, which enabled the spread of the publication to a broader readership.⁶⁰ This system not only facilitated payment but also circumvented previous issues of fraud in which “agents” collected money that was ostensibly for periodical subscriptions to line their own pockets.⁶¹

This infrastructure, however, was unequally available to different participants in the Islamic Revival. Al-Da‘wa was alone among its competitors in choosing to forgo

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⁵⁷ An “International Reply Coupon” (IRC) is a “coupon that can be exchanged for one or more postage stamps… The purpose of the IRC is to allow a person to send someone in another country a letter, along with the cost of postage for a reply… if the addressee is in another country an IRC removes the necessity of acquiring foreign postage or sending appropriate currency.” This simplified the challenges of sending magazines throughout the world for all four magazines because it removed the need to deal in different currencies. See "An International Reply Coupon Primer." N6HB. (http://www.n6hb.org/s-a/irc.htm)
⁵⁸ al-Da‘wa January 1977/ Safar 1397, p. 3.
domestic subscriptions. This step was taken as a precaution by the editors of *al-Da‘wa*: as Badr Muhammad Badr explains, “Had we offered subscriptions, it would have been equivalent to providing Central Security (*al-Amn al-Markazi*) with a list of people to harass anytime they chose to question one of us at *al-Da‘wa*.  

Even with the development of infrastructure, political risks increased.

Fortunately for the Muslim Brotherhood, urbanization also facilitated alternative means of distribution. All the magazines, but particularly *al-Da‘wa*, benefited from the popularity of kiosks and newspaper stands throughout Egyptian cities during this period. As Gonzalez-Guigano notes in her study of Islamic print culture in 20th century Egypt, sidewalk sellers of both mass-market books and periodicals dotted city streets, either in sturdy kiosks or on “merely a few pieces of carton laying on the ground.”

The importance of street sellers is underscored within the folds of Islamist magazines. *Al-Da‘wa*’s first issue in July 1976 directs readers to newspaper sellers (*ba‘at al-suḥuf* or *al-ba‘at*). Indeed, the second issue of the magazine even recounts the sales rush at stands: “Many newspaper stands sold out by 11 AM the day of publication… [with] some sellers even raising the price [of the magazine] due to demand.” Street sellers played a role early on for *al-I‘tisam*, too: the December 1972 issue directs readers to “ask for *al-I‘tisam* from newspaper sellers and kiosks in Cairo and in all governorates” (*b-il-Qahira wa-jami‘ al-muhafazat*). That editors promoted the sale of periodicals at these stands underscores how important street stands were when competing with the

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distribution networks available to Statist publications. Additionally, leading Brothers such as Mustafa Mashhur distributed issues of *al-Da’wa* to university students in the course of lectures (*muhadarat*) and seminars (*nadawat*),\(^{66}\) and Brotherhood members in mixed urban/rural governorates would meet in coffee houses, mosques and youth centers to read and discuss this periodical collectively.\(^{67}\) By contrast, though *Minbar al-Islam* and *al-Azhar* had access to popular distribution points, they depended mainly on their own distribution network through government-controlled mosques (*al-masajid al-hukumiyya*) \(^{68}\) and al-Azhar university, respectively.\(^{69}\)

This section has highlighted the importance of increased urbanization, transportation and literacy in the long term, and printing technology and banking infrastructure in the short term, to the viability of Islamic magazines as a mass medium. It has argued that this system was both comparatively open yet also clearly under the control of the regime, and was thus used unequally by different claimants to leadership in the Islamic Revival. Yet, infrastructure was of little use without the financial means to produce a magazine. How did Islamist magazines finance themselves and remain commercially competitive with their amply funded Statist competitors?

### III. Out of the Red and into the Green

Magazine distribution was essential to the ability of Islamist elites to compete with the multiple organs of the Egyptian state. In prior periods, mass print media could be

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\(^{67}\) *‘Abd al-Salam Bashandi,* Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt: 20 February 2013.


\(^{69}\) *‘Adil Rifa’i Khafaji,* Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt: 26 February 2013.
subsidized by the Brotherhood’s grassroots organization, yet this was not the case under Sadat. Instead, the Brotherhood’s organization (tanzim) – if one could call it an organization at this point – was still very much regaining its footing as its pre-1954 leadership readjusted to life outside prison walls. Another way would have to be found to subsidize a magazine.

Al-I‘tisam, edited by the ‘Ashur family, similarly lacked a mother organization that could bankroll it. Though the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya would have funded it had it remained the organization’s mouthpiece, this was not the case by 1976. Instead, the magazine was something of a family business: it included not only Ahmad ‘Isa ‘Ashur, but also his son Muhammad ‘Ashur (who had taken over as editor in chief in March 1967) and his brother, Hasan Ahmad ‘Ashur (the editorial secretary from March 1977 on). Prior to the second half of the 1970s, it had published on a barebones budget, subsidized by the profits of the Dar al-I‘tisam publishing house. The shift from journal to magazine – or, more accurately, from drab brown pages to color photography and high quality layout – required additional funding.

Neither could these Islamist magazines cover costs based on circulation. Estimates for al-Da‘wa’s circulation have ranged from 60,000-150,000 copies per issue, though the lower figure appears to be more realistic. Al-I‘tisam was decidedly the junior partner of

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70 Prior to 1952, the Muslim Brotherhood financed its various socio-economic and political program through membership dues. For unclear reasons, this source of funding was not used to subsidize magazines to any significant degree though, in the absence of advertisements, there must have some form of subsidies provided. See Shu‘ayb al-Ghubashi, Sihafat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin: Dirasa fi-l-Usul wa-l-Funun. Cairo, Egypt: Dar al-Tawzi‘ wa-l-Nashr al-Islamiyya, 2004, pp. 28-47. This situation was even more challenging in 1970: The Brotherhood had yet to rebuild its membership base and was in little position to offer even modest subsidies, let alone those necessary to produce a glossy magazine. Bashandi, Personal interview. Cairo: Egypt: 20 February 2013.

71 Madbuli, Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt: 28 February 2013

72 Raymond Hinnebusch cites circulation of between 80,000-150,000 copies, while John Esposito cites 100,000 copies. See Hinnebusch, Egyptian Politics Under Sadat: The Post-Populist Development of an
this Islamist publishing duo, averaging roughly 20,000 copies per issue.\textsuperscript{73} Within the Islamic periodical industry, these two magazines were success stories: the mean distribution of Islamic magazines and journals in 1979 was 3,681 copies.\textsuperscript{74} Yet, neither magazine’s circulation approached that of non-religious periodicals, let alone newspapers.\textsuperscript{75}

In light of these figures, it’s unlikely that circulation revenue played an important role in financing either magazine. This was hardly unusual, as Richard Ohmann notes regarding American periodicals in the twentieth century: “[P]ublishers mass-produced a physical product, which they sold at a loss, and used it to mass-produce an immaterial product, the attention of readers, which they sold at a profit…”\textsuperscript{76} Such advertising was even more crucial because the magazines had to price themselves at similar levels to state-subsidized competitors.\textsuperscript{77}

Such advertisement-funded magazine production had emerged over the previous two decades. During the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Egyptian print media was subsidized through multiple means, whether acknowledged subsidies by political parties for their organs, bribery to periodicals to take certain positions, or advertising purchased with a similar goal. Advertising oriented at a broader array of consumers, however, began to

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\textsuperscript{73} Madbuli. Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt: 24 February 2013.
\textsuperscript{75} By contrast, the mean circulation of daily newspapers during this period was 506,000 copies per issue. See Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, \textit{al-Ihsa’at al-ThaqAfyya}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{77} Throughout the 1976-1981 period, prices for \textit{Minbar al-Islam} and \textit{al-Azhar} ranged between 15-20 qurush and 4-20 qurush, respectively. Issues of \textit{al-Da’wa} and \textit{al-I’tisam} similarly ranged from 10-20 and 8-20 qurush.
increase during the interwar period: Ayalon notes that “a growing range of services and product...[such as] steamship companies, movie shows, cars and bicycles, radio receivers expensive clothing, chocolate and whiskey” came to advertise in newspapers. Yet, even such advertisements were pitched at a limited audience: prior to the 1970s, merchants, state functionaries, modern professionals and an extremely small elite had the financial means to purchase such print media on a regular basis. Accordingly, most Egyptian papers struggled to make ends meet. Of the seventeen papers that published in Cairo between 1951 and 1952, only nine either made money or broke even, while in Alexandria, six of thirteen achieved this level of success. An external financial backer was essential to continued publication for all but the most popular periodicals.

This challenge of funding was even more acute for self-described religious publications. Indeed, the most prominent Islamic periodical—al-Manar—featured very limited advertising during its run between 1898 and 1935. Similarly, the Brotherhood’s various pre-1952 publications—most notably al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin (1933-8, 1947-8), al-Ta’ruf (1945-7) and Jaridat al-Ikhwan (May 1946) – include few advertisements, both because they failed to attract advertisers and because they refused to accept “un-Islamic” products. External subsidies were thus an economic necessity for Islamic periodicals during this period. The 1970s would bring both advertisers whose products fit better

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78 Ohmann, Selling Culture, pp. 204-5.
79 Ibid. p. 194.
80 Tom Johnston McFadden, Daily Journalism in the Arab States, p. 30.
81 Given an average circulation of 300-400 copies per issue, it is doubtful that al-Manār was a particularly attractive advertising space. For information of al-Manār’s circulation figures, see Ami Ayalon, Arab Press in the Middle East, p. 148.
82 The Brotherhood rejected ads for the cinema, alcohol, cigarettes, women’s clothing or razors. The refusal to accept razor ads stemmed from the status of beards in Islam as an authoritative prophetic practice (Sunna). See Ghubashi, Shafaṭ al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin, p. 47.
with Islamist sensibilities and an audience that could not only afford a (subsidized) periodical price, but also potentially purchase whatever products companies wished to advertise.

Under Sadat, advertising served as a lifeboat for both *al-Da’wa* and *al-I’tisam*, enabling the former to publish and the latter to transition from low-tech journal to glossy magazine. Badr Muhammad Badr, editor of the “Youth and Universities” section of *al-Da’wa* between 1979 and 1981, explained that the Brotherhood did not have the financial capabilities under Sadat to subsidize a magazine; yet, by virtue of advertisements, the magazine was able to cover its cost, including salaries for editors, though they did not pay contributors to write.  

Similarly, Muhammad Madbuli, currently the general director (*al-mudir al-‘amm*) of distribution for Dar al-I‘tisam and previously head of marketing and subscriptions for *al-I’tisam* (1979-1981), suggested that from 1977 on, the magazine broke even based on advertisements and subscriptions though, like *al-Da’wa*, it did not pay its writers. Prior to 1977, *al-I’tisam* had printed with far lower production values and subsisted on proceeds from the other publishing activities of Dar al-I‘tisam.

Who were these advertisers and why did they support Islamist magazines? The macro-economic shifts that underlay the emergence of such advertisers are well known: the *Infitah* and Gulf oil boom, respectively, catalyzed companies and industries which otherwise would not have been able to or interested in hawking their wares or touting their company. The flood of new advertising, though, did not represent a complete rupture with past opportunities: periodical advertisements appeared in *al-I’tisam* prior to 1976, and many of these same publishers, bookstores and magazines began to appear in

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84 Badr Muhammad Badr, Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt: 26 February 2013.
85 Muhammad Madbuli, Personal interview. Cairo, Egypt: 24 February 2013.
al-Da‘wa as well. Giants of Islamic publishing such as Dar al-Ansar and Maktabat Wahba appeared in both magazines, as did a transnational constellation of Islamic periodicals which had grown in tandem with the oil boom, whether the Kuwaiti magazine (al-Mujtama’), a Saudi magazine (al-Da‘wa), or their Lebanese peer (al-Aman).

Yet the Islamic publishing industry, despite the strength of its transnational ties, was not capable of funding itself internally. Such advertisements were often given “in complimentary fashion” (min bab al-mujamala) and, even if they were paid, rarely occupied prime magazine real estate (i.e. the inside front cover, inside back cover and outside back cover). Indeed, such advertisements were often exchanged among publishers in barter fashion between magazines (for example, al-Da‘wa advertised in al-I‘tisam and vice versa).

While periodical advertisement was of limited value to magazine production, Islamic associations, investment funds and banks played a far more significant role. Whereas Islamic associations had first spread during the early 20th century, investment funds and banks grew rapidly in the context of the post-1973 oil boom in the Persian Gulf and expanded to Egypt in the context of the Infitah. Such companies encompassed the full range of “Islamized” services. One could receive “Islamic” medical services through Ibn

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86 al-Da‘wa September 1976/Ramadan 1396, p. 4 and al-I‘tisam, October 1978/Ramadan 1398, p. 17.
87 Representative examples can be found in al-Da‘wa Dhul-Qa‘ada 1397/October 1977, p. 7 and al-I‘tisam August 1980/Shawwal 1400, p. 30.
88 al-I‘tisam, August 1979/ Ramdan 1399, inside back cover.
90 Interview with Badr Muhammad Badr, 26 February 2013.
91 Such advertisements are usually referred to as “semi-ads”. For a discussion of this genre of advertisements, see Richard Ohmann, Selling Culture p. 7. In the case of Egypt, these advertisements, as one might expect, preceded the Infitah in al-I‘tisam and didn’t appear with noticeably greater regularity following 1974.
Sina for Treatment and Medical Services\textsuperscript{92} and engage in Shari’a-compliant financial transactions in everything from agriculture to commerce through the Saudi-based Egyptian Faysal Bank.\textsuperscript{93} Advertisers sought to both support a religious cause \textit{and} assist a new generation of consumers and investors who read \textit{al-Da’wa} and \textit{al-I’tisam} by putting the Islamist claim that “Islam is a Comprehensive Religion” into profitable practice.

The role of Islamic investment companies best illustrates the beginning of the alliance between Islamist activists and Gulf investors that would prove so important in the development of a “Parallel Islamic Sector” in the 1980s. Advertisements for the Jiku General Investment Company touted two sets of “believers” (i.e. Muslims) among its founders: The Arab Investment Company (ARINCO)\textsuperscript{94} and a list of many of the most prominent leaders and intellectuals of the Islamist movement in Egypt, including Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Mustafa Kamal Wasfi, ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, Jamal al-Din ‘Atiyya, and ‘Abd al-Halim ‘Uways.\textsuperscript{95} This list underscored the relationship between religious and intellectual gravitas and a changed regional economic balance. The following month, \textit{al-I’tisam} included an advertisement for the same company that reiterated the latter’s “religious commitment” (\textit{al-iltizam al-dini}).\textsuperscript{96} The collaboration of investment companies with Egyptian Islamist leaders thus underscores the role of transnational connections between Egypt and the Gulf in periodical advertising.

Yet, this was not only a relationship of religious credibility and financial credit. Egyptians who had made their wealth in the Gulf also emerged in Egypt during this

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{al-Da’wa} March 1977/ Rabi’ al-Thani 1397, inside back cover. The March 1977/ Rabi’ al-Awwal 1397 issue of \textit{al-I’tisam} featured a similar ad on its back cover.
\item \textit{al-Da’wa}, November 1977/ Dhu al-Hijja 1397, inside back cover.
\item ARINCO was composed of investors from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar.
\item \textit{al-Da’wa} June 1979/Rajab 1399, p. 59.
\item \textit{al-I’tisam} June 1979/Sha’ban 1399, p. 11.
\end{itemize}
period in support of the Islamist movement. The Sharif Investment Company, like the Sharif Plastic Company, was owned and run by ‘Abd al-Latif Sharif, who supported Islamic magazines by buying advertisements. Sharif does not appear to have been personally involved with the Muslim Brotherhood during this period, but welcomed the publishing of *al-Da’wa*, calling it “a victory for Islam and a shock to despotism and tyranny.” Similarly, Kaha, which produced juices, jams and vegetable soups, was owned by Dr. ‘Aatif Musa, a reader of *al-Da’wa* magazine. Musa’s letter to the editor in the June 1977 issue of *al-Da’wa* underscores the importance of distinctions between the Islamic Revival and the Brotherhood. He cautions the magazine’s editors to focus not only on the Muslim Brotherhood, but also more broadly on “the call to Islam” (*al-da’wa ila al-Islam*). Two other regular advertisers, Masarra real estate company and Modern Motors, were also controlled by Muslim Brothers who had prospered in Saudi Arabia following the 1973 oil boom. These Egyptian companies serve as examples of Egyptians investing money earned abroad into a particular vision of Egyptian state and society.

Nonetheless, the story of advertising in Islamist magazines is not only one of Islamist mobilization of a transnational network of ideologically sympathetic supporters. Prominent and regular advertisements were also bought by Egyptian companies that were otherwise unconnected to Islamism or even to Islamic causes; some were even public sector organizations owned by the state. Industries that had expanded under the *Infitah*

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98 *al-Da’wa*, October 1976/Shawwal 1396, inside back cover.
101 Between 1974 and 1979, industries that would prove central to advertising in *al-Da’wa* and *al-I’tisam* had grown substantially: the Petroleum industry grew from 263.9 million Egyptian pounds (LE) to 2.465 billion LE, while Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals increased from 212.2 million LE to 446 million LE.
advertised prominently within independent Islamic magazines. The growth of the chemical industry in Egypt post-1974 was evident as companies selling fertilizer (Egyptian Chemical Industries in Aswan)\textsuperscript{102} and basic household needs such as antiseptic cream (Dicol)\textsuperscript{103} appeared in both magazines. Real estate was another growth industry, both for the \textit{Infitah} broadly and for Islamic magazines in particular. Some real estate companies had local ties, including to the Sadat regime: the Arab Contractors Company, run by Sadat confidante ‘Uthman Ahmad ‘Uthman, was a regular advertiser.\textsuperscript{104} Others were based in the Gulf: one of the most prominent advertisers in both magazines was the Qatari company, Salim bin Hassan al-Ansari and Sons.\textsuperscript{105}

Financially self-sufficient Islamist magazines thus emerged at the intersection of technological development, the international flow of capital, and local support of both Islamist sympathizers and aggressive advertisers. They were funded by a broad variety of businessmen and companies, some advertising as an expression of religious allegiance, while others simply sought to hawk their wares to the magazine’s middle class readership. Whatever their motivations, the funding they provided enabled Islamist elites to project, alongside their Statist peers, competing (but not necessarily diametrically opposed) visions of state, society and ritual practice.

These shifts, however, only explain the possibility of magazine publishing; they do

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\textsuperscript{102} \textit{al-Da’wa} November 1976/ Dhu al-Qa’dā 1396, inside back cover.
\textsuperscript{103} Advertisement for the Chemical Products Development company. See \textit{al-Da’wa} October 1977/ Dhu al-Qa’dā 1397, inside front cover.
\textsuperscript{104} \textit{al-Da’wa} February 1978/ Rabi’ al-Awwal 1398, back cover. ‘Uthman Ahmad ‘Uthman was a prominent Infitah businessman, served as the Minister of Housing and Development, and was elected to parliament in 1979.
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{al-Da’wa}, September 1976/ Ramadan 1396, back cover.
not explain why the groups and institutions that produced these magazines—the Muslim Brotherhood, leading voices of the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya, the Islamic Research Academy at *al-Azhar*, and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs—chose to publish a magazine. The final section of this chapter will explore the benefits and challenges that magazine publishing posed for each organization.


This chapter began by arguing that Islamic magazines emerged as a key site for the negotiation of the Islamic Revival because they were the only way in which Egypt’s Islamist opposition could both speak to and receive feedback from a mass audience. This concluding section lays out how these magazines fit in with the other activities of competing religious elites and why magazines remained an attractive medium despite very real restrictions on Statist and Islamist publications, alike.

The Sadat regime equipped religious institutions under its authority to play an activist role in shaping public religious debate. Over the course of the 1970s, the ideological heat of confrontation with Saudi Arabia and the need to justify socialism in Islamic terms cooled as Sadat billed himself as the “Believing President” (*al-Ra‘is al-Mu‘min*).

Particularly during the second half of the 1970s, with Muslim Brothers returning home from exile and others released from prison, the regime shifted from its attempts to monopolize the religious debate to a more modest (and realistic) effort of channeling it, including through the medium of magazines. Sadat didn’t make this decision out of a commitment to a marketplace of ideas; rather, like his experiment in political pluralism
through platforms (manabir),\textsuperscript{106} it was an attempt to marginalize violent groups that challenged the regime’s legitimacy and to monitor Islamists of multiple stripes who had accepted peaceful accommodation with the regime (or at least the reality of its coercive power).\textsuperscript{107} This was an “inclusive” religious policy that set the lines of legitimate debate to exclude those who explicitly challenged Sadat’s claim to power.

Nowhere was the policy clearer than in Minbar al-Islam and its publisher, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA). Throughout his rule, Sadat followed Nasser’s practice of using SCIA to transmit a religious vision that justified political policy and provided a guide to Egyptians for sound daily religious practice. Accordingly, SCIA continued to publish the Fatawa Islamiyya series produced by Dar al-Ifta.\textsuperscript{108} SCIA also produced books in a variety of languages including Arabic, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Albanian, Afrikaans, Russian and Urdu.\textsuperscript{109} These books emerged out of different councils (lajnat) within SCIA and included studies of the Quran, Prophetic biography, the “Islamic heritage” (al-Turath al-Islami), and legal compendia (al-Mawsu‘at al-Fiqhiyya).\textsuperscript{110} Under the guise of “religious” publications –ostensibly merely the transmission of the “correct religion” (al-din al-sahih) –SCIA sought to gird Sadat against challenges, internal and external, to his political legitimacy.

\textsuperscript{106} The three platforms –Leftist, Centrist and Rightist –were predicated on allowing limited electoral competition. In the 1976 elections, the “Centrist” platform to which Sadat belonged won 280 seats, as compared to 12 seats on the “Right,” four seats on the “Left” and 48 seats among independents. See Ninette S. Fahmy, \textit{The Politics of Egypt: State-Society Relationship}. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{107} The ambiguity of this distinction comes through in ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abu-l-Futuh’s memoirs, in which he recounts how ‘Umar al-Tilmisani counseled leaders from al-Jama‘a al-Islamiyya to eschew violence in principle as opposed to merely strategically. See Abu-l-Futuh, Tammar, \textit{‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abu-l-Futuh}, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{108} Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, \textit{Defining Islam for the Egyptian State}, p. 159. Dar al-Ifta was located not within al-Azhar but within the Ministry of Justice. It was founded in 1895 and run by the state Mufti (a position that was created simultaneously). By the mid-1930s, al-Azhar had developed its own fatwa organ, \textit{Lajnat al-Fatwa}. See Skovgaard-Petersen, \textit{Defining Islam for the Egyptian State}, pp. 154-9.

\textsuperscript{109} al-Zanira \textit{al-Majlis al-A‘la l-il-Shu‘un al-Islamiyya} p. 4.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid. pp. 91-2.
Al-Azhar’s institutions similarly had long played both a national and a transnational role. Prior to 1972, *al-Azhar* magazine was published out of the office of the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar (*Mashyakhat al-Azhar*). Nasser promoted *al-Azhar* magazine as a means of upholding the authority of Egypt’s premier Islamic institution—not coincidentally under the control of the government—as he sought to deny the validity of the Muslim Brotherhood’s prescriptions for state and society. During this period, Nasser also utilized the Islamic Research Academy (along with SCIA) as part of a transnational competition with Saudi Arabia (which hosted the Muslim World League and its Fiqh academy) that pitted revolutionary government against a Gulf monarchy sheltering Muslim Brothers who had fled or been exiled from Egypt.111 While these dynamics continued through the Sadat period, state-employed ‘ulama during this period were not completely powerless and exploited their new designation as experts in the field of “Religion,” that had arisen out of the 1961 reform of al-Azhar, to create bastions of independence within the state.112 Similarly, writers in both *Minbar al-Islam* and *al-Azhar* were not necessarily political lackeys, often voicing support for religious programs that subtly yet surely challenged the regime’s claims to define the scope of religious knowledge and practice in Egypt.

The old guard of the Muslim Brotherhood faced different calculations, political and textual. While they hoped for legal status as a political party and the opportunity to contest national elections that would accompany it, ‘Umar al-Tilmisani recognized the limits to such national political opportunity at that time. Sadat had given the Brotherhood

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the opportunity to participate in a coalition with any of the three platforms (manabir), yet the Brotherhood’s leader refused this offer based on the concern that an alliance with secular political opposition would damage the Brotherhood’s popularity.\footnote{Mohammed Zahid, \textit{The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Succession Crisis}, p. 92. Importantly, though, Sadat was not against political participation \textit{per se}; he permitted individual members of the Muslim Brotherhood such as Hassan al-Jamal to contest seats as part of other parties. This produced between five and six seats in the 1979 elections. For more information, see Hisham al-‘Awadi, \textit{In Pursuit of Legitimacy: The Muslim Brothers and Mubarak, 1982-2000}. New York: I.B. Taurus, 2004, p. 41.} He also rejected Sadat’s entreaties to register as a charitable association, as this step would have limited the Brotherhood’s future political opportunities for an independent political party.\footnote{Mohammed Zahid, \textit{The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Succession Crisis: the Politics of Liberalisation and Reform in the Middle East}. New York: I.B. Taurus, 2010, p. 92.} Instead, al-Tilmisani sought the right to found a political party \textit{independent} of regime-defined platforms on a national level. Yet, such a future was remote: Law 40 of June 1977 had already limited the Brotherhood’s opportunities by declaring it illegal to establish “any party on the basis of social class, religion, or geographic region.”\footnote{Kirk J. Beattie, \textit{Egypt During the Sadat Years}. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000, p. 223.}

It was in the shadow of these restrictions that al-Tilmisani threw his full weight behind publishing an Islamic magazine that could project the Brotherhood’s ideas to a broad audience at a time when it lacked the organizational capability to do so locally and was hampered by political restrictions nationally. The Brotherhood was also unusually well-positioned to compete with other Islamic magazines: their focus on political and social programs and the practical application of religious precepts responded to (and emerged out of) this “functionalized” religious debate encouraged by the Egyptian educational system and state religious publications.\footnote{For an extensive discussion of this issue, see the sixth chapter of this dissertation.} This decision also fit well with the strategic restrictions set forth by the state as the Brotherhood focused on “religious” topics that stood far from the ostensible realm of “politics.” As long as the organization
steered clear of organized activism directed at Sadat and explicit challenges to the regime’s religious legitimacy, it could publish freely.

Writers in *al-I’tisam* faced some of the same political restrictions as the Brotherhood, while being torn between Brotherhood functionalist approaches that facilitated political mobilization and a Salafi commitment to theology and precise ritual practice. Prior to 1976, this periodical, then far closer to a journal than a magazine, limited its political commentary to identifiably “external” issues such as Israel, Eretria and the United States, or to internal threats such as Bahaism. When it commented on internal political matters, it was merely to affirm the legitimacy of the “ruler” (*al-hakim*) vis a vis his subjects (*al-mahkum*).\(^{117}\) Criticism of the state was confined to specific officials who failed to hold up accepted standards of piety.\(^{118}\)

Over the 1976-1981 period, however, the magazine sought to meld between a Salafi commitment to theology and ritual practice and a Brotherhood-style vision of social transformation.\(^{119}\) Complicating matters further, the transitions from journal to magazine pushed writers not only to speak in a less scholarly tone, but also to provide concrete solutions to their readers. As the coming chapters will show, the writers continually sought to balance this magazine’s traditional commitment to creed and precise ritual

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117 For example, see Abd Allah al-Muslim Ibrahim, “Bayna al-Hakim wa-l-Mahkum,” *al-I’tisam* July 1969/Jumada al-Ula 1389, p. 36. In this article, Ibrahim refers to rulers as “the Shade of God on earth” (*Zill Allah fi l-Ard*).


119 This dovetailed with shifts in the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya. It was during the same period that Muslim Brothers such as al-Hajj ‘Abduh Mustafa Abu Shima rose to leadership positions within the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya –yet the shift in *al-I’tisam* was not dictated by them. Furthermore, there was substantial overlap in preaching activities in independent mosques and in the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya’s preacher preparatory school. For more information, see Abd al-Ghaffar Shukr, *al-Jam’iyyat al-Ahliyya al-Islamiyya fi Misr*. Cairo, Egypt: Dar al-Amin i-il-Nashr wa-I-Tawzi’, 2002, p. 130.
practice with increasing pressure from both their readers and their textual competitors to speak fluently about pressing issues in the functionalized language of the day.

V. Conclusion

Islamic magazines emerged as a key medium of Egypt’s Islamic Revival as politically and intellectually diverse religious elites projected their ideas onto and responded to feedback from a far broader audience than they could ever have reached through grassroots activism. The debates that were to follow in these magazines were indelibly shaped by this medium, yet their emergence as a key site for Egypt’s Islamist opposition was hardly inevitable. Instead, it was dependent upon expanding urbanization and literacy, improved printing technology, and an effective postal system. Neither was such infrastructure sufficient; it was only thanks to policy shifts, changing transnational and local economic flows, and advertising support that Islamists in Egypt could seize a national pulpit in the pages of *al-Da‘wa* and *al-I’tisam*. A crucial era of public religious debate and practice in Egypt had begun.
Chapter 2

Finding the Pious: Islamic Magazines and their Readers

Who were the participants in the pages of Islamic magazines and the formation of key projects of the Islamic Revival, how did they choose between Statist and Islamist periodicals, and how did they participate in the formation of pious subjectivities as they aspired to religious respectability? In February 2013, I shuttled around Cairo in search of the private papers of the editors of these magazines and the subscription rolls that might reveal the identities and motivations of these participants in this formative period of Egyptian history.

If the fall of Mubarak in January of 2011 had created new possibilities for interviews – Muslim Brotherhood members were particularly helpful at Dar al-Tawzi‘ – other obstacles emerged. Some of these challenges were bureaucratic: Ahmad, a clerical worker at the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, informed me that to speak with writers and find records of subscriptions to Minbar al-Islam, I really should have arrived a quarter century prior. As it was, the individuals who were relevant to me had retired (and did not want to be bothered) and the documents had been discarded.

Other obstacles were ideological: ‘Adil Rifa‘i Khafaji, managing editor of al-Azhar, was more than happy to speak with me about the magazines, as long as we remained inside the four corners of the periodical. Beyond that, though, I was not only on my own but unwelcome: correct religion (al-din al-sahih) was contained within the folds of the magazine and “deep research” (al-bahth al-‘amiq) should not trouble itself with other questions. Indeed, as Khafaji noted, even a doctoral student such as myself could serve as editor of the Islamic Research Academy’s leading publication. It was no coincidence that al-Azhar was the last to include letters to the editor and fatwas with significant
identifying information, introducing this feature in the early years of Mubarak’s rule (1981-2011). It is for this reason that *al-Azhar*’s readers could not be profiled in this chapter though, as the following chapters will show, the journal’s writers and muftis played a key role in the textual and programmatic debates of this period.

My challenges at Dar al-Tawzi‘ and Dar al-I‘tisam differed. The former, affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, had regularly destroyed its records and letters to the editor as a precaution against harassment by state security. At Dar al-I‘tisam, I was given contradictory explanations as to the whereabouts of Ashraf ‘Ashur, the scion of the ‘Ashur family: some days he had left for England for a trip of undisclosed length, other days he’d be back shortly, just after the Maghrib prayer. It was only on my seventh visit when I stumbled on Muhammad al-Madbuli who had worked at *al-I‘tisam* magazine during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

I could neither interview the editors and writers because few are alive, nor could I examine subscription rolls or previous correspondence. Yet sometimes, when people were not available or would not talk, the magazines could. Hundreds of pages of magazine correspondence contained information about these key participants in the competing projects of Islamic magazines between 1976 and 1981.

In the contested context of Sadat’s Egypt, how and why did middle class Egyptians turn to Islam, and in which ways did these readers form themselves as pious participants in the Islamic Revival? This chapter uses the signature line of letters to the editor and fatwa requests in *al-Da‘wa*, *al-I‘tisam* and *Minbar al-Islam* to sketch the geographical contours, socioeconomic profile, and responses to religious mobilization by the readers whose correspondence appeared within Islamic magazines at this crucial point of
religious change. It begins by contextualizing competing projects of religious respectability within shifting networks of textual circulation and religious education that had developed over the course of the twentieth century. It then turns to the geographical contours of the Islamic Revival’s projects, arguing that the diffusion of Islamic magazines throughout Egypt enabled middle class Egyptians to supplement local projects and institutions and to form themselves as pious Muslims in concert with elite-led projects emanating from Cairo. The arrival of Islamic magazines, however, did not guarantee the appeal of their call; the next section of this chapter explores why middle class Egyptians turned to Islam, with reference to questions of socioeconomic disappointment and ideological mobilization by Statist and Islamist publications alike. Finally, advertisements in these three magazines are used to tentatively reconstruct the identities of readers who either did not write or whose letters did not appear.

I. Sources

This chapter is based on the descriptive statistics offered by the letters to the editor and fatwa requests within the magazines, and is complemented by qualitative analysis that deepens the preliminary conclusions emerging from these statistics. In doing so, it draws on 1,076 unique entries from 149 columns in 64 issues for *al-Da‘wa*, 278 unique entries from 73 columns in 54 issues for *al-I‘tisam*; and 705 unique entries from 117 columns in 60 issues for *Minbar al-Islam*. These entries were coded for location (at both the governorate and the city/village level), gender, and occupation or academic discipline (for those who listed themselves as students). Instead of limiting the data by excluding correspondence outright if it did not provide all three categories of information, all the

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1 Columns can include either letters or fatwa requests.
information in this chapter’s graphs was created using the percentage of valid entries, i.e. those entries containing the demographic information relevant for each section.\(^2\)

Notwithstanding the limitations on the explanatory value of this information, outlined in the introduction, data on this period of Egyptian religious history is scarce and this represents by far the largest sample available. This chapter thus focuses on a specific set of middle class participants and what this segment can reveal about the turn to Islam and the formation of competing projects of religious respectability and pious subjectivities during the Islamic Revival.

II. Context and Continuity in the Formation of Religious Subjectivities

While narratives of religious revival correctly identify shifts in public debate and practice, they tend to obscure previous institutional and discursive developments that underlay these shifts. In the case of the Islamic Revival in Egypt, the projects of religious respectability and the (re)formation of subjectivities therein emerged out of a longer history of institutions and discourses.\(^3\) This section thus shows how these projects responded to questions raised, but not answered, by state-sponsored religious education in public schools. It then turns to the specific circumstances in which readers found themselves, highlighting the socioeconomic and ideological context of the Sadat period.

\(^{2}\) The distinction between this measure and overall percentage is that the former disregards entries that don’t contain any information whereas the latter includes these entries. For governorates, “valid” entries represented 70.3 percent for al-Da’wa, 58 percent for al-I’tisam, and 66 percent for Minbar al-Islam. For locale, the statistics were 64 percent for al-Da’wa, 58 percent for al-I’tisam, and 58.8 percent for Minbar al-Islam. For urban/rural, al-Da’wa included 61 percent, al-I’tisam 68 percent, and Minbar al-Islām 59.4 percent. For occupation, al-Da’wa included 32 percent, al-I’tisam 28 percent, and Minbar al-Islām 22.5 percent. Among university students, 85.6 percent in al-Da’wa listed their disciplines, 85.7 percent in al-I’tisam did so, and 64.8 percent of those in Minbar al-Islam did so.

\(^{3}\) Skeggs, Formations of Class and Gender, p. 41.
While increases in literacy and education shed light on how readers were able to participate (see Chapter 1), the choice to do so was inseparable from their previous experience in the Egyptian public educational system. As Starrett and Doumato note, nationalist efforts to craft “master narratives” through religious education invariably stand in tension with “students’ diverse actual experiences” stratified along lines of region, gender, class, and sect.⁴ Most notably, educators faced a student body with lived experience of sectarian and economic disenfranchisement in Upper Egypt and increasing socioeconomic inequality throughout the country.

For those within Egypt’s middle class who aspired to religious respectability, Islamic magazines promised answers to questions raised, but not answered, by the public education system’s continued emphasis on the applicability of Islam to daily life. These publications were ideologically connected to public religious education, embracing the same functionalist vision by which religious education centered on goals of social policy.⁵ Yet, while Minbar al-Islam upheld the regime’s vision of political obedience and social peace, al-Da‘wa and al-I‘tasam challenged the regime’s subordination of religious education to its own ends. It was in this setting that readers throughout Egypt’s urban centers came to engage with questions of religious transformation and, in the process, took part in defining their subjectivities as pious Muslims.

Changing economic circumstances also shaped the formation of religious subjectivities. Previous studies of this period have focused on Islamist activism in isolation. Political scientists, working out of a tradition of Functionalist Social

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⁵ Gregory Starrett, Putting Islam to Work, pp. 62, 77-86.
Psychology, initially characterized the turn to Islamism as a response to “exogenous structural strains” – including rapid socioeconomic transformation, rural-urban migration paired with insufficient infrastructure, increasingly expensive basic commodities, and political disappointment – which produce “psychological discomfort” that must be relieved. In response, historians and political scientists have used Social Movement Theory (SMT) to push beyond questions of structural mismatch to examine pathways and methods of mobilization.

SMT-based scholarship on the Islamic Revival in Egypt argues for the intersection of socioeconomic disappointment and grassroots mobilization. Wickham shows that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood capitalized on the socioeconomic disappointment generated by a declining social contract to appeal to recent college graduates, while Bayat notes that Islamism under Sadat “reflected the rebellion of the impoverished and morally outraged middle class.” Both argue that socioeconomic outrage was channeled into a new ethic of action and emphasize Islamist efforts to transmit alternative religious visions through both media and local institutions. As this chapter will demonstrate, however, this argument must also be extended to Statist religious visions and their mobilization efforts.

The middle class was open to such mobilization in the face of an increasing divide between the cultural and economic components of middle class life under Sadat. On the

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7 See Wickham, Mobilizing Islam, pp. 85-92.
9 Wickham emphasizes the role of both local educational sites and mass media in transmitting religious frames, and Bayat argues that Islamists “built hegemony” both through political pressure of the regime and by engaging in “cultural production” which communicated an alternative system of values, norms and behavior. For Wickham, see Mobilizing Islam, pp. 119-149, and for Bayat, see Making Islam Democratic, pp. 195-6.
one hand, 80,000 to 100,000 state managerial elites (who were joined by capitalist entrepreneurs, contractors, leading doctors and lawyers, and pharmacists) still possessed the material means to purchase a home, marry and either fully fund or partially subsidize their children’s education. Yet, the segment of the middle class that struggled to achieve these basic landmarks had grown: roughly 200,000 Egyptians of similar educational background found themselves in a “contradictory location” within Egypt’s class-structure in which their educational qualifications did not correspond with their socioeconomic position.\(^\text{10}\) This division was a product of changing economic circumstances: due to a faltering state modernization project, the close tie between education, white-collar employment and socioeconomic mobility had declined, and delays between higher education and public employment could stretch nearly ten years.\(^\text{11}\) The emergence of an *Infitah*-fuelled private sector in Egypt further stratified this group. While those employed in the private sector earned vastly more as a result of new opportunities in petroleum, banking, construction and commerce, the earnings of those in public sector positions dropped in both comparative and real terms.\(^\text{12}\)

Individual economic explanations, however, are insufficient on their own to contextualize the religious choices that would follow. Middle class Egyptians were also enmeshed in a series of local and international ideological and economic shifts. Locally, the Sadat regime had sponsored religious student groups since the early 1970s in an effort to build a viable opponent to the still-powerful Egyptian Socialists and Communists and had expelled all Russian advisors in 1972. More broadly, Sadat appealed to “Science and


\(^\text{11}\) Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, pp. 36-37.

\(^\text{12}\) Ibid. pp. 40-1.
Faith” (*al-‘ilm wa-l-iman*) as an alternative source of legitimacy in the face of the declining value of the social contract. These local policy shifts were augmented by regional and global developments which strengthened Islamist forces within Egyptian society: the 1973 OPEC oil embargo drastically altered the economic fortunes of the Arab Gulf monarchies, enhancing both their political reach and their financial support for Brotherhood and Salafi publications.\(^\text{13}\) Globally, Sadat sought to improve Egypt’s economic position by striking a Cold War alliance with the United States and crushing Leftist mobilization locally, thus providing greater space for proponents of Statist and Islamist visions, alike.\(^\text{14}\)

Before exploring this ideological contest, however, we begin with a question of geography: who were the middle class Egyptians whose letters appeared in Islamic magazines, and what can their spatial locations reveal about the diverse projects of religiosity in which members of this segment of society participated between 1976 and 1981?

### III. The Geography of Revival

The spatial distribution of Islamic magazine readers underscores the participation of middle class Egyptians throughout Cairo, Alexandria, the Nile Delta and Upper Egypt in projects of religious change anchored not in their local communities (or in local government-controlled institutions), but in print networks. These projects stand in contrast to previous programs of local religious mobilization that confined their participants to interaction with either local leaders or preachers specifically dispatched

\(^{13}\) See Abu-l-Futuh and Tammam, *‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abu-l-Futuh*, p. 40.

