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Between Nationalism and Religion in Egypt:

Imagining the Nation from Below

Introduction

The January 25 revolution and the dramatic unfolding of events thereafter, have been a time of immense social, political and economic transformation in Egypt. Recent changes in political leadership, from the fall of Mubarak's regime, to the Muslim Brotherhood's (MB) ascent to power, and finally, to the landslide victory of the Armed Forces through Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's assuming of the presidency, have brought to light some of the dynamics of mass politics in Egypt. These transformations made visible a wide array of expressions of collective and national belonging as the Egyptian people came into contact with ideologically differentiated ruling regimes. The Muslim Brotherhood became synonymous with Islamic rule and an Islamic state in Egypt. The Armed Forces on the other hand, presented themselves as the true and ultimate bearer of Egyptian nationalism. What these uncomplicated identifications miss, however, are the intermediate and transformative positionalities between the two spheres of religion and nationalism, as subjectively experienced by citizens. Therefore, the aim of this work is to explore and unpack citizens' own constructions of nationhood and national belonging during the Muslim Brotherhood's rule and their quick fall from power; a time when Islamists were seemingly gaining a historical grip on Egyptian politics and society. The construction of

national sentiments during this transformative period is explored through the experiences of residents of one of Cairo's working class neighborhoods; 'Ain el-Sira.

Nationalism and State Practices

This work aims to explore nationalism as a socially constructed and transformative force; one that has been most aggressively shaped through local discourses of modernization and anti-colonialism. The shaping of Egyptian nationalism through anti-colonial struggles has brought novel power structures and power relations to the newly independent nation-state. That is, in one way, nationalism has served to legitimate the emergence of new elite groups that have the capacity to undermine colonial authority and place power into the hands of nationals.

Nationalism also served to legitimate the emergence of a new power structure, whereby power became a relationship between the national elite and citizens with whom they are believed to share a common destiny, identity and culture. Nationalism in this case, is not only implicated in claims about collective identity, but it also makes claims about power, where the latter is promised to be brought back into the hands of the people or nation, the elite and citizens alike. As such, it is possible to situate power relations within the discourse and related practices of nationalism, as essentially premised on the promise of equality among all members of the nation, as well as emphasizing a shared stake in the national project. But beyond this abstract notion of equality and shared stakes, lay the realities of inequality and the continuous struggle to realize the promises of national inclusion; a struggle which takes place through a multiplicity of platforms.

One of those platforms, is found at the level of state practices, through the bodies and institutions of the state with which citizens regularly engage. That is, the meaning of nationalism becomes

socially constructed in the struggle for power distribution between the ruling elite and citizens, as played out at the level of state practices. This study sees in the spaces of everyday practices with and around the authority of the state, generative sites for popular negotiations of the values of equality and inclusion and belonging. As such, this work engages Egyptian nationalism from two broad, yet intertwined angles. First, citizens' everyday interactions with bureaucratic bodies and institutions of the state are understood to be fertile grounds for creating conceptions of, and relations with, the governing regime and the contours of the national unity it propagates. Secondly, nationalism, as a political project and personal sentiment, is read through its position within a society in which religion strongly contributes to the shaping of collective identities, yet one which has seemingly rejected Islamic rule. This is most vividly seen through the Muslim Brotherhood's victory in the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2011-2012, and their quick downfall as seen through popular support given to the Army in removing the Islamic group from power.

It is from these two angles that the formation of national identity is analyzed among the residents of 'Ain el-Sira. This exploration of nationalism is thus, a spatially specific one and not synonymous with the attitudes and experiences of an entire population. Additionally, the experiences analyzed here are not representative of the entire community, but rather of particular economic and social groups within it, as will be seen in more detail in the coming chapters. The history of the locale, the social relationships it harbors and the relations its residents have fostered with state authorities over the decades are critical to understanding residents' formulations of modes of belonging and national identity during the past few years.

Division of Chapters

To better situate the above mentioned points, Chapter two focuses on macro-level analyses of Egyptian nationalist discourse as it has developed through its modern history. Specifically, it focuses on the different ideological, territorial and religious references along which nationalist discourse was propagated by different leaders through Egypt's modern history, while pointing to some of the continuities that have survived till the present day. The point of this over-view is to offer a framework for observing the development of the conceptual and moral limits of Egyptian nationalism as made available through macro-level discourses of nationalism. Such an analysis sets the stage for a more contextualized analysis of citizens' own constructions of national belonging. In addition, the chapter critiques the polarity of religion and nationalism through bringing into view some of the ways in which the two have been congruently constructed.

Beginning with Egypt's "liberal" period under British colonial rule and ending with the fall of Mubarak's regime, the chapter demonstrates how the influence of political ideologies adopted by the state, have diminished over this period. This loss in ideational resonance, however, does not imply a weakened impetus of the nation, for nationalist sentiments congruently came to espouse and express a powerful kind of territorial nationalism, as opposed to an ideological one. As will be shown the place and role of the Egyptian army is significant in this regard, mainly as it is the sole institution responsible for the protection of the national territory. More so, ruling regimes have repeatedly utilized the resonance and popularity of the national army in garnering support for their legitimacy, as the army is considered the institution most capable of upholding Egyptian sovereignty and independence. The powerful emotional capital garnered by the Egyptian army attests to both the centrality of the territorial dimension of Egyptian nationalism, as well as a popular recognition of the army as an intrinsically nationalist force.

More so, the void left by incoherent governing political ideologies, has reformulated spaces of engagement with the state, whereby relations with the ruling regime are fostered through more personal and less ideational links with the latter. The growth of state institutions and bureaucratic bodies and the development of powerful interest groups and power relations within them have shifted forms of recognition and inclusion within the nationalist project. That is, the power relations inherent in these personalized (and often informal) relations are constitutive of processes through which the values of equality and national inclusion among citizens, became shaped and understood. Feelings of exclusion and neglect by the state have proven to be powerful in mobilizing social and political groups against national rulers and in awakening a sense of powerful nationalism against what was framed as ‘unpatriotic’ rule.

Moving towards a micro-view analysis regarding everyday popular constructions of national belonging, chapter three will thus explore the socio-economic and political landscape in ‘Ain el-Sira. Understanding the specific urban history of the neighborhood, the socio-economic transformations taking place within it, and its place within national development plans allows for a more developed and spatially specific analysis of residents’ experiences and reactions to the recent changes in ruling regimes, specifically the coming of the Muslim Brotherhood. As will be seen, an understanding of popular attitudes against the Muslim Brotherhood is best developed through realizing the centrality of the personalized relations of power inherent in the Muslim Brotherhood’s governing structures. More so, the latter’s collision with already-existing local power structures in ‘Ain el-Sira, further impeded the Brotherhood’s capacity for garnering political and social legitimacy, struggling at arousing a sense of nationalist belonging among large groups of citizens

The powerful forces of nationalism which manifested during the events of the January 25 Revolution against Mubarak's regime, attest to the ways in which disenchantment over the kinds of power relations operating in governing bodies and institutions have mobilized millions towards a desire to "retrieve" their nation from a corrupt elite. Similarly so, popular reactions against the Muslim Brotherhood have been part of a nationalist upheaval against attempts of monopolizing power by the Islamic group, as became apparent through residents' anecdotes of the exclusionary practices of some bodies of the state operating in 'Ain el-Sira at the time. Thus, relations between the ruling regime and citizenry is the focus of chapter four. As practices of ideological engagement with the state lessen in force, it becomes pertinent to explore some of the alternative spaces that are constitutive of processes of national subject formation. Through discussions with 'Ain el-Sira's residents' regarding their experiences with the tumultuous and transformative period following the Muslim Brotherhood's victory in June 2012, the chapter focuses on residents' everyday interactions with representatives of the new ruling elite and the ways in which impressions of the ruling Islamic regime were created and communicated. Residents' initial hopes for better living conditions under the Islamic rule of the Muslim Brotherhood have helped position the latter as a legitimate contending national force, with high hopes for the betterment of national conditions. Nevertheless, throughout the Muslim Brotherhood's year-long rule, spaces for developing sentiments of belonging, assimilation and inclusion in the national project had been impeded by what had been experienced as exclusionary practices and rhetoric, as seen in 'Ain el-Sira. The focus thereby shifts to micro-scale interactions between residents and state personnel and government bodies. Attention to everyday realities of residents brings to light the centrality of the informal relations that had developed with bodies of the state over the previous decades. Opportunities for patronage, clientelism and middle-men

work, reveal spaces of affiliation with ruling regimes that fall outside the limits of an ideological subscription, yet those which have engineered discreet and informal spaces of inclusion within the national polity. More so, the discursive spaces in which these lines of mutual benefit operate, are explored through the spatial and social politics within the neighborhood, whereby familiarity with the ways of the governing regime- its tactics, personnel and opportunities of engagement with it- appear essential in understanding modes of assimilation and recognition to nationalist regimes. What I term, a ‘capacity for recognition’, is thus central in situating residents’ attitudes towards national leaders and in shaping a popular nationalist discourse. The opportunity for understanding the limits of ‘recognition’ are most vividly seen through the neighborhood’s experience with the Muslim brotherhood and their subsequent removal by the Egyptian Armed Forces.

The final chapter focuses on the popular acclamation of the army as representative and upholder of an “authentic” Egyptian nationalism. The transformative power of the army is apparent through its removal of Mohamed Morsi and banning the Muslim brotherhood from the political sphere, and in many ways, the social sphere as well. The performance of the armed forces in that transformative period and its ability to mobilize mass support, allows one to read the position of the armed forces in Egyptian political and social life as a state institution that has managed to move beyond the sphere of political recognition, onto more naturalized spaces of national belonging.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

In order to better contextualize the concepts and arguments mentioned above, this section aims to position them within the existing literature on nationalism, nation-building and national subject formation. The aim is to make clear the contours of the conceptual framework within which this study is situated through an engagement with selected works and authors. In doing so, it traces some of the transformations in theoretical approaches to nationalism, specifically highlighting the importance of research practices that focus on micro-scale, everyday processes of social life, as generative spaces for understanding collective action and popular constructions of the national imagery.

Writings on nationalism that date back to Renan's texts of the mid 1800s, argue for the existence of a "national spirit"¹ as one of nationalism's strongest and lasting powers. Nations for Renan were defined by a clearly expressed desire of a people to live together and "continue life in common"² with the role of intellectuals centered as the leaders and bastions of the national spirit. Renan's work had in ways, set apart the ideas of race and nation, by incorporating an ethno-cultural sense of nationalism combined with the active commitment of members of the nation. However, early writings emanating from Europe, had accepted the equation of the idea of race with the concept of the nation, whereby nations became the basic communities of history; organic, ancient and immemorial.³ These "perennialist" perspectives on the nation, which regarded national sentiments and consciousness as fundamental features of historical phenomena, would soon be challenged by the tides of modernism and anti-colonial struggles. That is, the expansion of the impetus of nationalism outside of Europe and across the globe as

¹ Renan, Ernest. *What Is a Nation?* Toronto: Tapir, 1996. Print.

² Renan, cited in Kohen, 135-40.

³ Smith, Anthony. "The Rise of Classical Modernism." *Nationalism and Modernism*. Routledge, 1998, p. 19.

seen in central and Latin America, Eastern Europe, India, the Far East, as well as the Middle East and Africa, has rendered much criticism of the view of nationalism and nations as organic historical conjunctions. Specifically, the end of the Second World War which saw the rise of anti-colonial nationalisms, had problematized the homogeneity of nation building processes as seen through the rising tide of modernism.⁴ Instead of viewing nations as the product of deep rooted historical forces, modernists saw nations as products of recent historical developments as well as of deliberate, rational activity which was made possible and necessary by the coming of modernity.⁵ The emergence of the classical modernist school of thought at the turn of the twentieth century and its conceptual development with the rise of third-world nationalisms, has had a significant and lasting effect on contemporary works on nationalism and national belonging.

The modernist approach constitutes a very wide literature and variations exist among the theorists who subscribe to this paradigm. Some of the strongest proponents of the modernist school of the 1950s and 1960s explain the construction of modern nationalism through the active work of political elites. That is, their active efforts in creating nationalist discourses, as well as acting as forces of social mobilization are seen as the most vital features of the modern nation-building processes. Writers such as Ernest Gellner and Elie Kedourie are adherents to the modernist paradigm and stress the role of active participation, elite practices and social mobilization in the building of modern nations.⁶

The work of Ernest Gellner is perhaps the most useful starting point for conceptualizing the contours of modern nationalism as discussed in this work. By mapping out some of Gellner's

⁴ Smith, 18.

⁵ Smith, 19

⁶ Smith, 24

concepts and critically situating them among contending writings, the scope and limits of his arguments are made visible to the study of contemporary third-world nationalisms, such as Egypt. Gellner's modernist approach to nationalism is seen through his emphasis on the elite process of nation-building. The effects of uneven global modernization have resulted in massive moves from rural to urban areas, culminating in a growing public mass which looked towards language and culture rather than village and tribal structures for social organization⁷. More so, the onset of modern forms of governance has brought with it novel political and social structures which made possible the formation and recreation of a class of political elite. Those elite whose active efforts in tracing back an immemorial nationalist past and in cultivating a unifying nationalist discourse capable of steering the collective body of the nation into the promised future, made possible the wide-ranging fervor of nationalisms. Therefore, Gellner's argumentation stems from the idea that nations do not simply create nationalisms, but rather that nationalist movements define, and create nations.⁸ According to Gellner,

Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist - but it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if...these are purely negative.⁹

Gellner's focus on the contribution of a political elite in creating nations allowed him to view nationalism as a theory of political legitimacy.¹⁰ Leaders' and political elites' reliance on popular support that is garnered through the unifying discourse of nationalism is seen through the relegation of other loyalties (religion, race, ethnicity and class) to the nationalist calling. This

⁷ Smith, 27

⁸ Gellner, Ernest. *Thought and Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965, 168.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Smith, 29.

kind of political legitimacy is also based in the notion that ethnic boundaries within a state, should not separate the power holders from the rest.¹¹ This latter contention will prove to be specifically important in reading popular attitudes from ‘Ain el-Sira towards the authority of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is not that the Muslim Brotherhood represented a different ethnicity, but that their political discourse had hinged on exclusionary references, as expressed by many of the residents.

More so, for Gellner, securing this kind of political legitimacy was made possible through the role of mass public education systems, and their particular role in sustaining ‘high culture’.¹² High culture is understood to be the culture of the elite and the intelligentsia; one that is specially cultivated and education-based.¹³ High culture becomes the space where images of the nation are drawn up and national discourse constructed. However, Gellner did not necessarily see high culture as exclusively belonging to the elite minority but saw in the force of the public education systems an ability to create a new kind of public; one that hinged on sustaining the ‘high culture’ and a desire and need to secure the growth and place of the homeland. That is, even though in the revised edition to his earlier work, Gellner stresses the spaces available for popular constructions of the nation through mass education, he still views those as structurally positioned to benefit the interests of a dominant high culture.

Although Gellner’s reading of nations and nationalisms duly brings into perspective the unequal effects of global modernization, highlighting the powerful role of the political elite in fostering nationalisms, I find that it contains a number of conceptual setbacks. First, Gellner’s take on the nation-building process is highly political. It affords little space for the work of cultural and

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

¹³ Smith, 32

communal norms, practices and beliefs. His focus is on elite groups and structures, marking those outside the realm of high cultures as ‘wild’ creatures that have been unable to engender a nationalism.¹⁴ The oppositional nature of high and low culture masks the discursive spaces of meaning making and the fluidity and movement that takes place between the two. In doing so, it also downplays opportunities for agency and action among the masses. A need therefore arises to complicate the link between high culture and the force of nationalism. That is, to complicate the relation between the nation-state and the nation. Subsuming the nation within the concept of the nation-state precludes the consideration of the problematic of the nation as a community. A community that is imagined to exist among like-minded equals, and for whom its members are prepared to make real sacrifices¹⁵.