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from Cairo and Alexandria.\footnote{As Mitchell notes, the Muslim Brotherhood drew its leadership from urban centers and mass constituency from the Egyptian countryside, including in the Delta. See Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 329. Other scholarship has noted the importance of provincial universities of the Delta and Upper Egypt to the Jama’a Islamiyya. Specifically, Saad Eddin Ibrahim’s study of militant Islamists in 1970s Egypt focuses on a narrow subset of thirty-four activists, some of whom were members of the Technical Military Academy (based in Cairo, Alexandria and the Delta) and others of whom were members of al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra (centered in Upper Egypt). See Ibrahim, *Egypt, Islam and Democracy*, p. 25. Along similar lines, Gilles Kepel highlights the role of Upper Egyptian universities, particularly those of Minya and Asyut, in the intensification of both sectarian clashes and violence within the Jama’a Islamiyya. See Kepel, *The Roots of Radical Islam*, pp. 162-170. Wickham expands this picture, noting the strength of the Brotherhood in Cairo, Alexandria and Delta cities and the influence of more militant Islamic groups (such as those studied by Ibrahim) in the towns and villages of the Upper Egyptian governorates of Asyut, Minya and Sohag. See Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, p. 115.} The geographic distribution of participants in Islamic magazines thus reveals how readers from these areas came to participate in national projects of religious change.

Challenges of access and literacy ensured that it would be middle class Egyptian men who would predominate in these religious projects.\footnote{An important qualification to this claim is that not all letters originated in Egypt. Letters to the editor from within Egypt in both *al-Da’wa* and *al-I’tisam* topped 89 percent (89.3 percent and 91.1 percent, respectively) and were 75.8 percent of those in *Minbar al-Islam*. The existence of a foreign contingent – ranging from North Africa to the Levant to the Persian Gulf – in all three cases, particularly that of *Minbar al-Islam*, underscores the role of those outside Egypt in shaping the debates of religious revival within the country.} City dwellers constituted 94.1 percent of the correspondents for *al-Da’wa*, 96.3 percent for *al-I’tisam*, and 93.8 percent for *Minbar al-Islam*. They were similarly gendered: men accounted for 97.5 percent of this group in *al-Da’wa*, 97.8 percent in *al-I’tisam*, and 93.5 percent in *Minbar al-Islam*.\footnote{In 1976, 32 percent of Egyptian men could read and write, while only 12 percent of women could do so. By a less stringent measure, 58 percent of men and 29 percent of women were classified as literate. See Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, *1976 Population and Housing Census*. Vol. 1, pp. 25-6.}

A survey of governorates (Graph 1) illustrates the extent of the emergence of the Nile Delta alongside Cairo and Alexandria. Participants from Delta governorates accounted for 49.1 percent of the letters in *al-Da’wa*, 32.1 percent of *al-I’tisam*, and 46 percent of those for *Minbar al-Islam*. By contrast, the Upper Egyptian governorates of Asyut, Luxor, Sohag, Aswan and Qina constituted 13.5 percent of *al-Da’wa*, 13.7 percent of *al-I’tisam*.
I’tisam, and 15.8 percent of Minbar al-Islam. When the data is compiled by region, it becomes clear that the Delta governorates represent the greatest area of popular participation, even more so than Cairo and Alexandria. The combination of expanded education, urbanization and distribution had brought a broader class of readers into national projects of piety.

Yet this vantage point, while correctly emphasizing the centrality of the Delta, nonetheless risks obscuring those particular urban areas that were focal points of participation (see Graph 2). Beyond the centrality of Cairo and Alexandria for all three magazines, Delta governorate capitals and even a few urban centers (marakiz) emerged as key sites of religious mobilization and subject formation. Popular participation was not concentrated in one or two Delta capitals; rather, it was dispersed, fairly evenly, among some nine cities, some capitals, others not. This distribution was largely similar among magazines: the governorate capital of Mansura (Daqahliyya) was popular in all three magazines, and Tanta (Gharbiyya) and Kafr al-Shaykh (Kafr al-Shaykh) appeared

18 The cities listed by cumulative total are those that accounted for at least five percent cumulatively or over three percent in any one magazine, with the exception of three Upper Egypt strongholds – Minya, Qina, Sohag and Aswan – which are included for purposes of comparison.
regularly across two of three. The prominence of Mansura and Tanta corresponds with population growth and industrialization, underscoring the importance of increased urbanization and economic development for the participation of a national audience in the formation of religious subjectivities.\(^{19}\)

Neither was such religious exchange limited to Delta capitals. It had also spread to other urban areas in the region, whether the textile center of al-Mahalla al-Kubra (Gharbiyya)\(^{20}\) or the aluminum center of Mit Ghamr (Daqahliyya). Readers from Upper Egypt, though less prominently represented than their Delta counterparts, hailed from governorate capitals of Asyut, Minya, and Sohag. The profile of participants across the Delta’s capitals and centers as well as pockets of Upper Egypt thus underscores the importance of local industrialization across Egypt, both within and outside governorate capitals.

\(^{19}\) The expansion of these cities can also be attributed to forced migration of residents of Port Said and Suez following the 1956 Suez war. See Husayn Kafafi, *Ru’ya ‘Arshiyya l-il-Mudun al-Sana‘iyya fi Misr*. Cairo, Egypt: Egyptian Public Institute for Books, 1985, pp. 56-72.

\(^{20}\) The city of al-Mahalla al-Kubra, though long known for its textile production, expanded further between 1960 and 1976 from a population of 178,350 to 292,900. This was primarily thanks to a textile industry that employed 97 percent of the city’s workers. Ibid. pp. 59-60.
The prominence of the Nile Delta in Islamic magazines was complemented by state-driven educational expansion. Between 1974 and 1978, Sadat opened seven new universities in Tanta, Mansura, Zaqaziq, Helwan, Minya, Monufiyya, and Suez. Five of these seven were located in the Delta, while none of the previously existing universities (Cairo, Alexandria, ‘Ayn Shams, Asyut, and al-Azhar) had been.\textsuperscript{21} Sadat also increased the number of high school graduates admitted to university from 40 to 60 percent.\textsuperscript{22} These moves accentuated Nasserist-era trends yet also signified a rupture: no longer would these youth have to travel to Cairo and Alexandria to pursue higher education. Instead, higher education—and literate culture more broadly—was to be more diffused throughout Egypt.

The significance of the participation of middle class readers through Egypt in the formation of competing religious projects thus lies not in the sudden access of the Egyptian middle class to religious elites, but rather in the vastly expanded geographic bounds within which religious subjectivities could be formed. Yet, as Egyptians supplemented high school religious education and sidestepped local religious leaders, growing economic divisions within the middle class would also shape their participation.

\textit{IV. Social Contracts and the Turn to Religion}

When middle class Egyptians sought religious respectability, how and why did they choose particular religious projects? Previous studies that rely on Functionalist Social Psychology assume a direct connection between socioeconomic disappointment

\textsuperscript{21} Wickham, \textit{Mobilizing Islam}, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. p. 36.
and the turn to Islamism. By contrast, scholars drawing on Social Movement Theory have successfully critiqued the determinist models of Islamist sympathies, arguing that economic grievances, melded with mobilization, lead to Islamist loyalties. Less theorized, however, is the distinction between “social position” (here, that of a socioeconomically frustrated middle class) and multiple “subject positions” of religious piety.\(^{23}\)

The broadly similar material position of participants in Islamic magazines challenges an exclusive focus on the connection between dashed socioeconomic dreams and Islamist mobilization and subjectivities. Participants across all three magazines worked disproportionately in “clerical”\(^{24}\) or “professional and technical” positions, rather than in managerial roles or in other industries (see Graph 3). The average among all three magazines for clerical roles within the bureaucracy was nearly 11 percent.\(^{25}\) Additionally, primary and secondary educators constituted 13.9 percent in *al-Da’wa*, 11.5 percent in *al-I’tisam*, and 25.2 percent in *Minbar al-Islam*. Across all three magazines, the project of religious respectability was an undeniably middle class affair.

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\(^{23}\) While the former is determined by class and gender, the latter requires active participation even as it is organized by institutional structures, whether education or media. See Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender*, p. 12.

\(^{24}\) This term refers to administrative work rather than to jobs performed by religious clerics.

\(^{25}\) Percentages of clerical workers were similar among the magazines: This segment represented 10.1 percent of *al-Da’wa*, 12.5 percent of *al-I’tisam*, and 11.5 percent of *Minbar al-Islam*. 
The importance of considering Statist and Islamist projects side-by-side is further underscored by the similar socioeconomic profile of university students who read Islamic...
magazines (see Graph 4). The number of young Egyptians studying at universities had expanded first under Nasser and then further under Sadat: the 1952-3 academic year began with 42,485 students, by 1968-9 this number had reached 142,875, and under Sadat in 1980-1 it rose even further to 563,750. These students, whose importance arose from their position as a bellwether for future ideological developments, represented a key target for not only Islamists but also Nasserists, Marxists and state-sponsored religious groups and institutions.

Research on this period has often highlighted the role of students in Islamism. Ibrahim noted that militant Islamist groups such al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra and al-Fanniyya al-‘Askariyya drew primarily from the ranks of students and recent graduates. Similarly, Wickham has shown how the Muslim Brotherhood succeeded in transforming prestigious faculties (such as Engineering and Medicine) into Islamist strongholds. These stories highlight two components of Islamist popularity on university campuses: the elites (hailing from prestigious faculties) and the rank-and-file of more limited socioeconomic horizons.

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27 For more on the state sponsorship of Islamic student groups, see al-Arian, *Answering the Call*, pp. 49-74.
The educational training of students whose letters appear in Islamist publications (see Graph 4) suggests that those student readers were no more likely than their Statist peers to study in elite departments. High-achieving students in fields such as Engineering and Medicine were featured all three magazines, though Minbar al-Islam’s participants (6.1 percent) were less likely to be engineers than their counterparts in al-Da‘wa and al-I‘tisam (13.6 percent and 13.3 percent respectively). Students who studied the Islamic Sciences participated most regularly in al-Da‘wa, while such students were marginal participants in al-I‘tisam and Minbar al-Islam. By contrast, 30 percent of Minbar al-Islam’s participants studied Education, while such students represented roughly ten percent of the participants in its Islamist competitors. This profile, while tentative, underscores the success of Statist and Islamist projects alike in mobilizing middle class Egyptians.

Statist and Islamist mobilization efforts, however, proceeded based on contrasting appeals. The Statist approach sought to provide a moral high-ground to those disadvantaged by the broken socioeconomic system: in April 1977, Minbar al-Islam’s

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30 Such analysis is necessarily tentative because there is no way to ascertain whether this educational distribution reflected the demographics of these readerships or whether it was merely a product of editorial intervention.
Muhammad Fahmi Latif argued that the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of material gain was “bestial” (wahshiyya); instead, knowledge should be pursued in the path of ethical improvement.\(^{31}\) Latif and his peers, though they could criticize the status quo, could not explicitly attribute it to the failing of the state system.

Yet, other state-aligned figures who were less involved in projects of religious mobilization sought to acknowledge the challenges that the current socioeconomic situation posed. Mustafa Mahmud emphasized the importance of “equal opportunity” (takaffu al-furas) in education, health care and basic living standards,\(^{32}\) while Muhamamd Mutawalli al-Sha‘rawi similarly noted the importance of “equal opportunity in life (takaffu al-furas fi-l-hayat)."\(^{33}\) For al-Sha‘rawi, equal opportunity was consistent with a rigid social structure: “The lessening (taqlil) of the percentage of the population that receives higher and higher educational credentials is not a reflection of opportunity but rather of ability…. society is a pyramid (haram)…. If the pyramid flips over, there will immediately be deterioration (inhiyar).”\(^{34}\) While the acknowledgment of the value of equal opportunity spoke to Egypt’s socioeconomic climate, neither Mahmud nor al-Sha‘rawi sought to transform this issue into a critique of Sadat.

By contrast, Islamist writers sought to hold Sadat responsible and offer an alternative vision to men and women alike. In January 1978, al-Da‘wa’s ‘Imara Najib stressed the need for an “Islamic system” (nizam Islami) which could achieve “social progress” (al-tagaddum al-ijtima‘i) without reference to socioeconomic hierarchy. Najib explained:

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“Islam [unlike the state] does not recognize titles such as ‘Doctor’, ‘Bashmuhandis’ or ‘General’ (Hadrat al-Dabit).”

Along more restricted lines, Ahmad ‘Isa ‘Ashur foregrounded morality in the face of material temptation. In response to a fatwa request about whether academic dishonesty was permitted in the pursuit of economic gain, ‘Ashur explained that cheating leads to corruption (fasad) which harms the common good (masalih al-nas) and corrupts the community’s livelihood (al-shu‘un al-ma‘ishiyya).

Such alternative Islamist frames were at once powerful and incomplete. They sought to rectify the challenge that socioeconomic stagnation posed to the attainment of respectability by offering alternative paths, yet they could not alleviate the core economic problem. By contrast, Minbar al-Islam had access to greater resources but was hamstrung by its dependence on the Sadat regime. These textual interactions deepen claims by Wickham and Bayat concerning the power of Islamist frames in the face of socioeconomic disappointment and highlight the challenges inherent in Statist and Islamist frames alike.

What did students who had not yet experienced the socioeconomic stagnation of this period make of the competing visions of Statist and Islamist writers? Bayat and Wickham assume that the Sadat project of “Science and Faith” held little ideological appeal for university students. Letters within Minbar al-Islam problematize this claim, though they do not entirely refute it. While it is possible that magazine editors forged laudatory correspondence, letters in Minbar al-Islam reflect reader enthusiasm for the magazine’s religious vision and resources. Many readers looked to the magazine to guide their

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35 This term literally means “Chief Engineer” and, at the time, signified membership in an educational elite. See Mona Russel, *Middle East in Focus (Egypt)*. Oxford, UK: ABC-CLIO, 2013, p. 211.
religious practice in educational settings: an August 1978 letter from the Delta town of Damanhur asked whether students who were ritually impure could recite the Quran in class.\textsuperscript{38} Similarly, in a May 1979 letter, a reader from the Delta city of Beheira asked for the help of the Sheikh of al-Azhar in funding a Quranic recitation program at the local charitable association (jam‘iyya khayriyya), while another reader in the same issue asked the Ministry of Endowments to supply Qurans for study in his local mosque.\textsuperscript{39} Correspondence such as this suggests that Statist claims retained appeal for some readers.

At the same time, critical letters hint at the contradictions that association with state institutions entailed. In September 1976, a reader from the Delta town of Zaqaziq explained: “I am a very religious student and fear that I will be punished in the world to come for studying man made laws (al-qawanin al-wad‘iyya) in the Law Faculty. Is the burden in this matter on me or on those responsible [for the curriculum]?” Minbar al-Islam’s response assured this reader that he bore no blame; rather, administrators and teachers within the Faculty of Law and a regime that trumpeted the slogan of “Science and Faith” (al-‘Ilm wa-l-Iman) were responsible.\textsuperscript{40} Yet, despite this condemnation, the mufti could not escape his status as a state functionary and thus could not solve the structural challenges that these youth faced.

Islamist mobilization strategies, by contrast, were untainted by political compromises yet struggled to deliver a practical alternative to the state system. In June 1977, an unnamed writer in al-Da‘wa criticized the Faculty of Humanities at Cairo University for not providing sufficient class time for the study of the Arabic language and the Quran.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{40} “Ifta,” \textit{Minbar al-Islam}, September 1976/Ramadan 1396, p. 160.
Yet there was little that al-Da’wa or al-I’tisam could do as neither was in the financial or legal position to found a university. Similarly, in a letter titled, “Where is the Free Education?,” an al-Da’wa reader from Asyut University complained that, despite paying 38 pounds of tuition annually, the students were given neither appropriate study space nor satisfactory nutrition. At this time, however, Islamists were not in a position to offer subsidized dining or university-caliber library space.

The parallel appeals of Statist and Islamist religious visions in the mobilization of university students confirm the commonality of socioeconomic disappointment to both projects and shift the focus to the ideological appeals made by competing religious elites. While functionaries of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs possessed greater material resources, they were also burdened by association with the Sadat regime. By contrast, Islamist elites successfully underlined the failings of the state system, yet were hamstrung by their inability to offer a programmatic alternative to its educational institutions. The respective challenges of association with the political failings of the ruling elite and access to material resources would shape not only efforts of religious mobilization but also the competing projects of the Islamic Revival.

V. Silent Readers

What about the silent majority of readers whose letters did not appear in these magazines? The final section of this chapter will explore this broader audience through a critical reading of advertisements that appeared in all three magazines. Though they did not actively contribute to debates, those “silent” readers were an audience to which editors, writers and popular participants spoke. While it is impossible to recover the

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selection criteria of editors, advertisements in the pages of the magazines nonetheless provide clues to who the advertisers thought were reading the magazines.

All the periodicals contained a myriad of advertisements for everything from books to banking and furniture to fashion. These advertisements, like letters, were filtered to some degree; editors presumably had the option of rejecting advertisements that didn’t suit their magazine’s message. Some advertisements were placed as gifts or exhibitions of religious piety, while others might have been placed to provide the advertiser financial leverage if the magazine deviated from his ideological preferences.

Still other advertisements were included because the concerned companies perceived the magazine’s audience as one that would consider buying their product, though the prominence of such advertisements could also reflect the disproportionate resources of a small segment of readers. Neither were advertisements necessarily a direct reflection of consumer practice as many readers looked without being able to buy.

In order to disentangle these different possible motivations for advertising, this section examines advertisements from identified Muslim Brotherhood supporters, on the one hand, and public sector companies, on the other. As Kepel notes, al-Da’wa was replete with advertisements from Brotherhood supporters who had made their fortune in Saudi Arabia during the preceding quarter century, most notably al-Sharif plastic, Masarra Real Estate and Modern Motors. Yet, public sector companies also purchased

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43 This was confirmed by both Badr and Madbuli. Badr, Personal interview. 24 Feb. 2013. Madbuli, Personal interview. 24 Feb. 2013.
nearly one-fifth of the advertising throughout the period.\footnote{\textsuperscript{46}} Crucially, such companies are unlikely to have purchased advertising space in these magazines except for economic reasons, because companies owned by the state were unlikely to support an Islamist voice in times of conflict with the regime. Finally, there were advertisements from companies of unknown political allegiance.

This section tentatively reconstructs the silent portions of the readership through attention to advertising motive, consumer practice and political position. It then compares the picture drawn by advertisements with two other key sources of information: the “popular participant” profile of the previous section and the 1976 Egyptian census. This participant profile provides us with a guide, albeit an edited one, to readership, while the census highlights divergences between this profile and demographic trends.

Islamic magazines included advertisements aimed at *Infitah* elites who did business with banks, investment firms and contractors. In *al-Da’wa*, Salim Ibn Hasan al-Ansari and Sons offered contracting opportunities\footnote{\textsuperscript{47}} and the Dubai Islamic Bank sought investors.\footnote{\textsuperscript{48}} In *al-I’tisam*, one could enter into commercial and contracting agreements with the Islamic Opening Company (*Shirkat al-Fath al-Islami*)\footnote{\textsuperscript{49}} or invest in private medical services at the Ibn Sina Medical Clinic.\footnote{\textsuperscript{50}} *Minbar al-Islam*, too, featured advertisements for the transnational Islamic banking with the Islamic Company for Gulf Investments,\footnote{\textsuperscript{51}} and even offered life in the “City of Dreams” (*Madinat al-ahlam*).\footnote{\textsuperscript{52}} The

\footnote{\textsuperscript{46}} Such advertisers could conceivably have placed pressure on Islamist magazines to moderate their opposition to the Sadat regime, but based on continued advertisement throughout Sadat’s rule, it does not appear that this was the case.
\footnote{\textsuperscript{47}} *al-Da’wa*, September 1976/ Ramadan 1396, inside back cover.
\footnote{\textsuperscript{49}} *al-I’tisam*, January 1981/ Safar 1401, p. 43.
\footnote{\textsuperscript{50}} Ibid. March 1977/ Rabi’ al-Awwal 1397, back cover.
\footnote{\textsuperscript{51}} *Minbar al-Islam*, October 1979/ Dhu al-Qa’da 1399, back cover.
\footnote{\textsuperscript{52}} Ibid. November 1978/Dhu al-Hijja 1398, inside front cover.
advertisements confirm the presence of a business elite within all three readerships, though they give no indication as to its proportional role. Given the professional background of participants, businessmen were likely a miniscule component of the readership.

To what extent did advertisers also speak to middle class readers? Both al-Da’wa and al-I’tisam were full of advertisements from Islamist supporters and from companies of unclear political allegiance. Readers could purchase household durables, whether furniture from Hawi furniture or cups, lighting appliances and plastic plates from Sharif plastic factories. Readers of al-I’tisam had fewer options on display when it came to household wares, though many ads for Sharif plastic company still appeared in the magazine. Yet, this evidence is inconclusive because it is difficult to know whether these advertisements appeared primarily for reasons of commercial competition, vanity or economic leverage. In al-Da‘wa, it appears that household wares were targeted at a specific audience: former editor Badr Muhammad Badr confirms the variety of potential motives suggested above, while suggesting that household appliances and clothing (al-adawat al-manzaliyya wa-l-malabis) were targeted at married couples who read the magazine. In contradistinction to both of its competitors, al-I’tisam contained few advertisements for clothing or household goods, and thus provided few clues as to the gender composition or age of its readership.

Like the Islamist businessmen who advertised in al-Da‘wa, public sector companies published similar advertisements directed at both men and women in Minbar al-
Islam. Wulkas clothing company offered unveiled women “elegance and high taste” (*al-anaqa wa-l-dhawq al-rafi*), and the Egyptian Goods Sales Company marketed functional men’s clothing. Public sector companies such as these could have supported this Statist magazine for reasons of either vanity or good politics; in the absence of editors who can speak to this logic of selection, this information is of limited explanatory value.

What about those situations in which advertising crossed political divisions? Islamist magazines *also* contained a wide variety of advertisements from public sector companies aimed at men and women. In *al-Da’wa*, the department store ‘Umar Effendi advertised summer clothing for girls and women, while the public sector Nasr Textile and Knitwear company (*Shirkat al-Nasr l-il-Ghazl wa-l-Nasij wa-l-Triku*) offered blouses and dresses for women and pants and cologne for men. Public sector companies also advertised household wares: the Egyptian Company for Electrical Appliances (*al-Shirka al-Misriyya l-il-Ma’dat al-Kahraba’iyya*) offered everything from televisions to lamps. These advertisements, targeted at those Egyptians whom advertisers believed to be readers, transcend the Statist/Islamist divide and suggest that the readership included a significant number of women. That women represented 25.1 percent and 30.4 percent, respectively, of middle-class professions furthers the impression that their share of the readership exceeded five percent.

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61 *al-Da’wa*, August 1976/Sh‘b‘an 1396, p. 46.  
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The specific goods offered by these companies also appealed far more to a married adult with a home than to a college student. Though students might purchase advertised clothing (assuming sufficient disposable income), furniture and electrical appliances were likely targeted at married couples. Accordingly, these advertisements suggest that the popular correspondence in these two magazines may underrepresent the proportion of professionals within the readership. The information available from the 1976 census similarly supports a more limited role for students within the readership: already-employed middle class professionals dwarfed students numerically, representing 15.7 percent of the population compared to the 1.44 percent of Egyptians who studied in universities during this period. One should not assume, however, that middle class professionals participated in Islamic magazines in proportion to their numerical weight as the statistical profile of popular participants describes the dynamic within the magazine rather than broader demographic trends within Egypt.

IV. Conclusion

Islamic magazines served as a crucial site for the formation of textual and social practices in the opening half-decade of Egypt’s Islamic Revival. These three magazines provided religious elites with an opportunity to shape middle class readers outside their direct supervision and, in turn, gave these readers the opportunity to participate in the formation of competing projects of religious mobilization from their homes and offices in Cairo, Alexandria, the Nile Delta and Upper Egypt. These popular participants, Statist

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63 Within the 20-25 age group, 1.678 million had yet to marry while 149,936 were married. By contrast, in the 25-30 age group, the numbers are reversed: 695,000 are unmarried while 1.757 million are married. Ibid. p. 159.
64 Ibid.
and Islamist, all faced socioeconomic frustration; their religious preferences, however, emerged out of competing programs of religious mobilization rather than solely from the mobilization efforts of Islamist elites challenging a religiously-inert regime.

Collectively, these readers provide a window into the geographic, socioeconomic and gender dynamics of the opening years of the Islamic Revival in Egypt. At the intersection of state educational policies, economic shifts and mass media, religious elites and middle class Egyptians engaged in a project of public morality from differing positions of power. Piety served as a source of social distinction premised on literacy, and aspirants to piety used their textual access to establish a place for their participation and to push religious elites to amend their prescriptions to fit local realities. It is to the textual dynamics of Islamic magazines that we now turn.
A Method to the Medium: Textual Authority and Islamic Magazines

Tens, even hundreds, of thousands of middle class Egyptians flocked to read Islamic magazines between 1976 and 1981. As they read, they followed in the path of their parents and, for the privileged among them, their grandparents. Since the 1880s, scholars and laymen in Egypt and elsewhere had claimed authority to define religion through the pages of periodicals. Preceding generations had also participated in Islamic magazines – alongside non-Islamic print media – through regular fatwa sections.¹ Indeed, during the first half of the 20th century, correspondence through fatwa requests became the norm as readers wrote to ask about anything from inheritance law to dietary restrictions to ritual precision.²

Despite these continuities, Islamic magazines between 1976 and 1981 reveal two key ruptures. The most notable shift lay in the changing function of Islamic magazines. Instead of serving as a site for the reproduction of elite intellectual authority and transmission of elite proposals of political reform,³ editors and writers used these periodicals to recruit a middle class audience into competing projects of religious respectability. By contrast, such a project of mass mobilization through print media was hardly possibly at the turn of the century: literacy stood at 5.4 percent in 1907, while by

¹ Rashid Rida’s Majalat al-Manar contained a regular and extensive fatwa section, as did al-Azhar, published by the Grand Sheikh office at the mosque-seminary complex of the same name.
² This is not to suggest, however, that all magazines enabled the same level of reader participation. For contrasting examples, note Rida’s al-Manar, which featured a regular fatwa section, and Muhhib al-Din al-Khatib Majallat al-Fath, which featured no reader participation.
³ As Dyala Hamza notes, Rashid Rida’s Majalat al-Manar redefined the broader function of Islamic periodicals to encompass the social contract itself. See Dyala Hamzah, “Muhammad Rashid Rida or: The Importance of Being (a) Journalist,” in Heike Bock, Jörg Feuchter & Michi Knecht (Eds.), Religion and its Other: Secular and Sacral Concepts and Practices in Interaction. New York: Campus, 2008, p. 61. By contrast, al-Azhar’s focus was far more on the reproduction of scholarly authority in its pages through mass media though, of course, this new site necessarily transformed these interpretative claims and on some level removed the need to approach the scholar in person to receive his ruling.
1976 it had reached 43 percent. Similarly, as the first and second chapters note, increased literacy rates were complemented by urbanization and an expanded postal system. It was in this context that elites competed to mobilize readers throughout not only Cairo and Alexandria but also the Nile Delta and Upper Egypt.

This change in function was accompanied by an adjustment in form as the fatwa section was expanded and complemented by a separate space for letters to the editor. These were projects that not only provided readers with a blueprint for pious living, but also depended on them to communicate the challenges that this vision posed in daily practice. Textual elites sought reader participation not because they championed the independent reader (or wished to undercut their own monopoly on textual authority), but because the success of their respective projects depended on reader feedback and they lacked easy alternative avenues for such feedback. For this generation of literate Egyptians educated in the state system, the 1970s represented the first opportunity to participate in competing projects of piety that depended on their on-the-ground reports.

It was thus out of the opportunity to participate in these competing projects of religious respectability, rather than the novelty of the “Islamic periodical” per se, that readers, alongside editors and writers, sought to understand and map their respective roles. What was to be the role of readers? To what extent could they challenge editors and writers? What were the issues that they could raise in a letter to the editor and a fatwa request, and how did the two formats differ? Conversely, what were the claims to authority that editors and writers made vis a vis readers, and how were these claims both broadened and fragmented by the medium of the magazine? Finally, how did debates

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over textual authority shape negotiations of multiple projects of religious piety during this period? What can we learn from the differences between the readers’ role in textual theory and their position in pious practice?

The following two chapters will tackle the two components of this question: the practices of editing, writing and reading on the one hand, and the concept of the “Islamic” magazine, on the other. Previous histories of the period have largely narrated this story and the religious debates it provoked over the following decades as one of the ascendance of Islamists over the state or of laymen over scholars. By contrast, this chapter evaluates whether such a shift occurred and proceeds on the premise that negotiations of religious authority are indelibly shaped by and inseparable from the site(s) at which they occur and the broader projects of religious change in which these sites are enmeshed.

Editors and writers published for an audience that was surrounded by a plethora of printed material, whether wall posters (majallat al-ha’it) and student newspapers at universities, or an array of newspapers or magazines at street-side newspaper stands and kiosks. This proliferation of reading material complemented the priorities of the Egyptian

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5 For example, Jakob Skovgaard Petersen notes the growing importance of laymen in religious matters in 20th century Egypt. See Skovgaard-Petersen, Defining Islam for the Egyptian State, p. 155. Richard Mitchell’s landmark study of the Muslim Brotherhood similarly highlights the lay-background of many of its members and “a more consciously ‘scientific’ approach to the problem of Islam.” See Richard P. Mitchell, The Society of the Muslim Brothers. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 189. Eickelman and Anderson contribute considerable nuance to this discussion by highlighting not merely the question of participants but also the dynamics of the debate itself; what they refer to as the “re-intellectualization” of Islam involves the use of both vernacular and methods of reasoning which “draw on wider, less exclusive or erudite bodies of knowledge, including those of applied sciences, and engineering.” See Dale Eickelman and Jon Anderson, New Media in the Muslim World: the Emerging Public Sphere. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003, p. 12. This chapter draws on Eickelman and Anderson’s focus on discourse but instead of focusing on the shift in systems of reasoning across media, it looks at the negotiation of textual authority at a particular media site.

6 For a depiction of such “wall magazines,” see Hasan Imam, Dir. Pay Attention to Zuzu (Khalli Balak min Zuzu) Cairo: n.p. For more information on this film and its depiction of Islamists on Egyptian university campuses in the 1970s, see Walter Armbrust, Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt, pp. 117-125.
educational system. For instance, a 1961 elementary school instructional manual published by the Ministry of Education directed fifth and sixth grade teachers to train their students in silent reading (al-qira’a al-samita) and to encourage reading of magazines and newspapers outside the classroom. Written material, of course, was not the sole media available; audiocassette sermons first proliferated during this period, and Sadat sought to channel public religious debate through Egyptian television, most notably through the repeated appearance of Sheikh Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha’rawi. Yet, print media, unlike audiocassettes or television, provided religious elites with a means of speaking with, rather than merely to, middle class readers throughout Egypt. It was in this context that religious elites and their audiences began to navigate the medium of Islamic magazines as they pursued multiple projects of religious respectability.

How did editors and writers adjust their claims of authority to incorporate the necessity of popular participation and how did readers define their contributions? In line with recent anthropological studies of Islam, this chapter takes extra-institutional activities (here, the production and consumption of Islamic magazines) as a site of religious practice. The question, however, is not only whether participation in Islamic

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8 For a discussion of the disruptive role of audiocassettes, see Charles Hirschkind, The Ethical Soundscape. For the public televised debates of this period, see Patrick Gaffney, The Prophet and the Pulpit, p. 267.
9 Recent anthropological scholarship has highlighted the value of focusing on practice in questions of religious authority. This can involve media as in the case of Charles Hirschkind’s ethnography of sermon audiocassette listening practices in 1990s Cairo. See Hirschkind, The Ethical Soundscape. It can also be wholly separate from media, as in Lara Deeb’s ethnography of processes of “authentication” among Shi’i women in the Dahiyaa suburb of Beirut. Deeb explores how these women make public religious claims to serve the community’s interests through practices of dress, behavior and charity. Deeb’s work, in particular, acknowledges popular textual consumption as well. See Lara Deeb, An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi’i Lebanon. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006. This chapter seeks to take the question of practice further by looking at how it is negotiated among elites and their constituencies.
magazines should be considered a form of religious practice, but also what it can reveal about concurrent projects of religious respectability.

While previous studies of mass-mediated religion emphasize the ways in which particular media forms shape the nature of claims to religious authority, and a recent study of the mediation of diverse calls to Islam in Morocco highlights related processes of subject formation, there is little discussion of how a medium’s rules, expectations and norms of negotiation are established. This omission, in turn, obscures the logic by which projects that arise from media are themselves negotiated and performed. To answer the question of how this particular media form shaped projects of religious piety, this chapter draws on histories of reading in Europe to sketch the “interpretative community” of Islamic magazines. Though lines were drawn within these texts, they would soon reverberate outside them.

Accordingly, this chapter examines how editors, writers and readers constituted themselves and one another through the pages of these magazines, particularly the letters to the editor and fatwa sections. As all four magazines grew more interactive, editors, writers and muftis increasingly felt a need to acknowledge the interactivity of the medium, even as they maintained an authoritative position. In parallel, readers

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12 As Roger Chartier notes, such communities are simultaneous to the act of reading: “Guided or trapped, the reader invariably finds himself inscribed in the text, but in turn the text is itself inscribed variously in its different readers. See Chartier, “Texts, Printings, Readings,” p. 157. Robert Darnton makes a similar point. See Darnton, The Kiss of Lamourette, p. 100.
13 I group the men who served as muftis in all four magazines along with writers of articles because both worked within the same interpretative community and faced many of the same constraints and opportunities as they spoke to a mass audience. As this chapter will demonstrate, however, their claims to textual—and religious—authority differed.
14 As Aileen Fyfe notes in her study of popular science publishing by Evangelicals in nineteenth century Victorian Britain, editors and writers sought to develop a “Christian tone” in which they could present
attempted to articulate an active position that could challenge a dichotomy of production/consumption. Through these relational claims to authority, editors, writers and readers emerged as participants in projects that were continuous with previous anxieties of textual production, while also distinct in the degree of their engagement with reader input.

I. Gatekeepers of the Truth? The Ambiguous Function of Editorial Elites

The position of magazine editor was not one that had a clear predecessor in Islamic history. While the scholarly tradition makes room for editors, this is a role that involved the canonization of and elaboration on existing texts, rather than the creation of explicitly new ones. Magazine editors, by contrast, served as gatekeepers of the pages under their purview, selecting and rejecting cover art, articles and letters to the editor. The religious basis of such claims to authority, however, was less clear.

In the first half of the 20th century, two main streams of thought had emerged on the relationship between periodical editing and Islam. Rashid Rida was among the most self-conscious about the implications of editorial intervention and in the June 30 1917 issue of al-Manar, he explained:

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15 The field of Hadith studies speaks specifically to this process by which prominent hadith scholars engaged in the process of *Tahqiq* (verification) in the creation of authoritative hadith collections of the Sunni tradition. As Joel Blecher has recently shown with reference to the titles (*tarajim*) in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith experts also articulated their own editorial function in terms of “the recovery of the canon’s ‘original meaning’ as the commentator inherited it, and the uncovering of an ‘original’ meaning that a canon may offer to a commentator’s contemporary milieu.” See Joel Blecher, “In the Shade of the *Sahih*: Politics, Culture and Innovation in an Islamic Commentary Tradition”. Unpublished Dissertation, Princeton University, 2013, p. 2.
[Although] we call [people] to God based on foresight (basira) and we write based on knowledge (‘ilm) and clear proof (bayyina), we still, like all others, are prone to mistakes (al-khata) and errors (ghalat)... as is the nature of those who are not infallible (ghayr al-ma’sumin) among humankind and for this reason we call on the readers of al-Manar...to write and inform us of the mistakes and erroneous impressions (awham) so that we can then inform other readers of these mistakes...”

As Dyala Hamza has shown, Rida’s appeal was based not on a textual interpretative monopoly but rather on a claim as a public intellectual (katib ‘amm) who sought to effect political change.17

By contrast, Rida’s contemporaries in al-Azhar were far more hesitant to acknowledge vulnerability to their readers. On the occasion of the thirteenth anniversary of al-Azhar in January 1941, editor Muhammad Farid Wajdi (d.1954) noted that “the transmission of the words of the possessor of virtue (sahib al-fadila) [i.e. the Sheikh of al-Azhar] at official occasions...and of beneficial studies (al-buhuth al-mustafida) account for the esteem with which readers hold this journal.”18 By the late 1970s, however, even al-Azhar would acknowledge its editorial function in the face of the changing role of these periodicals as tools of not merely mass transmission but also popular feedback.

Whether one followed the basic assumptions of Rida or Wajdi, reader participation through fatwa requests and letters to the editor pushed editors to clarify their role. Frequently, this challenge was met through editorial obfuscation: in a celebration of the twenty-eighth anniversary of the first issue of its previous incarnation in 1951, al-Da‘wa asserted its tie (rabita) with the reader, one based not on a political party (hizb) but rather

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on a shared connection to God. As part of this collaborative effort, editors later urged readers “to send us all your opinions and ideas….to your magazine” (*ila majallatikum*, italics added). In those cases when letters were not published, editors reassured readers that this was not an editorial decision, but rather a material necessity as “we respect every opinion and idea…sent to us…and apologize to anyone whose letters we haven’t been able to publish.” Were we to take the editors’ claims at face value, material obstacles were the only limit on reader expression.

Reader participation, however, had to be situated within a religious frame. While *al-Da’wa*'s editorial staff benefits from “letters that criticize us” (*al-rasa’il allati tanquduna*), such criticism was most productively rendered based on the “starting point of Nasiha” (*min muntalaq al-Nasiha*). By Nasiha, the editorial staff invoked a religiously sanctioned form of socio-political criticism that assumed the legitimacy of those in authority. In this way, free opinion, sanctioned criticism and elite religious authority could go hand in hand: readers could criticize editors and writers while simultaneously reaffirming the broader claims of this textual order.

*Al-I’tisam* similarly claimed to serve as a site of free opinion produced by fallible yet sincere editors. It acknowledged its fallibility early on as one that stemmed not from a

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21 Ibid.
23 In the contemporary Middle East, *Nasiha* has multiple uses, some of which confirm the political hierarchy and others of which open up opportunities for non-elites. As Talal Asad notes, the contemporary Saudi Arabian context reveals both types of practice. In the case of the former, rulers can engage in nasiha towards their population by “Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil” (*al-Amr bil-Ma’ruf wa-l-Nahi ‘an al-Munkar*) among them. In the case of the latter, ‘ulama can criticize a ruler through *Nasiha* while still accepting the government’s religious legitimacy and society as Islamic. In this way, the format of *Nasiha* “does not simply legitimate the ruler but binds him.” See Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993, p. 217. I argue that *al-Da’wa* invites its readers to engage in *Nasiha* in its second form in ways that both mold an “active” participant and reaffirm the Islamic nature of *al-Da’wa*. 
lack of sincerity or commitment but rather from material circumstances. In this vein, an
editorial note in the May 1977 issue apologized to the readers whose letters were not
published due to “technical circumstances” (al-zuruf al-fanniyya). Yet, as the opening
editorial in November of the same year made clear, al-‘Itisam was nonetheless capable of
serving as a magazine of “the faithful position…the enlightening remark…and the free
opinion” (al-mawqif al-sadiq...wa-l-kalima al-mudi‘a...wa-l-ra‘i al-hurr).

Similarly, editor-in-chief Hasan ‘Ashur argued that the magazine “does not advocate for one
candidate or another…[rather] it proceeds on an exclusively Islamic basis” (tantaliq min
qa‘ida Islamiyya bahta). An ostensibly unambiguous Islam was to undergird al-‘Itisam.

The dual claims to free expression and a “completely Islamic basis,” though, co-
existed uneasily. Unlike in the instance of al-Da‘wa’s recourse to Nasiha, in which the
religious legitimacy of multiple views was assumed within certain limits, al-‘Itisam
readers were not granted license to challenge the magazine’s exclusive claim to Islam and
thus the scope of “free opinion” was substantially narrowed. There was no room for
critical letters, even those based on Nasiha; instead, the faults of al-‘Itisam’s editors
could only be technical.

In contrast to the claim of al-Da‘wa to a shared tie with the reader to the divine and al-
‘Itisam’s “Islamic basis,” Minbar al-Islam defined its role as one of pure transmission of
writers’ and readers’ ideas alike. In response to a January 1976 letter, section editor Fu‘ad
Hayba thanked the reader for his contribution and explained that “every sound work (kull
‘amal salih) is published somewhere in the magazine.” More broadly, Minbar al-Islam

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26 Hasan ‘Ashur, “‘Alawi Hafiz Yarud ‘ala al-‘Itisam,” al-‘Itisam, January 1976/Shawwal 1396, p. 34.
sought to transmit “free opinions, purposeful conversations and recommendations….all based on piety” (al-ra’i al-hurr wa-l-munaqashat al-hadifa wa-l-tawsiyat… ‘ala asas taqwat Allah).\textsuperscript{28} Indeed, letters represented the lifeblood of the magazine and, in the July 1979 issue, Hayba exclaimed: “Your letters, truly, are the best thing that surrounds those who edit the magazine and produce it…” (al-qa’imin ‘ala tahrir al-majalla wa-isdariha).\textsuperscript{29} With such claims, how did Statist textual elites explain editorial selection?

Unlike its Islamist competitors, the editors of \textit{Minbar al-Islam} found it more difficult to attribute the exclusions of their editing practices to technical or material difficulties as Statist periodicals were fully funded by the state institutions to which they were tied. Instead, in the March 1979 issue, Hayba explained: “I have found myself going through nearly two hundred letters [an issue]…and there is [I have] an immediate feeling that I will not have sufficient time to explore the content of these letters…”\textsuperscript{30} When he faced the accusations of editorial neglect, Hayba sought to respond to them through an appeal to editorial authority. In the May 1981 issue, he printed a response to an unnamed reader’s “rebuke” (‘itab), explaining that the “magazine values every letter [and] every article….and in light of the many letters that arrived from readers, it gives every word its place” (tu’ti li-kull kalima munasabatiha al-khassa bi-ha).\textsuperscript{31} Like its Islamist counterparts, \textit{Minbar al-Islam} sought to hide editorial intervention. Without a plausible excuse of technical limitations, Fu’ad Hayba could only claim insufficient time.

\textit{Al-Azhar}, which did not contain letters to the editor until 1981, felt little need to elaborate on its editorial position until the final year of Sadat’s rule. In the March 1981

\textsuperscript{29} “Ma’ al-Qurra,” \textit{Minbar al-Islam}, July 1979/Sha’ban 1399, p. 121.
issue, however, both letters to the editor and an editorial comment appeared. Editor-in-
Chief ‘Abd al-Mu‘ti al-Bayyumi addressed the reader for the first time: “My brother the
reader (akhi al-qari), you will see new things in this issue and we have taken steps to
begin its [al-Azhar’s] comprehensive development” (tatwiruha al-shamil). Al-Bayyumi
proceeded to note the magazine’s noble history deriving from its connection to al-Azhar
mosque and its role in serving as a “receptacle for the thought of the geniuses who wrote
within it” (wi‘a li-fikr al-‘abaqira alladhina katabu fiha). Al-Bayyumi shifted from
implicit denial of the editorial role of al-Azhar in its preceding history (a mere
“receptacle”) to an equally concerted effort to obscure his own position by asking the
writers and readers of al-Azhar to share their “thoughts and suggestions” (bi-fikrikum wa-
iqtirahatikum) with the magazine.32 Later in this issue, a new section, “So Write the
Readers” (Hakadha Yaktub al-Qurra), appeared. The editorial shift at al-Azhar was in
full swing.

As this section has illustrated, the role of editors was largely defined in relation to
reader correspondence. Though the question of editorial intervention was not new to this
period, it was exacerbated by the explicit acceptance or rejection of certain reader letters.
It was in this context that readers sought to make sense of and to critique these editorial
claims to provide a free (and unedited) space. Though they did not challenge editorial
claims to non-intervention, readers nonetheless claimed the right to suggest editorial
improvements. An Egyptian engineer and al-Da‘wa reader, al-Sayyid Abu al-Nur
Muhammad, made clear his expectations:

Lessening the number of long articles and distributing those which you publish
among multiple issues as occurred in issue number 11 [April 1977/Jumada al-Ula

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Concision (‘adad al-itala) in any one article…indeed, al-Da‘wa magazine is a journalistic (emphasis mine) magazine (majalla sihafiyya) and is distinct from all other Islamic journals (majallat)…the Reader [also] wants to know the Islamic position (ra‘i al-Islam) on the many problems of the age and what he experiences in daily life, socially, politically and economically…[also] where are the intelligent journalistic investigations (al-tahqiqat al-sihafiyya al-dhakiyya)?...[additionally] the magazine must comment on current events, both local and global…

Readers similarly were conscious of their role and sensitive to being marginalized; a January 1979 letter asks why the magazine has not implemented “reader recommendations” (al-iqtirahat allati yab‘ath biha al-qurra). If the editors themselves could not be challenged explicitly, readers could still debate the choices these editors made as they published the magazine.

The simultaneous affirmation of editorial prerogative and claim to editorial input was not unique to al-Da‘wa. A letter from Ibrahim ‘Awad appeared in the March 1976 issue of al-I‘tisam and praised the magazine for being “frank and free” (sariha wa jari‘a) in the face of unspecified political and religious challenges. It then proceeded to offer a laundry list of improvements:

We hope that you will include literary and artistic studies (al-dirasat al-adabiyya wa-l-faniyya) …as such topics can serve as entry-point for the souls and minds of youth and the intelligentsia (madkhalan li-nufus wa-‘uqul wa dama‘ir al-shabab wa-l-muthaqqafin)…[and insofar as] Islam is a religion which includes all the needs and interests of the person, whether social, political or artistic, I also ask that the emotional bent (al-naz‘a al-infi‘aliyya) be lessened and that its intellectual and analytical bent (al-naz‘a al-fikriyya wa-l-tahliliyya) be strengthened.

Like in al-Da‘wa, however, readers also continually reaffirmed the importance of the editorial role. In both cases, readers negotiated a de-facto right to editorial input even as they never questioned that the editors themselves were in control.

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34 “Barid al-Da‘wa,” al-Da‘wa, January 1979/Safar 1399, p. 64.
Minbar al-Islam’s readers, though they requested new topics, were limited by the magazine’s claim to strict transmission and could not speak of the magazine as a site of free discussion. Hints of this desire, though, abounded. Like their peers, they requested new and different topics, such as a comparison of man-made legislation with its divine counterpart. 36 Readers also pushed for additional space: a February 1976 letter began with effusive praise (“I wish to express to you through these lines the pleasure and delight I get from your magazine”), before suggesting an additional section in which issues raised by readers could be discussed and writers could respond.37 In all three cases in which readers had the opportunity to contest editorial practice and to suggest their own contributions, they did so, yet at the same time, they did not challenge the basic claims made by editors to “objective” editorial practice. By contrast, the readers of al-Azhar first had the opportunity to send letters only in 1981 and, in the course of this year, did not comment on the magazine’s editorial practices.

Editors emerged from these negotiations both empowered and vulnerable. It is impossible to know whether the lack of challenges to editorial practice stemmed from the absence of readers who challenged this claim or from active silencing of these voices by editors. Notwithstanding the unavoidable uncertainty in this regard spot, what editors did publish illustrated the latitude they needed to grant readers so as to mobilize them in a particular project of religious respectability and the ways in which readers took advantage of this opening to raise new questions.

II. Writing within the Lines of Tradition

If the practice of editing was one of explicit debate, the negotiation of the authority to write an “Islamic” article was subtler. The act of writing in the periodical did not complicate textual authority any more than the decision to publish a scholarly treatise, and al-Azhar contained many essays in which scholars communicated with one another. More common among all four periodicals, however, were shorter entries that spoke in the language of contemporary political debate and targeted religious elites, laymen and middle class readers, alike. The question that remained, however, was how to conceptualize this practice of writing as Islamic if the writer’s role exceeded ostensibly straightforward transmission of the truth. In this setting, Islamist writers melded appeals to professionalism and piety, while their peers in Minbar al-Islam and al-Azhar made more conventional—though no less discontinuous—claims to represent a traditional order of textual production.

As in the case of editing, the rupture between 1976 and 1981 lay less in the anxiety of textual production as such than in the capacity of writing to mobilize readers around a project of religious transformation. In the early 20th century, the question of sound writing had revolved around the assumed relationship between professionalism and the capacity to fulfill the leadership role of elites as critical public intellectuals.38 By 1976, the broader litmus test had become the ability to mobilize readers.

Writers in both al-Da’wa and al-I’tisam saw writing as a religious obligation dependent on melding the modern science of mass media, religious commitment and social relevance. In August 1977, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Quddus argued for a combination of ‘ilm (science) and iman (faith); in this article, ‘Abd al-Quddus asked rhetorically,

38 See Hamzah, “Muhammad Rashid Rida or: The Importance of Being (a) Journalist,” p. 61.
“[H]ow can they [journalists] express the reality of society when they don’t know it in the first place?”39 While faith enabled deep knowledge of society, alienation had yielded a variety of ills, including Communist youth who mock religion and religiously radical youth (shabab mutatarrif diniyyan). ‘Abd al-Quddus’s claim to the necessity of sound training was not merely an endorsement of the mission of “Islamic journalism”; it was also an indictment of the current political system, which trumpeted “science and faith” yet let “un-Islamic” influences abound, and of an educational system that produced morally-deficient and culturally-alienated journalists.

Writers in al-I’tisam, like those in their sister Islamist magazine, argued for a combination of journalistic training and theological rectitude. An unsigned article in the December 1977 issue, titled “The Reality of Islamic Journalism” (Waqqi‘ al-Sihafa al-Islamiyya), expressed concern that most Islamic writers (kuttab isliamiyyun) are not journalists (sihafiyyun) by training. This distance from the “journalistic environment” (al-jaww al-sihafi) makes it difficult for them to reach the population in comparison with their Marxist and Socialist competitors. To correct this problem, Islamic writers must meld faith (iman), conscience (al-wa‘i) and knowledge (al-ma’rifa) based on professional expertise (al-khibra al-mihniyya).40 An ideal Islamic journalist could still be trained.

The challenge posed by al-I’tisam, however, was not resolved. Two years later, the magazine began a series titled “Islamic Media: From Interest to Religious Commitment” (al-I’lam al-Islami: Min al-Ihtimam Ila al-Itizam), which sought to tackle this question in greater detail. In the second part of this series, Doctor Yusuf al-Hijji argued against a piecemeal approach to this question. It was not merely a matter of “repairing and

patching” (al-tarmim wa-l-tarqi’); rather, a combination of technical skill and religious commitment (al-iltizam) and righteousness (al-salah) was required. Writers in both al-Da’wa and al-I’tisam believed that piety and professionalism would tie Islamic writers to their society and carry their project forward.

While the readers of al-I’tisam were silent or silenced on the question of writing, their peers in al-Da’wa were keen to explore the purpose and religious standing of writing. Three months prior to ‘Abd al-Quddus’s article, Mani ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmud had written a letter to the magazine titled “al-Da’wa Magazine Proceeds Along the Lines of the Islamic Program” (al-Minhaj al-Islami). For Mahmud, the obligation incumbent upon the writers of al-Da’wa was no less than a “program for moral training (minhaj al-tarbiya al-akhlaqiya) which follows Islam and its Shari’a…so that our modern youth are knowledgeable about all the affairs of their religion (kull umur dinihim)…” If the end goals of journalism were clear – in ‘Abd al-Quddus’s case, the spread of Islamism – readers like Mani ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmud pushed writers in al-Da’wa to define specific objectives within the Islamist project.

Other readers took pains to legitimate the practice of journalistic Islamic writing within traditional categories that paralleled the magazine’s broader claim to textual legitimacy. In the October 1976 issue, Abu Hurayra from Cairo asserted that:

There is no doubt that the publication and broadcasting of religious material…[whether] Quranic commentaries or explaining hadith…or Quranic judgments …or enjoining good and forbidding evil (al-Amr b-il-Ma’ruf wa-l-Nahi ‘an al-Munkar) and publishing news of the Islamic Umma such as spreading the Islamic call (da’wa), is a religious obligation enjoined by the everlasting Shari’a.” (fard tahtimu al-shari’a al-samad) 43

42 “Qurra al-Da’wa Yatahadathun Ilayha,” al-Da’wa, June 1977/Rajab 1397, p. 54.
In one fell swoop, this reader sought to justify the act of writing new texts by equating it not only with categories of religious practice (da‘wa, enjoining good and forbidding evil) open to laymen, but also with practices in which scholars had long engaged to spread knowledge of the authoritative account of the Prophet Muhammad’s life and Islamic law.

The invitation to writers, however, was neither open-ended nor unconditional. Mahmud al-Shura, a medical student at Tanta University, sought to draw attention to what he perceived as negative coverage of the 1979 Iranian revolution and the contrasting positive coverage of the deposed Shah’s arrival in Cairo by Egyptian media outlets. What is most revealing here, however, is not the specific issue of the Iranian revolution, but rather the notion of mediation presented by the reader. Al-Shura begins by arguing for individual intellectual responsibility: “let each free person take responsibility and let all those who possess a pen (kull dhi qalam) take responsibility for what he writes.”

This reader then urges writers to only base themselves on God:

Be pious in what you write (Itaqqu Allah fi ma taktubun) and in accordance with your fear of God (bi-qadr khawfikum min Allah), your fear of the people becomes weaker (yad‘af khawfukum min al-nas), and in accordance with your fear of the people, your fear of God becomes weaker. As a noble hadith says: “He who sees a wrong (munkar) should correct it with his hand, and if he was not capable [of this] with his tongue, and if not capable of this, with his heart, and this [the final option] is the weakest of faith.”

This multi-layered challenge warns of the dangers of popular whims and journalistic appeasement of these whims. The first part of the textual citation exhorts fidelity to religious duty in the face of a competitive media environment and political pressure. The latter citation complements the former by situating the obligation to write within a prophetic tradition (hadith) that sets out gradations of enjoining good and forbidding evil;

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in this scheme, the act of writing presumably falls under enjoining good and forbidding evil by one’s tongue. This fidelity, however, sits uncomfortably with the broader claim of this reader’s letter that responsible, free and sound Islamic thought can come not only from writers but also from readers. It is the challenge of successfully striking this balance that confronts those who write in Islamic magazines.

In contrast to the new claims to pious and professional writing of al-Da’wa and al-I’tisam, the writers of both Minbar al-Islam and al-Azhar claimed authority to write through ‘ilm (scholarly knowledge). The editorial staff of Minbar al-Islam contrasted its brand of writing—intellectual precedence (al-sabq al-‘ilmi)—with the typical journalistic approach of “precedence of publication” (al-sabq al-sihafi). Their appeal was knowledge, not breaking news of questionable veracity. Muhammad Kamal al-Din, who wrote a regular column titled “The Islamic Call and Communication” (al-Da’wa al-Islamiyya wa-l-I’lam) explained the act of writing in terms of political consultation: Islam is communication (i’lam) because it is the religion of Shura, whether in the home, at work, or in the actions of the ruler. Yet, this was a concept used commonly in discussions of an Islamic democratic system, rather than in journalistic debates; historically, it refers to practices of consultation enjoined by the Quran.

In this instance, Kamal al-Din re-appropriated Shura to place writers as arbiters of journalistic-turned-political authority. More broadly, the complementary claims made by the editorial staff and Kamal al-Din to writing brought together two categories—the claim

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46 This term can refer to both secular and religious knowledge. In the latter case, the ‘ulama are literally those characterized by ‘ilm. Scientists, too, are known as ‘ulama, but their discipline is always specified.
49 For a discussion of shura among “Islamic constitutionalists” in Egypt, many of whom had ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, see Bruce Rutherford, Egypt after Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam and Democracy in the Arab World, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, pp. 117-119.
to scholarly knowledge and that of political consultation with the population—to uphold the intellectual and political hierarchy. 50 Such a position can hardly be surprising for a magazine published under the aegis of the Ministry of Endowments.

Like Minbar al-Islam, the writers of al-Azhar conceptualized their role in traditional terms, though it took until 1979 for the publication to first tackle this question in any depth. Such hesitation was understandable: insofar as the writers of al-Azhar maintained a well-established claim as guardians of the Islamic tradition, there was little to be gained from defining this new medium, even if only as an extension of old scholarly practices. The walls of the Islamic Research Academy and the writers of al-Azhar, of course, could not divorce themselves from broader social changes, including those engendered by the spread of print media. The first hints of this challenge came in the November 1977 issue, when the magazine first made reference to “journalistic investigation” (tahqiq sihafi) in its pages. 51 This article was authored by none other than the popular Islamist layman, Jabir Rizq, further underscoring the permeability of the folds of al-Azhar even as the magazine remained primarily a voice of state-affiliated ‘ulama.

Neither could the question of writing be postponed indefinitely. With the flourishing of Islamic magazines outside of al-Azhar, the Islamic Research Academy’s ‘ulama had to articulate their own vision of writing. When this response appeared, it did so in considerable detail: titled “Forms of Communication in the Age of Prophecy,” the essay stretched some 16 pages and traced religiously oriented mass media to the formative period of Islamic history. Its core contention was that bearing witness to Islam involved

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50 For similar ideas, see an extended discussion among Muhammad ‘Abduh, Rashid Rida and Muhammad Iqbal on Ahl al-Hall wa-l-‘Aqd, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religious Authority and Internal Criticism. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 47-55.

the obligation of Da‘wa, and that the means of Da‘wa was “Communication” (al-I‘lam). As the author Muhammad Sayyid Muhammad explained, “Da‘wa through Communication is a continued movement [within Islam]” (al-I‘lam b-il-Da‘wa haraka da‘ima). In this formulation, mass communication and Da‘wa were inextricably linked. The case for communication—or, as the term “i‘lam” hinted at, media—as Islamic remained to be made. Accordingly, Muhammad proceeded to trace the history of such “communication” from the early call to Islam of the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca to the Prophet’s arrival in Medina, where he preached freely. The early Islamic community under the Prophet Muhammad was a media powerhouse, and the Prophet himself was a communications expert: as the author declares, “Da‘wa through communication was his life” (al-I‘lam b-il-Da‘wa kana hayatahu). Perhaps cognizant of the anachronistic play on communication as equivalent to modern mass media, the author attempted to resolve this tension by qualifying modern communication (al-I‘lam al-‘asri) as that which reaches a mass audience (al-itissal b-il-jamahir). Nonetheless, the anachronism remained insofar as the claim to communication as a deep-rooted Islamic practice was based on the vastly changed meaning of the Arabic term. As this Azhari scholar attempted to appropriate the evidently modern language of media, he sought to obscure the altered site at which ‘ulama found themselves.

The claims made by writers in all four magazines to textual authority sought to legitimize the role of writers as authorities arbiters of textual production. Al-Da‘wa and

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53 Ibid. p. 1500.
54 Ibid. p. 1502.
55 Lane notes that that the verb form from which this term is derived (form II) relates to the transmission of information. The verbal noun (I‘lam) is “particularly applied to quick information”. Edward William Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon. Beirut. Lebanon: Libraire Du Liban, 1968, Vol. 5, p. 424.
al-I’tisam explicitly acknowledged the role of journalistic training and sought to Islamize it through piety, while Minbar al-Islam and al-Azhar drew on more “traditional” categories, even as their use of these categories was no less discontinuous with previous models of textual production. All did so not because this challenge was new, but because all of these writers, scholars and laymen recognized that scholarly competitors could attack them for a poorly defined claim to textual authority.

Just as importantly, these claims undergirded their attempts to project themselves as religious authorities to a lay audience. While readers had commented regularly on these magazines’ editorial practice, they spoke far less about writing. Whereas editorial practice left room for graceful accommodations—technical difficulties, fallibility with regard to the needs of readers and so forth—the writer/reader relationship was far more direct and thus was more difficult for readers to challenge without appearing to aggressively encroach on the position of the writers. Conversely, editors were more likely to censor letters that directly criticized their periodical’s leading voices.

**III. Mass-Mediated Fatwas**

The textual claims made by writers, however, were not wholly unprecedented. All four magazines also hosted muftis who continued in the practice of issuing fatwas, albeit in ways shaped by the medium of print. Traditionally, a petitioner (mustafti) would request a ruling orally, whether locally or at a specific fatwa-issuing institution, and the mufti

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56 This process is distinguished by its privacy and orality as the petitioner (mustafti) secures an audience with the Mufti who rules on his or her case. Even in instances when the fatwa is also written down, the genre retains a “recitational” quality of immediate response by the Mufti. See Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, p. 149. The dynamics identified by Messick are still in existence; Hussein Ali Agrama’s recent study of the Fatwa Council at al-Azhar underscores the continued importance of this “traditional” mode of ifta. See Agrama, *Questioning Secularism*, pp. 160-187.
would respond on the spot. In this context, the mufti was considered to be the authoritative source of textual knowledge and thus knowledgeable (‘alim) as distinguished from the ignorant (jahil) petitioner.

The practice of ifta, however, was not one of complete mufti control as a well-crafted question could define the bounds of the mufti’s response by claiming particular facts (which the mufti must accept as such).\(^{57}\) This was no less the case for the periodical mufti. For example, in the case of the young man who complains about his desire to masturbate to avoid engaging in unlawful sexual activities, it is difficult (though not impossible) to inquire as to the circumstances under which this individual became sexually aroused.

The migration of the fatwa to print, also, opened up other possibilities. Though traditionally private, the magazine fatwa was transformed into a public dialogue; while a particular fatwa was ostensibly given in response to the istifta of a specific individual, the audience was the entire readership.\(^{58}\) Indeed, it is possible that the semi-anonymous nature of magazine ifta facilitated such questions. Yet, despite the unprecedented publicity of magazine fatwas, periodical-based ifta still had much in common with its oral counterpart.

Though the position of the mufti in these magazines was taken to be self-explanatory, it was also transformed to varying degrees by broader changes in which these magazines participated. Magazines each had several muftis, sometimes in successive order, other times alternating. Indeed, Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha’rawi even suggested to listeners that it is not sufficient to seek one fatwa; rather one should go to multiple muftis in order

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\(^{57}\) Masud, Messick, and Powers, "Theoretical Perspectives," in *Islamic Legal Interpretation*, p. 22.

to obtain the correct ruling (al-hukm al-sahih). Yet, this structure was still slanted towards scholarly elites, as all who wrote had obtained degrees in the Islamic Sciences from al-Azhar university.

Instead, the shift, found in varying degrees across the magazines, pertains to what petitioners might ask and, in the case of al-Da’wa, a blurring of the line between letters to the editor and fatwa requests. In al-Azhar and Minbar al-Islam, the role of the mufti was closer to the traditional model. This scholar, of course, had to respond to contemporary questions, such as the relationship between Communism and Islam. Nonetheless, the premise remained that this learned authority could authoritatively answer this question based on his grasp of the scholarly tradition. Though his interpretation might subsequently be debated, such challenge was to occur within the bounds of this tradition, rather than outside it. This was similarly the case in Minbar al-Islam and in al-I’tisam. Indeed, the latter reaffirmed the primacy of ‘ilm (and those who possessed it) on the top of the fatwa section through regular citation of a segment of Surat al-Nahl 16:43, which reads: “So ask the People of Knowledge if you do not know.” Though the medium of the magazine was far different from the oral practice of ifta, al-Azhar, Minbar al-Islam and al-I’tisam maintained a similar assumption of religious authority by not questioning – or providing space to question – how popular magazines meshed with this model of religious adjudication.

61 This is taken by other Salafis to refer to the ‘ulama. For example, in a 1993 lecture, leading Salafi thinker Nasr al-Din al-Albani (1914-1999) explained that the “People of the Message” (Ahl al-Dhikr) referred to in this verse were those responsible for informing the people of the rulings of God (Ahkam Allah) and not the ignorant (juhala). See Muhammad Nasr al-Din al-Albani, "Wujub Al-Tahari Fi-l-Fatwa." Mawqa’ al-Shaykh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani. Turath Al-Albani, n.d. Web. 02 Nov. 2013.
It is because of the silence of al-Azhar, Minbar al-Islam and al-I’tisam on the mufti’s role that al-Da’wa’s position is particularly striking. Like its sister periodicals, al-Da’wa maintained a regular fatwa section and utilized the ‘ulama within its ranks to respond to questions therein. Readers, however, played a central role in challenging fatwas that had been issued and in transforming the “question” of the fatwa into a political polemic. In the April 1979 issue of al-Da’wa, Muhammad ‘Abd Allah al-Khatib acknowledged the many letters which had arrived criticizing a previous fatwa he had issued, terming the reader’s responses a “noble rebuke” (‘itab karim).  

Al-Da’wa’s muftis were merely open to criticism, but also provided a space for readers to expand the bounds of the practice of istifta to include not only legal but also editorial questions. An example of this is found in the October 1976 issue. An engineer from Cairo, Mustafa Farghali, had two issues to raise, the first of which related to the religious status of women’s beauty products. His question, however, was not merely about these products. He also inquired why, if makeup was forbidden, al-Da’wa published advertisements for such products. This reader’s next question took aim at the magazine’s editorial policy: criticizing their positive depiction of the Islamic Caliphate in Turkey and the Imamate in Yemen, Farghali challenged the magazine’s decision to publicize these topics. Though most fatwa requests did not challenge the mufti’s position –let alone that of the editors and writers –as this one did, the presence of such correspondence in al-Da’wa reveals a blurring of the line between fatwa request and letter to the editor.

At the same time, though, the rupture represented by al-Da’wa’s fatwa section should not distract from the shifts, no less momentous, in the questions that the muftis of al-

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I‘tisam, Minbar al-Islam and al-Azhar sought to answer. Though muftis could choose to refuse to acknowledge their placement within magazines, readers explicitly grasped the practice of ifta not merely as a source of religious guidance but also as a site at which the practical implications of programmatic claims could be debated. This negotiation of authority, however, also depended on the practice of reading.

IV. The Rules of Reading

How was the “reader” of Islamic magazines constructed through exchanges among editors, writers and readers? The second chapter of this dissertation told the story of the actual readers of Islamic magazines of this period. By contrast, here I examine debates over the identity, practices and priorities of those who read as a lens to dynamics of subject formation in the competing projects of the Islamic Revival more broadly.

Who were the readers of Islamic magazines and how were they supposed to read? Both the al-Da‘wa editorial staff and its readers agreed that the Islamic magazine reader should be male and highly literate. In this vein, the sketch of writers in the “letters to the editor” section depicted men with a pen and paper, men who could not only read but also write. Editors were also concerned to depict a mass readership, not merely an intellectual elite: in the September 1976 issue, the editorial staff referred to the magazine’s “millions of readers” (maleyin al-qurra). Yet the editors of al-Da‘wa didn’t only aim for intellectualism: ‘Umar al-Tilmisani’s editorial note in the August 1976 issue exclaimed that the idea of al-Da‘wa had “arisen in live and pure hearts” (tara‘ra‘at al-fikra fi qulub hayya tahirah). A reader named Ibrahim al-‘Asqalani shared this sentiment, describing

64 “Barid al-Da‘wa,” al-Da‘wa, August 1976/Sha‘ban 1396, p. 71.
how he “yearned to see this magazine…” Editors and readers both spoke of the practice of magazine reading as one of intellectual and emotional fulfillment.

A division emerged among readers, however, over how highbrow al-Da’wa should be. Dr. Muhammad al-Sharif —apparently highly educated though the details of this education are ambiguous —praised al-Da’wa in the June 1977 issue for “speak[ing] to the mind and not to emotion” (tukhatib al-‘aql wa-laisa al-‘atifâ). Accordingly, he asked for a new “scientific section” (bab ‘ilmî) that would equip readers to engage in a more intellectual approach to Islam. By contrast, other readers were less interested in education and more interested in entertainment. A letter from a merchant, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Tamawi, explained as follows:

Most of the articles in the magazine are serious… and some of these articles make your mind tired from their depth (yut’ib al-‘aql min-‘umqîhî) and thus…[I recommend] setting pages aside for lighter writings (al-kitabat al-khañfîa) from which one can derive amusement (al-tasliya) during times of relaxation (awqat al-raha)...”

Editors and readers were thus divided over how the magazine should balance among intellect, emotion and entertainment.

The editors and writers of al-I’tisam similarly debated this balance. In the March 1977 issue, the editorial staff praised the letters that they had received whose writers “were able to deal with topics with deep clarity and understanding…we open our chests to all views and welcome the views of those who disagree with us, [whose letters] we discuss with objectivity, far from passion (nunaqishuha b-il-mawdu’iyya ba’ida ‘an al-infî’al). By contrast, a March 1978 letter from ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Zahir from the Delta town of

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66 “Barid al-Da’wa,” al-Da’wa, June 1976/Jumada al-Ukhra 1396, p. 61
68 Ibid.
Mansura was titled “al-I’tisam Magazine in our Conscience” and suggested a different conception of the magazine reading experience:

“I am among those addicted to reading al-I’tisam because it is my only breathing space (mutanaffas) which assures me that Egypt is still Muslim and Muslims are still noble…and it makes me happy to let you know that al-I’tisam penetrates the hearts (tunfidh ila al-qulub) because it is the only Islamic canon (al-midfa’ al-islami al-wahid) which hits the enemies of Islam….”

Thus, in both al-Da’wa and al-I’tisam, writers made claim to a “rational” and literate reader who consumes “intellectual” texts. While some readers agreed, others challenged this construction, instead preferring either emotional cultivation or entertainment.

While letters in both al-Da’wa and al-I’tisam emphasized entertainment and edification alike, letters in Minbar al-Islam emphasize a hyper-literate and rational consumer. Readers claimed regular participation: an October 1976 letter refers to its author as a “continued reader” (qari mustadim) and a year later, another reader with particular pretensions of intellectual gravitas noted that he reads not only Minbar al-Islam but also psychological and educational magazines. Some readers even took reading magazines so seriously that they regarded it as a basic religious obligation. As an anonymous letter from Cairo explained: “[Y]our magazine contains all that is beneficial (mufid)…and reading it is one of the highest ritual practices (min asma al-‘ibadat)…."

Readers of Minbar al-Islam –or at least those whose letters appeared- collectively presented themselves as a group less interested in appeals to emotion or entertainment than their Islamist magazine counterparts.

The readers of *al-Azhar* came into existence as active participants in 1981. Prior to this point, readers were effectively passive: in a 1977 article, writer Yahya Hashim discussed the threat posed by a particularly odious competitor, the leftist *Akhir Sa’a*. For Hashim, the danger was that “readers cannot help but stop in front of what they find in the article of *Akhir Sa’a*…”74 If in 1977, readers’ activities were dictated by writers, malevolent and benevolent, by 1981 they collectively formed a “just conscience” (*wa’i sa’ib*).75 As the author Muhamamd Rajab al-Bayyumi explains, the hope of *al-Azhar* is for the “sensitive reader” (*al-qari al-daqiq*) who can consume a magazine productively.76

The shift from passive reader to active participant was further solidified by *al-Azhar*’s shift from journal to magazine. Most notably, an editorial in the March 1981 issue asked readers to contribute their “thoughts and suggestions” (*bi-fikrihim wa iqtirahatihim*) to the editors.77 The previous absence of *al-Azhar*’s readers in the debates of editors and writers and in the pages of the magazine outside of the fatwa section reflect a traditional conception of knowledge transmission from the ‘*alim* (he who possesses ‘*ilm*) to the *jahil* (he who is ignorant of such knowledge). The shifts in this discourse over the course of 1981 and beyond merely underscored what had become increasingly obvious to *al-Azhar*’s editors by this point: readers had a role to play, whether in this periodical or in

76 Ibid.
that of a competitor, and it behooved the editors to define this role in a way that did not challenge their own claims.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter has examined how editors, writers and readers of Islamic magazines between 1976 and 1981 sought to define their place in a new interpretative community by negotiating novel roles that increasingly privileged middle class readers as participants in Islamic textual culture, while reaffirming the prerogative of religious elites to define the key frames of this project. These new opportunities for middle class readers—sometimes acknowledged, sometimes unspoken—went alongside a collaborative process as editors and writers constructed their own authority based on their claim to serve the needs of their audience, while muftis maintained greater separation yet still found themselves obligated to acknowledge mistakes.

Yet, even as the position of readers was dependent on an asymmetrical acceptance of the overarching claims of these elites, this imbalance should not obscure the creativity and even subversive response exhibited by readers. Though many letters affirmed the religious mandate of the editorial staff writers or muftis, readers simultaneously carved out a space for themselves as independent producers of thought and necessary voices of affirmation. Indeed, in their critique of editorial selection and suggestion of new topics, sections and methods of presentations, readers sought to edit the editors.

Paradoxically, however, the most difficult category to construct explicitly for the individual reader was his own. Though the actions of editors and writers could be critiqued and through such critique a claim to the reader’s role could be made, the readers
of all four magazines were ultimately unable to define their distinct role as readers and, in the instance of al-Azhar, physically lacked space to do so.\footnote{This is not to suggest that readers couldn’t imagine themselves as participants in a general sense; like the readers of Benedict Anderson’s \textit{Imagined Communities}, these readers fully understood themselves to be participating in their periodical of choice. For Anderson’s point regarding reader identity, see Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism}. New York: Verso, 1991, pp. 62-3.} If this was the case for letters to the editor, it was even more of an issue in the fatwa section, where the traditional distinction between ‘alim and jahil persisted to varying degrees. Nonetheless, readers represented a key participant in the broader discussion of textual interaction brought forth by Islamic magazines. If editors, writers and readers had negotiated their own positions more or less effectively, though, how did they navigate questions of textual authority and commercialization at the heart of the Islamic magazine?
High Tech Islam: “Islamic journalism,” Commercialization and Religious Authority

The capacity of Islamic magazines between 1976 and 1981 to serve as a medium of mass outreach was a source of opportunity and challenge for religious elites and middle class participants alike. It was not enough for editors, writers and readers to define their roles. Instead, the medium itself was inescapably bound up in competing claims of religious authority. Accordingly, this chapter explores the emergence of Islamic print media as a key site of religious mobilization during the second half of Sadat’s reign by asking a deceptively simple question: what were “Islamic magazines”? Or, put differently, how did editors and writers constitute a textual object that they called the “Islamic magazine” as both a “religious” and a “popular”, how did their readers react to these claims, and how did the tensions in this project foreshadow challenges within competing projects of religious mobilization?

Previous studies of Islamic print media treat this diverse domain as internally and externally static, telling a story in which Islamic journals (and magazines) are mere vessels which transmit and reflect the century long rise of Islam in the Egyptian public sphere.\(^1\) By contrast, this chapter highlights the relationship between textual authority, changing layout, and transformed sites of distribution. Most crucially, as religious elites appealed to middle class Egyptians through print media, they faced unprecedented commercialization both within the pages of the magazine and at their sites of distribution. In response, scholars and laymen alike sought to construct a tradition of “Islamic journalism” which legitimized their texts as religious while also adopting common visual features of the non-Islamic popular print media with which they competed. Although

\(^1\) For examples of this approach, see Anwar al-Jindi, *Tarikh al-Sihafa al-Islamiyya*, Muhammad Mansur Mahmud Hayba, *al-Sihafa al-Islamiyya fi Misr*. 

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readers felt little need to challenge the claim to textual legitimacy, they openly questioned the entanglement of religious production with commercial considerations.

Questions of popularity, technology and commercialization were marginal to Islamic periodicals in Egypt prior to the 1970s. In 1884, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897) and Muhammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905) founded the grandfather of Islamic periodicals, known as al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa (The Firmest Bond), from exile in Paris in order to spread Afghani’s Pan-Islamism and ‘Abduh’s calls for domestic reform within Egypt.² Though a crucial publication for many –Rashid Rida describes how it inspired him to “work for the unification of the Muslim world…[and to guide] the faithful to the ways of progress and modern civilization”³ – al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa was oriented towards religious and political elites, containing long essays and focused on opportunity for top down political reform.⁴ This elite emphasis was reflected in the periodical’s layout as it lacked crucial “magazine” features such as pictures, advertisements, advice columns, letters to the editor or even a fatwa column.⁵ With a literacy rate of lower than five percent at the time,⁶ periodicals were necessarily highbrow products.

In the aftermath of this early effort at “Islamic” publishing, journals of varying intellectual foci and priorities appeared, some directed at a scholarly audience and others

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⁴ See Keddie, Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography, pp. 140-2.
⁵ This textual distinction functions along a continuum: magazines are pitched at a lower educational level of writing, their layout includes far more pictures, and they publish essays, fiction, advice columns, advertisements, and letters to the editor rather than just essays. See Margaret Beetham, “Towards a Theory of Periodical Publishing as a Genre” in Brake, Jones and Madden Investigating Victorian Journalism. New York: St. Martin's, 1990, p. 24.
at scholars and laymen alike. Most prominently, Rashid Rida’s *al-Manar* sought to balance between intellectual bona fides and political relevance. Publishing bi-weekly, it included up-to-date news items during its first year but then shifted away from this feature as it sought to portray itself as a durable source of Islamic thought rather than print ephemera. Yet, even several decades after *al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa*, print remained an ineffective tool of grassroots political mobilization due to limited literacy. Just as importantly, Rida’s focus lay on a series of elite projects – a strengthened Ottoman Caliphate, alliance with Saudi Arabia, and the reform of Islamic education – and *al-Manar* enabled him to reach this audience.

Alongside Rida’s dreams of a revived Caliphate, other journals focused on domestic questions with comparatively little direct political relevance. Most prominently, *al-Azhar* (1930-present), published by the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar’s office, provided a space in which scholars in Egypt and abroad could discuss shared questions of textual interpretation and, secondarily, matters of Islamic educational reform. Form mirrored function and this periodical regularly featured long essays and made little effort to appeal to a broader audience in either content or presentation. Less scholarly though no less elite-centered, Muhhib al-Din al-Khatib’s *al-Fath* (1926-1947) was concerned with the

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8 In the case of *al-Manar*, this was a conscious editorial choice premised on this monthly periodical as a durable intellectual product, more similar to a book, rather than as a ephemeral source of news. For a discussion of this issue within *al-Manar*, see Muhammad Rashid Rida, “Muqaddamat al-Manar Thaniyya,” *al-Manar*. Cairo, Egypt: Matba‘at Majallat al-Manar al-Islamiyya, 1899, Vol. 2, p. 5.


10 I list *al-Azhar*’s publication dates, yet as noted in the previous chapter, this publication transitioned from journal to magazine in 1980.

In parallel, emergent Islamic social movements utilized the journal as a tool of ideological transmission. This shift was most notable in a succession of Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated publications: \textit{al-Nadhir} (1938-40), \textit{al-Ta’ruf} (March-August 1940), \textit{Majallat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin} (1942-1946), \textit{al-Shihab} (1947-8), \textit{Jaridat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin} (1946-1951), and the first iteration of \textit{al-Da’wa} (1951-6).\footnote{See al-Gindi, \textit{Tarikh al-Sihafa al-Islamiyya}, Vol. 1, pp. 12-13. Also see Shu‘ayb ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Ghubashi, \textit{Sihafat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin: Dirasa fi-l-Nash’a wa-l-Madmun, min 1933 ila 1952}. Cairo, Egypt; Dar al-Tawzi’ wa-l-Nashr al-Islamiyya, 2000, pp. 31-34.} In contrast to \textit{al-Azhar} or \textit{al-Manar}, these magazines and newspapers were centered on the Brotherhood’s aspirations for bottom-up religious change and, notwithstanding technological limitations, resembled magazines far more than they did journals.\footnote{Al-Ghubashi, \textit{Sihafat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin}, pp. 28-47. \textit{al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin}, a bi-weekly paper published by the Brotherhood, contained short articles along with advertisements for clothing and banking services, including Bank Misr. For example, see \textit{al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin}, 9 March 1937/26 Dhu al-Hijja 1355, p. 11. It did not include pictures, though this was likely due to technical difficulties rather than a lack of desire to appeal to a non-elite audience. The first iteration of \textit{al-Da’wa}, which appeared over a decade later and was published weekly, resembled daily Egyptian newspapers in both size and layout, featuring short articles and numerous advertisements. Like its successor publication, it contained full-page advertisements for companies with no obvious religious connection, such as Bank Misr and Egypt Air. For example, see \textit{al-Da’wa}, 7 July 1953/26 Shawwal 1372, p. 14.} At the same time, though, one should not overstate the extent of these periodicals’ diffusion given that \textit{al-Nadhir’s} circulation hovered around 5,000.\footnote{See al-Ghubashi, \textit{Sihafat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin}, p. 31.} The following decades would see a transformation in the format of Islamic periodicals and an expansion of their reach.
I. Selling the Islamic Magazine

The rise of Islamic magazines, and to a lesser extent newspapers, alongside journals provides crucial historical context to the centrality of such periodicals to competing religious projects under Sadat. A focus on these texts alone and the political and religious objectives that they served, however, obscures the ways in which changes in the production and distribution of Islamic print media precipitated new questions of textual authority.

This shift began within the folds of the magazine itself as these publications initially included a limited quantity of comparatively low-profile advertisements. By the 1970s, however, these magazines were replete with advertisements for everything from washing machines and carpets to pasta and desert. Instead of standing on the outer folds of the magazine or outside of them entirely, advertisements coursed through the heart of the magazine, constituting inescapable components of the reading experience.

The centrality of the advertisements was bound up in their economic function: magazines sold

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15 Al-Fath included advertisements, yet they were limited to the inner and outer cover. For example, see Muhhib al-Din al-Khatib, Majallat al-Fath, 12 January 1943/6 Muharram 1362. Cairo, Egypt: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1943, p. 16. Limited use of advertisements was often involuntary: Advertisements for the cinema, alcohol, cigarettes, smoking, women’s clothing, and even shaving blades were unacceptable to Brotherhood publications during this period. See Ghubashi, Sihafat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin, p. 47.

16 It is difficult to avoid reading advertisements alongside articles even if one seeks to focus on the latter. Indeed, as discussed in the first chapter, the assumption of advertising sales is the sale of the consumer’s attention to the advertiser. Crucially for our purposes here, the insertion of advertisements restructures the magazine experience. Sally Stein argues that it is not simply that the visual layout of magazines prevents a “straight, linear process” of apprehension; it is also that visual experience, rather than the text, that matters most in the consumption of the magazine. See Stein: “The Graphic Ordering of Desire: Modernization of a Middle-Class Women’s Magazine, 1914-1939” in Richard Bolton (ed.), The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992, pp. 145-162, especially pp. 145-6. In contrast to Stein, I do not focus on the relationship between layout, reading experience and meaning. Rather, I examine the narrower question of how the practices of editing, writing and reading were negotiated and how the Islamic magazine was defined as both a “religious” and “popular” text.
their readers’ attention to advertisers\textsuperscript{17} and, as a result, these textual interlopers were prominent participants in the layout of Islamic magazines.