Situating Cultural Nationalism

Moving away from totally subjecting the nation to the nation state, writers such as Hutchinson and Anthony Smith have demonstrated the significance of a cultural approach to nationalism, as well as a need for reading nationalism in line with popular perspectives from below.¹⁶

Hutchinson’s thought-provoking analysis of cultural nationalism shifts our gaze to the small scale, often transient character of nationalist expressions that stem from a need for moral regeneration of the community.¹⁷ More accurate is Hutchison’s assertion that cultural nationalism exists in a “contrapuntal relationship” with political nationalism.¹⁸ That is, when political nationalisms fail or become exhausted, the space for a cultural nationalism becomes clear in nationalists’ abilities to tap into collective energies, mobilizing large numbers of the

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Smith, 75.

¹⁶ Smith, 96

¹⁷ Hutchinson, John, and Anthony Smith. *Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p.41.

¹⁸ Smith, 73.

population towards an assertion of the power of nationalism and the homogeneity of its national community.

Understanding the position of cultural nationalism within national communities is central to the focus of this work. The weak impetus of political nationalism under Mubarak, had allowed for the recognition and acceptance of the Muslim Brotherhood as legitimate national leaders due to their representing Islamic moral and cultural grounds common to wide sections of the population. Nevertheless, maintaining a view of nationalism as a transformative and socially constructed force, these initial attitudes were soon overshadowed as residents experienced exclusionary practices from the bodies and representatives of the Islamic regime on the local level. Sentiments of exclusion and inequality between the ruling and the ruled are understood as signifying a rift in their imagined cultures of belonging; differentially implicating the moral and cultural capital which was associated with the Muslim Brotherhood with power struggles over inclusion and recognition. It must be noted that inclusion and recognition in this case do not refer to equality in terms of material or political power, but rather equality in being perceived as a member of the nation by the national leaders. The exclusion and inequality associated with the practices of the Muslim Brotherhood had to do with a certain mood of distinction among citizens; between those who belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood and those who did not, propagating an idea that some citizens were considered to be more incorporated into the nationalist project under the Brotherhood, than others. The struggle over power on the level of state bodies and institutions thus make visible the modes of assimilation and belonging with national regimes and leaders. More so, expressions of a reawakened Egyptian nationalism following the removal of the Muslim Brotherhood - although clearly intertwined with political bias and rhetoric - seem to have emanated from the historical recognition of the army as a

nationalist group, untainted by the political and ideological power struggles of other political actors. The kind of nationalism garnered by the Army seemed to fall on more primordial registers of the nation; unraveling specific cultural understandings of nationhood and the homeland at a time of political crisis.

Gellner's political nationalism, reminds us of the views of Eric Hobsbawm, who, writing from a Marxist perspective in the 1980s, argued that the nature of the modern nation lies in its elite's invention of national histories, symbols and lines of ancestry, where they did not previously exist. But Hobsbawm goes as far as concluding that nationalism has simply become irrelevant to most contemporary economic and social developments, a view which could not seem further from the truth in the present world order of nation states.¹⁹ Perhaps it is as Smith argues, that the adaptability of the discourse of nationalism has become an inherent quality of its survival, and that changes to the discourse must be situated on a wavelength to which the public is ready to tune into, further complicating Gellner's polarized high and low cultures.²⁰ The ability to transform and sway populations, I argue, has been visibly pertinent with the take-over of the Egyptian Armed forces from the MB and the kind of cultural and nationalist discourse they utilized in validating the take-over. The changes which took place in the modes of reference of the nationalist discourse, are seen as discursively engaged with residents' changing attitudes to the authority of the Muslim Brotherhood, as will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

Nationalism and Bureaucracy

Going beyond Gellner's work thus warrants a conceptual shift. That is, instead of trying to define and pinpoint the place of emergence of national loyalty, it becomes more pertinent to understand

¹⁹ Hobsbawm, Eric. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Second edition ed. Cambridge University Press, 1990, 175.

²⁰ Smith, 130.

the ways in which communities relate to and conceptualize national authority. The work of John Breuilly has shed light on the important role of growing bureaucracies in creating modern nationalisms. He contends that one of the keys to success of modern nations is their creation of an infrastructure of social communication, of which the state bureaucracy is a main pillar.²¹ The case of Egyptian nationalism for instance, even though not created out of the vessel of the bureaucratic state initially, still attests to the idea that the growth of the bureaucratic body, had arguably boosted spaces for engagement with the new nation-state. This had been particularly obvious under Nasser, whereby the efforts of the bureaucratic bodies were presented as working towards the development of the nation and the national community. The power of the bureaucracy through later eras of governance in Egypt however, has been consistently affected by the needs of a growing population. The increasing density of operations within bureaucratic bodies had generated an increased need and greater possibilities for informality. These increasing informal relations with the state were taking place at the borders of the legal bureaucratic state; thus culminating into an intermediary discursive space of engagement between state and citizens, as will be seen in the coming chapters. More so, the place of the bureaucracy has been consistently linked to the work of the state, with much less focus on its formative role in forming nationalisms.²² It is this conceptual gap between citizens' interactions with administrative state bodies and their formulation of nationalism, which is discussed in this work through a focus on the everyday lives of residents at a time of political instability.

Locating National Discourse through Everyday Spaces

²¹ Smith, 20.

²² Smith, 233.

Going beyond locating a particular place of emergence of nationalism warrants a conceptualization of the ways in which communities relate to one another and conceptualize relations among its members. This approach I argue, becomes critical to understanding the vigor of nationalism. The work of Benedict Anderson has been quite significant in this regard. Anderson's work operates within a modernist school of thought in dealing with emerging nationalisms.²³ The main impetus of his argument lies in the idea that nationalisms have managed to create "imagined communities" whereby citizens who have no direct relation to one another, are able to imagine bonds of fraternity and collectivity within a given national territory. Anderson argues that possibilities of these kinds of imagined communities were made available through the revolutionary force of capitalism, particularly print capitalism as seen through the circulation of books, newspapers and journals.²⁴

The idea that this imagined world becomes visibly rooted in everyday life is one of the concepts I appropriate from Anderson's work. Citizens come to experience public life through a process of 'selective fictiveness', allowing them to link potentially unrelated events, symbols, figures and imageries to one another. Additionally, Anderson's focus on print culture as one of the ways in which nationalist discourse and ideology came to permeate and shape public life, has been a hallmark of his work. Although it is true that print capitalism has been part of processes of expanding discursive understandings of the nation onto growing social fields, its positioning as the primary factor in creating possibilities for "a new form of imagined community", does not seem particularly relatable to the Egyptian case.²⁵ The processes of development of print capitalism were associated with trends in vernacularizing, and hence secularizing, the language.

²³ Smith, 137.

²⁴ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 2006.

²⁵ Ibid

In the case of Egypt, as in many other parts of the Arab world, Classical Arabic continues to co-exist with national vernaculars, such as Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian vernaculars. A large part of the authority of Classical Arabic comes from it being the language of the most important texts of Islamic civilization, the most important of which is the Qur'an. And with such an authority, Classical Arabic continued as the language of official writing, print-media, education and administration in Egypt. More so, Classical Arabic is an essential constituent of Arab identity and Arab nationalism, one which is meant to stress an overriding of religious affinities, yet one which simultaneously safeguards a specific Muslim identity. In Egypt however, there is no community of native speakers of Classical Arabic and the Egyptian vernacular 'ammiyya, is the most prominently used for oral exchanges, non-print media, poetry, plays, and more recently for novels and other published works. The popularity of the Egyptian vernacular however, continues to co-exist with a strong appreciation of Classical Arabic, as the language of the Qur'an, existing alongside 'ammiyya in its own right. For example, as described by Nilofar Haeri in her research in Cairo, the vernacularization of the Qur'an remained out of the question for Egyptians.

Contrasting the case of Egypt with other Muslim countries such as Iran and Turkey where the Qur'an was translated into Persian and Turkish, the vernacularizing process in Egypt had steered clear of authoritative religious texts, and Classical Arabic continued as a marker of a modern Arab and Muslim identity. Therefore, the ways in which Anderson's thesis on the role of vernacularizing language in the creation of modern nations can be applied to the Muslim world, remains vague as there are both similarities and differences among different countries in the region.²⁶ More so, this primary focus on print capitalism misses instances of conceptualizing the nation through other non-textual mediums, which unlike print, have the advantage of being

²⁶ Haeri, Nilofar, *Sacred Language, Ordinary People: Dilemmas of Culture and Politics in Egypt*. 1st Ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Web.

experienced by literate and semi-literate groups of the population.²⁷ The lens of daily interactions with the bureaucratic bodies and government representatives can be fruitful as alternative mediums of experiencing and negotiating national values and practices on the local level, away from an elite-view of nation building.

The universalism of Anderson's work sheds light on the need for location-specific and local studies. Lisa Pollard's groundbreaking historical study of nation building in Egypt between Muhammad Ali's rule and the 1919 revolution shifts the historical gaze to the place of the family as a category of analysis for Egyptian nationalism. Pollard's focus is on the ways in which the national character was shaped through the modern nuclear family as citizens acquired new domestic behaviors. Looking into nineteenth and early twentieth century school text books, syllabi and teacher's guides, Pollard is able to explore some of the new and modern spaces in which domestic relations- understood as constitutive of a greater national whole- became understood, practiced and learned.²⁸ Pollard's historical account expands the spaces available for reading the forms of development of anti-colonial nationalisms, away from the euro-centric biases which Anderson remains framed within. Yet, her work continues to be focused on elite productions and bourgeois discourses of the nation as family, excluding the vast majority of Egyptians.

Ziad Fahmy's work on the construction of the modern Egyptian nation through popular culture is an important addition in this regard. Exploring late nineteenth century popular spaces for discussing and debating national identity in Egypt, Fahmy's work brings into view the powerful and emotive forces of everyday cultural and artistic venues which do not rely on print capitalism

²⁷ Fahmy, Ziad "Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism: Colloquial Culture and Media Capitalism, 1870-1919." Doctor of Philosophy University of Arizona, 2007, 39.

²⁸ Kholoussy, Hanan. "Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923 " *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 7.1, 2006.

for consumption.²⁹ Bringing in the semi-literate and illiterate urban masses into the historical narrative, the power of songs, satire, plays, comedic sketches and poetry are explored, offering a much needed reading of anti-colonial nationalism from below. The focus on micro-scale, day-to-day interactions is a central focus of my work, as I find in everyday neighborhood interactions with bodies of the state and with national issues, spaces that make visible some of the more discreet forms that nationalist expressions and group loyalties often take.

The power of everyday happenings, social interactions and daily engagements with the symbols and bodies of the nation-state is explicated in Michael Billig's "Banal Nationalism". Billig's work is geared towards a reading of everyday nationalisms as experienced within established and "settled" nations. Therefore the premise of his work greatly differs from this one in that it aims to trace the banal consistency of nationalism, rather than to focus on its modes of transformation in less stable and democratic nations, such as Egypt. Billig's work remains significant for it marks a shift in the focus of research from macro-view theorizing on nationalism to more empirical studies, exploring issues of representation and localized meaning-making.³⁰

The work of Asef Bayat on the growing centrality of the public street as a political space has shed light on the everyday spaces in which identity formation and modes and networks of belonging take shape in the changing societies of the Muslim and Arab world.³¹ One of Bayat's critical points in describing the nature of the political street has been his emphasis on its harboring of social 'non-movements' who are able to impact significant social and political change. Rather than looking for movement organizations with leaders or ideologies, Bayat sees

²⁹ Fahmy, Ziad. *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011.

³⁰ Skey, Michael. "The National in Everyday Life: A Critical Engagement with Michael Billig's Thesis of **Banal Nationalism**." *The Sociological Review* 57.2, 2009.

³¹ Bayat, Asef. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Stanford University Press, 2013.

the operation of non-movements through individuals' practicing of an everyday art of presence.³² That is, utilizing what is available to them and uncovering new spaces within which to make one-self heard, seen, felt and realized within the nation.³³ Social non-movements are thus arguably found to be more concerned with practice and action, rather than being ideologically driven.³⁴ Bayat's concept of social non-movements is critical in understanding the social, economic and political dynamics of the public street in 'Ain el-Sira and the multiple relations between state and non-state actors that are established within it. The public street in the neighborhood thus becomes an "indispensable asset" for residents to survive and reproduce life.³⁵ These everyday dynamics become more complicated with the notion that poor/ subaltern actors operate within an economy of power relations, with their practices effected by global economic policies and a declining welfare state.³⁶ This idea is most heavily discussed in this work through the lens of neo-liberalism and the effect it has had on shaping market relations, urban localities, social engagements and political and economic aspirations in poor urban Cairo.

Neo-liberalism and the Growth of Alternative Spaces for Identifying the Nation

Neo-liberal cities are evidenced by increased de-regulation and privatization of production.³⁷ This thesis argues that the trend toward liberalization, has not only impacted trade behavior and economic relations, but also modes of engagement with a wide array of state and non-state actors. That is, it is through the proliferation of certain informal and de-centralized modes of

³² Goldberg, Avi. "Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 33.3 (2010): 485-487.

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Bayat, Asef. "Politics in the City-Inside-Out." *City & Society* 24.2 (2012), 15.

³⁵ Bayat, 4.

³⁶ Gercek, Salih Emre. *Essex Graduate Journal of Sociology*, 11.

³⁷ Bayat, Asef. "Politics in the City-Inside-Out." *City & Society* 24.2 (2012).

governance that neo-liberalism spreads its techniques and rationalities into social relations.³⁸ The growing capacity for de-regulation and informality which characterizes the neo-liberal city is discussed in chapter four through the work of writers such as Asef Bayat and Salwa Ismail who focus on neo-liberal governmentality as generative of particular political civilities. Ismail's focus has been on the various modes of intermediacy and clientelism that inform Egyptian social and political life. Her work reveals ways in which the operation of informants, thugs and mediators among citizens cuts across state and public officials' concern with de-regulated capitalist accumulation.³⁹ This work locates the impetus of neo-liberal governmentality through its decentralized power relations and informal networks of interest, and views them as constitutive of spaces for citizens to be positioned as intermediate power actors which have a stake in the national project. Even though assimilation with the national regime remained outside the realms of ideology, possibilities for citizens' economic, political and social engagements with the bodies of the state, have allowed for differentiated modes of inclusion in the national project. Particularly ones that directly affected their day-to-day livelihood and survival. It is this discursive struggle around recognition and inclusion in interest groups of the national polity which have been powerful in mobilizing groups of the population against ruling regimes. Research in 'Ain el-Sira reveals informal engagements with the bodies of the state, as entailing possibilities for not only economic, but also cultural and symbolic capital accumulation necessary for residents' survival in the neighborhood. The power relations negotiated between bodies of the state and residents of the locale are central to understanding popular conceptualizations of national belonging in the neighborhood.

³⁸ Ismail, Salwa. "Authoritarian Government, Neoliberalism and Everyday Civilities in Egypt." *Third World Quarterly* 32.5 (2011), 15

³⁹ Bayat, Asef. "Politics in the City-Inside-Out." *City & Society* 24.2 (2012), 2.