The shift in the 1970s, however, was one of not only form but also distribution. Prior to the 1970s, Islamic periodicals arrived in the hands of their readers through mail, whether by subscription or simply as complimentary packages to associates of the editor,\textsuperscript{18} as well as through the offices of publishers.\textsuperscript{19} Indeed, issues of \textit{al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin} often included guides to distribution points for “Islamic papers and magazines” (\textit{al-jara‘id wa-l-majallat al-Islamiyya}) which included all Muslim Brotherhood branches (\textit{furū‘}), Muhhib al-Din al-Khatib’s Salafi bookstore (\textit{al-maktaba al-salafiyya}), a series of libraries and private residences throughout Cairo, Alexandria and the Nile Delta, and even locations in Fez (Morocco) and Tunis (Tunisia), respectively.\textsuperscript{20} These distribution systems involved coherent lines of transmission, intellectual and physical as readers received Islamic periodicals directly from their religiously authoritative producers and read them in the comfort of their homes or in the libraries of their mosques.

Even with such clear distribution systems, however, magazine elites still felt a need to emphasize the “religious” status of these texts. Indeed, the cover page of \textit{Jaridat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin} even featured a warning on top of its list of distribution sites:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item There were, of course, instances in which individuals or companies bought advertisements merely to support the magazine in question. Chapter 2 of this dissertation discusses the motives of advertisers within Islamic magazines in greater detail.
\item For example, \textit{al-Manar} was distributed by mail to residents of Egypt and Syria previously known to Rida. See Muhammad Rashid Rida, \textit{al-Manar}. Cairo, Egypt: Matba‘at al-Manar, 1327, Vol. 1, p. 3. This followed the method utilized by al-Afghani and ‘Abduh in the distribution of \textit{al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa} from Paris. See Afghani and ‘Abduh (auth.) Hadi Khasru Shahi (edit.), \textit{al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa: al-Athar al-Kamila}. Cairo, Egypt: Maktabat al-Shuruq, 2002, p. 102.
\item For example, \textit{al-Fath} was distributed through the offices of the Salafi Bookstore (\textit{al-maktaba al-salafiyya}) in Cairo as well as through subscriptions, while \textit{al-Azhar} was distributed through the Grand Sheikh’s Office (\textit{Mashyakhat al-Azhar}). Both also offered subscriptions by mail. For example, see Muhhib al-Din al-Khatib, \textit{al-Fath}, 21 June 1928/3 Muharram 1347, p. 17. \textit{Al-Azhar}, too, offered subscriptions and appears to have also been distributed through the al-Azhar printing house (\textit{Matba‘at al-Azhar}). See Mashyakhat al-Azhar, \textit{al-Azhar}, Sha‘ban 1360, p. 1.
\item For example, see \textit{Jaridat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin}, 29 Dhu al-Qa‘ada 1352, back page.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
“[P]reserve the cover (ghilaf) of the newspaper and its pages as it contains rituals of Islam (sha‘a‘ir al-Islam) and the noble verses of God (ayat Allah al-karima).” As Islamic periodicals migrated to mixed distribution systems, this anxiety over the implications of placement of ostensibly religious texts alongside their secular counterparts only grew.

By the 1970s, Islamic magazine distribution was enmeshed in an increasingly commercialized system of production and distribution. Consumerism, while present under Nasser, increased substantially under Sadat, particularly in the field of religious production. This included audiocassette sermons and popular Islamic books (islamiyyat), as well as more mundane items such as key chains, coloring books, prayer beads and stickers. Just as importantly, Islamic magazines were sold not in religious bookstores but rather at open-air book and newspaper sellers or kiosks. While scholarly tomes may have been for sale nearby, these magazines more frequently shared shelf space—or, more accurately, cardboard-cushioned pavement real estate—with secular periodicals and books and religious commodities. The religious nature of commercialized Islamic magazines of this period was thus at risk of being questioned in ways that it had not been prior.

The environment of commercial “disorder” that came with new consumerism and the full integration of advertisements alongside visions of piety necessitated a process by which the editors, writers and readers of Islamic magazines claimed, challenged and sought to stabilize these popular textual objects as “religious.” Never before had the inner

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21 Ibid.
22 For more on the consumerism of the Nasserist periods and its continuities into the Sadat period, see Mona Abaza, Changing Consumer Cultures of Modern Egypt: Cairo’s Urban Reshaping. Boston, MA: Brill, 2006, pp. 94-113.
24 Ibid. p. 59.
folds of magazines and the marketplace of ideas (and magazines) been so tied to economic processes with such tendentious connection to Islam. These questions joined longstanding debates over the authority to write and the motivations for publishing. Between 1976 and 1981, debates over these issues, old and new, played out as editors, writers and readers sought to constitute the “Islamic magazine” as a politically relevant, religiously legitimate, and commercially-competitive text.

This was no marginal issue. A January 1976 letter to the editor in al-I’tisam asked “[W]hy is it that the papers and magazines in Egypt, the state of faith and science, don’t begin with the basmala [In the name of God most gracious and most merciful]…as is the case in most of the papers of the Islamic states….I recommend that al-I’tisam begin with this so that it can be a model for other papers.” Strikingly, the reader’s challenge was immediately accepted: while the previous issues of al-I’tisam did not contain this invocation on its front cover, the issue in which this letter was published and all subsequent issues displayed it prominently. Indeed, all four magazines displayed the religious slogan on either the front cover or the opening page.

Editors also sought to designate Islamic magazines as religious through cover art. The use of such religious signifiers, of course, had significant precedent: al-Azhar had long featured the minarets of its namesake mosque and Minbar al-Islam had featured

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25 This was the slogan of Anwar al-Sadat’s regime. For Sadat, society was built on the dual pillars of science (‘ilm) and faith (iman). See Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Anatomy of Egypt’s Militant Islamic Groups,” in Egypt, Islam and Democracy, p. 4.
26 al-I’tisam, January 1976/Muharram 1396, p. 36.
cover images of Islamic sites and personalities throughout the 1960s. Continuous with these previous practices, al-Azhar consistently depicted its namesake’s dual minarets, al-Da’wa featured images of the Ka’ba, and both al-Da’wa and al-I’tisam featured the Dome of the Rock.

Islamic images and high tech production buttressed each other. Editors increasingly drew on new printing technology to produce glossy cover photographs that could project contemporary ideological sympathies. This technique, made possible by the arrival of photo-offset printing in 1975, provided new opportunities to compete with secular publications. Al-Da’wa covers pictured Muslim Brotherhood martyrs such as Sayyid Qutb, current leaders such as ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, non-Egyptian Islamists such as the Pakistani Abu’l A‘la Mawdudi, and Islamic causes such as the Jihad in Afghanistan.

Al-I’tisam employed a similar strategy, depicting martyrs such as Hasan al-Banna, Muslim Brotherhood leaders such as al-Tilmisani, prominent ‘ulama such as Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha‘rawi and Mujahidin in Afghanistan. Editors of the magazine similarly depicted an array of “anti-religious” enemies, whether the Soviet Union, Alawite Syrian leader Hafez al-Assad, or the Camp David Accords triumvirate

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30 The Ka’ba is a large cube-shaped building inside the Masjid al-Haram mosque in Mecca. It is considered the holiest site of Islam. For the image, see al-Da’wa January 1977/Safar 1397.
32 This is not to suggest that these periodicals avoided the use of images prior to the 1970s. Instead, it is to underscore the expanded use of such images and the context that propelled this practice.
33 al-Da’wa, October 1976/Shawwal 1396.
34 al-Da’wa September 1981/Dhu al-Qa‘da 1401.
35 al-Da’wa, August 1979, Ramadan 1399.
36 al-Da’wa, April 1980/Jumada al-Ula 1400.
38 al-I’tisam, June 1980/ Sha‘ban 1400.
41 al-I’tisam, July 1978/Sha‘ban 1398.
of Israeli premier Menachem Begin, American President Jimmy Carter and Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat. Attractive visual imagery of Islamic sites, leaders and causes thus framed the magazine as both Islamic and attractive to prospective readers.

II. Rewriting History

As editors and writers sought to lay claim to religious authority, they also needed to justify the Islamic magazine as a genre. Accordingly, all the publications, save al-Azhar, sought to construct a history of “Islamic journalism,” hermetically sealed from the history of Egyptian journalism, in which they could anchor their claims to textual authority. What was the tradition on which these editors drew? The ostensible founders of this trend –al-Afghani and ‘Abduh –give no hint in al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa that they considered themselves to be engaged in a distinct field of “Islamic journalism.” Neither did Rashid Rida speak of this category in al-Manar. Although he described his publication as an “Islamic periodical” (sahifa islamiyya), his claim to publish lay in teaching (ta’lim), public speech (khataba) and the promotion of good and forbidding of evil (al-amr bi-l-ma’ruf wa-l-nahi ‘an al-munkar), and this category does not appear in the entirety of al-Manar’s issues between 1898 and 1937. Along similar lines, Muhhib al-Din al-Khatib described al-Fath as an Islamic periodical (sahifa islamiyya), yet did not situate the journal within a broader history of such publications. Though these writers perceived themselves as engaging in Islamic journalism, they did not consider this category to

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42 Al-I’tisam, April-May 1981/Jumada al-Ula and Jumada al-Thaniyya. For al-Da’wa, see al-Da’wa, June 1981/Sha’ban 1401.

43 Al-I’tisam, September 1978/Shawwal 1398. For al-Da’wa, see the January 1979/Safar 1399 issue for Begin and the October 1977/Dhul-Qa’da issue for Carter. While al-I’tisam pictured the Camp David trio together, al-Da’wa did not include Sadat when depicting the other two leaders. The Brotherhood’s magazine, though, made its opposition to the Camp David Accords quite clear: Its May 1981/Rajab 1401 issue depicted the Dome of the Rock encircled by a Star of David-turned-padlock.

44 See Hamza, “Muhammad Rashid Rida or: The Importance of Being (a) Journalist,” p. 61.
constitute a distinct textual tradition or profession. Indeed, it was only in the 1980s that Arabic-language histories of Islamic journalism would appear.\(^{45}\)

By contrast, writers in *al-Da‘wa, al-I‘tisam* and *Minbar al-Islam* sought to transform Islamic journalism into an overarching category of textual legitimacy. An unsigned article in *al-Da‘wa* traced the current iteration of the magazine to Hasan al-Banna’s early efforts in this domain,\(^{46}\) while *al-I‘tisam* traced its history back further to *al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa, al-Manar* and *al-Azhar*.\(^ {47}\) This Salafi-Islamist periodical’s fidelity to this path – albeit armed with a new style – had emerged over the previous forty years during which the magazine “lived within the boundaries of the history of Islamic journalism in Egypt” (*‘asha*ṭ fi sutur tarikh al-sihafa al-Islamiyya fi Misr).\(^ {48}\) *Minbar al-Islam* made similar claims to emerge from the line of *al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa* and, in 1981, even reprinted several issues of the latter as a complementary addition to the regular issue.\(^ {49}\) Like *al-I‘tisam*, it could also point to a long history of publication as it had brought the “Muslim Masses” (*al-jumhur al-muslimin*) to the “correct opinion” (*al-ra‘i al-sahih*) for over two decades.\(^ {50}\) Notably, none of the magazines sought to write themselves into a broader history of journalism in Egypt; instead, they used these past milestones to create a “tradition” of Islamic journalism that did not need to compare itself with either broader journalism or genres of scholarly texts.

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Yet, more revealing than the commonality of the claim to membership within a “tradition” of Islamic journalism was the contention surrounding access to this designation in both past and present. *Minbar al-Islam*’s position on this front was most inclusive, though arguably for reasons of practicality. As a government-directed organ in a field dominated by Islamists, it sought to avoid unnecessary fights. In this vein, *Minbar al-Islam* cited a survey of Islamic magazines by the Union for Radio and Television (*Ittihad al-Idha’a wa-l-Tilifizyun*) that ranked it second overall in distribution, in front of a magazine with a “deeper rooted history” (*dhat tarikh akthar ‘araqatan*). The first place in this ranking was presumably *al-Da’wa*, while the magazine of prestige was *al-Azhar*.

*Al-Da’wa* and *al-I’tisam*, by contrast, were far more explicit in their refusal to grant the imprimatur of Islamic journalism to their Statist rivals, even as they lacked the ability to censor these competitors. The January 1977/Safar 1397 issue of *al-Da’wa* mocked “state-directed religious journalism” (*al-sihafa al-diniyya al-muwajjaha*) that sought to place religion “in the template of every political system….” (*fi qawalib kul nizam siyasi*). By contrast, true Islamic journalism possesses the “pulse of the truth” (*nabdat al-haqq*). Similarly, in the April/May 1981 issue of *al-I’tisam*, Muhammad ‘Abd Allah al-Saman declared: “[B]y the gallant writer (*al-katib al-humam*), I of course do not refer to those who write in *al-Azhar*, *al-Tasawwuf al-Islami*, or *Minbar al-Islam* …rather, I refer to *al-I’tisam*, which has been published for over forty years, and *al-Da’wa*, which

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53 Ibid.
has resumed its activities in recent years.”

The affinity among these two magazines extended to readers, however critical they may have been: a January 1979/Safar 1399 letter to the editor in *al-Da’wa* compared the level of printing and editing in this periodical unfavorably with that of *al-I’tisam* and urged *al-Da’wa* to improve.56 By contrast, *al-Azhar’s* editors and writers, as representatives of Islamic scholarship in Egypt, initially had little interest in claiming membership within a broader history of Islamic journalism. Faced with competitors who laid claim to leadership of a genre of Islamic journalism distinct from scholarly production, however, *al-Azhar* would soon respond.

The struggle was not only for self-legitimation as “Islamic” publications but also to deny the right of other media—print, audio and visual—to speak about Islam. As Spadola notes with reference to contemporary Morocco, “the desire for an ethical soundscape or uniform space of piety presumes the presence of other calls, indeed, fears the very conditions of circulation that make the pious call possible.”57 Most threatening to the editors of *al-Da’wa* and *al-I’tisam* was the “non-Islamic” media of state-aligned organs. As noted in the first chapter, Islamist editors and writers had not chosen magazines as their medium of choice; it was the sole opportunity available to them in either print or non-print media as they lacked access either to the highest levers of power or to the financial resources of their competitors.

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For *al-Da’wa*, the main threats were ideological and ethical: Marxist ideologues threatened the religious beliefs of Muslims,\(^{58}\) and daily newspapers were dominated by talk of beautification and clothing instead of an “Islamic theory of religious and life” (*nazariyya Islamiyya l-il-din wa-l-il-hayat*).\(^{59}\) The challenge of non-Islamic media was not limited to print as movies brought “obscene words, naked films and base dialogue” (*al-kalima al-fahisha wa-l-sura al-‘ariyya wa-l-hiwar al-qadhar*) into the homes of Egyptians.\(^{60}\) Readers were similarly concerned, complaining that unethical daily newspapers such as *al-Akhbar* exposed their audience to naked women\(^ {61}\) and useless leisure rather than to ritual practice or religious knowledge,\(^ {62}\) while state television aired pornography (*aflam ibahiyya*) on the first two days of Eid al-Adha.\(^ {63}\) These were the reactions not of a dominant culture, but of a minority under siege.

*Al-I’tisam*’s participants perceived many of the same threats. A January 1976 letter to the editor praised the efforts of the “free and brave *al-I’tisam* magazine” (*majallat al-I’tisam al-hurra wa-l-shaji’a*) in the face of “polytheistic papers and magazines (*suhuf wa-majallat al-shirk*) that sought to spread Communism.” In response, ‘Abd al-Halim ‘Uways, editor of this section, confirmed the reader’s claim and noted that *al-I’tisam* had played a key role in revealing the attempts of Communist magazines such as *Majallat al-

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61 It is unlikely that nude photographs were actually printed. Instead, Islamists use this accusation to refer to women whose clothing they consider to be immodest.
62 “Barid al-Da’wa,” *al-Da’wa* December 1979/Muharram 1400, p. 64.
63 Eid al-Adha celebrates the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son, Ishmael. It begins on the 10th day of Dhu al-Hijja and continues four days. For citation, see “Barid al-Da’wa,” *al-Da’wa*, January 1977/Safar 1397, p. 62.
Sharq to destroy the faith of the Muslim masses. 64 Like in al-Da’wa, the threat was not limited to print media: Egyptian television was said to include dancing videos which “arouse the instincts” (tuthir al-ghara’iz). 65 Indeed, an August 1980 letter complained that Egyptian television presented the ‘ulama in a ridiculous light by showing one scholar on live television with what appeared to be rice stuck in his beard. 66 With this flood of ethical and ideological deviation, readers of al-Da’wa and al-I’tisam looked to their magazines as a lighthouse.

By contrast, for state-aligned writers, it was more problematic to publicly criticize other state organs. This did not mean that state-supported religious elites remained silent, but their criticism was often less specific than that of the Islamist opposition. Mustafa Mahmud noted the danger that television, radio, books and magazines posed to society and argued for a distinction between “low” and “high” art (fann habit wa rafi’). 67 Along similar lines, Muhamamd Mutawalli al-Sha’rawi explained: “[T]he issue isn’t whether certain things are permitted [or forbidden], it’s what you do with them…. a knife is permitted… but how will you use it? The same is true of a television…. The question is the orientation of your actions (ittijah harakatak).” 68 If Mahmud and al-Sha’rawi could acknowledge that a problem existed, they shied away from offering a solution.

Instead, Statist elites, alongside their Islamist counterparts, focused on establishing a place for their publications and projects within a competitive media environment. It was thus unsurprising that the beginning of this period saw the outbreak of conflict both

between Salafi-Islamists and the Islamic Research Academy, and between leading figures within the Brotherhood and the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya. The conflict between al-I‘tisam and al-Azhar over the leadership role of the latter’s namesake stood at the intersection of state claims to religion, Islamist opposition to these claims, and the role of the ‘Ulama as guardians of the Islamic tradition. The 1970s had seen an increase of Islamists in the ranks of al-Azhar’s faculty and student body and greater public activism among its faculty, yet the institution was still under regime control. The question of al-Azhar’s public role was one of particular immediacy in the case of Islamic magazines. The issue was not merely that many of the writers and editors were not trained as scholars; it was also that the Islamic Research Academy continued to take part in the debates of the Islamic Revival in Egypt through its control over al-Azhar magazine. The dispute over al-Azhar’s role was thus one over the right of laymen to produce religious texts, the types of topics popular religious texts should address, and whether the ‘Ulama’s guardianship of the scholarly tradition extended to periodicals.

Al-I‘tisam fired the opening salvo. In an unsigned May 1976 article, the editorial staff declared: “[W]e take pride in al-Azhar [university] as a value (ka-qima, emphasis added) but not as a collection of individuals.” The issue at hand was apparently the reorganization of al-Azhar institutionally, though the particulars are unclear. Al-I‘tisam’s criticism of this premier seminary derived from this Salafi-Islamist periodical’s journalistic mission to transmit non-negotiable religious principle, and it described itself

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69 Brotherhood aspirations for al-Azhar are neatly encapsulated in a 1984 book by Islamist scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi, The Mission of al-Azhar between Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (Risalat al-Azhar Bayna al-Ams wa-l-Yawm wa-l-Ghad). Qaradawi envisioned that a reformed al-Azhar could assume leadership of the masses of the Islamic Revival and proposed that it be a “university for science (‘ilm) and culturization (tathqif), a mosque for worship and education (tarbiya), and an association for proselytization (da’wa) and reform (al-‘islah).” See Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Risalat al-Azhar, Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1984, p. 56.

as a newspaper (sahifa) that does not deviate (la ta’araf al-inhiraf). Of most pressing concern was the Islamic Research Academy’s declining intellectual productivity and its limited participation in public life. While al-Azhar “stumbled on its path” (tan’athir fi tariqiha),\(^{71}\) al-I’tisam sought to bring the university and the periodical alike back to the Islam’s true message.

This article in al-I’tisam occasioned resistance from its readers. A June 1976 follow-up article noted that some readers had misunderstood, whether out of mistaken or willful ignorance, the magazine’s position as an all-out attack on Sunni Islam’s premier seminary. In the case of the latter, the magazine declared with palpable irritation: “[W]e are not responsible for making them understand” (an nujbirahum ‘ala al-fahm). The magazine then reiterated its criticism of al-Azhar’s silence on key global events, whether the fate of Muslims in Eritrea, Thailand and the Philippines, or Islamic radicalism (al-tatarruf al-Islami) at home.\(^{72}\)

In June of 1976, the Islamic Research Academy responded in the pages of al-Azhar with a strong defense of its record and assertion of its social role and intellectual authority. It began by denying al-I’tisam’s accusation of negligence in protecting Muslim minorities and reminded readers of the prominence of the Sheikh of al-Azhar, ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmud, in Egyptian public life.\(^{73}\) It also responded to criticisms elsewhere\(^{74}\) that

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\(^{71}\) Ibid.
\(^{72}\)“Alladhina La Yafhamun wa la Yuhwailun an Yafahmu…,” al-I’tisam, June 1976/Jumada al-Thaniyya, 1396. Though al-I’tisam criticized al-Azhar for its silence regarding al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra, this criticism wasn’t entirely fair. ‘Ulama at al-Azhar, most prominently ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmud, had been effectively silenced by the military tribunal which judged the group’s leader, Shukri Mustafa, in the killing of Minister of Endowments Muhammad al-Dhahabi. Though Mahmud was asked to support the state’s position, he resisted criminalizing Shukri’s in the absence of any access to either Shukri himself or to the texts on which he drew. See Gilles Kepel, The Roots of Radical Islam, p. 103.
al-Azhar as an institution had not taken a more active role in the debate over personal status law or on issues of economic distribution.\footnote{It is unclear which \textit{al-I’tisam} statements \textit{al-Azhar} was responding to in this instance, though it’s plausible that this may have involved public statements by \textit{al-I’tisam’s} editors that did not appear in the magazine itself.}

The majority of the Academy’s response, however, was devoted to launching a counter-claim to religious authority by attempting to define the norms of the Islamic magazine. Its first objection was that \textit{al-I’tisam} had not dealt with this matter in a scientific fashion (\textit{bi-uslub ‘ilmi}).\footnote{The personal status law (law 44/1979) was also known as “Jihan’s law” (after Jihan al-Sadat, the president’s wife) for what were perceived as westernizing impulses, most prominently granting women rights to alimony and custody in the case of divorce. See Skovgaard-Petersen, \textit{Defining Islam for the Egyptian State}, p. 232. Issues of economic distribution took on an increasingly prominent role in the context of the Infitah; tensions emerged particularly out of the quick rise of a new economic elite past the position of the modern middle class. For more on these tensions, see Relli Shechter, “From Effendi to Infitahi?: Consumerism and its Malcontents in the Emergence of Egyptian Market Society,” \textit{British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies}, April 2009, 36:1, pp. 21-35.} By contrast, \textit{al-Azhar} functioned as a center of such Islamic science (‘ilm). Accordingly, the challenging issues of the age, such as personal status laws and economic redistribution, were to be referred to the ‘Ulama.\footnote{Yahya Hashim, “al-Azhar wa-l-Mushkilat al-Islamiyya al-Rahina,” \textit{al-Azhar}, July 1976/Rajab 1396, p. 674.} Even more seriously, though, the magazine’s attack on al-Azhar University and the Islamic Research Academy had exceeded proper bounds (\textit{al-hadd al-ma’luf}),\footnote{Ibid. p. 673.} such unrestrained conflict among those spreading the call of Islam (\textit{al-du’a al-islamiyyun}) only served the interests of atheists and Communists.\footnote{Ibid.} While \textit{al-I’tisam} professed its commitment to theological unity, \textit{al-Azhar} saw its competitor as a source of division.

The debate seems to have ceased, at least in the pages of the magazines, with a final brief response in the November 1976 issue of \textit{al-I’tisam}, which asked, “Where is \textit{al-Azhar} magazine headed?” This concluding article noted regretfully that \textit{al-Azhar} had

failed to play a “vanguard role” (dawr tali‘i), instead resorting to attacks on al-I‘tisam. In doing so, it had not served as a magazine of Muslims (majallat al-Muslimin), but rather as one that submitted to the non-Islamic “interests and whims” (al-masalih wa-l-ahwa). The specter of such interests, though, only underscores the obvious: each editor made a claim to an Islamicity that struggled to co-exist with that of his competitors.

This debate illustrates not only an Azhar/Salafi divide over scholarly knowledge, but also the role of the Islamic magazine as a key site of textual contestation. While Salafi-Islamist elites attempted to unseat the Islamic Research Academy, Azhari scholars sought to protect their privileged role at this contested site of textual production through recourse to their position as guardians of the Islamic tradition. In doing so, al-Azhar’s writers sought to conflate “scientific” style and the claim of the ‘ulama to religious knowledge. Both al-Azhar and al-I‘tisam assumed the legitimacy of the medium even as each made a different claim to authority. While al-Azhar sought to couch its claim in ‘ilm, al-I‘tisam attempted to subvert this claim by suggesting that it had been spoiled by outside interests. Instead, for al-I‘tisam, what remained was to continue to hold tight to the rope of God.

Conflict over textual authority, however, was not limited to debates over the responsibility of scholars. In November of 1976, the first volley in what would become an intra-Islamist war of words was launched by al-I‘tisam in the form of an unsigned editorial titled “A Rebuke to the Brother ‘Umar al-Tilmisani: Is this a Call of Jahiliyya on the pages of al-Da‘wa?” The shift seemed sudden: only five months prior, the June 1976 issue of al-I‘tisam had welcomed the impending return of al-Da‘wa as a “strong Islamic

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voice” (sawtan islamiyyan qawiyyan). The title of this editorial, which played on the similarity between “call” (da’wa) and the title of al-Da’wa, centered on an article by Najib ‘Imara in the August 1976/Sha’ban 1396 issue in which ‘Imara had allegedly rejected the application of Shari’a. In a play on the author’s name, al-I’tisam exclaimed that “ignoble doctors” (al-dakatira ghayr al-nujaba) were advocating for rule by man-made laws.

Of course, al-I’tisam knew that ‘Imara had not actually argued against the superiority of the Shari’a. Instead, his argument was that Islamic law should not be applied until a process of education had concluded and the material and intellectual needs of Egyptian citizens had been met. Once it could be applied, Shari’a would serve as a public system (nizam ‘amm) that contained the basic rules to administer the political, economic, educational, cultural and social dimensions of human life. Though ‘Imara’s argument was provocative—it was based on the premise that education was a precondition of legal responsibility, and that apostates who had not received proper education were to be reasoned with rather than punished—it was hardly a call for un-Islamic practices.

Ultimately, though, the target of this editorial was not ‘Imara but ‘Umar al-Tilmisani in his capacity as al-Da’wa’s editor. Specifically, Tilmisani had “published this dangerous speech in al-Da’wa without critiquing it” (Nashara hadha al-kalam al-khatir fi-l-Da’wa dun ta’liq min al-majalla b-il-radd wa-l-tangid). Editorial mistakes were not
mere trivialities to the editors of *al-I’tisam*. Rather, al-Tilmisani’s silence could even rise to the level of a major sin (*kabira*) if he was in fact pleased with such an article.\textsuperscript{86}

*Al-I’tisam*, however, took pains to make clear that their opposition was to al-Tilmisani alone rather than to the *al-Da’wa’s* editorial staff as a whole, and expressed confidence in the latter’s “good intentions and sound goals” (*husn al-niyya wa-salamat al-qasd*).\textsuperscript{87} Despite these good intentions, however, the fate of the Muslim masses hung in the balance.

To what extent did this controversy concern the application of Shari‘a and to what extent was this particular question a site at which larger issues played out? The application of Islamic law was certainly a key political question in Egypt during this period. In 1971, Sadat had changed the second article of the Egyptian constitution to designate Shari‘a as “a” major source of legislation (it would later be changed in 1980 to “the principle” source).\textsuperscript{88} A number of efforts to codify\textsuperscript{89} Islamic law followed, including a 1972 initiative by the Islamic Research Academy and a later Parliamentary Commission headed by the Speaker of the People’s Assembly and Sadat ally, Sufi Abu Talib.\textsuperscript{90} Towards the end of the decade, the Jama‘a Islamiyya became involved in this issue, too.

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\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{89} Codification of the Shari‘a was unprecedented in that it took interpretative power away from the ‘ulama in favor a legal code. By contrast, throughout much of Islamic history, Shari‘a functioned as “an ongoing discursive tradition articulated in and through practices associated with educational and judicial institutions.” Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, p. 97. Also see Nathan J. Brown, “Sharia and State in the Modern Muslim Middle East,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29:3, August 1997, pp. 359-376.
\textsuperscript{90} Jakob Skovgaard Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State*, p. 201.
\textsuperscript{91} Kirk J. Beattie, *Egypt during the Sadat Years*, p. 253.
Codification carried real consequences for who would legislate and was thus a site of conflict among Islamists.\footnote{For more on the opportunities and ambivalences raised by codification, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, \textit{The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change}. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 94-102.} The Muslim Brotherhood was far more open to external intellectual categories and political compromises than the Salafi-Islamists of \textit{al-I’tisam} for whom the grafting of legal change onto preexisting political institutions was an unacceptable departure from a legal process based on the Quran and Sunna. Given this, it is unsurprising that \textit{al-I’tisam} objected so vociferously to ‘Imara’s claim that one should not be held legally responsible for violating Islamic law without prior material comfort and intellectual preparation.

Yet, this was not just a debate about the codification of Islamic law. The blaring headline of “Is this a Call for \textit{Jahiliyya} on the pages of \textit{al-Daʿwa}?” signaled an additional threat. While the term \textit{Jahiliyya} is used in the Quran to refer to pre-Islamic Arabia, Brotherhood theorist Sayyid Qutb popularized it in the 1960s as a trans-historical notion of paganism threatening Islam across time and space.\footnote{For more, see William E. Shepard, “Sayyid Qutb’s Doctrine of ‘Jahiliyya,’” \textit{International Journal of Middle East Studies}, 35:4 (Nov. 2003), pp. 521-545. Importantly, Qutb’s use of \textit{jahiliyya} as a trans-historical concept is taken from Abu-l-Hasan al-Nadawi and to some degree from Abu Abu’l A’la al-Mawdudi. See Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, \textit{Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Text and Context from Al-Banna to Bin Ladin}. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 108.} This understanding of \textit{Jahiliyya} would have been obvious to any Egyptian reader of this period and, as such, constituted a public challenge to \textit{al-Daʿwa’s} claim to transmit Islam and its authority to lead in a project of Islamic social and political transformation.

Crucially, however, this challenge assumed Islamic magazines to be a legitimate site of textual debate and diffusion. The issue at hand was not the medium itself, only al-Tilmisani’s failure to supervise \textit{al-Daʿwa}. Moreover, although \textit{al-Iʿtisam} could have targeted ‘Imara alone, its ultimate focus on al-Tilmisani underscores the stakes of
defining licit and illicit in this new and unregulated space. Yet a necessary space it remained: that al-‘ītisam did not comment on the broader danger represented by the magazine—as compared to the more regulated space of either the seminary or, to a lesser extent, the journal—only underscores its own commitment to this new site. This competition would eventually give way to cooperation as Islamist elites sought to shape the Islamic Revival.

III. The Magazines as Print Products and the Threat of Commodification

The world of Islamic magazines was hardly an ivory tower of religious debate. Instead, Islamic magazines had to quench a thirst for religious knowledge while presenting themselves as attractively as their secular counterparts. The introduction of photo offset printers in 1975 created both opportunities and challenges in this regard as access to new technology and technical expertise more broadly became a pillar of claims to print excellence for Islamic and non-Islamic magazines alike. This section will explore the claims to technological excellence made by the magazines and the conflicts that emerged from this participation in the broader world of print media.

Al-Azhar was the last holdout in a market of changing religious print production. It took until July 1980 for editor in chief Muhammad Sabir al-Bardasi to convert to photo offset printing. Staffed by scholars, this periodical straddled the line between journal and magazine. While it presumably had access to photo-offset printing, the potential costs of becoming a magazine were significant for this representative of scholarly learning.

For al-Azhar’s competitors, though, a claim to cutting-edge technology and top-notch layout had become essential to their claims to popularity that undergirded their
claims to religious authority. The basic challenge of meeting broader “popular” expectations while maintaining a distinctive religious style was not new as producers of Quranic recitation and audiocassette sermons had long confronted a similar challenge.\(^9^4\)

For Islamic magazines, such expectations could be met through both technical and editorial improvements. In \textit{al-Daʾwa}’s February 1981/Rabiʿ al-Thani 1401 issue, ‘Umar al-Tilmisani explained that the periodical had prioritized form (\textit{al-shakl}) over content (\textit{al-madmun}); noting the response of “Brothers around the world,” he promised that the next step would be to develop the content (\textit{tatwir al-madmun}) further.\(^9^5\) Al-Tilmisani, though responsive, was hardly ahead of the curve: as noted previously, a January 1979 letter in \textit{al-Daʾwa} had compared the level of printing and editing in this periodical unfavorably with that of \textit{al-Iʿtisam}.\(^9^6\)

Indeed, \textit{al-Iʿtisam}’s early concern with the technical and stylistic elements of journalism was clear from a September 1977 op-ed that trumpeted its “clear development in form and content” (\textit{tatawwuran malhuzan fi-l-shakl wa-l-madmun}). Editor Muhammad Ahmad ʿAshur attributed a host of changes—an increased number of pages, clearer pictures and typeface—to a new production process based on “the offset method” (\textit{tariqat al-awfsat}). The editor further noted with pride that \textit{al-Iʿtisam} was the first in the domain

\(^9^4\) The overlap in styles of religious and non-religious media in Egypt is well documented. For an analysis of the debate over the musicality of contemporary Quran recitation, see Nelson, \textit{The Art of Reciting the Quran} pp. 32-51. The polemic over whether or not particular styles of Quranic recitation constituted music is analogous to the question of whether “Islamic magazines” were distinct from non-Islamic print media. The efforts in favor of and against musicality in Quranic recitation were part of a broader process by which religious media was expected to compete with non-Islamic offerings for the attention of listeners even as it retained an amorphous “religious” nature. As Charles Hirschkind notes with regard to Islamic cassette sermons in the 1990s, “[a]s sermons moved outside the mosque to become a popular media practice, one competing with other forms of media entertainment, listeners came to expect some of the same pleasure and cathartic experience that Umm Kulthum’s music had previously made available.” See Charles Hirschkind, \textit{The Ethical Soundscape}, p. 54. In this context of Islamic magazines, the question of commodification was the polemical issue through which Islamicity was debated.


of Islamic journalism (*maydan al-sihafa al-Islamiyya*) to use such technology. In May 1978, reader Muhammad Fikri Ghanim expressed his appreciation for these developments, noting the magazine’s “attractive, modern and developed style” (*uslub jadhib wa-‘asri wa-mutatabwar*). In May 1978, reader Muhammad Fikri Ghanim expressed his appreciation for these developments, noting the magazine’s “attractive, modern and developed style” (*uslub jadhib wa-‘asri wa-mutatabwar*).98

*Minbar al-Islam* was similarly attentive to the specifics of technical development and the March 1979 issue’s editorial note promised “intellectual and technical advances (*zad fikri wa-‘ata fani*)”. This promise appears to have been fulfilled by the June 1979 issue, which touted such advances:

Dear Reader, in the last issue, you noticed that *Minbar al-Islam* magazine made a great leap in form and content (*fi-l-shakl wa-l-jawhar*). The printing shift from dim paper (*al-waraq al-qa‘im*) to relaxing white paper (*al-waraq al-abyad al-murih l-il-nafs*)…with the shift to an offset printer, the production staff (*al-ikhraj*) can present it [the magazine] to you in inspiring colors that call you to read (*bi-alwan al-muwahiyya al-da‘iyya ila al-qira‘a*).99

These technological developments, alongside articles and studies pitched at a broader audience, enabled the magazine to flourish. The fruits of this approach were further confirmed by an editorial note in June 1981 which observed that the most recent issue had sold out despite printing 3,000 additional copies and that each passing month saw the “broadening [of *Minbar al-Islam*’s] circle of readers” (*tawsi‘ da‘irat al-qurra*).100 Evidently, magazines could not only spread the call to Islam but, as the quotation above suggests, also the call to reading.

The shift to glossy magazine, however, engendered new complications, foremost of which was the need to protect these magazines from the allegedly corrupting influences

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of commodification. As independent enterprises, both *al-Da’wa* and *al-I’tisam* faced financial challenges. An editorial note in the February 1977 issue of *al-Da’wa* noted that the magazine aspired to publish weekly or bi-weekly but that this was not yet financially possible.\(^{102}\) Similarly, *al-I’tisam* noted that its circulation was limited not by demand but by the high prices of printing.\(^{103}\) Nonetheless, both magazines insisted that production was not affected by external financial considerations: in an editorial note in the July 1981 issue of *al-Da’wa*, ‘Umar al-Tilmisani explained that Islamic papers (*al-suhuf al-islamiyya*) differed from other papers on a root level (*ikhtilafan jidhriyyan*) because they reject the notion of media as a commercial enterprise (*tijara*). Though they sought to increase their readership, such success must not come at the expense of religious principles (*akhlaqiyyat al-Islam*).\(^{104}\)

The tension between “purely” religious and material considerations also emerged in the pages of *al-I’tisam* and *Minbar al-Islam*. The September 1978 issue of *al-I’tisam* featured an article by Hilmi Qa’ud on the economics of the magazine industry, which argued that magazines such as the Leftist *Ruz al-Yusuf* and *al-Tali’a* did not come close to breaking even. Rather, if one issue was sold for 15 qirsh, it had likely been produced at twice the cover price.\(^{105}\) A September 1978 editorial further defined the basic conflict of journalism as one between those who “financially benefit from writing” (*al-tujjar fi-l-kalima*) and those whose “word is unblemished….” (*kuttab al-kalima al-nazifa*)\(^{106}\)


Despite these claims to religious fidelity in the face of material pressures, al-
I’tisam’s readers did not remain silent. In a letter titled “The Rise of the Price of al-
I’tisam” (Irtifa’ Si’r al-I’tisam), students at Minya University challenged the magazine’s
prior claims of indifference to profit and asked accusingly whether the magazine’s resort
to “commercial methods” (al-uslub al-tijari) conflicted with its religious goals. In
response, al-I’tisam argued that, unlike those magazines funded by state institutions, it
had to cover its own costs. In light of financial challenges, which included a three-fold
increase in magazine paper prices along with the 33 percent of the cover price that it paid
to the government distribution company, the 15 qurush paid by al-I’tisam readers
paled in comparison to other magazines, whose prices ranged between 30 and 80
qurush.

Complaints over price, though, were not limited to financially independent
magazines, and readers of Minbar al-Islam raised this same issue. In response to one such
letter, section editor Fu’ad Hayba explained that while each issue was sold for 15 qirsh, it
cost at least three times that much. Indeed, it was only because of the Supreme Council
for Islamic Affair’s commitment to “the spread of the call to Islam and Islamic culture”
(nashr al-da’wa wa-l-thaqafa al-islamiyya) that the magazine could be published at a
loss.

The conflict, though, was not between journalistic piety and profit. Rather, this
dichotomy was a polemical stance that sought to obscure the relationship of print media
to Egypt’s new economic order. Indeed, the ultimate influence and thus importance of the

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107 It appears that commodity price increases fell on magazines in addition to the portion of costs they
already paid to the distribution company.
magazines, save al-Azhar, was defined by their popularity; the others, at different times, boasted of their scarcity. Popularity and religious authority thus went hand in hand. Neither could a clear distinction be made between advertisements and textual production as both al-Da’wa and Minbar al-Islam staged writing competitions that promised prizes. The former praised many of the readers who had participated: “Their writing was good, ideas sound…and their keenness for the victory of Islam was clear in every word they wrote” (fi kull kalima sajjaluha). Of these contributions, the magazine selected twenty superior entries whose writers could collect a prize at the magazine’s offices after the late afternoon prayers (Salat al-Maghrib) on January 21st, 1981. Reward did not only come on the Day of Judgment.

Similarly, Minbar al-Islam’s “Letters to the Editor” section ran an essay competition in response to monthly essay prompts. This contest was sponsored by an Egyptian audiostream company, “The Voice of Knowledge” (Sawt al-‘Ilm), and promised prizes as high as one hundred Egyptian pounds. At 1980 prices, the winner could have afforded a subscription to Minbar al-Islam for the next sixty-two years. Even as these magazines claimed that authentic Islamic journalism and the pursuit and propagation of religious knowledge more broadly could only occur independently of any profit motive, the magazines stimulated the textual production of their readers through material incentives.

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112 Ibid.
IV. Conclusion

The debates that formed the genesis of the Islamic Revival in Egypt between 1976 and 1981 necessitated the construction of “Islamic magazines” as a genre of religious text in order to stabilize the changes in contents and distribution produced by an increasingly commercialized Islamic publishing landscape as well as the commercial disorder in which these magazines were sold. This chapter has thus traced the construction of “Islamic magazines” in Egypt between 1976 and 1981 through different stages of their social use, from editorial office to newsstand to consumption and contestation among Islamic institutions represented by their editors, writers and, occasionally, readers. In doing so, it has foregrounded the efforts to render the Islamic magazine as both a textually authoritative and commercially popular object.

While editorial elites faced comparatively few questions as to whether their periodicals should be considered “Islamic,” commercialization was a frequent concern. Whether motivated by the ability to compete with secular periodicals through glossy covers and high-tech layout, or concerns over the cost of a single issue, editors could not escape the economics of Islamic publishing. Readers in turn, criticized the commercialization of Islamic magazines, yet continually ignored the disjuncture between publishing aspiration and economic reality. This core tension, which pervaded the correspondence of editors, writers and readers, would be inverted when it came to the respective projects of the Islamic Revival as an economically heterogeneous audience increasingly struggled to meet the practical requirements of piety.
Morals (al-akhlaq) are a key component of individual construction (al-takwin al-fardi)….Indeed, religion is a path based on morals (minhaj b-il-akhlaq). And morals are religion (wa-l-akhlaq hiya al-din)…They are not external to it nor are they superfluous (za’ida) to it…. – Muhammad al-Hanafi, Minbar al-Islam, March 1976

The path of the Muslim Brothers (minhaj al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin) has defined stages and clear steps…we [first] want to build the muslim man (al-rajul al-muslim) in his thought, creed, morals, emotions, action and behavior…. [Then we seek to build] the muslim home (al-bayt al-muslim)…[then] the muslim people (al-sha’b al-muslim)…. [then] the muslim government (al-hukuma al-muslima). – Unnamed student activists, al-Da’wa, November 1976

In March 1976, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affair’s Muhammad al-Hanafi insisted that state religious education was the path to building an Islamic society. A few months later, the Muslim Brotherhood’s student activists, drawing on the writings of the movement’s founder, Hasan al-Banna, articulated a seemingly distinct pedagogical plan to transform society and state through da’wa. Yet are these two claims really all that different? Though the first seems to suggest a depoliticized approach to religion and the second a commitment to comprehensive transformation of society, the proponents of each sought to use education to reorder Egyptian society through the formation of particular religious subjects.

This chapter examines efforts to institutionalize politically distinct projects of Islamic subject formation during the opening years of the Islamic Revival. It shows how Statist and Islamist elites alike sought to reform Ministry of Education-controlled primary and secondary institutions before moving towards the development of educational activities

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outside the bounds of the Ministry of Education. How should we understand this early period of cooperation? Was this a case of political co-optation? Were supposed efforts at reform mere public pontification by Statist and Islamist elites as they sought to underscore Sadat’s failures and to gain access to the resources necessary to set up their own educational institutions?

This chapter argues that the animating dynamic of this effort was neither political co-optation nor public posturing. Breaking away from an Islamist-centric narrative of the expansion of Islamic education within Egypt, it explores the relationship between the Brotherhood and Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya’s da‘wa, the religious projects of elites within the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, the Islamic Research Academy at al-Azhar, and the nationalist pedagogical efforts transmitted by the Ministry of Education. A comparison among these projects, in turn, reveals the adoption by both Statist and Islamist projects of the state-sponsored modernist notion that education can transform society. Within this frame, the seemingly incongruous policies of cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the creation of an alternative educational infrastructure both become comprehensible, and the shared history that underlies the origin of parallel projects of religious subject formation becomes clear.

I. Tracing Visions of Social Transformation

How can we explain the assumption in contemporary Egypt that social challenges can be solved primarily through Islam and through the proliferation of educational institutions and media that offer appropriate solutions? One approach emphasizes the role of technological change in the spread of alternative Islamic education through mass
media in 1970s Egypt. Eickleman and Piscator have noted the democratic potential of new media, and Salvatore and Hirschkind have highlighted the role of pamphlets, television and audiocassettes in facilitating Islamic education outside of either primary and secondary religious institutes (ma’ahid azhariyya) run by al-Azhar or their “civil” (madani) counterpart schools run by the Ministry of Education. The spread of mass and small media alike opened up new opportunities for scientists-turned-religious intellectuals such as Mustafa Mahmud, oppositional preachers such as ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk and, more broadly, for scholars and laymen alike, to reach both literate and illiterate segments of the population. This new media complemented pre-existing print products while appealing to a broader audience and introducing new voices.

A second strand of scholarship has focused more narrowly on grassroots Islamist pathways of transmission. In particular, Carrie Wickham charts the emergence of a “Parallel Islamic Sector” composed of a constellation of private mosques as well as self-consciously “Islamic” voluntary associations, publishing houses, medical clinics, banks and investment companies. This infrastructure enabled and transmitted a broad ideological project that guided its participants to personal piety and support for Islamist parties. This explanation also highlights the role of Gulf capital in supporting a wide array of Islamic publishing houses that would make independent Islamic publishing a viable economic enterprise over the course of the second half of Sadat’s rule.

5 See Wickham, Mobilizing Islam, p. 97
6 For example, see Kepel, The Roots of Radical Islam p. 110. Wickham highlights the role of Gulf capital more broadly in sustaining the institutions of the parallel Islamic sector. See Wickham, Mobilizing Islam, p. 98.
A third approach shifts focus from alternative sites and means of transmission to the Egyptian educational system. British-led educational reforms from the late nineteenth century on had presented Islam as a concrete set of pronouncements, a process which Gregory Starrett calls “objectification.” This objectified religious tradition was then utilized in the service of concrete political goals. The British used it to socialize the population against political revolt, Nasser to justify scientific socialism, and Sadat to argue that the state (and not the Islamist opposition) possessed an authoritative claim to religious legitimacy. This process of functionalization, by which religion came to be associated with particular social and political ends, produced a new understanding of religion itself: “[T]he ideas, symbols and behaviors constituting ‘true’ Islam came to be judged not by their adherence to contemporary popular or high traditions, but by their utility in performing social work….” In the process, what religion “taught” became increasingly incoherent as dominant interpretations changed with political winds and scholars stood on the sidelines. The state thus played a primary, rather than a secondary or reactive, role in the proliferation of religious education and in changing definitions of Islamic knowledge.

These narratives of the diffusion of religious transmission through Islamist outreach, technological change, foreign funding, and educational policy are both essential and incomplete. They provide crucial background on both Statist and Islamist educational projects, yet consider these projects separately rather than as two sides of the contestation

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7 Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, pp. 77-86.
8 Ibid. p. 62.
9 Starrett’s argument implies a teleology of functionalized religion; he describes the creation of a new Islamic “tradition” (turāth) which is derived from but logically distinct from the Islamic textual tradition as understood and practiced by ‘ulama. This chapter accepts that state-sponsored objectification and functionalization of religious education created a new “tradition” yet views Islamist visions of social and political transformation as no less functionalized than their Statist competitors.
over the transmission of religious knowledge to a mass audience. Furthermore, these narratives are not animated by the actors themselves—whether educational elites or their target audiences—but by inanimate technology, capital and pedagogical logic, and thus say little about the implications of specific methods of transmission, how such knowledge was deployed, or where religious subjects were formed and formed themselves.

This chapter, in turn, is neither a story of zero-sum competition between Statist institutions and their Islamist competitors, nor depiction of an inevitable battle between these religious elites and curricular experts within the Ministry of Education. Instead, it shows how efforts across the religious spectrum to define the relationship of the place of Islam within Egyptian society reproduced the Ministry of Education-sponsored modernist vision of education as a prime motor of social change, even as these efforts shifted from state-centered educational reform to independent educational institutions. In parallel, middle class Egyptians first sought to form themselves as pious participants in Ministry of Education-controlled institutions before turning to alternative structures of religious transmission that carried similar assumptions of transformation.

II. Islamic Transmission prior to 1976

Islamic educators in the pre-modern period would have had trouble recognizing their 20th century counterparts. The traditional “embodied” model of Islamic education proceeded based on human ties, in which scholars authorized students to teach particular

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10 Though Starrett notes this dynamic, he does not explore the interaction between Statist and Islamist visions of transmission.

11 Wickham’s work is an exception to this in that it explores specific agents of Islamization. That said, it nonetheless analyzes practices of religious outreach without any reference to competing models of state education and does not consider the ways in which prior to the development of an extensive proselytization network the Brotherhood negotiated to reform the state system.
books, and teachers formed students as pious subjects. It was premised on the assumption that such ties—and the local community that undergirded the broader enterprise of Islamic education—both guarded this knowledge against distortion and monitored the behavior of those who acquired it. This was an intellectual and moral order structured by human relationships and monitored by communal boundaries, rather than a comprehensive vision of top-down social transformation.

Yet, this model of subject formation was in retreat with the popularization of curricula for religious education and printing in Egypt in the late 19th century. The spread of printing broadened the reach of scholarly authority and the knowledge that scholars sought to transmit. Yet, this came at the cost of a double disembodiment, as print-mediated knowledge was no longer based on a personal relationship with the scholar in question, and the scholar lost his ability to monitor the embodiment of this knowledge through action. Just as importantly, the boundaries of the scholarly elites were challenged by an increasing number of laymen who took advantage of the shift from seminary to print as they sought to cultivate a broad audience through religiously oriented print media. Though it was still possible to replicate the dynamics of face-to-face education and communal belonging through religious institutions that trained future scholars and began at the primary level, disembodied transmission became a necessary (and often convenient) concession to limited resources.

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Just as importantly, the Egyptian state had entered the business of mass religious education in the late 19th century with efforts by British colonial officials to transform Quranic recitation schools (the *kuttab*) into a nationwide system with a unified curriculum. Colonial administrators believed that, like in England, correct mass socialization would prevent political uprisings, battle indolence, and even increase the country’s agricultural productivity.\(^{14}\) The government was similarly involved in teacher training, founding the Dar al-‘Ulum teacher preparatory school, later to become part of Cairo University, in order to prepare teachers of Arabic and Islam.\(^{15}\) This effort to replace one form of religious transmission (the *kuttab*) with another (the school), however, carried with it a distinct rupture: the teachers who taught textbooks came not from scholarly circles but from state institutions as they used mass-produced textbooks to affirm the existing political order.

In response, a variety of religious organizations sought to develop alternative projects, many of which mirrored the Ministry of Education’s move towards disembodied transmission even as they opposed the latter’s ideological goals. Most prominently, the Islamic Charitable Association (*al-Jam‘iyya al-Khayriyya al-Islamiyya*) began efforts to develop a parallel educational system that would meld state-mandated subjects and “Islamic values” (*al-qiyam al-Islamiyya*).\(^{16}\) This project, inaugurated in 1894, was aimed at those who lacked the means to study in government-schools and began with branches


\(^{15}\) For an extensive study of Dar al-‘Ulum’s curriculum and graduates which makes use of Bourdieuan concepts of cultural capital, see Kalmbach, *From Turban to Tarboush*. Kalmbach’s study reinstates the state as a key and multifaceted religious actor and shows how the hybrid religious education of Dar al-‘Ulum paved the way for projects of religious reform and changing notions of religious cultural capital.

in Cairo, Alexandria, Asyut and Tanta. By 1913, it included 3,912 students.\textsuperscript{17} As in the case of government-sponsored education, however, disembodied knowledge was transmitted by laymen to students.

The Muslim Brotherhood was one contributor to this process. Egypt’s leading Islamist organization had sought during the first half of the twentieth century to develop a parallel educational infrastructure, which included 31 schools spanning vocational training, female education, night classes for blue collar workers, Quranic memorization, and literacy education.\textsuperscript{18} Additionally, the Brotherhood organized educational activities outside of an institutional setting for blue-collar workers, peasants and women.\textsuperscript{19} Like its peers within the Ministry of Education and the Islamic Charitable Association alike, its concern was not the erudition of its teachers but rather their effectiveness in transmitting the organization’s core principles. Though they did not focus on state-sponsored educational reform, many leading Muslim Brothers, including founder Hasan al-Banna, were themselves schoolteachers.\textsuperscript{20}

By contrast, the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya was focused on training imams and gave little thought to projects of mass religious transmission. The founder of the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya, Muhammad Khattab al-Subki (d. 1933), had initially taught both ‘ulama and preachers from his home mosque, Masjid al-Jami‘a, in the Khiyamiyya neighborhood of Cairo.\textsuperscript{21} These students, in turn, fanned out to other Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya mosques and

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. p. 151.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. pp. 271-2.
branches (*furu’*) throughout Egypt, with an elite from among them becoming leading scholars within the movement.\footnote{Ibid. pp. 28–9.}

Over time, this commitment to preaching came to require a more robust infrastructure. In 1964, the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya opened an imam training institution in Cairo and soon established branches in Giza, al-Matariyya, Banha, al-Mahalla al-Kubra, Mansura, Alexandria and Bani Swayf.\footnote{The foundation of this institute, however, was done under the direct supervision of a military officer. See Muhammad ‘Ali Mas‘ud, *al-Jam‘iyya al-Shar‘iyya li-Ta‘awun al-‘Amilin bi-l-Kitab wa-l-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya*, p. 151.} These “Imam institutes” (*ma‘ahid al-Imama*) involved a two-year curriculum of memorization of the Quran, assorted hadith, and training in Arabic grammar. Staffed by experienced Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya preachers, they enabled the organization to furnish competent religious personnel to its mosques during a period in which the Ministry of Endowments suffered from a shortage of trained preachers.\footnote{Ibid.} In contrast to the Ministry of Education, the Islamic Charitable Society and the Brotherhood, the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya was intimately concerned with forming pious subjects through personal ties.

As Egypt entered the Sadat period, new opportunities to shape society through religious education beckoned, yet early efforts were limited. Both the Brotherhood and the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya had turned inwards over the previous twenty years; the question of how to compose and transmit an educational project to the masses was hardly relevant in the face of continued torture, jailing and even executions. As Khalid ‘Abd al-Qadir ‘Awda, an Islamic student activist in Asyut, noted, “there was no organization (*tanzim*)….there was merely the “idea of the Brotherhood” (*fikrat al-Ikhwan*).\footnote{Hadith Dhikrayat Ma‘ Khalid ‘Abd Al-Qadir ‘Awda. Perf. Khalid ‘Abd Al-Qadir ‘Awda. Ikhwantube, 2010.} While
the Brotherhood’s preaching network had been decimated, the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya was internally divided over the wisdom of a public educational project: while some of its leaders adhered to a quietist strain of Salafism, others had adopted a blend of the organization’s traditional commitment to ritual precision and Salafi theology alongside a commitment to social and political transformation.

Neither were those who sought to revive Islamist education, most notably the Jama’a Islamiyya, equipped to do so on a mass scale. Jama’a Islamiyya activist and later Brotherhood leader ‘Abd al-Mun’im Abul-Futuh recounts his experience during 1971-1972 academic year:

At that time, mentioning the Muslim Brotherhood was prohibited as was [possessing] their books. During this period, the [only] books which were widespread were those of the [Salafi] Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiya and the Jam’iyya Shar’iyya, and the books of Abu-l-A’la al-Mawdudi… books of the Salafi orientation (al-ittijah al-salafi) were distributed free of charge at universities…and [we also had access to some] books from the noble al-Azhar.26

Within these restrictions, student activists formulated the kernels of an alternative educational project that melded Brotherhood, Salafi and Statist authors. The 1973 recommended reading list for first year students included writing by Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, alongside books by the Statist preacher al-Sha’rawi, Mawdudi (d. 1979), and the Salafi scholar Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999).27 Other Jama’a Islamiyya curricula, however, excluded Statist authors: at Alexandria University, the movement’s reading list included works by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), Ibn Qayyim al-

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27 Ibid. p. 45. The included texts, part of a series produced by the JI called “Sawt al-Haqq” (the Voice of Truth), included al-Banna’s Risalat al-Mu’tamar al-Khamis and al-Mustalahat al-‘Arba’ as well as Mawdudi’s Nazariyyat al-Islam al-Siyasiyya, Sayyid Qutb’s Hadha al-Din and al-Mustaqbal li-Hadha al-Din, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s Tafsir Surat al-Fatiha, al-Albani’s Hijab al-Mar’a al-Muslima fi-l-Kitab wa-l-Sunna and excerpts from al-Sha’rawi’s La Ila ila Allah: Minhaj Hayat and al-Tariq ila Allah. Crucially, all of these books are popular works oriented towards instructing a mass audience in the details of pious living with a decided emphasis on pious models that support the religious transformation of state and society.
Jawziyya (d. 1350), Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966), and Abu-l-A’la al-Mawdudi (d. 1979). Though the position of the Jama’a Islamiyya further improved in 1975 when the organization’s success in the General Union of Egyptian Students elections provided it with access to printing facilities in which it could produce pamphlets, it still was limited to university campuses.

Prior to 1976, religious education outside the bounds of state institutions was limited by political repression and economic challenges, even as leading religious organizations grasped the potential power of education to transform society. Though the first half of Sadat’s rule opened up limited opportunities for Egypt’s Islamist opposition, the Brotherhood had yet to recover from the repression of the Nasser years, and the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya was still unsure of the wisdom of such a project. In parallel, neither the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs nor the Islamic Research Academy at al-Azhar had moved beyond piecemeal efforts to publish for a broader audience throughout Egypt. To the extent that an Islamic educational project emerged during this period, it was limited to the student activists of the Jama‘a Islamiyya.

An increasingly literate population throughout Egypt, however, beckoned. Between 1947 and 1976, the number of Egyptians who could read and write increased by 78 per cent from 4.32 million to 7.69 million, in line with demographic growth that brought Egypt’s population from 18.97 million to 36.63 million residents. How would Statist

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and Islamist elites seek to form religious subjects and society after 18 years of repression and to what extent were these efforts continuous with previous models?

III. Reforming State Religious Education, 1976-1979

Islamists had never had the opportunity to reform state educational institutions, yet by the mid-1970s, the prospect of reform of civil (madani) religious education beckoned in the face of apparent rapprochement with the Sadat government. By contrast, due to limits of infrastructure and technology, a grassroots project of Islamist education made little sense. In principle, the Ministry of Education was qualified to transmit Islam to the masses.

The prospects of such change even looked good. In April 1977, Minister of Education Mustafa Kamal Hilmi participated in a Council of Religious Education (Lajnat al-Tarbiya al-Diniyya) alongside the former Minister of Endowments Sheikh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ‘Isa (d. 1994) as well as ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmud, then the Sheikh of al-Azhar. This council of scholars and laymen discussed how to reform the material and level of the religious education curriculum so that it had greatest possible effect on students at different stages of education. Collectively, this council declared that henceforth, religious education would be considered a “basic component” (madda asasiyya) of the educational curriculum. Its members further decided to form an additional council that would consult with the Minister of Endowments and Azhar Affairs, Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha‘rawi,

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31 This did not mean, however, that the organization ignored the need to publicize the Brotherhood’s history: issues of al-Da’wa frequently contained excerpts from al-Banna’s “Tuesday talks” (Hadith al-Thulatha) as well as the stories of Brotherhood leaders who had suffered under Nasser. For example, see Hasan al-Banna, “Min Wahi al-Hijra,” al-Da’wa, December 1976/Muharram 1397, pp. 8-9.
and the State Mufti, Sheikh Muhammad Khatir. Neither was such an alliance necessarily wishful thinking: all of those involved could plausibly point to the possibility that the Sadat regime would be open to the reform of religious education as an intermediate step to satisfy varied religious factions at a time when the application of Islamic law to the regime’s political and economic policies was a far more complicated endeavor.

The stakes of such reform were high. As ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk noted in a June 10th 1977 sermon:

Egypt has been afflicted by three plagues (masa’ib): one political, one economic, and the third moral….It has been afflicted politically by the idol (sanam) of the socialist union (al-ittihad al-ishtiraki), economically by the idol of the public sector (al-qita’ al-‘amm) and morally and religiously (akhlaqiyyan wa diniyyan) by the idol of socialism. These are our problems because we proceed not according to righteousness and fear of God (al-birr wa-l-ta’wa) but according to sin and aggression (al-ithm wa-l-‘udwan).

Kishk did not specify an additional factor that was clear to both the Brotherhood and the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya: cooperation with state institutions also exposed them to accusations of co-optation into this system.

The possibilities offered by state educational reform nonetheless motivated Statist and Islamist elites to debate not only the substantive bounds of public religious education but also the religious subjects that it could produce. On the one hand, there was substantial accord among these competitors all agreed that the curriculum should include a heavy emphasis on the Quran and Sunna and that it should develop the child’s moral faculties

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and professional abilities. Though the focus on individual morality may have been continuous with the logic of kuttab-centered embodied religious education, the concern with professional prospects was decidedly alien to any traditional model of moral cultivation. Most importantly, participation in this conversation suggested an acceptance of the principle that educational institutions could serve as a nationally coordinated network of social transformation.

With this principle clear, the key question on the table was how each faction would spearhead mass subject formation and social reform. For the Muslim Brotherhood, correct Islamic education would produce individuals who embodied their priorities and thus ipso facto transformed society in their image. As Muhammad Isma’il ‘Abduh explained in October 1976, “[C]olonialism had sought to separate religion from practical life by...[restricting] the application of the Sharia to individual contexts such as ritual practice and personal status laws.” This separation, in turn, had produced a generation of secular Egyptians who did not know to look to Islam (and Islamists) for answers to challenges of morality, economics and politics. Though ‘Abduh left the exact implications of this call to educational reform ambiguous, ‘Abd al-‘Azim Fuda took ‘Abduh’s claim further. For Fuda, a combination of Quranic education, the Prophetic Sunna, theology (‘aqida), and the study of contemporary topics would enable Muslim

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37 Ibid. pp. 22-3.
youth to rebuild this connection between “knowledge and action” (al-‘ilm wa-l-‘amal) and, in doing so, face the ideological challenges in their midst.\(^{38}\)

Cooperation could even extend to other state institutions. In May 1977, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Quddus proposed that education reform (mediated by the Ministry of Education) could play a complementary role in the creation of an “integrated religious environment” (manakh dini mutakamil) alongside the Ministry of Information (Wizarat al-I’lam).\(^{39}\) A reconceptualization of the function of religious education could redefine public education and, by extension, society at large.

Writers in Minbar al-Islam and al-Azhar, by contrast, sought to reorganize society around an amorphous moral order. As Mansur al-Rifa‘i ‘Ubayd declared in Minbar al-Islam’s March 1976 issue, “Morals are Religion” (al-akhlaq hiya al-din),\(^{40}\) and religious education should reflect this core truth. Similarly, al-Azhar’s August 1976 issue featured an article by the Indian scholar Abu-l-Hasan al-Nadwi (d. 1999), in which he described the goal of religious education as the transmission of “the society’s traditions and its dominant values”(taqalid al-mujtama’ wa-l-qiyam al-sa’ida).\(^{41}\) Though this appeared to pose a conflict between religion as politics and religion as morality, these religious elites shared the modernist assumption that their respective priorities, transmitted through mass education, could and should comprehensively structure society.

Indeed, the central tension within these negotiations was not the principle of cooperation, but the role of scholars in this process. Salafi scholars in particular sought to

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stem the tide of lay control in state-sponsored religious education. In March 1977, Muhammad ‘Atiyya Khamis argued that the Egyptian nation could only continue through the creation of parallel religious academic tracks for its Muslim and Christian citizens. The pretext for this call was the alleged attempt by the Ministry of Education to produce “shared books” (kutub mushtaraka) for religious education classes, thus fanning the flames of sectarian conflict (fitna ta’ifiyya). This implicit threat by the Ministry of Education followed incidents of Christian-Muslim sectarian violence in Minya in 1975 and the murder of several Coptic students at the University of Asyut in 1976. In its stead, this prominent Salafi thinker proposed that two committees of ‘ulama and priests compose books for Muslim and Christian students, respectively. This proposal sought to effect nothing less than a thorough reversal in religious education, shifting authority away from state functionaries and back towards (Salafi) scholars.

Khamis and his line of reasoning, however, were in retreat as peers within al-I’tisam evinced far less concern with scholarly supervision. In a June 1977 interview, the exiled Muhammad Qutb, younger brother of the more controversial Brotherhood leader, balanced among competing priorities by combining a commitment to social transformation with attention to both theology and ritual. For Qutb, correct Islamic education (tarbiya Islamiyya) would enable Muslims to live every aspect of their existence – theology (‘aqida), Islamic law (shari’a), ritual worship (‘ibada), action (al-‘amal), feeling, behavior (al-suluk), politics, economics and society – according to Islam.

42 Government schools employed Muslim and Christian teachers to teach students of their each faith. See Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, p. 81. This was not the same, however, as having scholars and priests devise these curriculum.
44 Ibid. p. 12.
Who would transmit these texts remained a secondary question as Qutb focused on practicalities of transmission.

Efforts to reform the Ministry of Education, though, would soon fall by the wayside in the heat of political conflict between the Islamist opposition and the Sadat regime. Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations, the increased success of the Jama’a Islamiyya in university elections, and the assassination of former Minister of Awqaf, Muhammad al-Dhahabi, in July 1977 had strained Sadat’s relationship with the Islamist opposition.\(^{45}\) In the midst of these tensions, writers in *Minbar al-Islam* and *al-Azhar* sought to gird Sadat against these challenges by re-appropriating Islamist concerns and language. *Minbar al-Islam*’s Muhammad ‘Ashur acknowledged that religious education must “deal with the real problems felt by the masses…[so as to enable them to become] active workers in resolving issues and solving problems.”\(^{46}\) Six months later, *al-Azhar*’s Ahmad Shalabi took a similar tact, explaining that Islamic education should include the study of religious models of politics, economics, peace and war, education and society.\(^{47}\)

The shifts of this period are not necessarily what they appear. On the one hand, this is a story of Islamist success in challenging Statist competitors to adopt their language. Yet, what sense should we make of the decision of Islamists from the Brotherhood and the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya to engage with questions of civil education reform? It is unlikely that this was “mere” politics; after all, these Islamists, like their Statist competitors, agreed that state institutions were viable vessels of reform, that employees of the Ministry of

\(^{45}\) During the 1976–77 academic year, the Jama’a Islamiyya was victorious in a series of leadership contests, including those of the Cairo and Minya university student unions. By 1978–79, they had won a majority on the board of the General Union of Egyptian Students’ national board. See Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, p. 116.


Education were qualified teachers of Islam, and that religious education should serve as a transformative public project rather than an individual moral endeavor. Seen through this lens, competition between Statist and Islamist elites over the language of social transformation pales in comparison to the conceptual leap both had taken to accept the Ministry of Education as a premier transmitter of Islam. Yet, neither is this story of the success of the Ministry of Education in co-opting Islamists. Notwithstanding acceptance of the principle of state-sponsored religious education among religious elites, the student constituencies of Islamic magazines struggled to form themselves as pious Muslims and pushed religious elites to reconsider cooperation.

IV. The Insufficiency of Curricular Change

As Statist and Islamist elites sought to reform the civil education system, their readers critiqued this system from within and pushed elites, particularly Islamists, to articulate a programmatic alternative. In doing so, these middle class Egyptians authoritatively deployed Islamic knowledge acquired through civil education and mass media to question the efficacy of religious subjectivities formed through Egypt’s premier site of mass religious transmission. Yet, like religious elites, they accepted the premise that the Ministry of Education was a legitimate arbiter of the religious tradition and guide to religiously based social change.

Reader letters most commonly sought a greater emphasis on religious knowledge within Egyptian public schools. An August 1976 letter in *al-Da’wa*, authored by a secondary school student, raises this issue clearly: “[H]ow is it the case that the youth can study Religion (*al-Din*) without learning anything about Islam? The [core] issue is that
study of the Quran and Shari’a are not counted as part of the overall average (\textit{al-majmu’ al-amm}).” The \textit{al-Da’wa} editorial staff concurred, stating: “Quranic material is more important than other subjects such as History, Geography and the English language [which are counted].”\textsuperscript{48} Through modest curricular adjustment, Islam would regain its rightful role not merely within the school system but within Egyptian society at large.

It appears that calls to amend the curricular balance were effective: a May 1977 letter in \textit{al-I’tisam} praised Sadat for decreeing that religious education be a “core component” (\textit{madda asasiyya}) of primary and secondary education and thus calculated in a student’s overall average.\textsuperscript{49} This change was greeted by Statist readers with excitement: in March 1980, a reader from the Delta governorate of Damietta praised Sadat’s decision to require religious instruction (\textit{tarbiya diniyya}) at all levels of education in response to “the feelings of the masses” (\textit{ahasis al-jamahir wa masha’iriha}).\textsuperscript{50} These were readers who saw the Ministry of Education as an authoritative transmitter of Islamic knowledge and sought to work within the system to affect educational reform and, implicitly, social change.

At the same time, other readers within \textit{al-Da’wa} and \textit{al-I’tisam} spearheaded a broader claim to the transformation of education more generally. In doing so, these middle class Egyptians asserted their capacity to not only guide their own educational choices but to challenge contradictions between knowledge and action within state institutions. This began through a critique of the State’s claims to the greatness of science and its

\textsuperscript{48} “Akhbar al-Shabab wa-l-Jami’at,” \textit{al-Da’wa}, August 1976/Shawwal 1396, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{49} “Barid al-I’tisam,” \textit{al-I’tisam}, May 1977/Jumada al-Ula 1397, p. 43. This reader’s complaint, however, blurs a distinction between the status of religious education as obligatory and its incorporation into the student’s overall average. The former was obligatory according to article 19 of the 1971 constitution, while the latter was only implemented near the end of Sadat’s rule. For external verification of the latter shift, see “al-Tarbiya al-Diniyya tadhkhul kull manahij al-talim,” \textit{al-Shabab al-’Arabi}, 4 April 1977 (issue #532), p. 1.
When Knowledge is Not Enough

Chapter 5

relationship to Islam. In February 1977, a secondary school student, Kamal Fahmi Muhammad Ahmad, noted his dilemma of studying natural history (*al-tarikh al-tabī‘i*):

“How can I study disbelief (*kufir*) and then take an exam to answer questions which negate religion (*yatanafi ‘an al-dīn*)?” *Al-Da‘wa*, unable to effect change directly, responded that the Ministry of Education must face its responsibility to all Muslims for this state of affairs.51

The issue, however, was not just scientific development but also literature and global history. A January 1978 letter in *al-Da‘wa* noted that the textbooks in primary and secondary literature courses were not merely of poor quality but also morally inappropriate. The story in question, apparently a translated version of British author A.J. Cronin’s *The Citadel* (1937), “contained expressions that arouse the youth (*tuthir al-shabab*).”52 History was similarly problematic: a September 1978 letter in *al-I‘tisam* complained that a ninth grade textbook emphasized the European Renaissance, the history of Western revolutions, and the role of Martin Luther, while ignoring Islamic history.53 Reform required the exclusion of inappropriate non-Islamic material that could corrupt the desired process of moral cultivation.

Other challenges to the public education curriculum, however, also struck at the core of the regime’s claims to broader religious legitimacy. A December 1977 letter complained about a tenth grade textbook, *The Modern State in Light of the October Paper*.54 This reader asked rhetorically why Egypt, as a state that upheld Islamic law, did

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54 Sadat’s October paper sought to use the legitimacy gained from early military success of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war to argue for a revision of the 1952 revolution, which included the open-door economic policy of the Infitah and the development of platforms (*manabir*) within the Arab Socialist Union. See Steven Cook,
not publish a book titled *The Modern State in Light of the Quran* (*al-dawla al-haditha fi daw al-Quran*).\(^{55}\) This reader rejected the nationalist and religious credentials of the Ministry of Education’s curriculum and, by extension, of the Sadat government.

Readers were also concerned with the broader moral environment within schools. A December 1977 letter in *al-Da’wa* described the plight of a secondary student who had been beaten by the teacher for citing from the Quran, hadith reports, and the sayings of Muslim Brotherhood founder Hasan al-Banna on an exam.\(^{56}\) Similarly, Anwar 'Abd al-Salam Ghulam, a secondary school student in the Delta coastal town of Beheira, complained in a March 1977 letter to *al-I’tisam* that the Arabic language teacher in his school had forbidden students from posting [Islamist-themed] religious wall fliers\(^{57}\) while also sanctioning co-ed dances on school grounds.\(^{58}\) These students feared that the broader school environment obstructed the formation of religious subjects who could carry out the Islamist project.

Middle class Egyptians wrote to *al-Da’wa* and *al-I’tisam* in order to warn Islamist elites of the urgency of reforming the current system and the challenges it posed to their pious formation, yet they did not call for an alternative. As relations between the Sadat regime and the Islamist opposition declined, however, leaders within the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya recognized that both political winds and their constituencies’ respective needs necessitated a turn to alternative education projects, and

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\(^{57}\) Such wall fliers, literally “wall magazines” (*majallat al-ha’it*), contained articles on key “Islamic” issues of the day, generally from an Islamist perspective. For a depiction in film, see Hasan Imam, dir. *Pay Attention to Zuzu (Khalli Balak min Zuzu)* Cairo: n.p. For more information on this film and its depiction of Islamists on Egyptian university campuses in the 1970s, see Armbrust, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*, pp. 117-125.

their counterparts in the Ministry of Endowments, Education and Islamic Research Academy would soon follow suit. Crucially, this shift emerged primarily out of changing political winds and out of student documentation of the existing system’s limitations, rather than out of intrinsic ideological differences. As Islamist elites turned to the development of new educational institutions, they would reproduce the Ministry of Education’s guiding assumption that education could transform society.

V. A Changing Project of Transmission: From Public Educational Reform to Da’wa, 1979-1981

The emergence of alternative educational projects outside the Ministry of Education was neither sudden nor absolute, yet as Sadat’s relations with the Islamist opposition deteriorated, the urgency of this project increased. Indeed, the criticism of Sadat’s regime within al-Da’wa was so heated that the magazine could not publish its May 1979 issue,59 which would have come out two months after the signing of the Camp David Accords with Israel, while al-I’timam could not publish between March and May of 1979.60 These tensions came to the fore in the infamous Isma’iliyya incident of August 1979, in which Sadat publicly assailed Brotherhood Supreme Guide and al-Da’wa editor in chief ‘Umar al-Tilmisani for the Brotherhood’s alleged role in conspiring to destroy Egypt.61 Though al-Da’wa resumed publishing and al-Tilmisani remained free, the events of 1979 had

60 A bound volume of issues from this year included a small white note which stated “Issues no. 6 and 7 [i.e. those which covered the March-May period] did not reach the market.” The most likely explanation for production without publication is state censorship.
61 al-Arian, Answering the Call, p. 148.
tilted influence within the Brotherhood towards those who opposed cooperation with the regime, particularly Mustafa Mashhur.  

Neither was this conflict limited to the Brotherhood or the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya. The Sadat regime also renewed its active repression of the Jama‘a Islamiyya (with which both leading figures of the Brotherhood and the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya had collaborated over the preceding three years) through decree 265/1979, which froze the assets of the General Union of Egyptian Students and limited the organizing capabilities of the university-specific student unions. During the same period, confrontations on university campuses grew even more heated as Jama‘a Islamiyya cadres sought to assert their control over university campuses. The Sadat regime appeared increasingly intransigent, and ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk gave voice to feelings of alienation in a sermon on September 28th, 1979:

[We don’t want] a socialist state (ishtirakiyya), nor a democratic (dimukratiyya), state nor a populist state (sha‘biyya) nor a republican state (jamahiriyya). Rather [we demand], an Islamic, Quranic state (dawla qur‘aniyya islamiyya) …deriving its light from the One (al-Wahid). This divide paved the way for alternative proposals.

Most notably, in 1978 leading Brotherhood thinker Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926) published al-Tarbiya al-Islamiyya, in which he declared that he had little hope of cooperation with the Ministry of Education due to the “ignorance” (jahl) of political

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62 See al-Arian, Answering the Call, pp. 96-102. This is not to suggest, however, that no voices of cooperation remained. For example, in the July 1979 issue, al-Da‘wa’s mufti Sheikh ‘Abd Allah al-Khatib still spoke of cooperation with the Ministry of Education: in response to a question from a student who wished to explore “Islamic culture” (al-thaqafa al-islamiyya) yet was met by bewildered expressions among his teachers, he called for both the reform of curriculum and teaching styles and for the media to promote the spread of correct Islamic culture. See “al-Ifta,” al-Da‘wa, July 1979/Sha‘ban 1399, p. 16.


64 Ibid.

elites who “lived estranged in their own countries.”\textsuperscript{66} Such ignorance had produced an educational system that unduly restricted the meaning of worship (al-‘ibada) to mere ritual, instead of utilizing it to reform society, whether through group prayer or voluntary work.\textsuperscript{67} Indeed, Qaradawi continued, state institutions not only failed to protect Muslims from the “remnants of intellectual invasion and cultural imperialism” (athar al-ghazw al-fikri wa-l-isti‘mar al-thaqafi), but also actively propagated these faulty understandings.\textsuperscript{68} In the face of these challenges, al-Tarbiya al-Islamiyya sought “to make prominent the landmarks” (ibraz al-ma‘alim) of a tarbiya project.\textsuperscript{69}

The concluding year of the decade increasingly frustrated Statist scholars, too, as they were co-opted by Sadat in the service of blatantly political ends. During the summer of 1979, State Mufti Jadd al-Haqq was required to defend Law 44, also called “Jihan’s law,” which gave a woman the right to divorce her husband if he married a second woman. The law was widely criticized by Islamists as un-Islamic.\textsuperscript{70} In a similar move that produced even harsher opposition, al-Haqq issued a fatwa providing religious sanction for the Camp David Accords with Israel.\textsuperscript{71} In both cases, Islamists saw Sadat as distorting the “correct” Islamic position on these ostensibly disparate questions to fit his political needs. These conflicts, in turn, encouraged a greater focus on initiatives independent of the Ministry of Education.

Just as importantly, technological and economic change coincided with shifting political winds. Though empirical data on the Islamic publishing industry is difficult to

\textsuperscript{66} Qaradawi, al-Tarbiya al-Islamiyya, 28.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid. pp. 15-26.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid. p. 26.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid. p. 4.
\textsuperscript{70} Skovgaard-Petersen, Defining Islam for the Egyptian State, p. 232.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid. p. 233.
come by, perusal of the advertisements within Islamic magazines during this period suggests an increasingly crowded religious publishing world. This included a variety of Islamic publishing houses—most notably Maktabat al-Wahba, Dar al-I‘tisam, Dar al-Da‘wa, Dar al-Tawzi‘ wa-l-Nashr al-Islamiyya and Dar al-Ansar—as well as an increasingly diverse offering of texts, which ranged from Quranic commentaries and Hadith collections to ritual primers to tracts of religious-political mobilization. Just as importantly, state religious institutions, most prominently the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, continued to publish pamphlets. Though impressionistic, this evidence suggests that when Egyptian Muslims who aspired to piety sought additional religious knowledge, they had multiple options, Statist and Islamist.

Finally, the move beyond state institutions was shaped by the decline of universities as a central site for Islamist activism. Though the Brotherhood had successfully incorporated leading student activists by 1979, the latter’s access to free space had been curtailed both by graduation and by increased repression on university campuses.\(^{72}\) The loss of this key site, however, did not drive the Muslim Brotherhood into the arms of the Ministry of Education. In January 1980, Muslim Brother Muhammad ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘Awad dismissed public education as mere “test material” (maddat intihan) rather than a practical plan for behavior (suluk). Instead of serving as a model of virtue, religious education had now become a source of “corrupted morals” (al-akhlaq al-fasida).\(^{73}\) This critique that morality stood at the center of social transformation mirrored that of Statist scholars, again underscoring the ideological convergence between Statist institutions and Islamist organizations. Yet, despite these similarities, the Brotherhood had internalized

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both its own experiences and reader critiques that public education was incapable of producing sound religious subjects. Faced with new material circumstances and changing political opportunities, the Brotherhood turned away from the Sadat regime.

The frustrated Brotherhood leadership gambled that print media (whether magazines or a broad array of pamphlets\(^{74}\)) and the deployment of its recent graduates to working class neighborhoods to develop “parallel Islamic institutions” could better produce piety. This included the transmission of key Brotherhood works: as Brotherhood activist Sayyid al-Nuzayli notes, Muslim Brothers would gather locally to discuss books as part of their local family (\textit{usra}).\(^{75}\) These neighborhoods provided a new setting for the development of practices of transmission which paralleled student practices on university campuses, whether delivering the Friday sermon (\textit{khutba}), providing religious lessons (\textit{durus}), or organizing collective activities on religious holidays.\(^{76}\) These institutions, alongside a broad array of media products, would undergird a broad expansion of the organization’s preaching activities that continued throughout the Mubarak period (1981-2011).

If the Brotherhood sought to rebuild a network of grassroots educational institutions alongside mass media efforts, the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya focused on retooling its existing infrastructure. Like their peers in \textit{al-Da‘wa}, \textit{al-I‘tisam}’s writers had absorbed both the lessons of previous clashes with the Sadat regime and their readers’ reports as they lost faith in public educational reform. A September 1980 article by Mustafa Kamal Wasfi sought to move beyond the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya’s previous cooperation: “[E]ven if the

\(^{74}\) For example, the \textit{Nahwa Jil Muslim} series includes pocket-size pamphlets on how to act piously as a “Muslim Sister” (\textit{Ukht Muslima}), orthodox and deviant Sufi practices, correct child-raising practices and Islamic unity. Other pamphlets reproduce selections from Hasan al-Banna’s writings, particularly his “twenty principles” (\textit{al-usul al-‘ishrin}). For more on Brotherhood pamphlets from the 1990s, see Wickham, \textit{Mobilizing Islam}, pp. 137-143.