Positioning Religion in the Study of Nationalism

Throughout its history, Egyptian nationalist discourse has always made space for Islam as an element of Egyptian identity, albeit to varying degrees and in different forms. More importantly, Islam in Egypt has come to infiltrate the day-to-day normalities (and abnormalities) of social and economic life. The work of Carry Wickham and Denis Sullivan helps in mapping out some of the ways in which Islam has become normalized in everyday life in Egypt, particularly through the proliferation of Islamic associations. These associations include religious charities, social services associations, and Islamic banks and multinationals, which have started appearing more broadly during the 1970s and which adhere to an Islamic character. However, the extent to which Islam governs and guides the ways citizens perceive social and political life needs to be problematized in light of the recent transformations in Egyptian authority, particularly the celebration of the Army's removal of the Muslim brotherhood. Writers such as Hania Sholkamy have consistently argued against the futile divide between secular liberalism and revivalist piety in understanding Egyptian political and social life arguing that most social actors hold something of both. Instead, the emphasis turns to examining the significance of motivations-be them religious, non-religious or something of both- to the meaning of the act itself.⁴⁰ This kind of examination is followed through the course of this study as it examines residents' attitudes and acts towards the authority of the Muslim Brotherhood, on both the local and national levels through historically contextualizing those with attitudes towards Mubarak's NDP and the promises the army is imagined to bring. The significance of religion among residents, as will be seen, varies as religious repertoire becomes more aggressively engaged with political and social authority in the decision making ranks of the state. The space of religious loyalty as such, must

⁴⁰ Sholkamy, Hania. "Creating Conservatism or Emancipating Subjects? On the Narrative of Islamic Observance in Egypt." *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin* 42.1 (2011), 5.

be read along the lines of economic, symbolic and social dispositions that are specifically experienced in the locale.

The work of Roger Brubaker is highly informative in this regard. Following Brubaker's four proposed methods of studying religion in national contexts, this work situates religion and nationalism in a transformative discursive relation with one another. That is, it presumes a fluid relationship which changes in nature depending on the spatial and temporal conditions of the country. I adopt from Brubaker the processes in which religion and nationalism are seen as analogous phenomena, whereby both act as basic sources and practices of social and cultural identification at times.⁴¹ Religion is also viewed as a category of ideational belonging that helps explain nationalism. I argue that this kind of religious aspect of national recognition has been specifically powerful with the Egyptian army, for instance seen in the emphasis of the national collective memory on the Prophet's hadith which calls for upholding Egyptian soldiers in highest esteem. Brubaker's other two approaches which see religion and nationalism as inherently intertwined with one another and that which sees a distinctively religious *form* of nationalism are also engaged in the text. Their limits become constructed against the practices and voices captured from the neighborhood.

Methodology

This work locates the processes of national belonging and identity formation in the spaces of meaning making found in everyday interactions between bodies of the state and members of its community, as they constitute discursive power spaces through which citizens come to interpret and experience the values of national equality, inclusion in the system and the lines along which they are constructed. The aim is thus to capture the motivations and limits to residents' acts and

⁴¹ Brubaker, Rogers. "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches." *Nations and Nationalism* 18.1 (2012), 4.

expressions of national loyalty. The aim is also to capture the registers (material, communal, religious or moral) that they fall onto. More so, this research is concerned with instances of transformation in residents' feelings towards the different ruling regimes, in light of the socio-political and economic contexts in which they occur. These transformations become visible through the physical and spatial developments in the locale, as well as through changes in residents' attitudes and motivations towards the ruling authority. As such, data for this research is collected through engaging in participant observation over the course of six months. It also depends on conducting numerous semi-structured and unstructured interviews with residents of the neighborhood.

One of the ways in which I managed to develop relationships with some of the residents of 'Ain el Sira, was through prior personal knowledge of many members of Al Geel Center, until recently the only local NGO and research center in the neighborhood. At first, I spent a lot of time in Al Geel, getting to know some of the families and children that frequent it as well as helping out with the organization of events, or simply with managing small day-to-day errands. Spending time at the center also meant that I increasingly came in contact with locals who, although they do not partake in the activities of Al Geel, are in close contact with its members. Those include the adjacent coffee shop workers who are responsible for providing drinks (*mashareeb*) to visitors. Also included are the car workshops whose workers are often responsible for fixing and heavy lifting works in the center. After establishing my presence as a familiar visitor to the area, I found it easier to venture out into public spaces, spending more time in coffee shops and the small stores scattered along the streets, as residents became more familiar with my presence. That is, being acquainted with the center allowed me a trusted entry point to other spaces in the neighborhood, especially as some of the residents as I spoke with have long-

standing personal ties of trust and familiarity with my main informants, Reda and Omar, from the center.

My positionality as an outsider from the field, at first appeared strong, marked by an obvious class difference and a markedly distinct appearance as a non-veiled young woman amidst the conservative setting of ‘Ain el-Sira. However, growing up visiting ‘Ain el Sira on a weekly basis, particularly Al Geel, having met and learnt from the late Ahmed Abdallah Rozza, founder of the center and ‘son’ of the neighborhood, as well as having developed relationships of familiarity with many of its members, all played a role in shaping my positionality as both an outsider, yet one with an old affiliation and specific interest in the place and its people. In fact, I find that this complication of my positionality in the spaces between outsider and local, helped in creating generative spaces for knowledge sharing between myself and residents. They too, became interested in understanding my “in-between” position as a young woman who does not live in ‘Ain el-Sira, yet one who has relationships in the neighborhood and continues to take an interest in its people and places. This had in fact prompted the curiosity of many of the residents I spoke to as they themselves were interested in exploring this intersection, asking questions like who I used to know and what I used to do in the neighborhood, to try and place the range of my local knowledge and research intentions. Realizing the processes in which one becomes “placed” by respondents, is essential in acknowledging that our subjective positionalities, become part of the field as we study it.

Therefore, building rapport with many residents appeared to hinge on two main elements. First, were the instances where both of us appeared to share common knowledge about moments in the history of the neighborhood, some of the changes it has witnessed, or even news regarding the whereabouts of some of the old residents. Exchanging our own versions of local knowledge not

only allowed for an understanding of my own conceptual and observational limits, but it also gave many respondents the chance to venture into my own subjective history and experiences in the neighborhood. The nature of such interactions allowed for more personal and less inhibited conversation, situating our discussions as more personal endeavors rather than a process of simply providing information to an outside researcher. The other decisive element was residents' subjective reactions to the topic of my research and my institutional affiliation. A few respondents expressed their disinclination towards discussing matters that they perceived as too "political" and "complicated". Rather than directly expressing their apprehension, they mostly argued that they "do not engage in politics" (*malhomsh fel seyasa*), claiming lack of knowledge or expertise. It is important to point out that residents' distrust and aversion to engaging in these kinds of discussions comes at a time in Egyptian politics, particularly following the events of January 25, when journalists, researchers and even photographers, have become increasingly framed as spies, instigators or essentially following a hidden, often dangerous agenda, and as such are quickly avoided by many.

Another challenge faced in collecting data, was to find a way to address issues of national belonging with residents, from the bottom-up. That is, to allow for a space where popular references of national belonging could become expressed. This is in contrast to limiting discussions to the romanticized metanarratives of nationalism and national unity. Focusing on residents' individual stories and experiences in their neighborhood, allowed for an expansion of these spaces, particularly as discussions about their experiences with the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood, revealed alternative everyday registers on which belonging to the nation is understood and negotiated.

Several semi-structured and unstructured interviews were conducted with two groups of residents; those who used to live in the neighborhood but have opted to move elsewhere, yet continue to have relations within the neighborhood. The second consists of residents who have been born and raised in ‘Ain el-Sira and continue to reside there. Discussions with former and older residents have been useful in providing a sort of oral history for the neighborhood, helping in allocating the most prominent aspects of change or discontinuity over the years. Interviews with current residents on the other hand, have been fruitful in capturing current power relations in the neighborhood, as concerning the role of community leaders and big families as they engage and react to the politics of the locale. More so, residents’ daily interactions with bodies of the state such as the police station, local municipality as well as interactions with members from the ruling authority such as the old NDP and the Muslim Brotherhood, reveal discursive spaces through which the national imagery becomes constructed. These interactions also reveal some of the registers along which the politics of national belonging become understood in a working class neighborhood in Cairo.

Most of the data for this research had been collected through spending time in a number of locations in the neighborhood. This included the living quarters of some residents whom I have developed more personal relationships with, but most of my observations took place in the public space. This included car repair workshops which infiltrate the streets, the ‘*ahawi* (coffee shops) that have lately increased in number and Al Geel youth center.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the main concepts and analytical strands that are utilized in this work. It has also critically engaged theoretical scholarship on nationalism, situating the macro narratives of nationalism against much needed micro deconstructionist approaches. Taking into account the

historical, political and social conditions through which the project of nation building unfolded in Egypt, this chapter introduced some of the ways in which modes of national belonging, feelings of inclusion by, and recognition of, national leaders and regimes are implicated in everyday power struggles and relations, taking place in the bodies and institutions of the state. The next chapter will focus on the historical development of Egyptian nationalist discourse from Egypt's first encounter with liberal thought, up until the fall of the Mubarak regime in 2011 in order to point out some of the trends and continuities in the construction of Egyptian nationalist discourse, particularly in asserting its mobilizing power.

Egyptian Nationalism between Religion, the Military and Political ideology

This chapter aims to trace the trajectory along which Egyptian nationalism developed throughout its modern history as well as the modes through which its contemporary image has been constructed. The point is to offer a macro-view analysis of the political, territorial and religious references along which Egyptian nationalism was constructed by different regimes, while pointing to some of the continuities that have survived till the present day. Distinguishing patterns of political, cultural and religious nuances inherent in the official nationalist discourse, allows for a better understanding of local trends and collective community behavior towards the Muslim Brotherhood. This next analysis therefore provides historical structure to the processes of everyday local interactions with representatives of the ruling regimes.

Since independence in 1952, Egyptian presidents have continuously belonged to the institution of the army, even though the nature of each ruler's relationship to the armed forces has varied. With the Muslim Brotherhood's rise to power in 2012, national leadership was not only accorded to a movement whose loyalties had been created outside the national military institution, but one which also represented an ideologically and politically independent organization. By focusing on elite discourses of nationalism, the purpose of this chapter is to outline three constitutive elements of Egyptian nationalist discourse and the ways Egypt's experience with Islamic rule can be read against them. First, the development of Egyptian nationalism is read through the emotive and powerful role played by the Egyptian army, particularly seen through a heightened sense of territorial nationalism. The formation of

nationalist discourse is also analyzed through the role played by political ideologies, particularly focusing on the conditions necessary for these ideologies to be able to mobilize public support. Finally, nationalist discourse is seen through its articulation with the values of religion and piety as normalized aspects of everyday life. Rather than reading these aspects separately or independently of one another, these forces are seen as intertwined with one another, simultaneously affecting the ways in which the “nation” is identified and constructed by different rulers. This analysis is also fruitful in understanding popular opposition against the ideological project of the Muslim Brotherhood, culminating in nationalist demands for the take-over of the Egyptian army in mid 2013. That is, through reading the development of Egyptian nationalism along these lines, it becomes possible to view Egypt’s recent experience with Islamic rule apart from the long-standing debate around religion versus nationalism. But rather as a dialectic moment in which the forces of everyday religiosity and popular and historical renditions of nationalism, resulted in a collective reconstruction of the conceptual limits of national community. A reconceptualization which resulted in the rejection of national rule under the Islamic project of the Muslim Brotherhood. Beginning with Egypt’s early encounter with the ideological project of liberalism, through Nasser’s socialism and the Muslim Brotherhood’s Islamism, the following sections point out trends in the construction of the limits of national community within elite discourse. Understanding these trends is helpful in better situating the discussion on popular attitudes towards the nationalist narrative adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood, as experienced in ‘Ain el Sira.

Situating Muhammad Ali’s Modern State through the lens of Popular Egyptian Nationalism

Although it is true that the formation of the modern Egyptian state begins with the rule of Muhammed Ali, this chapter focuses more closely on the genesis of popular nationalist

movements beginning in early modern Egyptian history with Mustapha Kamil and Sa'd Zaghlul. However, it is necessary to point out that the policies and practices of Muhammed Ali's government and military had set in motion sentiments of a heightened territorial nationalism, backed by a central and decisive role of the Egyptian military, one which has arguably continued till the present day. The transformation of these sentiments into collective expressions of a patriotic territorialism both as transformations from within the military and among the general population began to take place in the early decades of the twentieth century as Egyptians and Egyptian nationalist discourse became increasingly shaped by the drive for independence against British occupation. Therefore, in an attempt to discern the distinct features of early popular nationalist movements and to understand some of their lasting influences, we need to first dedicate some time to understanding the political context in which these movements appeared, understanding them through earlier state-building projects as under Muhammed Ali.

Modernizing the State under Muhammed Ali

The formation of the modern Egyptian state is coined with the rule and military expansions led by Albanian soldier Muhammed Ali in the early 1800s. The longest reigning Ottoman vali in Egypt, Muhammed Ali's efforts included the centralization of administrative and political control and fighting bureaucratic corruption on the local level.⁴² He also cancelled the immunities on agricultural land belonging to religious institutions (*awqaf*) and increased the production of long staple cotton, thus funneling massive revenue to Cairo and into the Pasha's coffers.⁴³ Most importantly however, has been Muhammed Ali's influence on the modernizing of the Egyptian military. Anxious to secure his position against the central Ottoman authority in

⁴² Fahmy, Khaled. *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt*. Cairo; New York; American University in Cairo Press, 2002, 3.

⁴³ Ibid

Istanbul, Muhammad Ali adopted the practice of conscription in 1820-1821 and his army eventually amassed to an impressive thirteen thousand troops, in addition to a modernizing state and a growing bureaucracy⁴⁴ Conscribing the army's soldiers' from the Egyptian peasantry, Muhammed Ali aimed at molding the new troops into a modern, European-style fighting force.⁴⁵ However, Khaled Fahmy's historical analysis of Muhammed Ali's military modernization practices describes the novel practices of disciplinary power introduced through surveillance, time-management and medical examinations, as intersecting with the high occurrence of resistance to the implementation of these disciplinary modes. He recounts various manifestations of the Egyptian conscripts' discontents, citing many incidents of self-mutilation by the *fellahin* to evade conscription, as well as of a large uprising which took place in the *Munufiyya* province immediately after the introduction of conscription there in 1923, among many other instances of resistance and discontent.⁴⁶ With perceptions of the Pasha as a "distant and impersonal leader"⁴⁷, it appears that there is few evidence to support that the population felt it was part of Muhammed Ali's acclaimed nation building process. Therefore, it is possible to say that although Muhammad Ali's rule coined the genesis of the modern Egyptian state and army, it was not concerned, nor did it succeed at awakening Egyptians towards an independent and distinct nationalism or national identity.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, Muhammed Ali's policies may have inadvertently led to the culmination of a sense of difference between ruler and ruled, setting early nationalist sentiments into motion, Staffing military ranks with Turks for instance, had led Arabic speaking military conscripts into a

⁴⁴ Calvert, John. *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt*, Khaled Fahmy. 9 Vol. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2000, 64.

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Calvert, 65

⁴⁷ Fahmy, 66

⁴⁸ Calvert, 53

position of inferiority, one which translated into an intensified sense of their ethnic and territorial identity; the latter which continues in force until today⁴⁹ However, it was only in the 1870s that a new Egyptian elite began emerging, consisting of provincial notables, newly educated urban intelligentsia and middle ranks of the office corps; those which aimed at reconsidering the limits and nature of Egypt's political community and its affiliation and allegiance to the khedival dynasty, yet one which is part of the Islamic '*Umma*'⁵⁰ However, attempts to dominate the government, headed by the leadership of Ahmed 'Urabi had unsurprisingly failed mainly as they threatened Anglo-French strategic and commercial interests in Egypt.⁵¹ By 1882, the Egyptian army was defeated in the battle of *Tel-el Al Kebir* by British forces, sweeping away 'Urabi's government, which had set out to challenge the established Ottoman ruling elite as well as the growing European finance capitalism in Egypt.⁵²

The introduction of a foreign, non-Muslim "other" is considered a central shift in the politics of reproduction of Egyptian nationalist discourse, bringing to the center debates over the appropriation of European ideologies such as liberalism and the reclamation of religious values amidst the incessant force of modernization. Therefore, what is most interest to us here, are the groups of nationalists which emerged only again in the early years of the twentieth century, allowing the issue of nationalist loyalties to surface, but in a rather different light. Rather than being a military-backed movement, the nationalist movements under Mustapha Kamel and Sa'd Zaghlul -explored next- point to a marked shift in Egyptian nationalist history with regards to their culmination as *popular* nationalist movements, rather than interest and military based

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Gershoni, I., and James P. Jankowski. *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1930*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986;1987, 4.