\(^{76}\) Wickham, \textit{Mobilizing Islam}, p. 124.
class [religious education] is required, and even if there are many class periods, and even if the teacher is sincere…[such education] still has no value (la qima laha) because the broader religious environment corrupts faith” (al-bi’a al-‘amma mufsida l-il-iman). Echoing reader complaints, Wasfi concluded that the existing system was incapable of producing pious Muslims.

The question was how best to use the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya’s network of mosques to shape the broader environment, thus enabling education to serve its socially transformative purpose. The answer to this question, in turn, appeared in the April-May 1981 issue of al-I‘tisam. Beginning immediately, the organization would develop a parallel national school system with a revamped and standardized curriculum based on the Quran and Sunna. These discrete schools, however, were not sufficient; the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya also promised to increase its preaching (da‘wa) activities and to offer Islamic books to the general public through both libraries and bookstores. Though the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya had accepted the reality of disembodied religious transmission (and thus the necessity of composing or editing pamphlets supporting its views), its focus remained on developing its own educational institutions.

Egypt’s Islamic opposition was not alone in its frustration with the Ministry of Education. Even the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, the most sympathetic to the Sadat regime of all four organizations, had lost patience. In March 1980, ‘Abd al-Fattah Ghawi authored an article in Minbar al-Islam titled, “Towards a Better Approach for Teaching Religious Education,” in which he argued for a three-pronged emphasis on

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77 Ibid.
Quranic memorization, “the behavioral aspect” (al-`janib al-suluki) of Islam, and cooperation with the Egyptian media in the dissemination of “virtue” (al-fadila). Ghawi, though he shared his Islamist competitors’ concern with the incomplete formation of religious subjects and the role of broader immorality in exacerbating that concern, was not calling for a new system of religious education parallel to that of the Ministry of Education. Nonetheless, he lectured the Sadat government and the Ministry of Education to act because “writing solutions alone achieves nothing.”79 In tandem, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs sought to expand its meetings (nadawat), which had been previously held at the Council’s headquarters in Garden City, to “Islamic centers” (al-marakiz al-islamiyya) that could attract the youth (al-shabab).80

In the face of this frustration of Statist and Islamist elites alike, the Ministry of Education reasserted its educational leadership. In October 1980, it hosted a conference which included `ulama from al-Azhar University, the Minister of Endowments, the Deputy Minister of Education, and an array of university professors, Islamic thinkers and Azhar graduates. Curricular reforms and new criteria for selecting and developing teachers would better shape students.

The Ministry of Education also recognized that its Islamist competitors had moved beyond the civil education system. Accordingly, it embarked on a broader project that included the expansion of the publishing activities of the Islamic Research Academy at al-Azhar under the Ministry’s guidance, the foundation of an office for ifta within the Ministry, the mobilization of the media to spread Islam, the “palpable implementation of Sharia” (al-tatbiq al-malmus l-il-shari`a al-islamiyya), and cooperation between the

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80 al-Zanira, al-Majlis al-A’la l-il-Shu’un al-Islamiyya, p. 130.
Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Endowments to spread religious awareness (al-
wa’i al-dini) through the official mosque system. The Ministry of Education had
doubled down on its ambitious effort to shape the Egyptian population while mounting a
cPower play for primacy among state institutions.

Though leading members of the Islamic Research Academy shared the anxiety of
disembodied transmission with their fellow scholars in al-I’tisam, they eventually joined
the fray. As Academy member and former Minister of Endowments Muhammad
Mutawalli al-Sha’rawi explained in the Fall of 1980, “if people don’t have an approach
(minhaj) [to life] then the story [of Egyptian society] will remain corrupt (al-hikaya tab’a
fasida).” In turn, al-Azhar’s ‘Ali ‘Abd al-‘Azim detailed an expansive vision of religious
education that included cooperation among al-Azhar’s primary and secondary institutes,
the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Endowments-affiliated mosques and preachers,
religious societies (al-jam‘iyat al-diniyya), and Sufi Orders. In this vision, al-Azhar’s
institutions were the clear first among equals.

These proposals all sought to broadcast their own educational priorities outside of
state institutions. Though they had moved away from a focus on state-centered
educational reform, they neither questioned the legitimacy of state education in theory
nor abandoned Ministry of Education’s raison d’être: that education could act as a motor
of social change. The problem was not, as it would have been for early 20th century
scholars, that mass education, mediated by laymen, was incapable of producing pious

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p. 32.
82 Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha’rawi, "al-Halq al-Thaniyya min Tafsir Surat al-Fatiha," Tafsir al-Sha’rawi,
September 1980.
Ula 1401, pp. 930-1.
subjects; instead, current political circumstances merely rendered such an endeavor
difficult. With increased sources of funding, new media opportunities, and a growing
grassroots infrastructure, Islamist elites turned to an alternative project of education.
Readers, however, did not wait for the new system to emerge and sought to form
themselves as pious Muslims at new sites.

VI. Beyond the Blueprint

As elites drew up plans to implement differing visions of religious education, readers
sought to create informal structures of subject formation. This was partially a function of
timing as the development of a parallel Islamic education infrastructure was still in an
inchoate phase across the religious spectrum. Just as the proliferation of cheap scholarly
classics, pamphlets and periodicals facilitated alternative Islamist projects, so too did they
create new opportunities for local educational institutions and self-taught laymen.

Many readers sought to set up new institutions independent of magazine elites. A
June 1980 letter from a student at Cairo University’s teacher training college, Dar al-
‘Ulum, sought to craft an educational program which would transform doctors, engineers,
teachers, and both white- and blue-collar employees into devout Muslims who could
carry out the call to Islam. Accordingly, the reader called for the construction of a
curriculum for graduates of secular faculties of medicine, engineering and education. Yet,
unlike the public education system, this educational program would be headed by ‘ulama
“who are on board with modern civilization” (yarkabun ‘ala matn al-hadara al-‘asriyya)
and are capable of motivating their students to Islamic activism (al-‘amal al-islami).
Such ‘ulama would do so by teaching a curriculum which included figures as diverse as
Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), Ibn Sina (d. 1037), al-Khawarizmi (d. 850), Ibn Hazm (d. 1064) and, of course, Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949). What are we to make of this multifaceted curriculum?

The call to combine the writings of polymath scholars (Ibn Sina, al-Khwarizmi and Ibn Hazm), Ibn Taymiyya (a favorite author of Salafis, particularly Salafi-Jihadis), and the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood reflects the unclear lines of textual authority that underlay this endeavor of Islamic education. Just as importantly, it underscores the opportunity available to this Cairo University reader as he deployed the religious knowledge he had acquired in public education and, presumably, mass media, to build a new model of knowledge and action in which religiously dictated “action” (al-‘amal) became “Islamic activism” (al-‘amal al-islami). The novelty of this effort is further underscored by the blurring of historical divisions. Most notably, this proposed curriculum stretched across centuries of Islamic thought and across legal schools (madhahib), while ignoring fierce intellectual conflicts between Ibn Sina and Ibn Taymiyya over speculative Theology (Kalam) and placing Brotherhood founder Hasan al-Banna within these scholarly ranks. That said, this was not a free-for-all: despite al-Banna’s inclusion in the curriculum, the reader insisted that scholars lead this effort, echoing prior proposals within the Brotherhood. This proposal thus attempted to tame the potential interpretative instabilities of this poly-vocal disembodied curriculum by enlisting scholarly supervision.

The question for other readers, though, was not only how to develop a new curriculum, but also how to establish new educational sites. A fatwa request which

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85 For example, see Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Thaqafat al-Da’iya. Cairo, Egypt: Maktabat Wahba, 1978.
appeared in the May-June 1980 issue of *al-I’tisam* inquired as to whether it was appropriate to set up institutions such as hospitals, offices, scientific laboratories, or religious institutes either above or below a mosque in order to attract Muslims to study the “rulings of Islam” (*ahkam al-Islam*) inside the mosque. In response, the President of al-Azhar’s Fatwa Council explained that this question had two components. First, if it was intended to serve the interests of the mosque (*marafi’ al-masjid*) or the general interests of Muslims (*manafi’ ‘ammat al-muslimin*), then it was permitted. The Fatwa Council’s decision then added an additional stipulation that gave greater leniency in further building if the premises had originally been a mosque and residential housing (*masjid wa masakin*); if not, the individual was forbidden from expanding the mosque.

This fatwa request underscores not merely the practical exigencies of expanding the educational role of the mosque, but also the role of readers in mediating between knowledge and religiously motivated socioeconomic action.

These grassroots efforts to support the transmission of religious knowledge in local institutions emerge among readers in *Minbar al-Islam* as well. In May 1979, a resident of the Delta city of Beheira asked for the help of the Sheikh of al-Azhar in funding a Quranic recitation program at the local charitable association (*jam’iyya khayriyya*), while another reader in the same issue asked the Ministry of Endowments to supply Qurans for

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86 This term is ambiguous and could conceivably be translated as “to be a wing of the mosque” or “for the use of the mosque.”  
88 This combination was increasingly popular in Egypt during this period as state retrenchment in the provision of social services created an opportunity for Islamic educational institutions to step in by providing both religious education and medical services. For example, lay religious intellectual Mustafa Mahmud (d. 2009) founded an “Islamic center” which included both a mosque and a medical clinic. See, Armando Salvatore, “Mustafa Mahmud: A Paradigm of Public Islamic Entrepreneurship?,” in Salvatore, *Muslim Traditions and Modern Techniques of Power*. Münster, Germany: Lit Verlag, 2001, p. 220.
study in his local mosque. As they sought knowledge and ethical rectitude, middle class Egyptians attempted to buttress existing religious organizations and institutions through their own informal efforts.

In other instances, the question was one of the economics of book ownership and the role of the mosque as a center of textual distribution. For example, a September 1980 letter from Tariq Yahya Qabil, a native of the Mediterranean city of Port Said, noted a problem with access to books:

[A]t a time when the price of religious books (al-kutub al-diniyya), particularly Quranic commentaries, is rising, we find libraries of mosques which hold many books in glass cases...[yet] one cannot borrow them because they are under the care [of the administrator of the mosque] and must be preserved....we direct our call to the Minister of Endowments to put a stop to what is occurring here.

Editor Fu’ad Hayba responded that “the goal of founding libraries for mosques is to give all who seek to do so the opportunity to explore its books...as long as the readers return the books after reading.” Literacy and libraries could play their part in the religious transformation of Egyptian society.

Though mosques included libraries well before the second half of Sadat’s rule, these letters underscore not merely a desire for religious knowledge but also a commitment to pursuing this transmission outside the bounds of the mosque. Crucially, the local practices of knowledge exhibited by these middle class Egyptians did not represent a rupture of kind, but rather one of degree. While the Nasser period had imposed costs on public religious activity (rather than merely on political activism), Sadat’s rule enabled pious Egyptians of varying political allegiances to pursue projects of religious

91 Ibid.
respectability by seeking to acquire and promoting the transmission of Islamic knowledge.

VII. Conclusion

As Statist and Islamist elites alike surveyed their opportunities during the second half of the Sadat period, civil education appeared to be a promising site of reform. At a time when neither had access to a grassroots educational infrastructure, such reform could provide a new opportunity both to realize their own educational projects and to preempt rival efforts. As they turned to the Ministry of Education, however, these diverse religious elites adopted the underlying assumption of the institution that they sought to reform: public education, staffed by laymen, could produce social change. The curricular reform presumed necessary to affect social change, however, was uneven and readers in Statist and Islamist periodicals drew attention to the recurrent conflict between impious pockets of the Egyptian state and their own devout aspirations. As frustrations mounted and political winds shifted in 1979, elites and readers alike turned away from the Ministry of Education and towards the development of independent projects of religious education. As they pursued these projects, though, modernist assumptions of social transformation, rather than individual moral formation, would guide both the creation of competing religious institutions and the efforts of middle class Egyptians to form themselves and others as pious subjects.

While these programs and the related shift in the public debate over Islam and public policy were only in their infancy in 1981, the Mubarak period (1981-2011) saw the realization of this shift and its expansion to include new media forms and an enlarged
grassroots infrastructure. During the 1976-1981 period, however, religious elites, in conversation with their respective constituencies, made key decisions that would shape the intellectual architecture of the following decades. This was not a simple Islamist “takeover” of state institutions, nor a product of either Ministry of Education or Islamist-led functionalization of religious education. Instead, the adoption of religious education as a motor of comprehensive social transformation reflected intellectual cross-pollination among religious elites and their constituencies; at issue was not Islam’s comprehensiveness, but who was best qualified to transmit it. Engagement with the Ministry of Education shaped not only the decision to temporarily pursue state-based reform, but also the long-term emphasis on educational institutions as the key to social change.

Just as importantly, religious respectability for those who subscribed to both Statist and Islamist visions was a distinctly literate affair. It empowered those educated within the civil education system, male and female, to question key premises of the Ministry of Education’s vision of the relationship between Islam and social transformation, while shifting political and technological winds facilitated both the emergence of a decentralized network of educational institutions and auto-didactic Islamic education. Just as important, however, was that this project excluded the approximately sixty percent of the Egyptian population who could not read for leisure or intellectual edification. While institutions and practices of religious education privileged the middle class, practices of modesty and prompt prayer would stratify this segment internally along lines of both class and gender.
Modesty on the Move: Veils, Motor Vehicles and Mixing

“The greatest plague that has afflicted the Umma is that of [gender] mixing (bala al-ikhtilat)...it falls upon the girls to raise a sound nation (al-umma al-saliha)...[but] this plague has afflicted our hearts and our morals....”- ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk, 6 May 1977

“Despite man’s scientific achievements, such as walking on the moon, harnessing the energy of steam and [extracting] petroleum, we are on the verge of an age of apes (‘asr al-qurud)...the loss of control over our desires (shahawat)...over our selves.... people’s view of romantic relations are now ruled by their sexual organs (al-a‘da al-tanasuliyya).”- Mustafa Mahmud, 1978

“Women must be protected from mixing with men (al-ikhtilat b-il-rijal) to protect everyone in society...”- Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha‘rawi, October 1980

Knowledge was a necessary but not sufficient condition of religious respectability for Egyptian Muslims at the dawn of the Islamic Revival. The belief that Islam could and should be applied to daily life empowered those who took pride in their religious literacy to orient their daily practices to the Divine. What this meant in reference to modesty, however, was unclear. Across the political spectrum –from the anti-state preacher ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk to the state-aligned lay religious intellectual Mustafa Mahmud to the former Minister of Endowments Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha‘rawi –all agreed that Egyptian society was in a state of moral crisis and religious elites offered a blueprint for how to address this challenge. Yet, the gap between prescription and performance was significant as Egyptian men and women sought to live modestly in the midst of unrelated members of the opposite sex, whether on public transportation, in the classroom, or within the office.

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This chapter explores the emergence of changing practices of modesty and gender relations, with particular attention to the challenges that this project posed to readers as they navigated hetero-social urban environments. What were the legal strictures of modesty? How did practices of veiling and “Islamic” comportment facilitate ethical cultivation, and which challenges stood in the way of this goal? How did religious elites respond to these challenges, and how did state institutions shape this project?

The following pages examine these projects from prescription to practice. In contrast to previous studies of female modesty and gender relations that assume these categories to be *sui generis* and do not explore their formation and performance within a particular social context, this chapter examines how religious elites, Statist and Islamist alike, sought to structure public space through these bodily practices, as well as how middle class men and women documented the challenges they faced as they traversed public transportation, educational institutions and professional offices. In the face of worsening relations between the Sadat regime and the Islamist movement, Statist elites could offer few solutions to the burdens produced by their religious visions, while Islamist elites sought to overcome limited resources to facilitate modesty. This chapter thus focuses on pious practice as it is performed in daily life and foregrounds both ideological

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continuities with previous visions of gender relations and the social rupture provoked by the claim of this project of gender segregation to public space.

I. Introduction

Like education, individual modesty was supposed to both produce and reinforce public morality, glossed as the formation of an “Islamic society.” Yet, such a society could hardly be formed or upheld by traditional structures of social control. As I noted in the third chapter, editors, writers and readers despaired at the presence of “un-Islamic” media within Egypt, yet were powerless to censor it. What they viewed as moral depravity was transmitted into Egyptian homes, whether by radio or television or print media purchased at street-corner kiosks. Similarly, notwithstanding formulaic calls for the application of Islamic law (*tatbiq al-Shari‘a*) among Statist and Islamist elites alike, and the professed commitment of Anwar al-Sadat to apply the Shari‘a, state airlines still served alcohol and hotels still allowed gambling. As ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk noted in a May 6 1977 sermon, “The destruction of morality has reached the point that a female university student…at Cairo University…. stood on the university campus, in the midst of thousands of youth, and asked ‘Where is God?’ (*Ayna Allah*).”\(^5\) While there were undoubtedly male students who raised similar questions, Kishk’s invocation of this woman’s story underscores how public morality came to center of female modesty.

That debates over modesty intensified between 1976 and 1981 should not obscure the longer history of such questions. Pre-modern jurists set the stage for their modern counterparts, gendering public space in accordance with a fear of social disorder (*fitna*); rules of modesty and gender segregation were intended to minimize the danger of illicit

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sexual contact. That said, even in the abstract, jurists did not articulate a comprehensive vision of gendered public space. Instead, the focus of the law was on regulating particular modes of interaction (particularly illicit sexual interaction) between men and women.\(^6\)

Within the legal literature (*Fiqh*), the woman’s pudendum (‘awra) was traditionally addressed in either the section on prayer (*al-salat*) or that which dealt with ritual purity (*al-tahara*).\(^7\) Indeed, if magazine elites had looked to the tradition of the legal schools (*madhahib*), they would have found little to serve their project, though they would have found ample discussion of questions of illicit sexual relations.\(^8\)

Even the writings of the eponym of Wahhabism, Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, would have been of little use as the question of gender mixing played a very limited role in this religious leader’s quest to purify Arabia in the 18th century.\(^9\) This is not to suggest, however, that gender mixing was *accepted* during this period or prior. Indeed, scholars often feared popular preachers and storytellers (*qussas*) because their audiences were rarely gender-segregated.\(^10\) Similarly, the Maliki Cairene jurist Ibn al-Hajj (d. 737/1336-7) sought to restrict the circulation of Muslim women in public, particularly in settings in which they were likely to mix with unrelated men.\(^11\) These key exceptions

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notwithstanding, the legislation of women’s presence in public was a marginal concern for pre-modern jurists.

A focus on regulating women’s public presence more broadly emerged out of the increasing presence of women in public over the course of the 20th century, and the gender dynamics of the Nasserist project of State Feminism. Though Egyptian women of middle and working-class backgrounds had long worked outside the home, polices of educational expansion accentuated the previous educational access and public presence of Egyptian women. Moreover, even as the Nasserist project rejected physical veiling as a “reactionary traditionalism”, it trumpeted the “veiling of conduct...as a necessary solution to the tensions engendered by women’s integration into formerly homosocial work spaces....” This approach to veiling as a “performative boundary between male and female employees” adapted previous Islamic models of male/female interaction to the realities of a mixed public environment. Indeed, Nasserist-era intelligentsia and educators even directed “gendered prescriptions of etiquette and public performance”

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12 In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the question of women working outside the home was debated in the face of the spread of household technology that lessened the time required for housework and the 1877 Anglo-Egyptian convention, which banned the slave trade. It was in this context that new positions outside the home opened up for women and this shift led to public debate among journalists and intellectuals over the proper professional roles of men and women. See Beth Baron, *The Women’s Awakening in Egypt*, p. 145.


14 Ibid. p. 92.

15 Ibid. p. 98.

16 This is not to suggest that the model of male/female interaction articulated in the Islamic textual tradition was purely “religious”; it was also shaped by local cultural norms. At the same time, though, the notion that it was viable to restrict male/female interaction was a thoroughly urbanized one; in rural settings, men and women have long worked side by side in the fields. For example, Richard Antoun ethnography of the Jordanian village Kufr al-Ma in the 1960s recounts how men and women worked simultaneously in the field. See Antoun, “On the Modesty of Women in Arab Muslim Villages,” p. 682.
towards men.\textsuperscript{17} Though proponents of the Islamic Revival claimed ideological separation from Nasser’s project, they could not escape their ties, spatial and ideological, to it.

Islamists facilitated, rather than obstructed, women’s public presence. Although a commitment to female domesticity pervaded the writings of prominent Islamists, including those of the Brotherhood’s most prominent female thinker, Zaynab al-Ghazali (d. 2005), the latter also pursued a career of public activism.\textsuperscript{18} More broadly, the Islamist project assumed that women would serve as educators to the men and women of a future Islamic society, thus necessitating female education. Despite the rhetorical contrast between the morally reckless “compulsion” exercised by the Nasserist regime as it encouraged women to mix with men in educational institutions and government offices and the Islamist ideal of gender segregation, the “women’s question” in this formative period of the Islamic Revival was not how to return women to the domestic sphere, but rather how to regulate their necessary presence outside it.

The competing interpretive projects of the second half of the Sadat period did not represent a rupture of either female presence in public or the anxieties thereof. While Egyptians had seen women enter public space in greater number over the course of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, both the Islamic textual tradition and the Nasserist project of State Feminism carried anxieties of women’s public presence. In tandem, the desire by both Nasser and later, religious elites in the 1970s, to control social interaction was continuous with the Statist commitment to reordering society that first emerged under Muhammad ‘Ali during the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.

\textsuperscript{17} Bier, \textit{Revolutionary Womanhood}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{18} As Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman note, al-Ghazali balanced between a discourse of domesticity and both her own public activism and campaigning for women’s education and participation in both Jihad and Da’wa. See Euben and Zaman, \textit{Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought}, p. 282.
The shift, rather, lies in attempts to meld women’s presence in public with a project of religious respectability that sought to prevent not only illicit sexual contact, but also the multiple social interactions on public transportation, in school and at work, which could lead to it. Modesty, though, was hardly a social equalizer: if the project of Islamic education had privileged the most literate middle class Egyptians – a category that was disproportionately male and comparatively well-off – that of public modesty was even more severely classed and gendered, disproportionately disadvantaging lower middle class Egyptian women.

II. Principles and Prescriptions of Modesty

Pushes for public modesty came from below as Egyptian men and women reacted not only to the disappointment of 1967 and elation of 1973 but also to increased educational and professional opportunities. As women ventured out of their homes to attend class or to work, largely in government offices, unrelated men surrounded them. Though religious elites laid out legal requirements that were ostensibly timeless, their interpretative project responded to a new challenge and opportunity of mapping public space along religious lines under the rule of Anwar al-Sadat.

How were Egyptian men and women to live modestly as they traversed public space? Realities of cross-gender mixing required a forceful response and, between 1976 and 1977, al-Da’wa’s Zaynab al-Ghazali, al-I’tisam’s Muhammad Najib al-Muti‘i, and the

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19 For an ethnographic study of popular religiosity in the 1970s, see el-Guindi, “Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic: Egypt’s Contemporary Islamic Movement,” *Social Problems*, 28:4 (1981), pp. 465-485. El-Guindi argues that the movement began with a separate politically activist Brotherhood segment among men and a “religious-moral” project among women and merged at some point which reacted to not merely the impact of the 1967 and 1973 wars but also to increased female educational participation and the cultural “westernization” brought on by the *Infitah*. In this explanation, however, she does not consider the possibility that elements of the popular religiosity of the Islamic Revival may have been concealed under Nasser due to political repression.
Sheikh of al-Azhar ‘Abd al-Halim (writing in *Minbar al-Islam*) all made clear that, despite these new realities, men and women must still avert their gazes from all members of the opposite sex unrelated to them.\textsuperscript{20} This consensus placed these religious elites squarely within the mainstream of a longer tradition of gender relations.\textsuperscript{21}

Even with the precaution of averting the gaze and avoiding physical contact, all also agreed that, in public, the entirety of the woman’s body should be covered save her hands and face.\textsuperscript{22} Along similar lines, women must not merely cover illicit areas of their bodies but must also avoid “tight clothing” (*malabis al-dayyiqa*) that outlines the body, even if it does not show flesh.\textsuperscript{23} These physical areas, however, were not the only potential “adornments” (*zina*) that women were forbidden from displaying: *al-İ’tisam*’s Zaynab ‘Awad Allah Hasan also warned against tools of adornment (*adawat al-zina*), i.e. makeup


\textsuperscript{21} This echoes prominent pre-modern commentaries, even as it expands on them by eliminating a pre-modern distinction between what one was forbidden to look at and the practice of looking at *ajnabi* members of the opposite sex more broadly. By way of example, al-Zamakhshari (d. 538 H/1143 CE) interprets the latter of these two verses to suggest that women should not look at men between their navel and the knee. Yet, it is preferable (but not required) for a woman to avert her gaze entirely from unrelated men in the first place. See Mahmud b. ‘Umar Zamakshari (auth.), ‘Adil Ahmad ‘Abd al-Mawjud (edit.) and ‘Ali Muhammad Mu’awwad (edit.), *al-Kashshaf ‘an Haqa’iq Ghawamid al-Tanzil wa-‘Uyun al-Aqawil fi Wujuh al-Ta’wil*. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Maktabat al-Obeikan, 1998, Vol. 4, p. 288. Fakr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606 H/1209 CE) offers an even more pointed explanation: the injunction to avert one’s gaze is separate and broader from looking at the private parts (*furiy*) of those unrelated to you and is based on the premise that “the gaze is…the forerunner of immorality” (*ra’id al-fujur*). See Fakr al-Din Muhammad ibn ‘Umar al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Fakhr al-Razi: al-Sushahhar bi-l-Tafsir al-Kabir wa-Mafathih al-Ghayb*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr, 2005, Vol. 23, p. 206.


or perfume that are applied to the body and can be either seen or smelled. To engage in these practices would constitute an act of flaunting (al-tabarruj).

Though religious elites feared cross-gender mixing—all repeatedly cited a popular narration from Sahih al-Bukhari in which the Prophet was said to have declared, “I have not left behind a more harmful [source] of fitna to men than that of women”—they could not ban it, whether in the case of women attending public prayer, or with regard to education and employment.

This consensus across the religious spectrum underscores the basic parameters of the expectations of modesty that structured the early years of the Islamic Revival. Though this project was hardly alien to a pre-modern tradition of regulating cross-gender interaction, it was equally shaped by novel conditions of expanded female employment and education in mid-20th century Egypt. The effort to avoid the specter of not only unlawful sexual activity (zina) but also all relations between eligible men and women challenged religious elites to apply these legal stipulations to social reality.

Elites thus laid out the practical application of these principles in considerable detail. There was consensus among the magazines that female piety required “Islamic Dress”

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(known alternatively as “al-ziyy al-islami” or “al-ziyy al-shar‘i”).\textsuperscript{28} Al-Da‘wa reflected this agreement when it stipulated that religiously-appropriate garb was to cover everything except the face and hands, not reveal a woman’s curves (\textit{taqati‘ al-jism}), be transparent, call attention to the woman, resemble men’s clothing, or carry the scent of perfume.\textsuperscript{29}

The question of debate among magazines was between the \textit{hijab}–the uppermost component of “Islamic dress”–and the \textit{niqab} that hid the face as well. For al-Da‘wa, the \textit{niqab} was a virtue yet not an obligation; though it counseled those women who donned it (\textit{munaqqibat}) to persevere in the face of parental resistance, it similarly warned them that their \textit{hijab}-wearing (\textit{muhajjibat}) sisters were, like them, “religiously committed” (\textit{multazimat}).\textsuperscript{30} Al-I‘tisam took a more stringent position, though it notably did not define the \textit{niqab} as obligatory: a women was to wear the \textit{niqab} if she had just adorned her face and hands for her husband, thus constituting her face and hands as \textit{fitna} to other men.\textsuperscript{31} In this instance, al-Azhar sided implicitly with the approach offered by al-I‘tisam: when questioned whether the face was considered ‘\textit{awra}, mufti Mahmud Muhammad Raslan stipulated that though the face did not fall into this category, it was still not permissible to look at a woman’s face “for fear of \textit{fitna}” (\textit{khashyatan min al-fitna}).\textsuperscript{32}

Elites also sought to minimize the reasons women had to leave the home.

Notwithstanding the danger it would appear to pose, none of the magazines denied the

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{29} “al-Ifta”, \textit{al-Da‘wa}, July 1978/Sha’ban 1398, p. 40.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid. p. 41.
\end{footnotes}
right of women to attend public prayer.

Instead, the focus was on education and employment. A May 1977 article in *al-I’tisam* by ‘Isa ‘Abduh proposed a “home university” (*jamī’at al-dar*) through which women could complete their university education with the aid of television and radio broadcasts. Through such a program, a woman could reach a “scientific level” while remaining in her “religious stronghold.”

These discussions, however, were short-lived as nothing came of this program, for reasons both technological and practical. However much *al-I’tisam* might idealize a domestically confined female body, social realities differed.

The case for women working, however, was more divisive and centered on whether such activity was permitted as a necessity (*darura*) or whether it was legally permitted in and of itself. For *Minbar al-Islam*, tasked with defending a state establishment that had employed women throughout the bureaucracy and trumpeted their presence as part and parcel of national progress, Islamic history was a narrative of the participation of women in governance, law and commerce. Neither did these activities conflict with the maintenance of public morality; on the contrary, they coincided with the reign of “proper public comportment and high moral values” (*al-adab al-‘amma wa-l-qiyam al-khulqiyya al-rafi’ a*). By contrast, *al-Da’wa* and *al-I’tisam* saw women’s employment as a matter

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of necessity that harmed both men and women insofar as it limited the ability of women to fully perform their domestic roles while also depressing men’s wages.\textsuperscript{36}

Nonetheless, \textit{al-I’tisam} was not solely the province of men who sought to define women’s role within the home. The editor of the “Muslim Woman’s Corner” (\textit{Rukn al-Mar’a al-Muslima}) section, Zaynab ‘Awad Allah Hasan, sought to carve out an exception to her male counterparts’ calls for a solely domestic role by arguing that female employment in the roles of teachers and nurses was licit because it “brought good to society.” Hasan, however, carefully girded herself against anticipated attacks by conditioning such participation on limited domestic responsibilities (whether due to not having children or to having relatives who could help care for these children) and adherence to “limits” (\textit{hudud}) of modesty.\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Al-Azhar}, in contrast to its peers, did not respond to questions of social policy, here oriented around the public role of women; it merely confirmed, in its fatwa responses, the reality of women working and stated that such practice was legitimate if accompanied by the consent of either her husband or a male relative.\textsuperscript{38} Thus, debates among writers and muftis over working women were inflected by Statist/Islamist battles over public morality, yet they were not reducible to them. Indeed, it was from within \textit{al-I’tisam} that Zaynab ‘Awad Allah Hasan launched a sharp, though heavily qualified, defense of female employment.

Elite prescriptions of female modesty underscore the spatial and ideological ties between the gender project of the Islamic Revival and its secular-nationalist predecessor.


Far from diametric opposites, Statist and Islamist elites drew on a pre-modern tradition that defined illicit cross-gender interaction and married it to a Nasserist era push to regulate women’s presence in public. The latter project, in turn, was itself an outgrowth of a longer history of modernization in Egypt by which state institutions came to order society. Yet local realities soon challenged the ambition of this state-inspired project of social order. How did pious middle class Egyptians shape competing projects of modesty?

III. The Challenges of Modesty

As women and men sought to avert their eyes, avoid physical contact and dress modestly, they struggled in the face of a model of modesty that placed the burden of compliance almost entirely on practitioners as well as a broader social environment that made few allowances for exceptions. Perceiving themselves as a moral minority, Egyptian men and women used fatwa requests and letters to the editor to highlight the difficulties inherent in the project of modesty and pushed elites either to either revise their expectations or to develop structure that would ease the burdens of these prescription. These popular interventions are best viewed collectively as an amalgamation of anxieties arising out of the challenges of personal modesty, rather than as difficulties specific to the readers of any one magazine.

Individual chastity–and abstaining from sexual experimentation–was a challenging endeavor for sexually curious readers of al-Da’wa, al-I’tisam and Minbar al-Islam. As an al-Da’wa reader from Cairo noted in a request for a fatwa in the December 1979 issue, “I am a pious youth and I love obedience to God and praying. But I’m aroused when I see...
an unveiled woman (mar’a safira) or hear stories of love and romance…what should I do? Is masturbation (al-‘ada al-sirriyya) licit?” Sheikh Muhammad ‘Abd Allah al-Khatib, though he noted that this was hardly the first time he had been asked about this topic, could not grant this request to authorize masturbation; instead, he recommended that the reader fast, pray five times daily, and recite the Quran.39 An unsigned fatwa request in the November 1979 issue of al-I’tisam carried a similar concern: “Masturbation with the hand (al-istimna b-il-yad) is forbidden. Is masturbation with something other than the hand (bi-ghayr al-yad) licit [as] I often am haunted by [sexual] ideas and find myself sexually aroused and, [in this state] minimal rubbing leads to ejaculation (al-inzal). What is the treatment?” Ahmad ‘Isa ‘Ashur had little to offer this young man: he affirmed that masturbation through any means was forbidden and suggested that the reader distract himself through fasting, which would lessen sexual desire and “dam the paths of Satan” (yassud masalik al-Shaytan).40

The question was how to navigate between seemingly unquenchable sexual desire and religious commitment. The stakes were high, as ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk explained in an October 13 1978 sermon:

Masturbation (al-inzal al-minni b-il-kaf) afflicts those who engage in it with unacceptable illnesses…. it takes over the memory…. it causes the servant [of God] to forgot the declaration of faith on his death bed…. it afflicts the body with sluggishness and laziness (al-khumul wa-l-kasal)…. it causes rheumatoid tuberculosis (al-sill al-rihawi)…. and leads to an addiction to alcohol and hashish and opium… 41

Was there any escape to this temptation?

Chapter 6  
Modesty on the Move

One reader was so desperate that he asked whether he could take out a usurious loan in order to get married and thus avoid engaging in unlawful sexual relations. Sheikh Muhammad ‘Abd Allah al-Khatib, however, advised this reader to fast as well. Minbar al-Islam, by contrast, provided a legal escape from such frustration, though a narrowly crafted one, when ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmud counseled a reader who claimed to need to masturbate in order to avoid engaging in pre-marital sex. According to Mahmud, one could quench sexual desire through masturbation if abstaining from masturbation would lead to illicit sexual relations (zina), which would in turn lead to social disorder (fitna). This ruling, however, did not apply if the person had aroused himself (huwa al-mutasabbib fi itharat nafsihi). It is doubtful that these prescriptions provided sustained relief for the frustrations experienced by these readers and others.

As the anecdote of the usurious loan suggests, challenges of sexual desire had been further exacerbated by the difficulty many young men faced in assembling the financial prerequisites of marriage. A June 1979 letter from the Middle Egypt governorate capital of Bani Swayf to al-Da‘wa complained that it had become difficult to marry owing to the high dowries and a population crisis that had contributed to a shortage of adequate housing. Separately, the editor of the “Youth” section of al-I’tisam noted the challenge of dowry prices to men who wished to marry. This editor, though, did not provide a solution to social norms, nor could Muhammad ‘Abd Allah al-Khatib; the latter merely

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44 “al-Ifta,” al-Da‘wa, June 1979/Rajab 1399, p. 62. Egypt had experienced a shortage of adequate housing since the 1960s, owing to both population growth and to a distorted housing market. Most crucially, Nasser-era rent controls allow tenants to remain in their apartments at a marginal rent even when their family size is insufficient to fill the apartment. See Juan Eduardo Campo, “Domestications of Islam in Modern Egypt: A Cultural Analysis,” in Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei, The Domestic Space Reader, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012, p. 41.
counseled that the Shari’a did not require any more than a metal ring or a cup of dates as dowry if both sides agreed.\textsuperscript{46} Though al-Khatib may have sanctioned a comparatively modest dowry, the party that needed to agree to this was the potential bride’s family, not the mufti.

As participants pursued Statist and Islamist projects of modesty, they remained a moral minority. Their status was marked not only by the struggles each faced individually, but also by the social challenges that followed from this position. Some claimed to suffer from harassment by school administrators: a letter to \textit{al-Da’wa} from a high school student in the Delta capital of Kafr al-Shaykh complains that he was expelled after growing a beard and falsely accused of being a member of the militant group al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra. In response, \textit{al-Da’wa} promised to contact the Ministry of Education and to inquire whether this decision was in keeping with the state’s commitment to “science and faith” (\textit{al-’ilm wa-l-iman}).\textsuperscript{47} A male reader reported a similar story of the expulsion of a female high school student in another Delta city, Ashmun, after she had decided to veil.\textsuperscript{48}

Readers of \textit{al-I’tisam} and \textit{Minbar al-Islam}, like their \textit{al-Da’wa} counterparts, struggled with impious surroundings. In a September 1977 letter, a student at the Alexandria Religious Institute condemned the women around him for not adhering to Islamic dress and flaunting their charms (\textit{mafatin}). All \textit{al-I’tisam} could offer this reader was triumphalist encouragement, assuring him that large numbers of Muslim women in Egypt were returning to Islamic dress.\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Minbar al-Islam} responded similarly to a veiled

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\item \textsuperscript{46}“Ifta,” \textit{al-Da’wa}, June 1979/Rajab 1399, p. 62.
\item \textsuperscript{47}“Barid al-Da’wa,” \textit{al-Da’wa}, July 1978/Sha’ban 1398, pp. 62-3.
\item \textsuperscript{48}“Barid al-Da’wa,” \textit{al-Da’wa}, February 1978/Rabi’ al-Awwal 1398, p. 62.
\item \textsuperscript{49}“Barid al-I’tisam,” \textit{al-I’tisam}, September 1977/Shawwal 1397, p. 43.
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Muslim woman who had written about the loneliness she faced, seeking to reassure her that such modest women were the key to the eventual development of an “Islamic society” (mujtama‘ Islami) in Egypt.\(^{50}\) As the anxieties of these readers suggest, however, personal modesty was particularly challenging when the ranks of the pious were a distinct minority that sought to avoid corruption by the majority surrounding it.

This challenge could not be met by rejecting the majority of Egyptians who surrounded these readers. There were certainly Egyptian Islamists during this period who took this approach: members of al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra married internally and, upon the orders of their leader, Shukri Mustafa, many rejected employment in state institutions.\(^{51}\) None of the magazines, however, took this position towards public space and participation. Indeed, in the February 1980 issue, *al-Da‘wa’s* mufti, Muhammad ‘Abd Allah al-Khatib, fielded a question regarding young men who isolated themselves from society to preserve their faith. In response, he explained that “withdrawal and turning inwards” (*al-i‘tizal wa-l-intiwa*) for the sake of ethical preservation is forbidden because a Muslim is obligated to “inform [people] and teach and guide them” (*al-balagh wa-l-ta‘lim wa-l-irshad*) as part of the broader obligation to both spreading the call of Islam (*da‘wa*) and Jihad. Accordingly, self-isolation made the performance of these key individual obligations impossible.\(^{52}\) Yet, for those who rejected the path delineated by Shukri Mustafa—and the alienation from friends and family that it also entailed—heterosociability was the norm rather than the exception. Men and women sat, walked and lingered side by side on public transportation and sidewalks, and sat in close proximity in


\(^{51}\) Gilles Kepel, *The Roots of Radical Islam*, p. 86.

classrooms, movie theaters and restaurants. It was thus little surprise that a critical mass of letters reflected on the challenges engendered by this environment.

These challenges began with the most basic of social interactions. A reader in *al-Da‘wa* asked whether he should pronounce the Islamic greeting of “Peace be upon you” (*al-salamu ‘alaykum*, known as “*al-salam*”) to an unrelated woman (*ajnabiyya*). The reader further inquired as to whether it is permissible to greet older women because “one does not have to fear from their *fitna*” (*la yuksha min fitnatihin*), in contradistinction to younger women. Sheikh Muhammad Nada confirmed the reader’s suspicion that the latter is licit while the former is not, explaining that one can even shake the hand of an older woman (*musafahatuha*) if *fitna* does not beckon. The specter of illicit contact hung over public space.

Even physical barriers were insufficient. A reader of *al-I’tisam* asked about handshaking and received an even more stringent answer from Ahmad ‘Isa ‘Ashur: not only is it forbidden to shake a woman’s hand, but it is forbidden to look at her hand. The question that ‘Ashur then raises is whether a man can shake the hand of a woman who is wearing a glove. Even in this case, however, the most lenient position that ‘Ashur deduces from the corpus of authenticated Sunni hadith reports is that a woman whose hand is covered can shake a man’s hand if she is pledging allegiance to the Imam, a decidedly unlikely scenario for the readers of *al-I’tisam*. In all other situations, however, shaking hands is forbidden because it leads to the “arousal of desire” (*itharat al-shahwa*). The simplest of greetings was thus complicated.

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54 This practice is part of the collective acceptance of the Sunni Imam who will serve as the community’s political and religious leader. It is distinct from the Shi‘i concept of Imam.
The question was not only how to greet peers, but also how to navigate public transportation. These young men and women were, like the members of their age group more broadly, constantly on the move, whether traveling to school, work or for leisure. Only a minority of these students and young workers, however, could afford private transportation; the majority used a combination of trains, subways and buses to navigate Cairo, Alexandria and the major cities of the Nile Delta. How could one avert one’s gaze and separate one’s body, let alone adhere to an ideal of gender segregation, in this crowded context?

Middle class Egyptians documented their frustrations and sought solutions. A March 1979 letter to *al-Da’wa* by a youth from the Cairo suburb of Ma’adi complained about the crowding of the subway system, describing the experience of riding it as “[sexual] torment” (*al-‘adhab*).56 Another letter from a male student at Cairo University’s Faculty of Commerce elaborates: the bus and subway system lead to “[sexual] violation” (*intihak*) as many women are forcibly pressed up against men; with this physical contact, “Satan begins to excite [sexual] desires.”57 The reader’s target is not his fellow riders but the government, which must set aside seats on public transportation for women and provide special buses for female workers at affordable prices. Though letters from *al-I’tisam*’s readers did not appear on this topic, its writers had grasped the difficulty. Muhammad Kamal al-Fiqhi, in an article titled “Do Not Oppress Women”, noted the social danger of men and women mixing on trains, subways and buses.58 The challenges of the pious individual, however, only multiplied when they disembarked.

On university campuses, men and women had little space to breathe, let alone to maintain a distance from members of the opposite gender. The growth of the Egyptian university system between 1951 and 1976 from one to over four million students had not been accompanied by a proportional expansion of course selection, lecture halls or leisure space. The readers of Islamic magazines lived this reality and the challenges it posed to the ideal of gender-separation. A February 1980 letter to *Minbar al-Islam* asked whether friendship between young men and women was permitted, particularly at universities, due to the gender-mixing therein? The State Mufti, Jadd al-Haqq, forbade friendship but permitted sitting together during lectures as a necessity of educational progress, on the condition that this did not involve “crowding or physical contact (*tazahum aw ihtikak*).”

Yet, in lecture halls that routinely seated several times the permitted audience, al-Haqq’s fatwa did not speak to the lived experience of these students.

The challenges of gender mixing were no less serious for white-collar women. An October 1978 letter in *al-Da’wa* from an Egyptian woman describes the criticism she faced while employed in a private-sector company when she donned “Islamic dress”: she was informed that women in the office did not dress in this fashion. The response of *al-Da’wa* was to search for alternative employment that accepted her commitment to sartorial piety. Similarly, a “Muslim Sister in Cairo” wrote in to the September 1979 issue to express her concerns about secretarial work at a private-sector company and the specific challenge of balancing between modesty and financial need. The mufti, Sheikh

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Muhammad Nada, provided little in the way of solutions, counseling the woman that such a workplace was not only inimical to the preservation of modesty (al-hishma) but would also involve being alone (al-khalwa) with unrelated men. Accordingly, her need for work did not justify employment in such a job. What al-Da’wa and Nada could not provide, however, were employment opportunities that would satisfy the dual requirements of profit and piety.

The questions and conundrums faced by middle class Egyptians testify to the rupture of social norms that emerged in 1970s Egypt. Those who adopted the pious prescriptions of Statist and Islamist elites alike found themselves in a religious minority, forced to bear the burden of modesty without either institutions or transportation methods that facilitated these religious obligations. Instead, their claims to piety stimulated opposition and left their practitioners socially marginalized. It would be up to religious elites to supplement these models of modest sociability with corresponding structures to support this approach. The solutions that followed underscored the limited maneuvering position of Statist elites, the limited funding sources of their Islamist competitors, and the ingenuity of student activists in the face of these challenges.

IV. Patching a Thatch Roof: Brotherhood and Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya

Solutions to the Challenges of Piety

The letters of readers, male and female, of al-Da’wa, al-I’tisam and Minbar al-Islam testify to the challenges of personal modesty in a state in which public morality was to be upheld not by the structures of governing authorities, but by the commitment of

individual believers. The responses of *al-Da‘wa* and *al-I’tisam* to these challenges underscore the *ad-hoc* and continually developing nature of pious practices and structures during this period, their contrasting organizational abilities and political imagination, and the role played by mid-level bureaucrats in the formation of a key project of the Islamic Revival.

Notwithstanding broad agreement with their Islamist competitors on questions of modesty and gender segregation, neither *Minbar al-Islam* nor *al-Azhar* offered programmatic alternatives to the status quo. This position was not a product of insufficient conviction but rather of institutional location, as the logical address for criticisms of public morality (and the failure to enable gender segregation) was the regime, while the commitment of Islamists to this question was part and parcel of their challenge to Sadat’s claim to define the bounds of religion within society. Yet, when it came to the economic and technological capacity to facilitate alternative modes of interaction and the political opportunity to further such plans, the tables were turned. Islamists, in particular those of *al-Da‘wa*, had the will but not the way, while Statist magazines, staffed by leading figures within state institutions, had the means but not the room to maneuver.

The disjuncture between means and motivation confronted elites within both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya as they sought to mobilize students on university campuses. Nonetheless, the solutions that they could offer were neither permanent nor broad-based, instead, depending heavily on cooperation with university administrators and the Jama‘a Islamiyya. The contrasting efforts of leaders within the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya to facilitate individual modesty and
gender segregation underscore divisions both within the Islamist camp and between Statist and Islamist elites on a topic of theoretical consensus.

Attentive to the needs of their base, the Muslim Brotherhood offered an active program of gender segregation to rectify challenges of mass transportation, lecture halls and leisure. In cooperation with the Jama’a Islamiyya, which included students of both Brotherhood and Salafi persuasion, the Brotherhood, beginning in March 1977, to provide gender-segregated transportation between Cairo University and key areas of the city, including Imbaba, Kitka, Mit ‘Aqba, Dokki, Giza and Qasr al-‘Ayni. When buses could not be segregated, other means were employed: a March 1977 letter praised the Jama’a Islamiyya activists at ‘Ayn Shams University who patrolled public buses to prevent inappropriate male/female interaction. By February 1978, the Brotherhood and the Jama’a Islamiyya had turned their focus to the railroad, securing gender-segregated seating on a set number of train routes, particularly between Cairo and Alexandria.

The goal of separation was extended to the classroom. Al-Da’wa boasted that the Faculty of Agriculture at Cairo University now provided separate seating in lecture halls for male and female students and that, in the near future, the lectures themselves would be separate. Similar policies were implemented in Upper Egypt at Asyut University. In parallel, the Jama’a Islamiyya negotiated with the administration of Cairo University to provide separate spaces for men and women for university events hosted in the university’s outdoor stadium. Finally, al-Da’wa also touted an agreement with al-Azhar

65 “Akhbar al-Shabab wa-l-Jami’at,” al-Da’wa, June 1977/Sha’ban 1397 pp. 45-6. It does not appear from any of the magazines, however, that this was implemented prior to the end of Sadat’s rule.
university to require that its female students and university employees wear “Islamic
dress” on campus and in the university dorms as a landmark shift.68 These proposals,
however responsive to the needs of readers, were nonetheless limited: without the power
to set university policy, the Brotherhood and the Jama’a Islamiyya negotiated piecemeal
over specific policies at particular institutions.

Indeed, even in the final year of Sadat’s rule, this was still very much an uphill battle.
In February 1981, ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk reported that the dean of the Faculty of Girls
(Kulliyat al-banat) at al-Azhar rejected the notion that the hijab was a religious
obligation.69 Efforts to facilitate gender segregation were equally likely to stall: a 1981
push to create a woman’s car on the Cairo subway system had failed due to a “lack of
positive response.” Yet, as al-Da‘wa noted, the need was pressing as female students and
workers of “limited income” were forced to rely on a public transportation system that
did not protect them from gender mixing.70

In the face of limits to institutional reform, student activists turned to providing
Islamic dress at a reduced price. Most notably, students in the Jama’a Islamiyya at Cairo
University, again in cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood, spearheaded an effort to
provide subsidized Islamic dress for female students, even sewing the outfits by hand.71
Similarly, in the fall of 1981, the Student Union at al-Azhar university set aside 15,000

February 1981. N.D. Cassette.
70 “Tajriba Yajib an Tu‘ammam,” al-Da‘wa, May 1978/Jumada al-Thaniyya 1398, pp. 44-6. It is unclear
whether this program was put into broad practice or whether it was another proposal that led to the creation
of women-only sections on trains and subway cars in Egypt. Neither was this program of gender-
segregation fully successful: it was never applied to public buses.
Egyptian pounds to set up an “Islamic dress” program that would offer appropriate attire at a 40 percent discount.\textsuperscript{72}

In contrast to the grassroots organization techniques utilized by \textit{al-Da’wa} in cooperation with the Jama‘a Islamiyya, \textit{al-I’tisam} offered individual solutions to structural challenges. On specific questions of gender mixing, the justification of “necessity” (\textit{darura}) was invoked; based on this principle, an act that would otherwise be forbidden was permitted in order to safeguard the interests of Muslims.\textsuperscript{73} Accordingly, Ahmad ‘Isa ‘Ashur declared that it was permissible for a man to look at unrelated woman in “situations of necessity or pressing need” (\textit{fi halat al-darura aw al-haja al-mulihha}) such as medical treatment, court testimony or financial transactions.\textsuperscript{74} Similarly, “the common good” (\textit{al-maslaha al-‘amma}) was cited by Ahmad Najib al-Muti‘i to justify a male doctor looking at a female’s body.\textsuperscript{75} Yet at what point did “exceptions” to the rule become more prevalent than the rule itself?

Indeed, the most common advice given by \textit{al-I’tisam} to its readers was that individual challenges did not require broader solutions. It was not that the magazine’s writers were oblivious to the need for programmatic alternatives. After all, ‘Isa ‘Abduh’s proposal for a home university, which appeared in the May 1977 issue, had sought to “protect Muslim women from the crowdedness of the road and transportation” and thus from mixing with men.\textsuperscript{76} Far more common, however, was a model of public morality defined by individual female piety. A fatwa in the February 1980 issue of \textit{al-I’tisam} is illustrative in this regard,

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\textsuperscript{72} “Akhbar al-Shabab wa-l-Jami’at,” \textit{al-Da’wa}, September 1980/Shawwal 1400, p. 60.

\textsuperscript{73} For more on the ambiguities arising out of usage of necessity (\textit{darura}) and the common good (\textit{maslaha} or \textit{al-maslaha al-‘amma}) see Ahmad Dallal, “Appropriating the Past: Twentieth-Century Reconstructions of Pre-Modern Islamic Thought,” \textit{Islamic Law and Society}, 7:1 (2000), pp. 325-358.

\textsuperscript{74} “Ra‘i al-Din,” \textit{al-I’tisam}, August 1978/Ramadan 1398, p. 42.


\end{flushleft}
featuring the story of a female student who had turned to Islamic dress—whether she wore the hijab or niqab is left ambiguous—in order to escape sexual harassment. This young woman, in turn, “felt comfort and calm in the university and in the street and on public transportation…people began to respect her and treat her with politeness” (yu’amiluha bil-adab). There was little mention, however, of how men might discipline themselves or how school administrators might facilitate this project.

For readers of both al-Da’wa and al-I’tisam, a partial solution that seemed out of the reach of many was marriage. It was not that marriage would resolve the danger of gender mixing. Rather, it would create a viable and religiously permitted pathway for sexual desires and thus lessen the dangers of such cross-gender interaction. In the January 1980 issue of al-Da’wa, Zaynab al-Ghazali noted the preponderance of (unprinted) letters of readers who sought marriage. She informed these readers that al-Da’wa was considering a section to bring such pious youth together. Similarly, al-I’tisam saw marriage as the sole defense against “deviation” (al-inhiraf) and, in January 1980, argued that dowry prices must be lowered, whether by shifts in social practice or by state regulation of dowry prices.

Yet, neither al-Da’wa nor al-I’tisam was in the position to shape either social practice or state regulation on a broad scale. More broadly, this project modesty remained a minority effort. As Kishk asked rhetorically: “Have the problems of Islam ended? Are women still incited to flaunt (al-tabarruj?) Has [the infamous] al-Haram street been closed? Have we closed the distilleries to drunkards? Have we forbidden gambling (al-

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qimara)? Have we forbidden disobedience (al-ma’siya)?!

Much work remained to be done.

These early efforts to facilitate female modesty and gender segregation arose in response to the needs of expanding ranks of students and professionals committed to key practices of the Islamic Revival, even as they reflected a longer anxiety over modest comportment and gender relations. In this setting, women’s presence in public was not a concession, but rather an assumed condition of social life. The subsequent development of programmatic alternatives to the status quo, however, was neither smooth nor linear; despite the needs of their pious constituencies, the success of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jama’a Islamiyya depended on the cooperation of mid- and upper-level bureaucrats alike and the ability of Islamist activists to produce modest clothing on a shoestring budget. In the midst of cramped mass transportation, overcrowded lecture halls, and co-ed government offices, a project of modesty and gender relations emerged.

V. Conclusion: Modesty and the Islamic Revival

Since the 1970s, Islamic comportment has become the norm rather than the exception. The majority of women don either the hijab or the niqab, and the Cairo subway and Egyptian rail system offer women-only cars at peak hours. Modesty is no longer the

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82 There is no way to show statistically that the men and women who practice piety, whether through ritual or modest comportment, are a majority. What one can state is that secularist women who remain unveiled, such as the socialist intellectual and novelist Nawal al-Sa‘adawi, are conspicuous in their decision to do so and that any implication of impiety among politicians, even those running on secular platforms, is a source of concern. For an example of the latter dynamic, see “ElBaradei Claims ’Smear Campaign’” Al Jazeera English. Al Jazeera, 04 Sept. 2010. Web. 18 July 2014.
difficult undertaking of a minority, but a readily available option.\(^8\) The project of public morality that undergirded this shift, however, did not arise out of thin air; instead, it was the product of a dynamic process of negotiation between religious elites and middle class Egyptians, and between Islamist activists and educational administrators throughout Egypt. Though participants all claimed that these efforts were intrinsic to Islam, their mere participation in and critiques of these projects underscore continued processes of construction and interpretation and the productive interface between theoretical prescription and practical experience. Through this process, concerns of public morality came to center on the mechanics of traversing public transportation and institutions. Though the anxieties of female public presence and cross-gender interaction were continuous with prior debates, the questions that participants raised (and the solutions they and elites devised) were not. The readers of Islamic magazines played a crucial role in bridging the gap between theory and practice by bringing to light (and publically airing) the challenges and even contradictions of a public project that lacked institutional or legal basis.

The discourse of public morality on which this project pivoted also contributed to the creation of a gendered and classed vision of Egyptian public life that sought to balance between non-negotiable social and economic realities and an ideal of feminine domesticity. Among religious elites, not all participants spoke equally: though Zaynab al-Ghazali and Zaynab ‘Awad Allah Hasan argued for female participation in public life both implicitly through the act of writing and explicitly through calls for female

\(^8\) This is not to suggest that all Egyptians are pious or that those who claim piety are consistent in their practices. For more on the ambivalences and ambiguities of practices of piety in Egypt, see Samueli Schielke, "Ambivalent Commitments: Troubles of Morality, Religiosity and Aspiration among Young Egyptians," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39:2 (2009), pp. 158-185.
education and employment, they did so within a broader debate defined by men, whether religious professionals or laymen, Islamists or state-employees. Women’s marginal status was reflected not merely in their position as a numerical minority, but also in how they spoke. While women could highlight challenges that daily life posed to this project of modesty, men had the opportunity not merely to articulate their own religious commitment, but also to voice their impious acts. These assumptions of gender emerged out of a male-centered textual elite and male-dominated readership; though women participated as both writers and readers, they faced obstacles to equal participation in both textual and public space.

The importance of female piety and gender segregation in public transportation and in workplaces and educational institutions emerged at the intersection of a reality of gender mixing, a regime which balanced between religious claims and contradictory actions, and an Islamist opposition which seized on modesty and gender segregation to implicitly challenge the Sadat regime. Such efforts to facilitate public morality, however, faltered not only due to a lack of state support, but also due to the challenges they engendered for mobile young men and women of limited means and even more limited marriage prospects. As readers questioned the strictures set forth by elites, they challenged them to provide structures that could undergird this nascent community and aid their aspirations to piety. Alongside the communal identity and ethical cultivation facilitated by modest practice, many of these middle class Egyptians also found community through regular and collective worship. It is to the project of daily prayer within the Islamic Revival that we now turn.
Prayer and the Islamic Revival: A Timely Challenge

On August 2nd 1981, a reported 250,000 Egyptians flocked to ʿAbdin Square in the center of Cairo to perform the Eid al-Fitr prayers, celebrating the end of Ramadan. This square was a central site of political authority: it stood in front of a palace of the same name, built by the Khedive Ismail between 1863 and 1874 as a replacement for Cairo’s Citadel, to serve as an official home and workplace for Egypt’s ruler. These prayers, by contrast, were organized by organizations that sought to challenge the existing political order: in an event convened by the Jama’ a Islamiyya and aided by the Muslim Brotherhood, Brotherhood theorist Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1926-present) gave an hour-long holiday sermon (khutba) analyzing the landmark events of the previous century of the Islamic calendar. Following Qaradawi, the Commander (Amir) of the Jama’ a Islamiyya, Muhammad al-Rawi, questioned the recent crackdowns on the Brotherhood mouthpiece, al-Daʿwa magazine, and mocked calls for “national unity” (al-wahda al-wataniyya). ¹

The gathering in ʿAbdin Square was the latest in a series of holiday prayers-turned-political-rallies. The Jama’ a Islamiyya had organized mass prayers for both Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha² in this square and at an athletic stadium in Alexandria since 1976 and, in the absence of access to the ballot box, used the growing attendance to index their support within Egyptian society. The pious masses of ʿAbdin Square on Eid al-Fitr served as a visual reminder to both ruler and ruled of the contrast between the state-sponsored political order and the Islamist opposition.

Yet, the central site of ritual competition in Sadat’s Egypt was neither the annual Eid

² Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan while Eid al-Adha falls on the tenth day of Dhu al-Hijja and honors the Prophet Ibrahim’s willingness to sacrifice Ismaiʿil to God.
prayers nor even the weekly Friday prayer. Instead, as Egyptian men and women increasingly oriented their lives towards worship of the Divine and new political commitments, competition revolved around the daily early-afternoon Zuhr prayer. Though ostensibly “merely” one of five daily prayers—which could be performed between roughly noon and three in the afternoon—the Zuhr was the only prayer to fall directly in the middle of both the official work and school days, thus offering Islamists a novel means by which to insert their vision of religious piety into the clocks and corridors of Egyptian state institutions. In parallel, readers in both Islamist periodicals took advantage of the letters to the editor and fatwa sections to assert their right to pray at certain times together with their pious peers, and to challenge the claim of bureaucratic and educational institutions to temporal and spatial primacy over religious ritual. Leading Islamists, student activists and sympathizers within state institutions thus spearheaded a project whose legacy has endured even as the Brotherhood has been driven underground.

This chapter begins by contextualizing the Islamist transformation of the Zuhr prayer within a longer history of state efforts to form industrious and loyal citizens through governmental institutions and mass media alike. In doing so, it highlights the models of spatial and temporal order by which these elites sought to organize Egyptians, and it

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3 For example, see Patrick Gaffney, The Prophet’s Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt, especially 194-207 as well as Gaffney, “The Changing Voices of Islam: The Emergence of Professional Preachers in Contemporary Egypt,” Muslim World. 81.1 (1991), pp. 27-47. While Friday mosque attendance is important for its inclusion of both communal prayer and a sermon which, implicitly or explicit, affirms or denies the ruler’s political authority, it is also the most obvious example of prayer and thus has received a disproportionate share of academic attention. This attention is not confined to studies of specific mosques but also to mosque sermons. For example, see Hirschkind, The Ethical Soundscape. In the work of both Gaffney and Hirschkind, the “battle” over mosques is a contest to define the Friday sermon and is measured by the balance between “official” and “popular” (i.e. Islamist) mosques.

demonstrates both how state planners framed religious practice within nationalist political objectives and how theory and practice frequently diverged. It then turns to previous conceptions of prayer as a temporally-defined act, examining the history of “religious” time in Egypt and previous 20\textsuperscript{th} century interpretations of Surat al-Nisa 4:103, the key Quranic verse which commands prayer at defined times.\(^5\) The second half of the chapter, in turn, shows how Egyptian Islamists reconstructed the Zuhr prayer as a means of political challenge that, far from simply asserting the centrality of a longstanding Islamic temporality, melded it with a state-sponsored concept of order. On this basis, leading figures within the Muslim Brotherhood, Jamʿiyya Sharʿiyya and Jamaʿa Islamiyya, alongside the middle class readers of Islamic magazines, established prayer within bureaucratic schedules and claimed ritual space within state institutions to facilitate its collective performance.

The negotiation of the Zuhr prayer within state offices and schools casts light on the cultivation of pious subjectivities in Egypt’s Islamic Revival as well as on the relationship between planning and practice within the state institutions. While Hirschkind and Mahmood emphasize the existence of distinct Islamist and secular projects of subject building,\(^6\) I argue that the popularization of this daily prayer represents a hybrid of

\(^5\) Surat al-Nisa 4:103 reads: “And when you have completed the prayer, remember Allah standing, sitting, or [lying] on your sides. But when you become secure, re-establish [regular] prayer. \textit{Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times.}” (italics added) It was revealed during the Medinan period when the nascent Muslim community was first able to practice and preach Islam publicly.

\(^6\) The “secular” project of subject building, as Asad notes, seeks to lay claim to broad swaths of society, including those historically claimed as “religious.” See Asad, \textit{Formation of the Secular: Christianity, Islam and Modernity}. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 199. For Hirschkind and Mahmood’s views of the bounds of the Islamist project of subject formation, see Hirschkind, \textit{The Ethical Soundscape} particularly pp. 117-8 and 137-8 and Saba Mahmood, \textit{The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject}, particularly pp. 113-117. Also see Richard Gauvain, \textit{Salafi Ritual Purity: In the Presence of God}. London: Routledge, 2013. Hirschkind in particular notes that “[W]e might say that Egypt’s Islamic counterpublic is inscribed within the government rationalities and institutions of national public life but also oblique to them incorporating orientations and modes of practical reason that exceed or cut across modern normatively.” See pp. 138-9. By contrast, this chapter situates the production of pious subjectivities
bureaucratic logic and Islamist piety. Specifically, although this endeavor challenged the
primacy of work over prayer time and the state’s vision of the correct relationship
between national and religious identity, it shared the state’s basic assumptions of order,
discipline and temporal precision. Far from the tardy cousin of the “rationalized” state
schedule, this project transformed the previous rhythm of prayer into a model of prompt
practice that would make state planners proud.

I. Prayer, Religious Subjectivities and National Identity Prior to 1976

Although the Brotherhood’s move to politicize the Zuhr prayer was new, the
battle to define ritual practice and space in order to produce particular religious subjects
was not. Most notably, the Ministry of Endowments had worked since the 1920s to
regulate prayer times and since the 1940s to extend physical control over Egyptian
mosques, while Muslim Brothers and Salafis sought to retain their own sites of ritual
practice through which they could produce alternative religious subjects. Such
contestation was not limited to Egypt: competition between government and Islamist
forces to control mosques also occurred in Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia and elsewhere
throughout the Islamic world.

within state institutions and suggests that “government rationalities” are central, rather than peripheral, to them.
8 Law 157 of 1960 granted the Ministry of Endowments the authority—and responsibility—to supervise and financially support all Egyptian mosques within the coming decade. These attempts, however all-encompassing, were defined by practical limitations that confronted the Ministry of Endowments: in 1961, only 17.5% of the 17,224 mosques in Egypt were staffed and funded by the Ministry of Endowments. In 1975, the number of mosques had increased to 28,738 but the proportion of government mosques was 17.9%. To put it differently, the number of mosques administered by the government had increased by 71% (from 3,006 to 5,163), but the government’s share of mosques had hardly budged. See Patrick Gaffney, “Changing Voices of Islam,” The Muslim World LXXXI (1991), pp. 30–40.
9 For Indonesia, see Florian Pohl, Islamic Education and the Public Sphere: Today's Pesantren in Indonesia. N.P Germany: Waxmann Verlag GmbH, 2009, p. 64. For Pakistan and Malaysia, see Seyyed
How can we explain the timing of this particular effort? This was certainly not the first time that the contradiction between the Zuhr prayer and state timetables had arisen; the expansion of both bureaucratic employment and education in Egypt over the twentieth century suggests that this was a longstanding tension. Yet, prior to the 1970s, there is little indication that either Muslim Brothers or Salafis lobbied for government institutions to structure their schedules to accommodate this ritual practice. Though the number of “popular” mosques functioning outside state supervision increased under Nasser, those who prayed daily in public fashion were a distinct minority. Indeed, a memoir by Muslim Brother al-Sayyid ʿAbd al-Sattar Miliji recounts that during the 1930s and 1940s, the Brotherhood struggled to attract more than ten students to their mosques at universities around Egypt.

If there were a constituency likely to pray the Zuhr prayer in spite of logistical obstacles, it would have been members of Egypt’s leading Salafi organizations, including those of the Jamʿiyya Sharʿiyya. Yet, even as numerous issues of al-Iʿtisam throughout the Nasser period featured fatwa request from readers regarding prayer, ranging from the conditions under which one could postpone prayer, the sites at which one could pray the Friday prayer, or situations which spoiled ritual purity (wudu’), there was no mention of a

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conflict between the state timetables and religious ritual. Rather, elites and rank-and-file members within the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya, though aware of the temporal contradiction of the Zuhr prayer in state institutions, could avoid direct challenge by performing the prayer within its roughly three hour window between noon and three in the afternoon, rather than immediately when the call to prayer sounded. While Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya members who were enrolled or teaching in primary and secondary schools—in which it was more difficult to pray if there was not a specific time set aside—would have struggled to fulfill this obligation, others likely performed this prayer during breaks in the workday, thus engaging in a project of piety on the margins of the state temporal order.

It was only during the second half of Sadat’s rule that Egyptian Islamists came to focus on the Zuhr. This decision reflected not only a tension between ritual practice and state timetables, but also available political opportunities. The Brotherhood, in particular, sought a project that would facilitate their popularity within state institutions without appearing to directly challenge Sadat. The attractiveness of a focus on this ritual practice further increased as the Brotherhood cultivated the students of the Jama‘a Islamiyya, themselves disproportionately affected by state-enforced schedules. By contrast, opportunities for political mobilization at Friday prayer were more circumscribed due to the efforts by state security to monitor and even dictate the content of Friday sermons.

In their focus on the Zuhr prayer, Egyptian Islamists were not alone. In the late 1970s, female workers in Malaysian factories lobbied the government for the right to pray during work hours and the provision of a prayer room in which they could do so, and the

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12 The technical beginning of this period is once the sun has reached true noon as it crosses the celestial meridian. At this point, it is precisely between sunrise and sunset.
government responded by providing longer lunch breaks to encompass the Zuhr prayer.\(^{14}\)

Similarly, government employees in Pakistan have employed a variety of tactics, ranging from successfully persuading their superiors to authorize the construction of a mosque on office grounds to simply spreading “reed mats out in the little-used lobby of one of the office buildings.”\(^{15}\) An exception to such piecemeal accommodation is the Imam-Hatip system in Turkey, which sets aside time for Zuhr, but this option is available only to the minority of the student population that does not attend state public schools.\(^{16}\)

Abstention, though, was still an option: a study of Islam in Bosnia notes that Bosnian Muslim government employees in the 1980s postponed regular performance of the Zuhr prayer until after their retirement from “the ‘secular’ (and ‘Yugoslav’) public workplace.”\(^{17}\)

The demands of Egyptian Islamists, however, also reflected local specificity, particularly the emergence of a self-consciously “Islamic” temporality in Egypt during the first half of the twentieth century.

II. The Temporality of Prayer: The Construction of Religious Time and the Lag of Quranic Commentaries

The transformation of the Zuhr prayer into a temporal challenge to the state’s claim to define its citizens is inseparable from a longer history of British colonial efforts to institute European style conceptions of time, and the subsequent reproduction of this project by post-colonial Egyptian rulers. In his study of the history of temporality in


modern Egypt, On Barak traces how new means of transportation and communication produced both a “European” emphasis on “expediency and promptness” and “‘countertempos’ predicated on discomfort with the time of the clock and a disdain for dehumanizing European standards of efficiency, linearity, and punctuality.”18 It was in this context that “‘Egyptian time’ retroactively sprouted roots in the Islamic tradition and rural folklore,” and the religious calendar came to represent a “sacred” or “authentic” time.19

Temporality also emerged as key sites of political dissent. As Barak notes, the Arabic press in the 1880s used “train schedules and other technical concerns….to broach [techno] politics without directly deploying the language most associated with illicit ‘politics’ –that of Egyptian nationalism.”20 Put simply, the British civilizing project claimed a colonial efficiency, which this colonial power contrasted with Egyptian indolence. Egyptians, in turn, accepted the broad importance of British-imported technology, even as they highlighted the contradictions within it –“[incorrect] [t]imetables, train malfunctions, and the exposure of inefficiencies”21 – to challenge colonial authority. Though British rule ended officially in 1922 and unofficially in 1952,22 the temporal claims it had made and stimulated would march on under the post-colonial Egyptian state.

These claims, however, would also be transformed by the religious identity and ambitions of the leader. Post-1952, the conflict was no longer between “European” time

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19 Ibid. pp. 4-5.
20 Ibid. p. 80.
21 Ibid.
22 Egypt functioned as a British protectorate between 1922 and 1952 even as it was officially ruled by the Monarchy.
and “Egyptian” counteretempos—or, for that matter, a European ruler and Egyptian population—but was rather an intra-Egyptian affair. Just as debates over takfir\(^{23}\) involved a struggle to devise a religious justification of violence in the face of an outwardly Muslim leader,\(^{24}\) so too did the Islamic identity of the ruler necessitate a more subtle, though no less effective, exploitation of “Islamic time.”

Though Nasser largely repressed political opposition, Sadat’s rule provided the Muslim Brotherhood with the opportunity to use religious temporality as a wedge issue with its constituency. Most notably, Sadat’s self-depiction as the “believing president” meant that he could hardly deny the obligation of daily prayer for those studying or employed in state institutions. Islamist elites, on the one hand, and readers of varying stripes, on the other, would challenge and negotiate the disjuncture between state claims to uphold religious law and this basic practice as they sought to produce themselves and others as pious Muslims.

As the 1970s dawned, however, Islamist elites and their readers had limited textual resources at their disposal to challenge the primacy of bureaucratic over Islamic temporality, let alone to advocate a hybrid of the two temporal approaches. Indeed, Quranic commentaries popular in Egypt during the early- and mid-twentieth century said little about this question. Most notably, Rashid Rida (d. 1935) did not treat daily prayer as a pressing question in his discussion of Surat al-Nisa 4:103,\(^{25}\) even as he devoted twenty-one pages in Tafsir al-Manar (The Lighthouse Commentary) to questions such as

\(^{23}\) Takfir is the practice of declaring another Muslim to be an infidel (kafr). It was used by Islamists in Egypt who took Sayyid Qutb’s Milestones (Ma‘alim fi-l-Tariq, 1964) as a guide and later by Salafi-Jihadi groups across the Middle East and South Asia.


\(^{25}\) The latter part of the verse reads: “For such prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times.”
requirements of prayer during travel or during periods of fear for one’s life (generally in the context of war). Similarly, Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949) said little about regular prayer in his commentary, *Nazarat fi Kitab Allah* (Glances in the Book of God), merely enumerating the ethical and social benefits of ritual obedience.

This state of affairs did not change as the twentieth century progressed. In *Fi Zilal al-Qur’an* (In the Shade of the Quran), Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) takes a strict position regarding prayer during war—he advocates praying in shifts—but does not consider the ordinary circumstances of many of his readers. Neither did the Azhari Sheikh Muhammad Mahmud Hijazi (d. 1973), author of the popular 1962 commentary *al-Tafsir al-Wadih* (The Straightforward Commentary), deal with the issue of prayer times. Instead, he devoted his discussion to the question of prayer while traveling. The silence of these commentators on the question of daily prayer was not for lack of commitment to this fundamental ritual practice; rather, the obligation was so obvious that there was little need to discuss it as a legal matter, and these commentators did not consider prayer as a political project. During the second half of Sadat’s rule, however, prompt performance of the *Zuhr* would vault forward in textual and political prominence alike as Islamist elites, state employees and students participated in a project that transformed previous models of religious temporality.

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III. The Prayer Project: State Claims and Islamist Counter-Claims

As Sadat drew on the state’s religious and educational institutions to transmit a nationalist vision in which religious piety and political loyalty went hand in hand, he could not simply silence Islamist voices. Instead, his claim to faith depended on allowing the opposition to speak and even mobilize. To meet Sadat’s ideological needs, *Minbar al-Islam* emphasized the centrality of prayer for the everyday lives of its readers. Each issue of the magazine contained a prayer chart setting out the times of the five daily prayers (*mawaqit al-salat*) for the coming month.\(^30\) Alongside this roadmap to timely prayer, the Sheikh of al-Azhar ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmud (d. 1978) issued multiple fatwas deeming performance of the five daily prayers “the most important pillar (*rukn*) of Islam besides the declaration of faith (*al-shahada*).”\(^31\) Prayer was to structure the daily life of Egyptian believers.

This conception of prayer, however, was also oriented towards a broader affirmation of the existing political order. In this vein, *Minbar al-Islam* chronicled the President’s January 1976 visit to al-Sayyid al-Badawi mosque in Tanta, noting how the “citizens praised and hailed the life of their leader” (*tahlil wa-takbir al-muwatinin li-hayat al-qa’id*). Though Friday prayer had always involved an affirmation of the legitimacy of the current ruler, this iteration doubled as a political rally. Instead of reciting God’s praises – the usual context in which the honorific chants of *takbir* and *tahlil* are used – Egyptians were to affirm Sadat’s rule. By contrast, Egyptians appear to have attended mosque little outside the Friday sermon. As ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk noted in a March 25th 1977 sermon, “What are we thinking of when we hear the call to prayer and we are sitting on

\(^{30}\) For example, see *Minbar al-Islam*, March 1976/ Rabi’ al-Awwal 1396, p. 97.

the corner of the coffee shop (nawasi al-maqha) or on the open roads (qawari’ al-turuqat)...yet we do not respond...” Prayer and mosque attendance would soon vault forward in importance.

Leading voices within the Jam‘īyya Shar‘īyya were the first to explicitly challenge the subordination of religious ritual to bureaucratic schedules. In the December 1976 issue of al-‘tīsām, the Jam‘īyya Shar‘īyya’s leader ‘Abd al-Latīf Mushtahiri (d. 1995) praised Muhammad Sa‘īd Ahmad, a Member of Parliament from the Delta textile center of al-Mahalla al-Kubra. Ahmad had first prayed the Zuhr prayer in the midst of an afternoon parliamentary session and then the ‘Asr and Maghrib prayers, in turn, as the day of deliberations dragged on into the evening. For Mushtahiri, this was proof of the need for an alternative schedule:

The true principles of the religiously committed (mabādi’ al-multazimin) do not change based on time and place...this is the first time in the history of parliament that the newspapers have noted that a Muslim man has announced the rituals of his religion at their appointed time (sha‘a‘ir dinihī fi mawaqitihi) in a place in which hundreds have neglected the obligation of prayer and followed their desires...we salute the member of parliament Doctor Muhammad al-Sa‘īd, a physician and the president of the Mahalla al-Kubra branch of the Jam‘īyya Shar‘īyya...and we place no one above God (la nuzakki ‘ala Allah ahadan).32

Yet, for reasons that are unclear, this public challenge of piety receded into the background of al-‘tīsām.

Several months later, al-Da‘wa editor and leading Muslim Brother Salih ‘Ashmawi (d. 1983) revived the issue of prompt prayer. His March 1977 article, “Where is Prayer Performed in the State of Science and Faith?,” mocked the Sadat regime’s claim to piety by underlining the impossibility of full ritual practice within governmental institutions.

For ‘Ashmawi, prayer was particularly incumbent upon rulers (al-hukkm wa wulat al-

Umur) so that they could serve as a model for the people. Accordingly, it must be performed five times daily at the presidential palace as well as in the parliament, cabinet, ministries, judiciary, educational institutions, and professional offices, whether private or state-owned. The obligation to pray was also a social equalizer because it applied to every level of employee, whether white or blue collar, young or old, the most senior or most junior. It was this social reach that enabled the Zuhr prayer to serve as an effective challenge to the state’s efforts to discipline the individual citizen.

As ‘Ashmawi wielded prayer as a pointed instrument of religious challenge, he singled out members of parliament and the educational system alike. This Brotherhood leader asked rhetorically why the Speaker of the People’s Assembly—none other than the Sadat regime’s public proponent of the application of Shari’a, Sufi Abu Talib (d. 1981)—had not decreed that parliamentary meetings would be paused for ten minutes during prayer time. Just as dangerously, state-sponsored civil education (al-ta’lim al-madani) was useless without a broader moral education (tarbiya). ‘Ashmawi thus called on “all university administrators and deans of faculties and of primary and secondary schools to stop lessons during prayer times and to go down from their offices to the prayer hall (musalla) to join professors, teachers, white collar workers (muwazzifun) and students, both male and female.”

Neither should practical obstacles stand in the way of this project. As ‘Ashmawi explained:

[T]here are those who claim that the timing and work that has to be performed [are incompatible]…[and thus] do not allow prayers to occur in this fashion [i.e.

at the correct time]….but this is about action (al-ʾamal) and action alone is the strongest truth and most demonstrative evidence.\(^\text{34}\)

Indeed, the implementation of the *Zuhr* prayer in all state-controlled institutions represented no less than “the serious path to the application of the Islamic Sharia…leading to the establishment of an Islamic society (iqamat al-mujtamaʿ al-Islami).\(^\text{35}\) At stake was not only the application of Islamic law, but also the reorganization of society’s temporal rhythms to accord with piety rather than productivity.

The call for a reorganization of state schedules to accommodate timely prayer led to concrete, albeit limited, policy achievements over the summer of 1977. At this time, Sadat’s relationship with the Islamist opposition was frayed, but not severed. Despite deep dissatisfaction with the trials of the youth of al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra,\(^\text{36}\) elites within the Brotherhood and the Jamʿiyya Sharʿiyya had yet to dismiss cooperation with the regime. Accordingly, the Brotherhood allied with local branches of the Jamaʿa Islamiyya as they petitioned the Ministry of Education to provide breaks for prayer time at Egyptian universities. The July 1977 issue of the magazine included an article written by two students at Asyut University’s Faculty of Agriculture. This article, titled “A Pioneering Experiment at Asyut University’s Faculty of Commerce,” detailed how classes during the 1976-1977 academic year had paused for the *Zuhr* prayer.\(^\text{37}\) Indeed, according to the two authors, the Faculty’s Dean had issued orders for all departments to allow students and white-collar employees (muwazzifun) to perform prayers in timely fashion within the

\(^{34}\) Ibid.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.


faculty mosque. Neither was Asyut the only success story: only three months earlier, Salah al-Din Hasan, the deputy of the Ministry of Education in Sharqiyya, had ordered primary and secondary principals to adjust the class schedule to account for the early afternoon obligation. The goal of anchoring Islamization within the daily practices – and schedules–of state-controlled institutions was clear.

With Asyut as an early model, writers and readers in al-Da‘wa argued for a restructuring of class time within al-Azhar’s nationwide network of primary and secondary religious institutes, acknowledged by the regime and Islamists alike as a key pathway for the transmission of religious knowledge in Egypt. In November 1977, ’Abd al-‘Azim al-Mat‘ani called for the “revival” (nuhud) of this central system of Islamic education, arguing that Azhari institutes throughout Egypt should organize class-time around prayer, and teachers should join their students in this ritual practice. This reorganization, in turn, would instill “virtuous morals and praiseworthy behavior” (al-khulq al-fadil wa-l-suluk al-hamid). Yet, as readers reminded Islamist elites, this problem was not limited to al-Azhar’s institutes and a letter from the same month, titled “Studying and Prayer Times,” demanded that al-Azhar University’s classes stop for prayer times as the University president had promised. The failure of religious institutes and al-Azhar University –let alone public schools –to stop for prayer was not merely a matter of ritual rectitude but symbolized a sense of broader moral decay that the Brotherhood and the Jama’a Islamiyya would exploit.

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38 Ibid. p. 45.
This effort to revamp school schedules, however, would be piecemeal and incomplete, and letters streamed into al-Daʿwa reporting these gaps as readers sought to form themselves as pious Muslims for whom religious ritual took precedence over bureaucratic obedience. In June 1979, a reader from Damietta noted that the governorate’s general director (mudir ’amm) for the Ministry of Education had ordered primary and secondary schools to coordinate prayer and class times, yet this had not occurred in practice. The reader then urged “all those responsible for education in our country to take this faithful model” (hadha al-namudhaj al-mukhlis) as a template for their actions.42 Similarly, in February 1980, Ashraf ʿAbd al-Hakim Mujahid, a student at ʿAli Mubarak secondary school in Daqahliyya, complained about “students not responding to the call to prayer, whether in the afternoon (al-Zuhr) or at other points of conflict with class times.” This reader continued with the obvious question: “[W]hy can’t teaching pause during times of prayer and why can’t teachers, in cooperation with their students, perform the prayers at this time…as we are in a state of Science and Faith.”43

Yet, the teachers were not necessarily at fault. A June 1980 letter from a secondary school teacher in Daqahliyya, titled “Oh Ministry of Education: What about Prayers?”, complained that teachers, like their students, should have the opportunity to perform prayers during the school day.44 While Sadat claimed to apply the Shariʿa, students and teachers reported how he had fallen short and questioned the equation of nationalist and religious loyalty. Indeed, the best strategy at times remained avoidance. As ʿAbd al-Hamid Kishk counseled students in September 1979, “Oh sons, oh primary school students, perform the prayers prior to going to school and ask your fathers to pray for you

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42 “Barid al-Daʿwa,” al-Daʿwa, June 1979/Rajab 1399, p. 64.
Even for the most steadfast, structural limitations could be overwhelming.