⁵¹ Hashim, Ahmed S. "The Egyptian Military, Part One: From the Ottomans through Sadat." *Middle East Policy* 18.3 (2011): 63-78.

⁵² Gershoni; Jankowski, 4

associations as under the ‘Urabi movement. Also, the newly introduced possibility of creating political parties, had allowed for the expression and proliferation of European-influenced ideas about governance, sovereignty and constitutionalism. The development and expression of a more distinct political ideology becomes apparent with the creation of the *Watani* party by Mustapha Kamil and later on through the liberal expositions of Lutfi Al Sayyid and Sa’d Zaghlul’s complex liberal nationalism. The intersection of these varying utilized “liberal” values with Islamic values and loyalties are best understood through analyzing the references along which early nationalist movements became popularized. As one of the aims of this chapter is to focus on the influence of political ideological and religious registers in the creation of modes of national belonging and loyalties in Egypt, it is best to begin with Mustapha’s Kamel’s political influence in shaping modern Egyptian discourse.

Mustapha Kamil

The first formal manifestation of a popular nationalist outcry came with Mustapha Kamel’s *Al Watani* Party. Although Kamel had been the leading nationalist figure in Egypt for over a decade, he only officially organized his movement into a political party in 1907.⁵³ Kamel belonged to the generation that had benefitted from the schools established by Khedive Ismail and developed, although limitedly, under British rule.⁵⁴ He had not received traditional education at Al Azhar but had a modern education, and by the time he had received his license in law from the University of Toulouse in 1894, he had already established himself as a nationalist leader.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ziad Fahmy, "Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism: Colloquial Culture and Media Capitalism, 1870-1919." Doctor of Philosophy University of Arizona, 2007.

⁵⁴ Hourani, Albert Habib, and American Council of Learned Societies. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 201.

⁵⁵ Ibid

The vacuum left by the failure of the ‘Urabi movement⁵⁶ allowed Kamil, with his young and enthusiastic persona, to capture the support and admiration of those around him.⁵⁷ Eventually, the principles of the first, loosely formed, Watani Party were publicly presented to an audience of almost seven thousand people at the *Zizinya Theatre* in Alexandria on October 22nd, 1907.⁵⁸ One of the most important principals was the immediate evacuation of British forces⁵⁹.

Nationalism’s Early Engagements with Religion

Most significant for the purposes of this chapter however, is the wider ideological framework within which Kamil’s nationalist message was formed. Kamil viewed Egyptian nationalism as operating under the wider umbrella of Ottoman authority and against British rule. In fact, Egyptian nationalism was seen as part of broader Muslim and Eastern identities, moving towards a diffuse sort of pan-Islamism. Interestingly, Kamil’s explication of Egyptian nationalism found no contradiction in espousing a clear affiliation with the Islamic caliphate as well as with the project of a modern Egyptian state, alluding to the centrality of Islam at the core of national identity. His nationalism worked towards an alienation of the British authorities, espousing the possibilities that a united Egyptian movement could bring to the dignity of the nation. I argue that Kamil’s ability to utilize both nationalist and religious references in framing the contours of the nationalist struggle, constituted a foundational discursive construction within Egyptian nationalism making it highly problematic to attempt a clear separation between the two. The genesis of the Egyptian nation on the frontlines of anti-colonialism drove a desire to assert a more concrete identity against foreign rule. This also had the effect of reformulating the limits of

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ See Mustafa Kamil, *Awraq Mustafa Kamil: al-Khutab* (Cairo: al-Hay’at al-Misriyya al-‘Amma lil-Kitab, 1984), 301-38.

⁵⁹ *Al Gala’* was the term used for the evacuation of British forces coined by Mustafa Kamil.

religion and its place in an emerging national culture. On the popular level, Kamil's ideological mergers remained unquestioned, as the drive for independence was sufficient as a unifying political message. Controversy and debate regarding his political project remained confined within literary and intellectual circles, whose medium of engagement was mainly academic journals that only enjoyed a miniscule readership among the majority of the population.⁶⁰

Because Kamil's take on nationalism was also grounded in advocacy work and mobilization, he acquired great resonance with a population that was ready for leadership after the failure of the 'Urabi revolution. In exploring the dynamics of colloquial mass culture in Egypt in 1908, Ziad Fahmy argues that the populism of Mustafa Kamil's party began the process of "defining and popularizing urban Egyptian nationalism", even though the limits of this project were laid out within elite power circles.⁶¹ And if there were to exist any doubt regarding the extent of Kamil's popularity throughout his years of activism, then his funeral would come as a great testimony to the powerful influence of his political message. Kamil died on the 10th of February 1908, only one year after the creation of the Watani party. The following is an excerpt from a letter written by Sir Eldon Gorst to Sir Edward Grey describing the funeral and the extent to which Kamil had successfully asserted himself as one of the country's first nationalist leaders.⁶²

⁶⁰ Ziad Fahmy, "Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism: Colloquial Culture and Media Capitalism, 1870-1919." Doctor of Philosophy University of Arizona, 2007.

⁶¹ Fahmy, 83.

⁶² Sir Eldon Gorst was part of the British Diplomatic Corps that came to Egypt in 1885. He worked as financial adviser and adviser to the Interior Ministry in successive years. By 1904, he was representing Lord Cromer in foreign office and came to replace Cromer as British consul in Egypt in 1907.

Sir Edward Grey on the other hand, acted as Foreign Secretary between 1905 and 1916, holding the longest continuous tenure in office till present. His focus on Cairo was driven by the potential of massive investment opportunities.

*The cortège was accompanied by the Grand Cadi [Qadi], the Sheikh of the El Azhar [al-Azhar] University, and a number of Notables, some of whom had previously held high posts under the Government. The procession was headed by students of all the secondary and higher schools and colleges in Cairo, who had absented themselves from their studies en masse, and who marched in good order in ranks of four. After the Notables came a great crowd composed of people of the lower middle class, minor government employees, and small shop-keepers. Some idea can be formed of the magnitude of this crowd by the fact that it took fifty minutes to pass by a certain spot. . .*⁶³

This mass ritual, perhaps Egypt's first national funeral, was expansively covered by all newspapers, exposing snapshots of a national symbol in the making. The kind of emotional capital that was accumulated by Kamil would come to be used by later nationalist figures.⁶⁴ And up until this day, Kamil's memory easily evokes un-contested principles of nationalism which sit comfortably with Islamic loyalties and affiliations.

Egyptians' Encounter with Liberalism as a National Political Ideology

Although Kamil's popularity was unquestionable and his articulation of Egyptian nationalism undeniably influential, his political ideology did not go uncontested. As political party life began to take on a more diverse form in early twentieth century Egypt, a number of political thinkers appeared on the public arena attempting to operationalize the growing sentiments of popular nationalism along political ideological lines, very much influenced by changing global powers and the rise of liberal doctrines in the West. Named the father of Egyptian liberalism, Ahmed Lutfi Al Sayyid was one of the most ardent figures in shaping a liberal secular ideology in an

⁶³ FO 407/172 February 16, 1908, Sir Eldon Gorst to Sir Edward Grey.

⁶⁴ Fahmy, 193.

Egyptian nationalist context. He created and headed the ‘*Umma* Party in 1907, which was distinctively more secular and liberal than Mustafa Kamil’s *Watani* party. Ideologically, Al-Sayyid perceived Egyptian nationalism as expressive of a distinct national community, clearly set apart from the Ottoman order. He was one of the most outspoken proponents of a philosophy of nationalism based on distinct civil and political rights as opposed to an understanding of national unity as based on a shared Islamic culture.

Al Sayyid's project explicated a kind of Egyptian nationalism defined along clear liberal values and advocating secular systems of governance. He was thus interested in a definition of nationalism that unfolded along clearly definable ideological values and principals. The extent to which this school of liberal thought flourished under Al Sayyid remains debatable. His work, although resonant among intellectual circles of the 1920s elite in Egypt, did not find in mass support the recognition that would allow it to endure the political and social tribulations that would carry Egypt through the century. This was partially due to the classist nature of his party, whose elite constituency was often seen as disengaged from popular social forces and local needs. The party’s top-to-bottom approach to social reform narrowed spaces for innovative and popular tools of governance, limiting their powers of garnering popular support. The exposure of Lutfi Al Sayyid’s work also had a negative impact on the resonance of his message. His nationalist philosophy was expounded piecemeal in newspaper articles over the period of four to five years and was almost inaccessible to wider illiterate or politically uninterested sections of the population.⁶⁵ The force of liberalism as a nationally unifying ideology was limited through its dissociation from popular social bases and its premise on classist ideas of national power relations. In other words, the fact that Al Sayyid’s project was primarily based on ideological

⁶⁵ Ziad Fahmy, “Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism: Colloquial Culture and Media Capitalism, 1870-1919.” Doctor of Philosophy University of Arizona, 2007.

explications and less on popular values and mobilizing slogans, resulted in popular disinclination from his liberal nationalism. However, other national figures from Lufti's school managed to more effectively espouse nationalist sentiments through mobilizing popular support and practicing a sort of accommodative liberalism. Such was the case with Sa'd Zaghlul, who was one of *Al 'Umma* party's main members, but broke off from it to create the infamous *Wafd* party.

Sa'd Zaghlul's Populist Nationalism

The end of the war in 1918 brought with it a change in the power structures involved in the propagation of Egyptian nationalism. That is, from a movement of the middle and upper urban classes, it developed into one which was able to command the active support of almost the entire people at times of crisis.⁶⁶ After the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers in 1914, Egypt was unilaterally declared a protectorate under British rule, resulting in the deposal of 'Abbas Hilmi and his replacement with his more malleable uncle, Sa'id Pasha⁶⁷ Thousands of peasants were conscripted for service with the Allied forces in Palestine, food grew scarce as too much land was given to the production of cotton, and the presence of a growing foreign army created more tangible interactions with what was seen as a hostile occupation.⁶⁸ The shared popular sentiments that emerged after the war as a result of these developments were captured and mobilized by Sa'd Zaghlul's *Wafd* party.⁶⁹ When the war ended, Egyptians began forming a delegation to present Egypt's case for independence at the Paris Peace Conference, one which Zaghlul stepped up to head. The request to participate in the conference however, was refused by British authorities, setting in place the chain of events that would trigger the 1919 revolution

⁶⁶ Hourani, 209.

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Pollard, Lisa. *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing and Liberating Egypt (1805/1923)*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

⁶⁹ Ibid

which famously called for the unification of Egyptians regardless of religion or class, against British rule.

Understanding the significance of global politics is critical in contextualizing popular affiliations with the nationalist movement of 1919. The forces of anti-colonialism were formative of numerous spaces of cultural and local political engagement in the period leading up to the 1919 revolution. In an attempt to evade the gaze of the colonial authorities, people found in culture and the arts fertile grounds to express their dis-affectation. Satirical periodicals with colloquial Egyptian content, burlesque comedy plays, *taqatiq* (Colloquial songs) and colloquial poetry became highly popular and acted as spaces for decoded discourses, and as a medium through which identities were negotiated.⁷⁰ Sa'd Zaghlul's own initiatives as Minister of education in 1907, included the introduction of a course called *al-tarbiyya-al-qawmiyya* (National upbringing) into educational curricula mainly to offset the khedival decree which called for the separation of Muslims and Christians in classes on religion.⁷¹ The introduction of the new subject was situated within a growing discourse that pitted relations among citizens as a national, rather than a sectarian affair.⁷²

Significantly, Sa'd Zaghlul's approach to populism was also entangled with his own religious conceptions. He remained loyal to the idea that any legal system ought to maintain its roots within Islamic jurisprudence, and in that sense, was up-taking an approach which would set him apart from his land-owning elite secular companions, the likes of Lutfi Al Sayyid and 'Ali Abd el Raziq. Zaghlul, along with his party, gradually came to be seen as the voice of the Egyptian nation and of Egyptian nationalism. This was a nationalism which was liberal in the sense that it

⁷⁰ Fahmy, 86.

⁷¹ Pollard, 119.

⁷² Ibid

was geared towards the liberal values of constitutionalism, yet did not go far beyond that to address issues such as secularism and freedom of individual choice. In fact, Sa'd Zaghlul and his party were of the strong opponents against one of Sheikh Ali Abd el Raziq's progressive works about the re-interpretation of Islamic Governance in *Al-Islam wa 'osool al-hokm*. Zaghlul's rule was conservative in the sense that it harbored little capacity for more revolutionary and progressive debates on matters concerning religion, dogma and freedom of personal choice. His rule was more geared towards the goal of independence and the constitutional amendments necessary for that to be achieved. Leading the populist nationalist movement, the Wafd Party rose to a highly influential place in Egyptian politics and in the minds of ordinary Egyptians. Crucially, it played a central role in the creation of Egypt's 1923 constitution and in transitioning the country from dynastic rule to constitutional monarchy.

However, by the 1940s, the Wafd had come under increased scrutiny as its leadership was taken over by more wealthy capitalist landowners and self-interested politicians, the likes of Sirag Al Din Pasha and Mustapha Al Nahhas. The promise of independence went unfulfilled and the nationalist discourse of the Wafd became largely discredited as its members focused on personal power gains, leaving frustrated larger social and political demands of reform and independence.⁷³ By 1943, Makram 'Ubeid, the secretary general of the party between the years 1936 and 1942, had published his "Black Book" as an expose of corruption in the Wafd starting with Mustapha Al Nahhas onwards.⁷⁴ The popular base that had accumulated under Sa'd Zaghlul had found limited spaces for popular participation and inclusion into the nationalist project, after the

⁷³ Mondal, Anshuman A. *Nationalism and Post-Colonial Identity: Culture and Ideology in India and Egypt*. New York; London; Routledge Curzon, 2003, 169.

⁷⁴ Reid, Donald. "Fu'ad Siraj Al-Din and the Egyptian Wafd." *Journal of Contemporary History* 15.4 (1980), p.8.

leader's death.⁷⁵ His liberal nationalism soon lost its resonance among a disenchanted public whose main aim was to gain independence from colonial rule. Instead, Egyptians had to contend with a consumed and detached intelligentsia, which only focused on the 'elite' conditions of the polity, failing to capitalize on popular support as an integral element for recreating the emotive and mobilizing power of nationalism.⁷⁶

The ideology of the *Wafd* and its ability to govern the people increasingly came under attack and by the late 1940s the party was dismantling from within. Simultaneously, voices of Islamic opposition, mainly from the 'ulama and the Muslim Brotherhood, were gaining ground. Founded in 1928 by sheikh Hassan Al Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood was created as an Islamic organization concerned with creating a political, social and religious movement. Involved in the struggle for national independence, its members were greatly concerned with addressing what they perceived as the moral degradation of the Islamic community under British rule. However, by the 1940s it had become clear that members of the local elite, namely members of the *Wafd*, had drifted further from attaining the goal of independence. It became easy to point out corruption, class discrepancies and what they viewed to be a moral and ethical deterioration of local culture associated with the western-oriented populism of the *Wafd*. Retrospectively, it might be possible to say that from the beginning Zaghlul was less interested in espousing a particular ideology than he was concerned with achieving national independence; the latter ultimately ended up being his main historical marker. And indeed, he is part of national memory not as a liberal, as per his acclaimed ideological grounding, but as a popular leader whose nationalist project called for the inclusion of all classes and sects of the Egyptian nation.

⁷⁵ Mondal, 169.

⁷⁶ Pollard, 132.

Important also throughout these two decades, is the solidification of the limits of national community, whereby being “Egyptian” came to occupy greater importance in constructing the popular legitimacy of national rulers. Increased discontent and lack of sentiments of belonging towards the monarchy, and especially towards British authorities, demonstrated an emphasis on the idea of “retrieving” the nation, and handing it back to its rightful owners. The construction of national identity and modes of national belonging at this time are also very much intertwined with conceptions and imageries of an organic, territorially bound community. This kind of territorial solidarity becomes deeply connected with the role of the Egyptian military, which since its creation in 1820 by Muhammad Ali, had engaged in the making of the modern Egyptian subject, for instance as seen with Egyptian soldiers and officers development of a sense of inferiority or inequality enacted between them and foreign officers and soldiers. More so, the military institution acted as one of the few institutions where Egyptian soldiers could experience some forms of social mobility within its ranks, and as such potentially affecting the ideological and political orientation of the institution as Egyptian officers became increasingly involved in its ranks. The growth of a sense of national belonging within one of the oldest political institutions of the modern state, had cast the Egyptian military as increasingly concerned with the protection of the territorial modern nation, and as an important player in the struggle for independence.

It therefore appears that the ideological framework of liberalism survived for two decades, not through its own right, but rather because of its intertwining with a nationalist discourse that was premised on a larger, more inclusive goal of independence; one that was aimed towards both territorial and political freedom from all forms of foreign occupation. The central place in

Egyptian nationalist discourse regarding the sovereignty of the “nation” and the self-governance of its national community would culminate in a kind of territorial nationalism under Nasser and his Free Officer’s movement.

Understanding Nasser between Ideology and the Military

The July 23 revolution headed by Gamal Abdel Nasser and the take-over of the Free Officers, represents a different positionality between political ideology and nationalist discourse. It is true that the end of Egypt’s ‘liberal’ period had coincided with Nasser’s rise to power. However, Nasser’s capturing of nationalist sentiments and his transformation of the nationalist discourse had not initially been premised on ideological grounds. As seen with Kamil and Zaghlul, political ideologies, even though upheld as the defining markers of political eras, actually appeared as secondary to wider nationalist claims. That is, focusing on ideology as the mobilizing force behind Nasser’s popularity is also misleading in a number of ways. First, it assumes that a period of liberal rule had taken its course in Egyptian politics, when in actuality, liberalism seems to have been the conceptual preoccupation of literary, high culture, and theoretical elite-centered debates. The foundational premise of Egyptian nationalism, that is, had less to do with an affiliation to a specific liberal ideology, and much more to do with a politicized territoriality set against foreign occupation in the context of changing understandings of the place of Egypt in a changing global order. Second, it is crucial to realize that the coup of the Free Officers did not begin by heralding mass support for socialism, nor did it initially embrace a clear political ideology of its own.⁷⁷ In his work on Nasser’s movement, Joel Gordon

⁷⁷ Hibbard, Scott W. "The Rise and Decline of Egyptian Secularism." *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India and the United States*. John Hopkins University Press, 2010, p. 56.

argues that the events of July 23, 1952 had caused few to lament the actions of the army.⁷⁸

Disillusionment with the parliamentary system and its inability to lead the way to independence, had allowed nationalist energies to be captured by an institution towards which there existed little doubt concerning its patriotic character and nationalist duty: that of the Egyptian military. The Free Officers' military affiliation, and the institutional support it provided them, allowed them leverage in asserting order and in capturing sentiments of loyalty and belonging to a popular nationalist movement⁷⁹ That is, it appears that the appeal of the Egyptian army itself had initially been more powerful than any specific ideological orientation. The force of Nasser's ideological project was not initially recognized by many of Egypt's political elite as a threat to their power. That would soon change, as his political ideology began to take shape, although that would not begin until almost a year after his victory.

The Growth of a Statist National Ideology

Rather than a well-defined political ideology and a mass following, the Free Officers' main bid for power was to establish a strong centralized state and cultivate popular legitimacy for military rule. The new Egyptian state grew on the basis of the expansion of the two dominant institutions of the armed forces and the Egyptian bureaucracy, both of which are still as dominant in today's Egypt. Rapid expansion of the public sector along with the nationalization of numerous industries and the enactment of the land reform laws, not only had the effect of cementing the new regime's power to mobilize resources, it had also created a new class of Egyptians' whose interests were closely tied to the state.⁸⁰ Under the new regime, citizens were to expect free state education, a job in the government apparatus, as well as state-sponsored pension after retirement.

⁷⁸ Gordon, Joel. *Nasser's Blessed Movement: Egypt's Free Officers and the July Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, 14.

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Hibbard, 58.

Political parties which were controlled by the elite of the 1930s and 1940s, most important of which were the liberal *Wafd* and *Umma* parties, were victims of attempts of elimination and by January 1953 all political parties were outlawed. ⁸¹ In fact, Nasser's political authoritarianism and social welfare put in place a clear *statist* dimension to national loyalty, whereby citizens' relations to the new nation became primarily expressed through a glorification of the Egyptian state. In other words, nationalism became expressed through the promise of the Egyptian state to include all national classes within its ranks, making citizens part of the process of national development and the drive for self-sufficiency and full independence.

Nasser's Territorial Nationalism

The fact that statism became one of the defining pillars of Nasser's Egypt however, does not in turn mean that no efforts at furthering a particular political ideology took place. Arab nationalism and Arab socialism were both adopted by the regime as the necessary vehicles of change, steering the nation away from a bygone era. The political ideology of socialism allowed Nasser's statism to continue, for it made accessible a systemic language with which to address social inequality, corruption, education, health care, and even women's rights as domains which could be bettered through state intervention. The Egyptian military, on the other hand, had been central to the propagation of Arab nationalism and its role as part of a regional alliance against Western and Israeli intervention. It is important to contextualize the move towards Arab nationalism within the nationalist discourse of the time. First of all, Nasser repeatedly emphasized the coexistence and compatibility of his Egyptian and Arab loyalties, often using the term "Arab Egypt" in his speeches. ⁸² However, despite repeated assertions of the unity and

⁸¹ Gordon, 4.

⁸² Egypt, Ministry of National Guidance, *Majmu'at Khutab wa Tasrihat wa Bayanat al-Ra'is Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir (multivol; cairo)*, 1: 155.

solidarity of the members of the Arab nation, when asked whether his sense of collective identity was more Arab or Egyptian, Nasser's response was an unreserved articulation of his self-identification as an "Egyptian coupled with a more contingent sense of Arab affiliation"⁸³ In fact it was the practical utility of solidarity as Arabs that Nasser emphasized as the motive force behind Arab nationalism.⁸⁴ It was a strategic necessity, a defensive necessity as well as common interests which rather compelled Arabs towards unity.⁸⁵ More so, in line with the territorial nationalism of Nasser, and the pivotal role that the Egyptian Army played in securing Egyptian independence and sovereignty, Arab nationalism was built with the pioneering role of the Egyptian army, at its epicenter. As such, Arab nationalism continued to retain Egyptian leadership within the region, and the propagation of Arab nationalism in Egypt focused on the benefits and interests to the Egyptian nation. More so, realizing that involvement in the Arab nationalist movement had developed well after the formation of the Egyptian state and where the existing territorial state was the main element in the political field, allows for a better understanding of the relationship between a transnational movement like Arab nationalism and its integration with Egyptian territorial nationalism.⁸⁶

The position of Egypt within the region was premised on the belief of the unmatched strength of its army compared to other countries of the region .More so, the strength and legitimacy of the Egyptian state, was cemented in its military-backed ability to defend the people's interests from the corruption of the pre-revolutionary elite ensuring it remained within the truly patriotic hands of its current leaders. That is, through constant valorization of the territorial nation, linking its

⁸³ Jankowski, James P., and I. Gershoni. *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, 152.

⁸⁴ Jankowski; Gershoni, 154.

⁸⁵ See Heikal, *Milaffat*, 654, 742

⁸⁶ Jankowski; Gershoni, 167

survival with the role of the military, the main referent of Egyptian nationalist discourse became the fervor of a strong territorial state.

Nationalizing Religion under Nasser

The place of religious discourse in the nationalist narrative was also greatly affected by the statism of Nasser. That is, although Nasser espoused a secular ideology, his regime could not, and did not, follow a similar process of secularization as the one that had taken place in Turkey in 1924 by Mustapha Kemal Atatürk. Instead of eliminating religion from public social life, the 1952 regime sought to control religion as well as influence the kinds of uses it was put to. Consequently, after consolidating his position as the leader of the Revolutionary Council in 1954, Nasser dissolved the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood on January 13, 1954, despite the hopes that the latter had with the establishment of Nasser's nationalist project.⁸⁷ The Brotherhood's continued existence as an independent organization, as well as one which had repeatedly made calls for the application of shari'a law, had provoked the leader into silencing the voices of Islamic discontent. Additionally, the attempt made on Nasser's life on October 26, 1954, for which the Muslim Brotherhood was profiled and accused despite denial of many of its accused members, gave Nasser the pretext he needed to dismantle the organization.⁸⁸ Consequently, hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood leaders were tried in courts, and six were hanged in December of the same year.⁸⁹ As noted by Timothy Mitchell,

⁸⁷ Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. Web.

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ Ibid

“On July 23, 1952 the Muslim Brothers joined with the rest of Egypt in celebrating the dawn of a new era; twenty-nine months later, six of the Society’s members died on the gallows, and the organization was destroyed almost beyond repair.”⁹⁰

In addition to silencing the Muslim Brotherhood as the most important Islamic opponent to the regime, Nasser took control over private and public mosques, placing them under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Religious Endowments. Such was an attempt at ensuring that local preachers followed and endorsed a state-approved narrative of Islam and religious teachings.⁹¹ And to best gain control over the content of the Islamic message transmitted to the public, Nasser proceeded to gain control over Al Azhar by bringing its financial assets under the control of the state. By doing so, he successfully curbed the institution’s autonomy and forced it to depend on the state for financial support.⁹² Rather than a process of secularization, what was unfolding was rather a process of nationalizing Islam. The new regime’s legitimacy still hinged on its ability to present itself as the righteous leader and moral keeper of the national community. The nationalization of religious bodies and institutions gave the state monopoly over the interpretation of religion, and at the same time created a nationalist discourse in which the use of religion remained a key link between the modernizing state and its population.⁹³

Nasser’s nation building project was thus largely premised on the territorial and statist dimensions of nationalism, through which socialism and pan-Arabism were represented and engaged with. In addition, Nasser was able to force the country’s two most important liberal political parties out of the political arena. Associating the ideological project of liberalism with the fouls of colonial occupation and British manipulation, their place in national history soon

⁹⁰ Mitchell 1969, 96.

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Hibbard, 62.

⁹³ Hibbard, 65.

became conceptualized as a part of an unwanted past. Liberalism became associated with elitist and westernized political practices.

Intertwining Religion with National Identity: Sadat's Road to Legitimacy

The end of Nasser's rule with his death on September 8th, 1970, bore with it the still-fresh memory of Egypt's shattering defeat in the 1967 war against Israel, leading to the latter's occupation of the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. Sadat's mission as new president was thus geared towards the liberation of Sinai from Israeli occupation while maintaining social order and political legitimacy among the population. In order to do so, Sadat found in the use of religious discourse a way of framing and identifying his new regime. Sadat offered a more accommodative environment to Islamic movements, specifically the Muslim Brotherhood, releasing many of its members from jail and allowing the free circulation of the organization's journal. This shift in approach meant to signify a break from Nasser's "Godless secularism" as the Muslim Brotherhood had called it, in a bid by Sadat to acquire wider popular bases of legitimacy. More so, by portraying himself as the "believer president" (*Al Ra'ees al mo'men*), Islamic discourse was put at the center of the national imagery and Islam and piety were presented as some of the more important values associated with national leadership. This is also strikingly apparent in the amendment of Article (2) of the Egyptian constitution which came to decree that Islamic Shari'a be considered *the* main source of legislation, as opposed to *a* source of legislation. Religion, as such, became intertwined with the construction of national identity, once again through instituting popularly held Islamic values and principals within the discourse of the state and its bodies.

More specifically, Sadat's quest for controlling opposition, particularly that of the die-hard Nasserists and leftists, had first of all, led him to remove most of them from their posts in the

upper echelons of the regime and from the Arab Socialist Union (ASU).⁹⁴ More so, between the years 1971 and 1975, Sadat coupled his fights against the left with granting general amnesty to members of the Muslim Brotherhood, gradually releasing them from prison, in hopes that they would provide a counterweight to the Nasserist left.⁹⁵ The Muslim Brotherhood's mouthpiece, *Al-da'wa* journal was allowed publication and its circulation was reported to have reached eighty to a hundred thousand copies per month at its height⁹⁶, alluding to the increasing popularity of the organization and of their Islamic outlook on public life, which had mainly been concerned with the reformation of the state and society through the application of the Islamic shari'a.⁹⁷ Although the Muslim Brotherhood may have intended to adopt a more gradualist approach to Islamic reform under Sadat, their hopes of becoming a legitimate political party were smashed when Sadat issued the 1977 Political Party Law which would ban the creation of political parties on the basis of religion. The result was an organization which was neither inside nor outside the national system, for it was not formally acknowledged as a political party yet it was one which still garnered popularity in parliament through its individually elected members.⁹⁸ However, by the late 1970s, members from the Brotherhood became increasingly vocal about the social inequalities that have been growing under Sadat's *infitah* (opening of the economy to market forces) as well as his heavy handed control of dissent and opposition. However, the termination of the relatively amicable relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and Sadat strikingly came with his visit to Jerusalem in 1977, following which the peace treaty with Israel was signed in 1979. In an attempt to control the social and political outrage over signing the

⁹⁴ Wickham, 24.

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Hinnebusch, Raymond A. *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat: The Post-Populist Development of an Authoritarian-Modernizing State*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York, NY, USA; Cambridge University Press, 1985, 205.

⁹⁷ Wickham 25

⁹⁸ Wickham, 26

peace treaty, in 1981, Sadat arrested more than 1,500 civic and political leaders from across the ideological spectrum. Included of course were members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who only a month later would move to assassinate the president on October 6, 1981.⁹⁹

Additionally, religious discourse was used by Sadat to lend popular legitimacy to the more extensive role that would be taken on by the military during the 1973 war with Israel. Engaging the military body within patriotic and religious frameworks was constitutive of the processes by which the military institution in Egypt has come to accumulate national and moral capital among the people. Perhaps this is particularly apparent in present day Egypt with Abdel Fattah el Sisi's popular coming to power in 2013. However, Sadat did not in fact put forth a clear political ideology for his regime. What manifested instead was a political project that found in religious accommodation fertile grounds for creating popular legitimacy. At the same time, it was one whose nationalist discourse was most avidly expressed through regional politics and territorial victories. The central position occupied by military victories in Sadat's era also came with an expansion in the privileges of the officer corps. That is, in order to ensure military generals' political acquiescence, particularly in the post-war period, Sadat proceeded to plant the seeds of the military's economic empire that would take its full form under Mubarak. This kind of expansion was aimed at rebranding the military as a major contributor to national prosperity as well as ensure venues for top officials to pursue their private interests.¹⁰⁰ More so, Sadat's ideational links with the Egyptian military had arguably become strengthened as he shifted away from Pan-Arabism towards an "Egypt-first" orientation; one which would prove to be quite popular with the army generals. Sadat verified this shift in the post-war era by arguing that it in

⁹⁹ Wickham, 28

¹⁰⁰ Nassif, Hicham Bou. "Wedded to Mubarak: The Second Careers and Financial Rewards of Egypt's Military Elite, 1981–2011." *The Middle East Journal* 67.4 (2013), 514.

the 1973 war, “it was Egyptians who dies while other Arab states postured and orated,”¹⁰¹, further solidifying the territorial nation as a main marker of Egyptian national identity.