Despite the clear limitations of the state’s efforts, Islamist lobbying sometimes bore fruit. In the April 1981 issue, a reader recounted how, since the previous month, classes at the faculties of Theology (Usul al-Din) and Preaching (al-Da’wa al-Islamiyya) at al-Azhar university ceased when the time of Zuhr arrived, with teachers and students directed by loud speaker to gather in the faculty mosque. In response, al-Da’wa congratulated the professors of these two faculties and called on other Egyptian university faculties to take them as a model. If Islamization could be anchored within the heart (and clocks) of state institutes, prayer could become the norm through which piety was cultivated rather than the practice of a minority.

While the leading thinkers of the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya hesitated to use prayer to challenge Sadat’s hold over state institutions, the Brotherhood worked with the Jama‘a Islamiyya to transform the Zuhr. Their success was less in educational policy—the limits to the implementation of prayer times in schools is underscored by letters from readers in state and Islamist magazines alike—than in documenting a gap in the state’s religious claims which was easily observable to a mass audience, educated and uneducated. In the process, they had cornered the Sadat regime, which acknowledged the daily obligation of prayer, and thus found it difficult to resist the Brotherhood’s lobbying.

Just as importantly, “Islamic temporality” had taken a decisive turn. Though previously less prompt than its bureaucratic counterpart, the continued demands to pray immediately following the call to prayer now compared favorably with the habitual

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lethargy of government offices and schools. Yet, temporal accommodation was insufficient on its own: The opposition also required access to mosques to facilitate the formation of specifically Islamist subjects.

IV. When Time is Not Sufficient: Making Daily Prayer Collective

When the enemies of Allah come to attack Islam, they attack the mosques…not with the heavy cannon and its long range shells, and not with long-range bombers…rather, they attack the mosques by scaring people away from entering them…. They frighten the men so that they don’t grow beards and they frighten the woman so that they don’t cover their heads. This is an explicit war (harb sariha) against God… - ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk, September 28 1979

The whole land is a mosque (kull al-ard masjid)…you can meet your Lord at any time and in any place…mosques are an airstrip (mahbat) at which God reveals truth (al-Haqq) to the people…. there are [also] houses in which God has permitted his name to be mentioned…. people must preserve these mosques so that their connection with God remains. - Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha‘rawi, May 1980

While Kishk warned of the challenges of attracting Egyptians to the mosque in the face of the threat of state security forces, al-Sha‘rawi suggested that one’s focus should not be limited to the mosque. The battle was not between piety and impiety, between prayer and abstention from it. Instead, the conflict was between an anti-state preacher who sought a site at which to mobilize his followers and a Statist preacher who sought to diffuse the importance of particular religious sites by spreading religious practice more broadly throughout society. The latter strategy had could serve to diffuse the specific challenge of mosques by spreading religion more “thinly” across Egypt. Alternatively, it could merely encourage a broader transformation of social spaces along religious lines.

Chapter 7  
Prayer and the Islamic Revival

The Muslim Brotherhood, as it teamed with the Jama’a Islamiyya, occupied a middle ground: by taking prayer to the state’s doorstep as it argued for access to ritual space at the core of state institutions, it could be seen as diffusing the threat of mosque mobilization. At the same time, though, this project of pious cultivation would soon be anchored within those spaces ostensibly controlled by the state.

Students led the charge, as they appealed to employees within state institutions. A December 1976 letter from Cairo University’s Faculty of Humanities (Kulliyat al-Adab) detailed student negotiations with upper-level administrators to provide space for regular collective prayer: a student explained that the school’s mosque could hold no more than 15 students at a time, thus requiring students to pray in successive groups. Accordingly, this reader, a member of the Jama’a Islamiyya, called on the dean of the faculty to “provide a broader space for prayer…[which also includes] space for women.”49 Yet this problem persisted: a January 1978 unsigned column from a student at Cairo University, titled “Seven years…and the mosque has yet to be finished,” noted that while original promises for a university mosque had been made during the 1970-71 academic year, the Ministry of Endowments had apparently halted the project by refusing to pay the Arab Contractors Company to finish it. The student expressed hope that the university, headed by Sadat ally and speaker of the People’s Assembly, Sufi Abu Talib, would complete a spacious mosque in short order.50 At this point, the Jama’a Islamiyya saw a possibility of accommodation with the Sadat regime and viewed it as a potential ally for mosque construction, rather than as a direct threat to the sanctity of ritual space.

This effort was not limited to university students. In April 1977, a group of students from the Azhari secondary institute in Alexandria explained: “[W]e cannot find a place to pray…[even as] the institute’s mosque has become a soccer field….will those responsible for the institute (al-mas’ ulun) [within the state bureaucracy] listen to us?”\(^{51}\) It is unclear whether the Ministry of Education responded to this call, but \(\text{al-Da’wa’s} \ ‘\text{Abd al-’ Azim al-Mat’ani grasped its importance and in the November 1977 issue, declared that al-Azhar’s renaissance (nuhud) depended on the coordination of class time and prayer time and also the existence of a prayer hall (musalla) in all Azhari institutes.}\(^{52}\) Whatever the hopes of renaissance, these young Azharis struggled to reconcile their institute’s educational mission with the practical obstacles it posed to collective ritual practice.

As these readers worked to effect change within their own institutions, \(\text{al-Da’wa’s} \) editors and writers gave comparatively little attention to questions of access to spaces in which to perform the \(\text{Zuhr} \) prayer. Instead, beginning in 1978, the shift in this debate was driven by members of the Jama’a Islamiyya writing in the “Youth and University News” section of the magazine and by readers in high schools across Egypt. The conflict began within these schools as students clashed with low-level administrators and state security forces alike: Hisham Mahmud, a secondary student at the National Model School in Alexandria reported that he had been repeatedly physically assaulted by Central Security (\(\text{al-Amn al-Markazi} \) for performing the call to prayer while at school.

This reader, however, \(\text{also} \) challenged the Muslim Brotherhood to support his efforts: “\(\text{[A]s} \text{al-Da’wa} \) attacks the enemies of Islam in Somalia, Burma, Eretria and Ethiopia, I ask it to face the enemies of Islam from those who are counted as Muslims (\(\text{mimman}\)\(^{51}\)” “Barid al-Da’wa,” \(\text{al-Da’wa} \), April 1977/Jumada al-Ula 1397, p. 62.
“yantamin ilayhi).” In response, *al-Da’wa*’s editors did not mince their words as they criticized repression by state institutions while defending themselves:

This [action by the security services] is terrorism (*al-irhab*).… they instill fear in the youth of Islam…carrying out the plans of the enemies of Islam… but God most high will bring victory to those who support him…. we hope that these people will remember, if only for a second, that they belong to Islam and return to it. We call on Dr. Hasan Isma’il, Minister of Education, to investigate this matter so as to determine the validity of the complaint….and to extend the secure hand of supervision, which is keen for Islam (*yad al-ishraf al-amina al-harisa ‘ala al-Islam*) to private schools.  

Whatever the subsequent investigation of the Minister of Education, the challenge of repression of the *Zuhr* prayer did not abate as these readers entered the mosque.

Once entrenched in the mosques, students frequently used their bodies to protect their claim to ritual space. Most striking is a February 1979 letter from Amal Zayn al-ʿAbdin, a secondary student at a girls’ school in Alexandria. She described how, on November 24 1978, a male teacher had entered the prayer hall (*musalla*) and expelled all the female students therein who had come to perform the *Zuhr* prayer because it conflicted with the school schedule (*nizam al-madrasa*). The letter writer was in the midst of prayer and thus ignored her teacher’s demand; in response, the teacher entered the mosque wearing his shoes and dragged her outside by her hair. When another female student came to her aid, this teacher began to assault the second student and expelled her from the prayer hall, too.

Yet this was not merely a case of faculty brutality. As this student noted, the principal of the school and her deputy were both Christians and the teacher in question was a Muslim man touching a woman unrelated to him. In response, *al-Da’wa* noted sarcastically:

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We have not been aware previously that the presence of female students in the school’s prayer hall (musalla) could be considered a disruption of the school system (nizam al-madrasa)...This constitutes audacity against God (al-tajarru’ ‘ala Allah) and an attempt to destroy the mosque...at a time when there is no authority figure (mas’ul) at the school who is ready to prevent such behavior. Once again, we call on the Minister of Education to investigate this new incident and to determine what occurred...\

Educational intermediaries, though likely also involved in more quotidian struggles over authority, were fearful of a project of piety that threatened to overturn the Ministry of Education’s claim to order and the subordination of religious practice within its institutions to imperatives of nationalist education. While they could not deny the time of prayer, they could seek to regulate it within each of their schools’ daily schedule. Conversely, as students pursued piety, they used their bodies to challenge the authority of their teachers and state security forces alike.

Students did not stand alone in the project of the Zuhr prayer; at times, they found support from teachers, too. A former teacher at Qasr al-Nil secondary school in Cairo complained in the March 1980 issue of al-Daʿwa that he had lost his job after leading the students in the Zuhr prayer. After the school principal warned him that he was not to do so, he made clear that “there are no limits on who can perform or supervise prayers.... the students need someone to guide them to the path of God and to protect them from deviation (al-inhiraf).” In response, the principal warned him: “[D]on’t forget that there are monitors (ruqaba) in our school...[and] we want to continue earning a living in peace (nurid luqmat ‘aysh b-il-salam).” The teacher saw no solution other than to resign and took aim at the state, asking rhetorically: “[I]f we are living in a state whose slogan is science and faith and if the name of the Ministry is that of Education....and if we are

54 “Barid al-Daʿ wa,” al-Daʿ wa, February 1979/Rabiʿ al-Thani 1397, p. 64.
supposed to guide to Truth (al-sawab) and good (al-khayr), then who is making the mistake here?!”

High schools were a key site of state control and the Ministry of Education sought to use the implicit threat of government surveillance to prevent the emergence of a new generation of Islamist youth. This teacher’s story, however, also suggests that the state’s employees often disagreed with, and even subverted, the directives of their superiors, thus opening up new (if temporary) spaces for this Islamist project.

Ultimately, the most significant clashes and repression would emerge on Egyptian university campuses, particularly at Cairo University, near the end of the 1979-1980 academic year. At this time, the Islamist opposition had not only laid claim to ritual space but also vocally challenged Sadat’s negotiations at Camp David. Of course, Jama‘a Islamiyya organizers had previously faced restrictions: most notably, students participants in one of the Jama‘a Islamiyya summer camps (mu‘askarat) had fled Cairo University at the end of the 1977-1978 academic year following a crackdown by state security forces. By the 1979-1980 academic year, though, this conflict had intensified further as state security entered Cairo University’s Faculty of Medicine on two different occasions. The latter occasion, which fell on July 3, 1980, involved security forces surrounding the mosque at Cairo University’s Faculty of Medicine set aside for female students.

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56 In 1979, Sadat shut down summer camps at Alexandria, Cairo and Zaqqaziq universities. Clashes also occurred in Minya and Asyut, both within and beyond university grounds. See Kepel, The Roots of Radical Islam. London: Saki, 2005, 153-161.
The scene, as described by a member of the Jamaʿa Islamiyya, was mayhem and involved the ransacking of the mosque library and the forced removal of copies of the Quran and other Islamic books. Most symbolically, security forces reportedly tore down a banner bearing Surat al-Jinn 72:18: “The mosques (masajid) are for Allah, so do not invoke with Allah anyone.”\(^{59}\) This criminal act (ʿamal ijrami) had prevented worshippers from fulfilling their religious obligations; accordingly, there could be no doubt that those who had done so had engaged in injustice (zulm). The student cited Surat al-Baqara 2:114 rhetorically: “And who are more unjust (wa-man azlamu) than those who prevent the name of Allah from being mentioned in His mosques and strive toward their destruction.” Whereas the students were the emissaries of God and His party (awliyaʿ Allah wa hizbihi), their opponents awaited a great punishment in the hereafter.\(^{60}\) The precise identity of these opponents, however, remained unspoken.

With students spearheading the claim to mosques, al-Daʿwa’s mufti Muhammad ʿAbd Allah al-Khatib (b. 1929) elaborated the religious implications of the crackdown at Cairo University’s Medical Faculty. Textually, al-Khatib took a similar line to the students, citing both Surat al-Jin 72:18 and Surat al-Baqara 2:114. Yet, this mufti had additional targets in mind, castigating al-Azhar for the “silence” (sukut) of its scholars in the face of such “aggression” (ʿudwan). He then turned his appeal to the rank and file of the security forces: “[T]hose troops who stand ready to defend Satan…they should prepare to defend their Umma and to regain Jerusalem, and to struggle against [the forces of] atheism and aggression that face every Islamic community whose inviolable sites are

\(^{59}\) Ibid. This verse is traditionally used to denote the exclusive sovereignty of God, rather than man, over the world.

being violated and holy objects stomped upon….\(^{61}\) Citing the Quran in rhetorical fashion, he asked: “Have you heard the story of the soldiers of Pharaoh (\textit{Fir'awn}) and Thamud \(^{62}\)?/ But they who disbelieve are in [persistent] denial/While Allah encompasses them from behind/ But this is an honored Quran [inscribed] in a Preserved Slate.”\(^{63}\) Khatib had taken the rhetoric of the Jama’a Islamiyya one step further, suggesting that the troops of the security services were those of the pagan civilizations of Pharaonic Egypt and Thamud and that their leader was equally beyond the pale.

It was left to the elites of \textit{Minbar al-Islam} to respond to the clear inconsistencies between the state’s claims to religious legitimacy and the potent opposition claim to place religious temporality and identity before their respective bureaucratic and nationalist counterparts. On the discrete question of daily prayer, there was little use arguing:

Muhammad al-Ghawi acknowledged that prayer was a central component of Islamic education (\textit{tarbiya islamiyya}) and that “the most important aspect of [religious education] is the timely performance of prayers during the school day.”\(^{64}\) Yet, al-Ghawi sought to also push back against claims that the state had failed to provide proper ritual space:

\begin{quote}
Let us be honest: the mosques in schools or university faculties are abandoned (\textit{mahjura}) or nearly so …few students go there… and indeed, [these] mosques sometimes serve as places for students to flee from lessons… rather, all students should go to the prayer hall (\textit{musalla}), as it is a class period (\textit{hissa}) in the day like any other…\(^{65}\)
\end{quote}

\(^{61}\) "\textit{Akhbar al-Shabab wa-Jami’at},” \textit{al-Da’wa}, September 1980/Dhu al-Qa’d 1400, p. 40.

\(^{62}\) Thamud were a pagan people in Arabia prior to the advent of Islam. The Quran 7:73–4 exhorts the people of Thamud to worship Allah lest they face a “painful punishment” (\textit{adhab ‘alim}).

\(^{63}\) This is a reference to Surat al-Buruj, 85: 17-22. The reference to Pharaoh therein was hardly innocuous: ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj, author of \textit{al-Farida al-Gha’iba} (The Hidden Obligation) and leader of the Jihad organization referred to Egypt’s ruler by this designation and, on October 6th, 1981, Sadat’s assassin exclaimed: “My name is Khalid Islambuli, I have killed Pharaoh, and I do not fear death.” See Kepel, \textit{The Roots of Radical Islam}, p. 198.


\(^{65}\) Ibid.
That al-Ghaiwī sought to make prayer a “class period” like any other only underscores the success of the Islamist challenge of the previous half decade and the attempt of this representative of the Ministry of Endowments to claim the Zuhr prayer within a state-sanctioned temporal and spatial order.

Although school prayer had arrived, cooperation with the Islamist opposition was short-lived. Nineteen-eighty-one saw the arrest of thousands of Leftists and Islamists alike and the shuttering of not only dozens of mosques in Egypt but also, in the late summer of 1981, the offices of al-Da‘wa and al-I‘tisam. Within this environment of mass repression, Minbar al-Islām’s ‘Abd al-‘Azīm Mahdī authored an October 1981 opinion piece titled “Mosques are for God” (al-Masajīd li-llah). The piece, which appeared in this Statist publication less than a week before Sadat’s October 6th assassination, sought to reappropriate Islamist claims to the inviolability of university mosques and to paint the religious opposition as a source of social disorder (fitna). Accordingly, mosques represented the center of the state’s focus: whereas radicals (al-mutattarrifun) sought to use mosques to foment social discord by transforming them into “dens of Satan” (awkaran l-il-shayṭān), the regime deemed it essential to reassert control over them in order to “realize peace and avoid bloodshed.” This supposed control and the avoidance of bloodshed, however, would not last long as Sadat was assassinated only a few days later by a Brotherhood splinter group.

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67 Ibid. 52.
V. Conclusion

Between 1976 and 1981, leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamʿiyya Sharʿiyya challenged the Sadat regime’s religious legitimacy by transforming the Zuhr prayer into a tool of temporal and spatial contestation within state institutions. Leaders from the Jamaʿa Islamiyya and Islamist readers supported this effort by reporting the contradictions between the regime’s claims to religious observance and the reality of its educational institutions. Individual prayer, however, was insufficient and, through lobbying, protest and bodily resistance, Egypt’s Islamist opposition sought to acquire space within state institutions to support collective ritual performance. Far from walled off citadels, the offices, classrooms and courtyards of state institutions were key sites of Islamist activism. State writers and institutions, in both word and action, had little choice but to concede to many of the demands arising from this project. Many schools were instructed to cease instruction during prayer times, while both schools and government offices built mosques.

Yet, this is not solely a story of an Islamist takeover of state institutions. Leading figures within the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamʿiyya Sharʿiyya successfully teamed with student activists to entrench the Zuhr prayer within state institutions. At the same time, though, they also adopted their opponent’s vision of order and discipline. While the temporality of this Islamist project ostensibly emerged from the “natural” rhythm of daily prayer, it ultimately constituted a striking replication of state-sponsored notions of order and discipline.

The ways in which the project of prayer melded Statist and Islamic understandings of temporality also casts light on the ways in which state institutions both shape and are
shaped by those who work and study within them. The story of the Zuhr prayer is neither one of straightforward resistance nor one of co-optation and compromise. It reveals how Islamist leaders, students and professionals were shaped by state-sponsored conceptions of time and space, even as they consciously and unconsciously re-appropriated these concepts and reshaped institutions to serve new ends. Just as importantly, it highlights the internal diversity of a state whose employees displayed differing preferences and priorities, and a set of institutions in which even those who agreed on ends might differ on means. The regime might not have approved of how central security carried out its directives, while teachers and principles often found themselves on opposite sides.

The success of this hybrid project of pious cultivation through a transformed Zuhr lies in its ubiquity in contemporary Egypt. Whether at the National Archives, Parliament or in the cavernous Mujammaʿ, the necessary time and space for the collective performance of the Zuhr prayer is now the norm rather than the exception. While this project began as an Islamist endeavor to occupy state institutions under Sadat, its diffusion has been accompanied by a comparative dilution of its Islamist undertones. Indeed, contemporary Islamists and their opponents alike brandish their ritual piety: both jailed Muslim Brotherhood president Muhammad Morsi (b. 1951) and his successor and jailor, ʿAbd al-Fatah al-Sisi (b. 1954), proudly sport the “prayer bump” (zabiba), and al-Sisi regularly appears on television engaged in prayer. That Egypt’s first democratically elected president and his successor are both products of this shift not only points to the shared logic that binds state institutions and Islamist organizations, but also underscores why representatives of each work so hard to deny this shared history. Within a polarized
political landscape, the story of how the Zuhr prayer became the norm, rather than the exception, is easily forgotten.
Religious Revival between Mursi and al-Sisi

As I researched and wrote this dissertation between May 2011 and September 2015, Egypt’s political landscape veered between diametrically opposed leaders and ideological claims. From revolt against Mubarak to Mursi to al-Sisi, every choice seemed to present an alternative, whether the revolutionary chant of “Egyptian for Egyptians” (Misr l-il-Misriyyin), Mursi’s “Islamic renaissance” (Nahda Islamiyya), or a return to the pre-revolutionary status quo and promises of an “Islamic Revolution” (Thawra Islamiyya) under al-Sisi. Most tumultuous was the year between Mursi’s election on June 30th 2012 and the July 3rd 2013 coup. If, in February of 2013, Islamists had been excited to talk and optimistic about the future, by July 2013, the political winds had turned. By June 2014, the shift was unmistakable as Brigadier General-turned-President ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi spearheaded a successful campaign to categorize all-Islamists as “terrorists.”¹

Al-Sisi’s decision to place the Brotherhood beyond the pale politically and to outlaw it legally exacerbated tensions within an already polarized landscape. Indeed, when I contacted al-Da’wa editor Badr Muhammad Badr by Facebook to set up a follow-up phone conversation, he explained that his garage had suffered an arson attack several weeks prior and that he no longer used his phone. A burnt garage was only the tip of the iceberg: the August 2013 massacre of hundreds at Rabī’a al-‘Adawiyya mosque and the imprisonment of thousands of Muslim Brothers made clear that there was little room for the Brotherhood to participate in Egyptian politics or society. In turn, a group identifying itself as the local branch of ISIS has taken to attacking government officials, naval ships, foreign embassies and possible even a Russian civilian plane. A minority voice within the

¹ For the longer-term roots of this polarized discourse by which Islamists are uniformly constructed as “terrorists,” see Walter Armbrust, “Media Review: al-Da’iyya” (The Preacher), Journal of the American Academy of Religion 82: 3 (Sept. 2014), pp. 841-856
Islamist movement has thus become its most active faction as Muslim Brothers sit in prison and Salafis struggle to balance political accommodation and religious principle. While the choice between al-Sisi and Islamism was not initially one of security over terror, the former’s policies created a self-fulfilling prophecy.

These political tremors derailed the research of many of my colleagues. My project, by contrast, was less vulnerable to these political vicissitudes, depending not on sustained access to Islamist and Salafi leaders or to state institutions, but on a type of source that few saw as politically contentious. Once I had acquired the bulk of this material—whether at the Egyptian National Archives (Dar al-Kutub), the ‘Azbakiyya Book Market in Cairo, the Moshe Dayan Center Media Arabic Press Archive at Tel Aviv University, Princeton’s Firestone Library, or Columbia University’s Butler Library—I could begin to tell a story of the religious contestation and pious practice that had emerged in the early years of the Islamic Revival. The cooperation of this period grew more distant in the face of violent polarization of Egyptian public discourse over Islam after January 25th 2011, the events of the early years of the Islamic revival became even more crucial to understanding negotiations of Islam in contemporary Egypt.

Though the Islamic Revival first arose under Sadat, Mubarak’s rule (1980-2011) saw the consolidation of multiple projects of mass religiosity. Even as Sadat shuttered both al-Da’wa and al-I’tisam and jailed thousands of political opponents in the Fall of 1981, Egypt’s diverse Islamist opposition and their Statist competitors had already successfully inaugurated a process that would produce an increasingly devout society over the coming 30 years.

As the 1980s progressed, Statist and Islamist religious institutions alike embarked on
an ambitious expansion of their activities, while middle class Egyptians drove a demand for religious education. The scope of such efforts is largely anecdotal, thanks to the efforts made by Islamist organizations to stay out of the regulatory grasp of state institutions and poor record keeping by these same institutions. Even so, the expansion of the activities of both the Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya and the Muslim Brotherhood is notable. The Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya, which had 101 branches and an unknown number of mosques in 1974, had grown to somewhere between 262 and 350 branches by 1991 and controlled somewhere between 1,115 and 6,000 mosques.\(^2\) In the early 1990s, it was able to utilize these sites to provide everything from social welfare to religious training: the former included caring for orphans,\(^3\) medical clinics and the distribution of Zakat, while the latter encompassed Quranic memorization, the establishment of libraries of Islamic books, the maintenance of the organization’s mosques, and regular lectures on religious topics.\(^4\)

The expansion of the Brotherhood’s educational activities, by contrast, would proceed through its ties to university students. If the Islamist curriculum of the Jama‘a Islamiyya in Sadatist Egypt was limited by the inevitable graduation of the movement’s leaders, these leaders soon found new sites of activism. As Carrie Wickham notes, professional syndicates formed a key site of activism, educational and socioeconomic, for Brotherhood leaders. In turn, the organization’s grassroots infrastructure extended to Cairo’s unplanned peripheral areas (known as ‘ashwa‘iyyat).\(^5\) In the latter setting, independent mosques would serve as essential sites of individual da‘wa through

\(^3\) In Egypt, a child is considered an orphan if his or her father is absent.
\(^5\) Wickham, Mobilizing Islam, pp. 176-203.
preaching, lectures and the distribution of pamphlets and audiocassettes authored by
Hasan al-Banna, Mustafa Mashhur, the Lebanese Islamist Fathi Yakan, and others.\(^6\) The
early 1990s also saw an increase in the number of Islamic newspapers: *al-I’tisam* had
returned to publication, and the Brotherhood had gained control over *Liwa al-Islam*.\(^7\)

Yet this was not simply an educational project dominated by tracts of Islamist
mobilization; equally popular were commentaries on the Quran and hadith collections as
well as popular works on the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions.\(^8\) More broadly,
many sites of religious education avoided any explicit political or organizational
identification due to fear of political repression, even as their members may have
belonged to the Brotherhood, Jam‘iyya Shar‘iyya or other Islamic organizations.\(^9\) In
tandem, the Ministry of Endowments spearheaded a drive to provide religious libraries to
associations (*jam‘iyyat*), universities and clubs, reaching some 2,000 libraries in all
between 1981 and 1998.\(^10\) Just as importantly, Statist institutions continued to draw on
their original strengths: the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Research Academy
alike took advantage of state-controlled television and radio broadcasts,\(^11\) while the
Ministry of Education continued to dispense religious education through its schools.

Beginning in the late 1990s, the infrastructure of religious education expanded further
through the spread of satellite television and the Internet. Salafi scholars such as

\(^{6}\) Ibid. p. 138.

\(^{7}\) In 1980, Sadat amended the printed materials law (*qanun al-matbu‘at*) to stipulate that publishing licenses
could not be passed down upon the death of the licensee. As a result, the government simply refused to
process ‘Umar al-Tilmisani’s petition to publish again until his death in 1983, at which point they declared
the matter closed. The Brotherhood, though, succeeded in obtaining another license from Fatima Hamza,
the license holder of the *Liwa al-Islam* journal upon Hamza’s 1984 marriage to a Muslim Brother, ‘Afat

\(^{8}\) Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, p. 135.

\(^{9}\) Ibid. p. 125.

\(^{10}\) Ministry of Endowments, *Wizarat al-Awqaf Bayna al-Madi wa-l-Hadir...wa-l-Mustaqa’bal*. Cairo, Egypt:
Ministry of Endowments, N.D, p. 50.

Muhammad Hasan and Muhammad Hussein Yaqoub now host their own websites and satellite television programs, while lay preachers such as Amr Khaled produce everything from programs such as *Lifemakers* (*Sunna‘ al-hayat*), which help to organize local communities around Islamic ritual practice, education and socio-economic service provision, to *Renewers* (*Mujaddidun*), which aims to cultivate a new generation of Islamic leaders along the lines of Donald Trump’s *The Apprentice*.\(^{12}\) State institutions could no longer hope to control religious education as under Nasser, nor could they serve as a dominant voice within a broader market as they had during the 1980s and early 1990s. Instead, al-Azhar’s Academy for Islamic Research and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs could only seek to participate as one voice, albeit a well-financed one, within a broader debate.

This broader debate, in turn, framed shifts in religious practice in contemporary Egypt. The proliferation of diverse educational projects for Islamic transmission, institutional and media-based, served not only to educate lay Muslims concerning the fundamentals of their religion, but also to shape social perceptions of what it means to be a pious Muslim. In the shade of this educational apparatus, Egyptian Muslims claim religious respectability as they orient themselves to both the Divine and to their peers.

The expansion of the ranks of the pious, however, was neither the product of an Islamist assault on state institutions nor the inevitable reaction to the ideological disappointment of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the initial successes of the 1973 war. Instead, this shift in religious thought and practice – distinguished by new practices of and structures to facilitate religious literacy, modest dress and gender segregation, and the

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\(^{12}\) For more on this, see Aaron Rock, “Amr Khaled: From Da’wa to Political and Religious Authority,” *British Journal of Middle East Studies* (2010), 37:1, pp. 15-37.
collective daily performance of the Zuhr prayer—would emerge through cross-pollination, competition and even cooperation among Statist and Islamist religious elites and the Sadat regime during the second half of the 1970s. The Islamic Revival—in both Statist and Islamist varieties—was formed in public spaces, whether state institutions, the streets of Cairo, Alexandria, the Nile Delta and Upper Egypt, or mass transportation throughout the country. Reorienting our gaze to the sites at which individuals perform piety in daily life reveals a complex story of religious change that challenges previous divisions between state and society, conflations of the regime and state institutions, and assumptions of uniformity within the Islamist opposition.

This story not only revises previous narratives of religious change in Egypt, but also presents a new methodological approach to the study of Islamic media generally and mass-mediated texts in particular, by showing how Islamic magazines came to be a central site of negotiation in the formation of key projects of the Islamic Revival. The relevance of these texts is twofold: they allow analysis of interaction among editors, writers and readers, while also providing a picture of the readers’ geographic and socioeconomic position. Chapter two of this dissertation has shown the utility of this approach by harvesting the information contained in the subject lines of letters to the editor and fatwa requests in order to compare the constituencies mobilized by Statist and Islamist magazines, and thus to broaden explanations of the “turn to Islam” to also include Statist visions. The use of this source to produce descriptive statistics can be extended both to other studies of periodicals within the field of Islamic Studies and to studies that draw on popular periodicals more broadly.

This analysis also speaks to a broader literature on both piety and Islamism.
Methodologically, it foregrounds the ways in which particular media forms shape the religious projects that follow, and the role of state institutions in these projects, whether the institutions are explicitly religious (such as the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs) or ostensibly secular (such as the Ministry of Education). By focusing on the pious practices by which their practitioners navigate the state/society divide, it complicates previous narratives that implicitly assume the existence of intellectually and socially sealed worlds.

This methodological move helps to shape more nuanced understandings of an Islamic Revival that includes pious participants with varying political allegiances. While it shows significant overlap between those who turned to Statist institutions and Islamist organizations when it comes to questions of religious obligation and practice, it also highlights divergent political approaches. Crucially, piety and either implicit or explicit support for the (non-Islamist) status quo can go hand in hand; the quietist Salafis who performed the Zuhr prayer for decades without politicizing it are no less committed to the project of mass religiosity than their Islamist competitors. Indeed, the ranks of the politically quietist pious extend beyond the Salafis to those who participated in Statist projects of religious respectability. Instead of considering this segment of society as somehow unprincipled or mere apologists, this dissertation takes seriously the rise of a movement that dedicates itself to Statist visions of Islam and opposes Islamism. Religious principle can be lived not merely through resistance to an unjust regime, but also through attempts to morally shape society from within. To return to the opening quotation of the fifth chapter of this dissertation, “religion as morals” includes, for many, commitment to social transformation through Islam.
Conversely, both Statist and Islamist movements of piety and social change emerge through a dialogue between local conditions and claims and elite visions. In complement to SMT studies that depict a “framing” process, this dissertation suggests that the frames themselves are formed at the intersection of elite programmatic visions and local practice. Neither can we separate these frames from broader intellectual trends: while the existing literature highlights the importance of neighborhood outreach and leading Islamist thinkers, participants in these projects are neither ideologically nor sociologically sealed. Instead, as the ranks of the pious frequent state institutions, whether schools or offices, modernist conceptions of order, gender relations and change shaped competing projects. Statist and Islamist religious visions, while products of the efforts of religious elites to affect change within Egyptian society, are equally shaped by the unexpected ways in which ideas and people move across supposedly clear-cut political and religious borders.

This history of the emergence of the Islamic Revival also reveals how the spread of competing projects of religious respectability produced a highly classed and gendered religious sphere in which ostensibly direct obedience to divine writ renders sustained critiques of class and gender impossible. The normativity of piety –whether education, modesty or ritual practice –has continued to place the burdens of class on the shoulders of a middle class whose purchasing power has declined and particularly on those women within it who bear disproportionate responsibilities. While religious elites offer short-term solutions –whether limited economic redistribution through Zakat, subsidized modest dress and books, gender-segregated subway cars, or regular prayer spaces –they lack the economic resources to fundamentally ease the burdens of piety or the politics of gender that structure them. Yet, these participants are nonetheless privileged: the pious
social respectability to which they lay claim is only available to those with sufficient literacy to purchase and read pamphlets and periodicals. These strictures affect even those who don’t wish to participate: the choice is no longer to veil, pray or educate oneself religiously, but rather to abstain from these practices.

The occlusions of class and gender that inhabit the Islamic Revival are paralleled by amnesia concerning the shared history of Sadat’s rule. The social dominance of the norms of the Islamic Revival has produced a situation in which this religious shift is seen as a product of a spontaneous turn to Islam, rather than the work of leading religious factions of the period, whether Statist or Islamist. It is in this context that Brothers, Salafis and al-Sisi share religious references and commitments. Islamists no longer have an unmistakable upper hand; indeed, the question isn’t whether al-Sisi prays, but where. Even more notable, however, is the transformation of Egypt’s first lady: while both Jihan al-Sadat and Suzanne Mubarak consciously fashioned themselves as “Westernized” and left their heads uncovered, al-Sisi’s wife Intisar ‘Amer (like Mursi’s wife, Najla Mahmud) dons the hijab.13

The spread of the Revival’s norms is evident even in instances of Islamist failure. Once the premier claimant to Islam, the Muslim Brotherhood has become one of many contestants. The Brotherhood’s success in the 2012 presidential elections was supposed to be a fait accompli due to the assumed equation between religiosity and support for Islamism.14 This explanation, however, fell flat as the voting results were tallied and

13 Such a shift is the more notable given the historic marginalization of all pious markers from Egyptian media and culture. For more on this point with regard to films, see Walter Armbrust, “Islamists in Egyptian Cinema,” American Anthropologist 104:3, pp. 922-930.
14 By contrast, pre-election analyses assumed this relationship. For example, see Jenna Krajewski, “Beyond Tahrir Square: Can Egypt’s Liberals Survive in the Post-Mubarak Era?” World Policy Journal, 28:2 (Summer 2011), pp. 89-99. Also see Eric Trager, Current Trends in Islamist Ideology 14 (Jan 2013), pp. 27-37.
Mursi had received a mere 25 percent of the votes in the first round and 51.7 percent in the second round against Ahmad Shafik, former Prime Minister and an indisputable symbol of the Mubarak era. In a country in which 80 percent of women are said to veil and men and women alike pray regularly, piety and political support for the Brotherhood were not one and the same.

Instead, the multiplication of claimants to this title, part and parcel of the spread of the Islamic Revival, has challenged the Brotherhood’s previous preeminent position. The speed with which Egyptians turned against the Brotherhood in June 2013 thus becomes easier to understand: at stake was not the election of an outwardly pious leader, but rather which pious leader could govern Egypt’s fractious political system. Political contestation in post-Mubarak Egypt –Mursi’s rise and fall and Sisi’s ascent –becomes legible when we foreground changing goalposts of religiosity that have come to define Egyptian society.  

The emergence of the Islamic Revival in Egypt also casts light on broader religious conflicts and contestation within the region. The relationship between religion and politics has rarely seemed so fraught as it does today, as leading figures and rank-and-file members of the Brotherhood sits in Egyptian prisons, ISIS rules over parts of Iraq and Syria, and al-Qaeda works to assert control in Yemen. Islamism’s compatibility with democracy, the future prominence of Salafi-Jihadists within the Islamist movement and the region more generally, and how all of this relates to secular and religious regimes

This is not to suggest, however, that all those Egyptians who live within post-Revival Egypt participate in wholly coherent fashion. Instead, the demands of piety set forth by this shift in religious practice –and the social normativity of such piety –have produced their own contradictions. See Schielke, “Ambivalent Commitments.” Indeed, the social dominance of the Revival broadly shapes not merely the processes of subject formation among its participants but also the articulations of “non-belief” among those who situate themselves outside its ranks. See Schielke, “Being a Nonbeliever in a Time of Islamic Revival: Trajectories of Doubt and Certainty in Contemporary Egypt,” International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 44:2 (2012), pp. 301-320.
alike, is unclear. Why and how does Islam play such an outsized role in these deliberations?

The relationship between Islam and action is much theorized, with explanations ranging from Orientalist assumptions of a direct relationship to social scientific critiques that foreground questions of political power and economics. Michael Cook’s recent book, *Ancient Religion, Modern Politics, provides a useful middle ground:*

> [R]eligious heritage…[is] a set of circuits that the politically inclined may or may not choose to switch on or a menu from which they may or may not choose to make a selection; that is to say, an ancient religion, like a menu, provides its modern adherents with a set of options that do not determine their choices but do constrain them.\(^\text{16}\)

The “menu” of the 21\(^{st}\) century Middle East derives inspiration, but not order, from Islam’s scholarly tradition and its approach to questions of governance, peace and war. Instead, this set of options represents an amalgamation of select elements of this heritage with a Statist logic by which governmental institutions thoroughly order society.

It is at the intersection of Statist and Islamic traditions that Islamist leaders trumpet the ability of an Islamic state to remake society. The contemporary Middle East, in turn, offers a variety of combinations of the relationship between Islam and politics; from the religious-nationalism of Saudi Arabia and Iran, to the Secularism of Baathist Iraq, Turkey and Syria, to the minority Sunni monarchy of Bahrain, states have used law, education, and control over preaching and prayer actively to define and regulate the relationship between Islam and politics.\(^\text{17}\) The key question is not how Islamist thought leads to particular political behavior, but how Islamist projects compare with those of their

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“secular” peers, and the shared intellectual bases of these opposing trends.

Debates over the relationship between religion and politics in the region also neglect the lived experience of non-elite, particularly middle class, participants in these projects. It is frequently noted that religious elites, both Statist and Islamist, draw on the language of modern science, a product of the embrace by state institutions of a technocratic discourse and the perceived relationship between science and modernity. This focus on intellectual cross-pollination should be broadened, however, to consider the ways in which both ideas and people mix across state institutions and Islamist organizations. Specifically, the turn of citizens in the contemporary Middle East to Islam—and what this means in practice—is intimately shaped by educational and professional experiences and is performed both within official spaces of business and at unofficial sites of communal gathering. Asking how the constituencies of different religious projects are related, whether through outright overlap or through communal ties, complicates narratives of ideological polarization and elucidates the shared roots of competing factions.

The efforts of both Statist institutions and Islamist organizations to dispense religious education and to mobilize constituencies to support their respective projects also necessitate a reconsideration of Islamism as an analytic category. The solution is not simply to note that there are multiple “Islams” produced by Statist institutions and Islamist movements. This approach, though it illustrates the diversity of contemporary contestations of Islam and politics, is primarily descriptive. Instead, we must understand Statist and Islamist claims in relational fashion: each is engaged in a religious project that draws on modernist state-sponsored conceptions of order and discipline, even as it makes

selective use of the Islamic scholarly tradition. It is only by considering these projects as ideologically and spatially linked that we can appreciate the influence of each on the contemporary Middle East and the political game by which each seeks to obscure its ties to the other.

This approach extends to understanding Salafi-Jihadist organizations, particularly ISIS, as ISIS transitions to building state institutions. There are, of course, particular practices of the Islamic State that carry deep historical resonance, including its emphasis on issuing currency that follows stylistically from the rule of the third Rightly Guided Caliph ‘Uthman ibn Affan (644-656).\(^{19}\) Alongside coinage, however, a recent New York Times article noted the organization’s move towards “issuing identification cards for residents, promulgating fishing guidelines to preserve stocks...[and] requiring that cars carry tool kits for emergencies.”\(^{20}\) Just as the group’s use of violence emerged out of both the spectacle of modern mass media and the violence of both post-Saddam Iraq and Assad’s Syria, so too do its practices of governance evince a distinctly modern sense of order and discipline.

Far from a replication of Islamic history, identity cards, natural resource guidelines and automobile regulation reflect a more recent history of state claims to define the relationship not only between religion and politics, but also between state institutions and the production of social order. It is only by tracing the logic and diverse motivations of ISIS’s institutions, the sites at which order is claimed, and the practices through which it


is both affirmed and contested, that the relationship between religion and politics in the
Islamic State becomes clear. Though distinct from Islamist organizations that have
worked peacefully within society and adopted discourses of democracy, ISIS’s projects
are also shaped by Statist notions of social transformation and political control and, like
their Statist competitors, their projects are mediated by a poly-vocal bureaucracy with
competing ideological agendas.

A shared history of Statist institutions and Islamist organizations thus stands at the
heart of the emergence of the Islamic Revival in Egypt. This story, however, is not
limited to Egypt; rather, it speaks to broader questions of relationships between Statist
and Islamist institutions, and the likely role of Islam in regional politics over the coming
years. As Egyptians, Saudis, Yemenis, Syrians and others seek Islamic answers, their
options are considerable. The choices that they make will shape the course of the Middle
East.
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