Spaces for Ideological Contestation Under Sadat

The Political Party law (law 40 of 1977) issued by Sadat excluded the formation of parties based on class, religion or regional affiliation.¹⁰² The law was issued against the background of the 1977 bread riots, which were a reaction to limiting government spending on public goods and services as a result of the harsh conditions of the IMF’s economic liberalization policies. In an effort to check spaces for ideological or political opposition, Sadat proceeded to create the National Democratic Party (NDP) in 1977 with a base of urban and rural bureaucrats. This was significant in the creation of a class of statist who were supportive of the regime. The NDP portrayed its character as a national one, representative of all groups of the nation, yet in doing so, espoused no clear political ideology, such as that of Nasser’s socialism. The basis of inclusion within the party had thus developed along statist lines, whereby support of the regime became the defining feature of its members, rather than ideological, sectarian or classist identifications with it. Additionally, the crackdown on ideological and political opposition included Islamists and Islamic organizations and whose growing power was blatantly felt with the assassination of Al Sadat in 1981 by members of *Al Gama’a Al Islamiya*.

Therefore, it is possible to see the ways in which political ideology came to take on a less emphatic role and resonance under Sadat. The creation of his own political party along statist lines as opposed to clear ideological assimilations, had set the tone for the NDP for the years to

¹⁰¹ Thomas Lippmann, *Egypt after Nasser: Sadat, Peace, and the Mirage of Prosperity* (Minneapolis: Paragon House, 1989), 183.

¹⁰² See Mona Makram Ebeid, “The Role of the Official Opposition”, in *Egypt Under Mubarak*, eds. Charles Tripp and Roger Owen (New York: Routledge, 1990), 27.

come as statist relations continued to grow and solidify under Mubarak. At the same time, the references along which national community was iterated and imagined came to lay on religious lines of identification, emphasizing the place of Islam as an intrinsic part of national identity. Sadat's national legacy is also defined by his military "master plan" of retrieving Egyptian territory, as such reviving a kind of territorial nationalism among Egyptians. The role of political ideology, therefore, was lost amidst grander schemes of national inclusion. Sadat's vision of an inclusive national identity therefore alternatively emphasized the role of religion and the territorial nation in shaping the nation. Islamic opposition, on the other hand, was to remain as the main face of ideological opposition throughout the following decades.

A State of Ideological Incoherence under Mubarak

Upon coming to power, Hosni Mubarak initially adopted a reconciliatory approach regarding political participation. A son of the military institution, Mubarak capitalized on this legitimacy as a military-backed national leader by demonstrating an observable increase in tolerance for spaces of political expression, mainly through allowing increased circulation of independent newspapers and licensing new opposition parties.¹⁰³ Mubarak made a point of declaring that he was neither Nasser nor Sadat and it is true that he did not completely follow in any of his predecessors footsteps.¹⁰⁴ However, neither did he construct a clear ideological project of his own. By the late 1990s, power struggles within the NDP between the Old guard- namely the statist and supporters of the regime- and between emerging younger groups of businessmen, had begun taking over the operational capacity of the party and members were hardly ideologically unified. Instead of putting forth a clear ideological project, the NDP grew in line with the neo-liberal

¹⁰³ Ayalon, Ami. "Egypt's Quest for Cultural Orientation." *The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies* (1999), 17.

¹⁰⁴ Ayubi, Nazih N. M. *The State and Public Policies in Egypt since Sadat*. No. 29. Vol. Reading, Berks, UK: Ithaca Press, 1991, 226.

economic policies adopted by the state, aided by the emergence of powerful economic groups with their own interests to persevere and grow. Importantly so, the party managed to create networks of patronage and clientelism that acted as wide and interconnected power bases, allowing its survival for thirty years. That is, rather than allowing for political participation or an ethos of accountability, the NDP functioned through managing and controlling the political elite, as well as engaging lower rank intermediaries from the general population.¹⁰⁵ Over the years, various political and socio-economic groups were able to find ways to benefit from the regime and construct ways for their inclusion into its power networks. For instance, on the level of local governance, the growing needs of an expanding population coupled with an overburdened bureaucracy allowed for the formation of informal networks and relations of interest between government employees and lower rank intermediaries from the general population. The bases on which relations were formed were thus centered on the possibilities of inclusion within the economic and political networks of the state, rather than on a clear ideological congruence or assimilation with its national party.

This lack of an ideational link also seemed to be the case with Mubarak's relationship with the military. Although it remained that presidents' survival in office depended on allying the leaders of the nation's coercive apparatus to their rule, the post-war period of stability under Mubarak necessitated engaging various other means for upholding the army and its officers in high status.¹⁰⁶ Having no grand mission to offer the officers as champions of the poor or liberators of the occupied national territory, retired officers were promised- and indeed occupied- hundreds of

¹⁰⁵ Heiss, Andrew. "The Failed Management of a Dying Regime: Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's National Democratic Party, and the January 25 Revolution." *Journal of Third World Studies* 29.1 (2012), 157.

¹⁰⁶ Bou Nassif, 529

managerial positions in the Armed forces economic empire.¹⁰⁷ The creation of a parallel economic system for the Egyptian military took place through the establishment of non-defense businesses, including factories, military clubs and hotels, all of which operated outside the control and supervision of parliament and the Organization of Administrative Monitoring (*Hay'at al-raqaba al-idariyya*).¹⁰⁸ The military-industrial-business-commercial complex (MIBCC) in Egypt progressively grew with Mubarak's neo-liberal turn, as new avenues for ensuring officers' allegiance to the regime appeared with the new economic changes.¹⁰⁹ More so, retired officers and generals were given high status posts in bureaucratic and state institutions all over the country, and throughout Mubarak's years in power, almost 40 percent of the governors appointed by him, came from the military institution.¹¹⁰

Nevertheless, the struggle for ideological legitimacy increasingly became problematic with the rise of Islamic opposition groups. Although Islamic militants were crushed in the early 1990s through a vicious government-led counter insurgency, their appearance on the scene years later was aided by the growth of a parallel Islamic sector under Mubarak.¹¹¹ This involved a growth in the numbers of Islamic voluntary associations such as welfare societies, cultural organizations, schools and health clinics, as well as an increase in the number of Islamic banks, publishing houses and investment companies¹¹² Some of these institutions belonged to the larger network of the Muslim Brotherhood, while others represented individual projects of piety. The growth of institutions of an Islamic character are reflective of the normalized positions that piety and

¹⁰⁷ Bou Nassif, 526

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ Hashim, Ahmed. "The Egyptian Military, Part Two: From Mubarak Onward." *Middle East Policy* 18.4 (2011), 109.

¹¹⁰ Bou Nassif, 10

¹¹¹ Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, 97.

¹¹² Ibid

religiosity have come to assert in the everyday lives of the Egyptian citizenry. Their popularity is significant in understanding the highly cherished values of Islam and religiosity to the Egyptian public, which will appear consequential with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to power.

The weakness of the ideological character of Mubarak's nationalism meant that Islamic discourse could find more fertile ground to grow with little competition from a contending national ideology. At the same time, the vagueness of Mubarak's ideological project allowed for a more spacious and inclusive understanding of national community which was not hindered by ideological limits or barriers. It is particularly this sense of ideological 'indifference' which sets in contrast the exclusionary and highly ideological project of the Muslim Brotherhood that unfolded upon their coming to power in 2012. Congruently, the Muslim Brotherhood's existence as outside of the nation's prime nationalist institution, namely the Egyptian military, cast doubt on the question of their national loyalty among groups of the population. The ways in which the Brotherhood's rule was experienced as a self-interested project, set apart from the wider national community, become more apparent through the everyday practices of members of the organization among local residents of 'Ain el-Sira. The extent to which sentiments of national inclusion and belonging have been experienced by local residents during the Muslim Brotherhood's rule, will be explored in the next two chapters.

Conclusion

By focusing on the references through which macro-level discourses of Egyptian nationalism were constructed by regime leaders throughout modern history, this chapter sets the stage for a more contextualized analysis of citizens' own constructions of national belonging. In other words, it offers a framework for observing the development of the conceptual and moral limits of Egyptian nationalism. Egyptian nationalism seems to have grown through the historical

intertwining of religious discourse and modes of national belonging. The co-existence of these two spaces of identity formation allows us to see the experience with the Muslim Brotherhood beyond the dichotomous positions of national belonging and religious loyalty. The point, rather, is to look for the modes of inclusion into the national community that nationalist ideologies like political Islam, trigger in popular imagination. The continuous struggle to realize the promise of national inclusion, as mentioned earlier, is usually played out on the level of state practices as citizens' interact with state representatives and institutions. The growth of the bureaucratic apparatus along with its networks of relations and interests, as well as the growth of a statist ideology, played a significant role in shaping previous nationalist projects. Understanding the modes of inclusion propagated by the project of the Muslim Brotherhood, is thus crucial in situating the ability of the Muslim Brotherhood to maintain popular support. The next two chapters explore the spaces and instances in which inclusion into the national project became perceived by residents under the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Another point made throughout this chapter is about the specific conditions required for political ideologies to manifest into mobilizing and unifying nationalist discourses. As shown above, Egypt's turn of the century encounter with liberal politics attests to the efficacy of liberalism as a unifying nationalist discourse upon its linking with the grand objective of national independence. Nasser's political ideologies of socialism and Pan-Arabism were able to effectively manifest based on the emotive power it drew from the nationalist spirit of the Egyptian military institution and its role in reclaiming national territory. The power of political ideology as a unifying national force in Egypt therefore seems contingent on its existence within a wider narrative of unity and belonging; one which is triggered by highly emotive and unifying events such as national independence, war victories and regional advancements.

Realizing these trends is useful in analyzing the general failure of the ideological project of the Muslim Brotherhood by understanding the specific ways in which nationalism and religion have historically been constructed as constitutive of one another. That is, the case of Egypt shows that nationalist ties have been understood to be inclusive of certain modes of religiosity, whereby Islamic values and principals played a critical role in shaping modern Egyptians' social and political relations. Yet, the politicization of religious discourse and its use as part of an overriding ideological project under the Muslim Brotherhood, triggered processes in which religious and national identity became portrayed and experienced as dichotomous forces. The ideological character of the Muslim Brotherhood thus allowed the organization to be perceived and experienced as divisive, limiting and exclusionary among many sections of the population.

Finally, in order to read beyond the fall of the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt as a victory of civil and secular national ties, over religious ones, this chapter shed light on the specific position of the Military institution in Egyptian nationalist history. The privileged position of the Egyptian military and its unequivocal role in furthering a kind of territorial nationalism has allowed it to persistently occupy an uncontested capacity as guardian of the nation, in both its territorial and imagined form. Important, are the intrinsic ties between past ruling regimes and the military, which have awarded the former wider spaces for national mobilization through displaying their belonging to the nation and identifying with its most patriotic institution. The Muslim Brotherhood's existence as a force outside of the military institution cast its nationalist identity and loyalty in doubt. This is most obviously seen in the high levels of popularity and mass mobilization prompted by the appearance of army General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and his leading role in the take-over of power from the Muslim Brotherhood in July 2013. The army's clear nationalist orientation, in contrast to the Muslim Brotherhood's separate and distinct ideology of

political Islam, seemingly touched upon wider imagined spaces for inclusion within the national project, consequently gaining the support of millions of Egyptians.

‘Ain el-Sira: Local Community Life and Everyday Modes of Belonging

This chapter will explore the socio-political features of ‘Ain el-Sira in order to situate modes of national belonging among residents as seen through their regular interactions with bodies and representatives of ruling regimes, namely the NDP and the Muslim Brotherhood. Beyond viewing equality and national belonging as abstract notions of nationalism, this chapter aims to place the meaning of nationalism in the struggle for power distribution between the ruling elite and citizens, as played out at the level of state practices. One of the spaces in which the struggle for national inclusion is played out is through residents’ interactions with local state personnel in ‘Ain el-Sira, such as with police officers and employees of the local municipality. The appearance of the Muslim Brotherhood as a distinct power group in the neighborhood in 2012 is also analyzed through the extent to which the struggle for power-sharing and inclusion in the national project was being shaped through the organization’s political and social presence and practices in the neighborhood. The relationship between nationalism and religious loyalty thus shifts, in order to recognize the banal and everyday spaces through which citizens may come to experience Islamic rule when presented through a politically-organized and distinct authority. This is in contrast to the normalization and acceptance of pious and moral Islamic values in their personal and public lives. More so, the chapter focuses on the modes of social organization in the neighborhood. This is necessary in order to situate the development of local power groups, those which I term the “notables” of the community. One of the most salient features of interaction between local state authorities and notables lies in their dependence on informal and personal

modes of recognition of one another. As such, this chapter aims to shed light on some of the alternative modes of inclusion: those which manifest through informal relations with state representatives, as well as through personal relationships built on local forms of familiarity and recognition.

The Significance of 'Ain el-Sira

One of the reasons why 'Ain el-Sira was chosen for this research has been its unique social and political history. That is, instead of situating 'Ain el-Sira as one of the many *sha'bi* or informal areas growing around the outskirts of Cairo beginning the 1960s, with the all-too-familiar narrative of poverty, illiteracy, extremism and crime prevalent in these areas, 'Ain el-Sira has arguably experienced a rather different history. Based on interviews with some of the old residents of the area, as well as with workers in Al Geel Center, 'Ain el-Sira appears as home to one of the leaders of the leftist student movement of the 1970s. Ahmed Abdallah Rozza, most famous for his leftist views and life-long struggle towards opening up spaces for civil participation and equality among the different classes of society, was a 'son' of the neighborhood. His opposition to the mood of political oppression and the stringent economic policies initiated by Sadat, was first exhibited through his leadership of the student union, a position to which he was freely elected by the student body in 1972.¹¹³ Ahmed 'Abdallah had led the famous student occupation and first ever sit-in in the Gamal Abdel Nasser hall room at the Cairo University, which would shortly thereafter develop into massive protests in Tahrir Square in January 24.¹¹⁴ On the day following the occupation of Tahrir Square, President Anwar Al-Sadat addressed a speech to the student body, attempting at reconciling with some of their demands. Yet, the president remained wary of Abdallah's influence over the movement and at some point in his speech, the president uttered the famous words "I will not sit with Rozza",

¹¹³ Interview with Farid; old friend of Ahmed Abdallah

¹¹⁴ Ali, Sarah. "Ahmed Rozza... 'ayqoonat al-haraka al-tollabiya." 14 January 2014. www.masrelarabia.com.

ultimately signaling to the powerful resonance of ‘Abdallah’s name as leader of the movement and his revolutionary role in shaping the politics of a generation. ‘Abdallah was considered a young hero of the neighborhood and his circles of influence grew from within ‘Ain el-Sira. In fact, many of those younger students of ‘Abdallah would carry on to manage Al-Geel Center after his passing, as will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Other figures from the neighborhood which demonstrate its earlier cultural and social make-up include Farag el Antary, who was a musician in the Cairo Orchestra Symphony and was one of the artists who grew from within the neighborhood. There was also Mohamed Afifi, who was considered a local leader within the community. He was the representative of the Socialist Union in *Masr el Qadima* (of which ‘Ain el Sira is a part of), and later became elected into one of the executive committees of the Socialist Union. His opposition to Sadat and his commitment to his own Nasserist ideologies had even led to his arrest numerous times and his activism was not only recognizable on a local level, but he was also nationally known.¹¹⁵

Contemporary ‘Ain el-Sira however, demonstrates a stark transformation from the social and political conditions of the 1970s. As will be explored below, the change in the constituency of the neighborhood’s population has had a lot to do with the transformation of the neighborhood from a hub for social activists, politicians and artists, to one where religious conservatism, political apathy and social conservatism become the main markers of the area. However, they are these transformations which trigger questions about the forms of national belonging in a community which had seemingly lost its touch with political participation and social activism. The following sections will attempt to reveal some of the alternative ways in which national

¹¹⁵ Interview with Omar Morsi

belonging and inclusion within the national project and community can be understood in a contemporary working class neighborhood in Cairo.

History and Modes of Social Organization

'Ain el-Sira enjoys a central urban location. Built on the main road of Salah Salem, 'Ain el-Sira lies south of the historic neighborhood of el-Sayyida Zeinab and is separated from the busy neighborhood of el-Dokki by the Nile corniche. Built in 1958, 'Ain el-Sira was part of the new Public Housing project (PH) introduced by former President Gamal Abdel Nasser. The PH projects aimed to provide better housing opportunities to middle and lower class Egyptians, through providing rent stabilized housing, thus rendering the neighborhood more affordable to larger sections of the population.¹¹⁶

The neighborhood was initially built as two hundred residential blocks, with an average of sixty apartment buildings per block.¹¹⁷ It also included a designated market area and was renowned for an abundance of green zones surrounding its roads and buildings. During Nasser's rule, the neighborhood was supplied with cooperative shops that provided basic goods at subsidized prices.¹¹⁸ By the late 1960s, additional housing units were constructed by the state to accommodate the growing population, which came from within Cairo as well as other Egyptian governorates.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Doaa AboulMagd, Christian Kesteloot, and Eric Corijn. "Housing Projects for Low Income Groups and Modes of Economic Integration: A Comparative Study in Greater Cairo." *The Royal Dutch Geographical Society*, 2013, 460.

¹¹⁷ Fahmy Menza, Mohamed. *Patronage Politics in Egypt: The National Democratic Party and Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo*. New York: Routledge, 2013, 57.

¹¹⁸ Menza 59

¹¹⁹ Abdallah A, Siam A. *Al-Mosharaka al-Sha'beya fi hay Ain Al Sira bel Qahera*. Al Jeel Center, 1996.

Since its inception, 'Ain el-Sira has had a relatively heterogeneous population in terms of the geographical, professional and social backgrounds of its residents.¹²⁰ The population contains residents from a variety of different rural areas, as well as class positions – including working class families, small to medium-sized merchants and middle class professionals, such as school teachers and government employees.¹²¹

By the time Anwar Sadat came to power, the Egyptian economy was faltering and under great pressure to cope with growing global markets. With Sadat's introduction of the policy of *infitah*, the state-led policies of Nasser were dismantled and the Egyptian market opened up to foreign and private investors. The focus of new investors was alternatively directed toward luxurious and upper-class housing due to the low profitability of low-income housing projects¹²². In line with the state's gradual retraction from the market, Sadat introduced new housing laws that organized the transfer of home ownership from the state to residents, at a symbolic price¹²³. There were assumed political benefits in offering home ownership to lower income groups through privatizing housing. Additionally, the high cost of maintaining the area in comparison to the small financial returns from apartment rentals is argued to have geared the decision to privatize housing in the neighborhood.¹²⁴

Privatizing Residence and the Creation of Local Power Groups in 'Ain el-Sira

Privatization of apartments was one of the most influential factors in shaping the demographic and social divisions of the neighborhood, and allowed many families to sell their apartments in

¹²⁰ Menza, 57

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Doaa AboulMagd, Christian Kesteltoot, and Eric Corijn. "Housing Projects for Low Income Groups and Modes of Economic Integration: A Comparative Study in Greater Cairo." *The Royal Dutch Geographical Society*, 2013.

¹²³ AboulMagd, Kesteltoot, 460

¹²⁴ Interview with Saeed Okasha, political analyst and resident of the neighborhood.

'Ain el-Sira and move to more affluent neighborhoods. This also took place at a time when many Egyptians, including residents of the area, had begun moving abroad, especially to countries of the Gulf, as job markets expanded in these regions. As explained by one former resident of the neighborhood, Dr. Hassan, who now lives in the upper-middle class neighborhood of Maadi, many residents took jobs abroad throughout the 1980s, providing more chances for upward mobility and allowing many families to sell their apartments in 'Ain el-Sira and move to better neighborhoods. His own family sold their apartment in the late 1980s and moved to the middle class district of el-Haram, after his eldest sister started working in Saudi Arabia. The extent of this trend was such that, by the late 1980s, one apartment building was seen to have 7 out of the 10 families residing in it, move to the Gulf ¹²⁵

The possibility of selling residences also led to changes in the constituency of the neighborhood. For example, apartments were being sold to immigrants from other rural governorates, in addition to residents from informal settlements around Cairo. Rural immigrants arriving to the area also attracted their own kin and family members, resulting in the formation of social relations and solidarity bonds among families from the same governorates. As stated by numerous residents, these clan-based groups have also been particularly important in the consolidation of popular support bases for parliamentary candidates, particularly those running with the NDP.

Not only did the constituency of the neighborhood undergo transformation, but there was also an observable increase in the population. The increasing cost of living triggered by Sadat's Open Door policy, combined with the government's lack of new public housing projects, had culminated in a housing crisis which prevented many young adults from leaving their parents'

¹²⁵ Abdallah; Siam, 1996

homes after marriage. As a result, many apartments housed two and sometimes three generations of the same family at once. For instance, one apartment that had housed a family of six during the 1980s is now home to fourteen people, including three siblings, their wives and children.

In their study of societal participation in 'Ain el-Sira, Abdallah and Siam — who are also residents of the neighborhood — argue that the changes in the constituency of the population of 'Ain el-Sira also led to a change in the *de facto* elite of the community.¹²⁶ The draining of middle class professionals from the area created spaces for the recognition of social status along references other than that of education and occupational standing. The authors argue that, instead, money-making became one of the main indicators of a person's stature, whereby the social status of a *kasseeb* (one with a skill of quickly making money), became equal to that of a professor or doctor.¹²⁷ As will be explored in Chapter 4, money-making opportunities available for the *kasseeb* have, in fact, expanded with the growth of opportunities within the informal job market, which has continued to expand with rising levels of consumerism and the expansion of the private sector, particularly as the state failed to accommodate the growing population within its formal employment structures. The magnitude of this failure became increasingly obvious with the introduction of Mubarak's neoliberal economic policies, which encouraged private businesses and the development of private money-making schemes, many of which grew informally and out of the bounds of the law, particularly in low-income neighborhoods.

Situating Power groups and Notables in 'Ain el-Sira

The emergence of new power groups within the community is part of the process through which local communities shaped their own means of inclusion within the national project. The role of

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ Ibid

these groups, or notables, as will be explored below, signals to alternative modes of power-sharing that have been established between residents of the neighborhood and members of the ruling elite under Mubarak, further increasing spaces through which locals assimilate as part of a national community and within the national polity.

First, it is important to outline and define the characteristics of these elite power groups. The aforementioned values of money-making are important, not only in relation to status but also because they shape individuals' and groups' capacity for meeting local demands and mediating local disputes. These money-making groups are considered the current notables of the community and consist of members of old and long-standing families who are often called upon to mediate local conflicts.¹²⁸ Their status is not only based on their recognized roles as mediators, but also on the kinds of social and economic networks that they are involved in. The ability to offer protection to residents, procure material resources, and call on their respective connections when needed, have been key features in the survival of such power groups.

The notables of present-day 'Ain el-Sira are made up of local families who occupy prominent positions within different trades in the neighborhood. They include owners of automobile repair shops, fruits and vegetable vendors, old coffee shop owners, as well as popular drug dealers. In his work on the politics of patronage in Egypt, Mohamed Menza points out continuities between these kinds of sociopolitical intermediaries and traditional figures of authority in the old Egyptian *hara*.¹²⁹ These figures of authority, namely the *futuwwa*, are known for their physical strength, bravery, generosity, and most importantly, their intimate and personal ties with

¹²⁸ According to discussions with some of the older residents of 'Ain el-Sira, the original notables of the community consisted of individuals who were known teachers at the local schools, politically active community members who were described as *mothaqqafeen* and well-read, as well as sheikhs and religious men. This is in contrast to present day notables of 'Ain el-Sira, who are mostly renowned for their positionality as business men and money-makers, and one's who are also integral parts of the social and economic relations in the community.

¹²⁹ Menza, 70.

residents.¹³⁰ The role of these groups in the social structure of the urban community of 'Ain el-Sira often falls along this historical continuity of the *futuwwa*, acting as an alternative to a largely inefficient state structure.¹³¹ More so, in their attempt to minimize the exploitation of the authorities and retain control over their spatial and social capital, these groups became engaged in economic and political networks which offered them security and freedom in organizing their businesses and social relationships. As such, they were often seen to enter into deals and agreements with the ruling elite under Mubarak, spanning a wide range of activities that include, but are not limited to: working on local campaigns for NDP parliamentary candidates, selling votes during parliamentary elections, aiding the police in arresting criminals in the area, as well as assuming the role of “peacemakers” in the neighborhood so as to avoid police intervention in the first place. This kind of power delegation, argues el-Hagg Yasser, a coffee shop owner who is considered one of the notables in the area, was actually welcomed by the local police forces under Mubarak.¹³² These groups of residents, as such, were positioned to act as intermediaries and facilitators of a range of political, economic and social processes in the neighborhood through engaging in relations of cooperation and power exchange with national authorities.

I argue that these groups, from the *kasseeb* to the notables, are constitutive of what Asef Bayat terms social “non-movements.” These non-movements point to groups who practice an “everyday art of presence” through utilizing what is available to them and uncovering new spaces within which to be seen, heard and realized within the nation.¹³³ The emphasis here is on

¹³⁰ El Messiri, S. (1977) 'The Changing Role of the *futuwwa* in the Social Structure of Cairo', in Gellner, E. and Waterbury, J. (eds), *Patrons and Clients*; 24.

¹³¹ Menza, 39

¹³² Interview with Hagg Magdy

¹³³ Goldberg, Avi. "Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 33.3 (2010): 485-487

the possibility of viewing ordinary people as generative forces that can effect meaningful changes through everyday actions.¹³⁴ For instance, the notables' role in steering local political and social action becomes particularly visible at times of national transition, such as with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood. The regime change under Mubarak placed residents' modes of inclusion into the national project among new and unfamiliar power groups, causing them to question the extent of their inclusion within the Muslim Brotherhood's nationalist discourse. This sense of exclusion was most vividly expressed by power groups such as the notables, whose role in mobilizing parts of the community against groups like the Brotherhood, were quite significant.

Groups of residents like the ones discussed here constitute spaces of discursive intermediacy, between the politics and needs of the locale and the power structures of national authority. That is, the relations created between notables in the area and representatives of the national regime are constitutive of spaces in which alternative forms of power sharing and inclusion in the national project can be shaped and negotiated. These intermediate relations appear significant in the construction of attitudes toward the national regime and the extent to which inclusion within it, even if informal, remains possible. Relations with representatives of Mubarak's regime were largely established through notables' involvement in NDP electoral campaigns. Relations to the regime had also been established along more personal ties with *omana' el-shorta* (police officers) at the local police station, as well as officials within the local municipality. As explained by el-Hagg Yasser, a mutual familiarity had been established between members of the community and the local police officers. However, the Muslim Brotherhood's ascent to power

¹³⁴ Bayat, Asef. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Stanford University Press, 2013.

had brought with it changes within the security personnel dispatches to the area, to the discontent of el-Hagg Yasser and other notables in the area. Thus, it is possible to view these spaces of discursive intermediacy as those in which citizens are able to negotiate spaces for their inclusion in national frameworks of power while ensuring their own interests and needs.

The basis on which these informal relations are created is not through ideological assimilation with governing structures of power, but rather through the existence of spaces of mutual recognition and possibilities for differentiated forms of inclusion. Familiarity with and recognition of national leaders and their representative bodies is thus constitutive of processes through which national belonging can be alternatively experienced and expressed by local residents. I argue that these informal spaces are central to our understanding of Egyptian nationalism from a micro-scale perspective, and reveal alternative references along which inclusion within the national community and national project are constantly recreated within everyday life. Establishing a sense of familiarity and a capacity for recognition of the national regime appears to manifest within everyday engagements with local state practices.

Understanding nationalism through residents' personalized relations with the bodies and practices of the national regime is thus useful in analyzing residents' attitudes toward different ruling regimes and the modes through which popular conceptions of national belonging are constructed.

Mapping out the State in 'Ain el-Sira

Apart from the highly emotive and sensitized forms of nationalist discourse seen during national holiday celebrations or expressions of solidarity during national crises, nationalist discourse is also continuously and banally recreated on the level of the everyday. This section will discuss the ways in which boundaries of the national community and possibilities for recognition within the

national project continue to be recreated through citizens' interactions with the practices and personnel of state institutions.

From the outset, there appears to be scant presence of the state in 'Ain el Sira. The presence of the state appears limited to the local police station, one of the important state institutions that acts as a space in which residents engage with national authority; the main neighborhood mosque that was built during the construction of the neighborhood and which belongs to the Ministry of Endowments; and a family hospital that serves as one of important state facilities catering to the neighborhood and surrounding areas. The relative absence of the state is evident in the lack of public facilities and the increasing degradation of infrastructure beginning the late 1980s, to which scant government attention is paid.

In our conversations, residents consistently listed problems with trash and sewage as the main aspects of public life that require attention from the government. 'Ain el-Sira has three public schools, one of which is Ahmed Abdel Aziz School. For the duration of fieldwork, the school was surrounded by a constant overflow of sewage water and large piles of trash were seen to block access to the school's entrance. Residents argued that the school had been suffering from these problems for many years now, and little has been done by the government (including that of the Muslim Brotherhood's) to improve the infrastructure around it. More so, the cooperative outlets established during the time of Nasser have ceased to function; their buildings are now empty and abandoned. As one resident stated as he sat smoking his hookah at one of the local coffee shops, "We're always forgotten by the government, dropped out of their projects, as you can see by the state of our roads and infrastructure." Another resident argued that the people in the neighborhood are forced to do everything themselves, from fixing street electricity to repaving roads after they are ruined by sewage floods. The state in 'Ain el-Sira is thus often

defined against that which it is not; the areas in which it does not provide and the countless instances in which it failed to respond to citizens' troubles and requests.

But understanding the presence of the state in the neighborhood cannot be premised on a dichotomous understanding of presence and absence. Rather, the apparent absence of the state from the neighborhood is alternatively read along two lines. First, there are the expanded possibilities for residents to negotiate their economic relations and modes of social organization in the locale. The state's gradual retraction from its role in the provision of basic services and infrastructure, law enforcement and maintenance of social order, has culminated in increased spaces for residents' autonomy over public space. For instance, residents were able to open their own kiosks, shops and coffee places, most of which operated without permits. Massive building extensions were constructed adjunct to the original residential blocks as many families grew beyond the capacities of the original apartments. The wide, empty pavements became the sanctuary of the ever-growing market that has long overgrown its designated area expanding into the streets of the neighborhood. The high degrees of informality, deregulation and privatization of space reproduction have become some of the most salient features of 'Ain el-Sira, seen as part of a growing neoliberal city.¹³⁵

The second way of reading the presence of the state in the area is through realizing the implication of day-to-day processes of space-making and social organization with the local forms of state bureaucracy. Forty percent of the total labor force of Masr el-Qadima belongs to the informal sector which continues to depend on informal relations with bodies of the state in

¹³⁵ Bayat, Asef. "Politics in the City-Inside-Out." *City & Society* 24.2 (2012), 2.

organizing their activities and ensuring their survival.¹³⁶ For instance, el-Hagg Yasser states that owners of local businesses and coffee shops have opted to forge deals or bribe employees of the local municipality as well as officers in the local police station rather than to follow through with the endless process of obtaining a legal permit. Despite the greater possibilities for control and autonomy over their living quarters and businesses, residents' continued presence and survival depended on processes of power negotiation and on establishing informal relations of familiarity and co-dependence with representative bodies of the state. Residents specifically capitalized on relations among employees of the state who are routinely present in the neighborhood. Among the most important of these state employees, argues el-Hagg Yasser, are the *ameen el-shorta* and the *mabahith* officers, with whom familiarity develops as they tend to remain in their posts for a few years at a time.

Residents' expressions of familiarity with the personnel and practices of national institutions signals to alternative spaces through which identifications within the nation become conceptualized and negotiated on an everyday basis. More so, it is through these daily informal interactions and the creation of relations of mutual recognition and familiarity that the form and limits of national governance are continuously recreated. These relations are thus seen as constitutive of alternative power spaces, through which the struggle for power-sharing and inclusion within the national polity take place. It is also through these spaces that the abstract values of national inclusion and the imagined limits of the national community become recreated in tangible forms on the level of everyday life interactions.

State Society Relations as Seen through the Role of the Local Municipality

¹³⁶ 'Labor Force in the Cairo Governorate', 2006 National Census of Egypt, Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, (CAPMAS) Cairo, 2007.

One of the important pillars of Mubarak's regime and that which aided in its survival was its dependence on countless interpersonal relationships and local ties between the state and a class of citizens made up of intermediaries and middlemen, as mentioned above. Even citizens who were not involved in direct relations of patronage with the state had seemingly established an understanding of how the state functioned in everyday life. As one resident argued in explaining his preference of the old regime over that of the Muslim Brotherhood, "We knew very well the ways of Mubarak's regime; its system, its people and the games they played. And we knew what we needed to do to look out for ourselves and meet our needs and the needs of our families." (Gamal; 2015)

Knowledge of the old regime in this sense entailed a recognizable familiarity with informal channels of communication, the possibilities for back-door agreements and, most importantly, knowledge of the power groups one could resort to in order to "get things done." One of the important spaces in which recognition and engagement with the national authority took place was in the local municipalities, which are known for their exceptionally high levels of corruption and chances for discreet profiteering.

Municipalities in Egypt are intended to act as links between decisions made in central government and their application on the local level, as part of a lengthy, yet largely inefficient process of decentralization.¹³⁷ Infrastructure works, electricity, sanitation and building permits are among the mandate of the municipalities and as such these institutions play a role in steering processes of socio-economic development, as well as act as spaces for perpetuating the discourse of development adopted by the national authority. Importantly, it is with the advent of Mubarak's

¹³⁷ AbdelFattah, K. (2007) *The Political Participation and Awareness of the People of Misr Al Qadima and Dar Essalam*, Cairo: Political and Legal Awareness Project, New Fostat NGO.

neoliberal phase, amid the growth of opposition against his regime – particularly from Islamic forces – that municipalities became regarded by the regime as fertile spaces for the establishment of community-level power bases used to ensure the regime’s own interests.¹³⁸ Technically, local municipalities are controlled by their elected councils, but it was the then-ruling NDP that had unilaterally won almost all municipal elections. Even when municipal elections were frozen between the years 2003 and 2007, the government had opted to appoint an ad-hoc committee, mainly constitutive of NDP members and affiliates.¹³⁹ By the 2008 elections, the NDP had won 97 percent of all municipal seats.¹⁴⁰ According to Ahmed Abdallah, a late activist and resident of ‘Ain el-Sira, the importance of municipalities had in fact surpassed that of the parliament and the Shura Council, as any electoral candidate from the area had to first pass through the personnel at the local municipality.¹⁴¹

However, being severely underfunded and highly limited by dependence on the governor’s approvals, local municipalities have continued to receive reduced state allocations, or ones that at best remain stagnant, and thus could not possibly match the growing needs of the administration or the locale.¹⁴² Their operations consequently began to take place through informal networks of interests, motivated by citizens’ improvisation of new ways of managing their livelihoods and aided by the propensity of government workers to operate outside the formal limits of the law. This will be explored further through empirical cases in Chapter 4. The point is that interpersonal ties and mutually beneficial relations became the channels available for the survival of both members of the community, as well as those of the ruling regime.

¹³⁸ Menza, 111

¹³⁹ Ibid

¹⁴⁰ World Bank and Maghrib Center (2008) *The Political Drivers of Spatial/Regional Disparities in the Middle East and North Africa: A case study of Egypt*, Washington DC: World Bank and Maghrib Center, George Town University.

¹⁴¹ Abdallah; Siam, 2006.

¹⁴² World Bank and Maghrib Center (2008) *The Political Drivers of Spatial/Regional Disparities in the Middle East and North Africa: A case study of Egypt*, Washington DC: World Bank and Maghrib Center, George Town University.

Everyday practices and engagements with the local bureaucracy as the instances referred to above show, are first and foremost, critical in our understanding of state/ society relations. That is, they force one to shift away from the “imperialism of categories” which allow for the conventional and convenient distinction between the two.¹⁴³ The positionality of local residents as part of the reproduction of state corruption through their active practices of bribery and cronyism as well as officials’ tendency to accept working outside the official parameters of the law in order to better sustain control over the neighborhood as well as to further their own personal interests, reveals a merger between the two categories of state and civil society on the level of everyday life. Not only are financial transactions involved, but the interactions between the two reveal another level of inter-personal relations, modes of recognition, informal power dynamics and multiple foci for the development of group relations and solidarities. Therefore, in focusing on the multiple relations of power at play within these local engagements, it becomes possible to locate the discursive construction of the forms and limits of national belonging through areas which are often marked off as signifying the “failure” of the state. It is also important to become sensitive to the use of corruption discourses, for they must be placed in a context of a regime of “development”; that which came into existence as part of the international order of decolonized nation states.¹⁴⁴ This allows us to pose serious questions to the validity and usefulness of the exclusive categories of state and civil society which were constructed along Western imaginaries of political and social life. What arises therefore, is a need for an understanding of the relative positionalities each occupies in terms of the other, particularly

¹⁴³ **The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance. In *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*. Veena Das, ed. Pp. 69-93. Delhi: Oxford University Press.**

¹⁴⁴ Gupta, Akhil. "Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State." *American Ethnologist* 22.2 (1995), 383.

realizing the cultural and political processes involved within them, which shape the limits and forms of “belonging” and “inclusion” into the national project in an Egyptian working-class neighborhood.

Municipalities are thus situated at the boundaries of both national politics and community relations. In other words, their engagement with the day-to-day realities of residents has situated these institutions between feelings of detachment from the national sphere and spaces for inclusion and assimilation within it. As such, relations formed with and around the local municipality are seen as discursive spaces of meaning-making, whereby citizens experience their place in the nation and negotiate their positions, even informally, within its power networks. Even though high levels of inefficiency and corruption in municipalities left the majority of residents frustrated, their role continued to be a generative one. Municipalities’ generative role is seen through their shaping of an everyday culture of informality, whereby power sharing and inclusion within networks of interest becomes based on locally and historically established relations with the personnel and practices of the ruling regime and its interest groups. The possibility of regularly “placing” oneself within the regime’s networks of power is part of conceptual processes that make possible the recognition of the modes of inclusion within the national community.¹⁴⁵

Nevertheless, it is particularly these struggles over inclusion and equality, as well as feelings of disengagement from the power relations and networks of interest of the state, which have left large numbers of citizens frustrated with Mubarak’s national project. The discontent and feelings of exclusion of wide sections of the population culminated in mass nationalist upheaval against his regime in 2011. A seeming failure of the citizenship contract between the regime and the

¹⁴⁵ Stewart, Kathleen. 1996 *A Space on the Side of the Road*

population, had been identified as one of the motives behind the popular uprising. However, it is the assumed limits of such contract which requires our attention. That is, the discourse of citizenship rights in the case of residents of 'Ain el-Sira, remains limited for understanding the micro-scale and informal modes of inclusion that have been produced between citizens and the state in the neighborhood. Looking beyond the conceptually and analytically limited categories of citizenship, it is possible to see the necessary processes for negotiating alternative spaces and informal relations for residents to secure their own needs and interests, particularly within a state apparatus that remains burdened by a growing population and inefficient governing structure. That is, acquiescing to the idea that citizens simply do not enjoy most of their citizenship rights certainly overlooks the nuances related to the differences between "entitlement" and "empowerment".¹⁴⁶ Utilizing the discourse of citizenship draws an image where residents lack their entitled rights. However, in doing so, it also overlooks the local and original processes and negotiations- the spaces of local forms of agency- which essentially shape citizens' efforts at securing their needs. Such processes entail a sense of empowerment and agency which are not reflected in the discourse on citizenship.

However, even groups of residents, such as the notables, who had engineered spaces for benefitting from the ruling regime, had hopes for better chances of inclusion after the regime's downfall and many found in the piety of the Muslim Brotherhood sufficient motive to believe that their rule would come with more equality and lesser levels of corruption. Also what is important to realize here is the ideological detachment from Mubarak's regime and its signaling to the development of a particular mode of national belonging; one which is premised on an

¹⁴⁶ Gupta; 21

understanding of the nation through its permissibility of informal forms of inclusion; that is, relations which are not delimited on citizens' ideological assimilation with the regime.

Interestingly so, the relations inherent in the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood also predicated their existence along informal and interest-based networks and associations. However, it is in understanding the ways in which residents understood and experienced these new power bases and their respective positions within them, that local attitudes toward the Muslim Brotherhood can be better understood. The case of the Muslim Brotherhood is also fruitful in reading the nuances of religiosity and nationalism in Egypt. Therefore, the next few pages will discuss some of the conceptual disparities between residents' internalization and acceptance of Islamic modes of piety in everyday life and between their experiences of political Islam as an exclusive field of power under the rule of the Brotherhood.

Contesting Frameworks of Belonging in 'Ain el-Sira

Residents of 'Ain el-Sira are part of a locale which is not only engaged with the informal dynamics of the state, but it is also one that has been part of the piety movement in Egypt. Saba Mahmoud views the piety movement as the increase in Islamic forms of observance beginning in the 1970s, whereby Islamic references increasingly came to shape and mold everyday social and cultural life.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, it is true that the forces of Islamic conservatism have pervaded the majority of aspects of public, as well as private life in Egypt, whereby religious references and its authoritative texts have come to occupy normalized spaces within popular discourse. Empirically, it is possible to see a surge in the number of mosques throughout Cairo as well as an

¹⁴⁷ Mahmoud, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005; 2004.

expansion in the kinds of activities procured within them. Quran recital lessons are the norm as part of the daytime activities of mosques, the latter which have also been increasingly used as platforms by preachers and Islamic activists to propagate their message and gain followers, particularly so in *sha'bi*, or overpopulated quarters. Religion can also be seen as more extensively proliferating through state and non-state educational systems as well as public and private media channels. The Islamic veil is popularly endorsed and continues to signal the importance of expressing conservatism and piety in the public space.

It is critical to point out that engagement in the piety movement is not limited to religious groups and non-state actors, but that the Egyptian state, since Nasser, had been using religion to consolidate power and mobilize society for decades.¹⁴⁸ With the successive regimes of nationalist governance under Sadat, Mubarak and the current presidency of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, religion has been increasingly cast as intertwined with nationalism.¹⁴⁹ Whether it is through linking the values of heroism and sacrifice for the nation, with the highly upheld Islamic value of martyrdom, or through state censorship over texts, publications and media productions on religious grounds, or even as seen through the tradition of ending each statement from the Egyptian Armed Forces with a prayer for success and help from God (*wallahu al-mowafiq wa al-mosta'an*), the discourse of Egyptian nationalism had always borrowed from the values and legitimacy of Islam, in constructing its own popular image. Therefore, instead of viewing religion as constituting counter-codes of civility than those espoused by Egyptian nationalism, it ought to be seen as something that is so imbricated with it that it becomes part of the

¹⁴⁸ Ansari, Hamed. *Egypt, the Stalled Society*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986, 398.

¹⁴⁹ Brubaker, 8.

phenomenon of Egyptian nationalism.¹⁵⁰ Religious values are thus seen as constitutive of modes of social organization and identity formation in Egypt. The positionality of religious discourse among residents in 'Ain el-Sira is discussed in the following analysis.

Situating Religious Discourse in 'Ain el-Sira

The proliferation of religious symbols and modes of religious identification in 'Ain el-Sira can be seen through a number of developments in the neighborhood. For instance, according to the older residents of the neighborhood, but who continue to visit till the present day, argue that there has been a visible increase in the number of mosques in the area. In contrast to the decrepit state of residential buildings and public facilities, the mosques were of the few spaces in the neighborhood that received attention from residents, Islamic charity groups, as well as from the Egyptian state. The state-controlled mosque in 'Ain el-Sira, which belongs to the Ministry of Endowments, is routinely maintained and kept in good shape. The new mosques that have been built had either been locally funded or constructed by the efforts of Islamic associations. More than just a place for prayer, mosques provided religious lessons and acted as spaces for young men and women to meet and engage with matters of religion and piety and their place in everyday modern life. Mosques, as such, act as spaces in which religio-cultural frames of belonging become part of the process of articulation of subjectivities.¹⁵¹

Another particularly subtle symbol of religious identification are the small blue placards placed on the entrances of most apartment buildings that appeared in the early 1990s. With the words *al-Islam howa al-hall* ("Islam is the solution"), the Muslim Brotherhood's slogan repetitively yet

¹⁵⁰ Ismail, Salwa. "Authoritarian Government, Neoliberalism and Everyday Civilities in Egypt." *Third World Quarterly* 32.5 (2011), 19.

¹⁵¹ Ismail, 16

subtly appears around the neighborhood. As I have come to learn through discussions with residents, most residents were unaware of the context of this slogan prior to the January 25 revolution and the placards appeared to be just another form of some voluntary effort toward furthering the resonance of Islamic teachings through daily reminders.

Another important Islamic association in the neighborhood that had played a role in mainstreaming Islamic references in the neighborhood is that of *al-jam'eyya al-shar'eyya* (JS). Funded through donors from the wealthy countries of the Gulf, the building of the JS mosque was built across from the state-owned mosque, in a powerful standoff between the two.¹⁵² The JS offers an extensive program of action that can be divided into *da'wa* (religious awareness) and aid services.¹⁵³ Those include provision of religion classes and lectures, basic food and school supplies, day-care center services, free medical aid and discount trips for *'umra* and *hajj*, to name a few.¹⁵⁴

Although officially an apolitical, service oriented, non-governmental organization, the JS was arguably closely associated with the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁵⁵ Links between it and the Brotherhood before the revolution, however, were unknown to the majority of residents I spoke to, even though the Islamic nature of the JS was recognizable to them. In fact, most residents, old and new, report that the presence and popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood had always been low in the neighborhood. And although many have engaged with Islamic charities and associations of different kinds, the majority of their engagements with these centers were not premised on knowledge of, or association with, organized Islamic groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. For instance, many of those interviewed had expressed their preference in dealing

¹⁵² Menza, 85

¹⁵³ Menza, 92

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

¹⁵⁵ Ibid

with the JS in order to address their daily needs and concerns, mainly because they were more efficient in their services and conveniently located close to their residence, rather than because of political or ideological links with the organization. It is true that the combination of Islamic discourse with that of local development and aid had indeed helped in garnering moral legitimacy to these kinds of Islamic associations. However, the point here is to emphasize the relatively depoliticized nature of engagements with Islamic associations as experienced by residents of the neighborhood.

The extent to which contending Islamic forces, namely the Muslim Brotherhood, have been able to successfully gain the support and mobilize residents of the working class neighborhood of 'Ain el-Sira ought to be read in light of the spaces of power sharing and inclusion imagined by residents under the new regime. As mentioned above, although a conservative community that is imbricated in the propagation of Islamic modes of civility, ordinary residents' relations to organized political Islamic groups seem to have been limited. This largely seems to have been due to lack of knowledge about groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and their political history, which many only became aware of after the January 25 revolution. This is a significant factor that points to the lack of presence of the Muslim Brotherhood as an ideological popular movement in the neighborhood. The Muslim Brotherhood and their networks of relations did not seem to be a part of residents' daily social, political and economic engagements, nor were they part of the interest groups and power relations that have been established over the years in the neighborhood.

As such, two points need to be made about the position of the Muslim Brotherhood within Egyptian nationalist discourse. An ideological movement in the first instance, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to power brought with it new and contending power relations, whilst

framing the question of national identity within a specific and clearly delineated ideological framework. That is, ideological assimilation was experienced as a prerequisite to inclusion within the new regime's modes of power-sharing. As discussed in the previous chapter, the power of ideologies as mobilizing nationalist forces greatly differed among rulers, and mainly depended on the social and political popularity of its advocates and proponents. This brings us to the second point: the idea that the networks and groups of power within which the Islamic organization operated were experienced as part of distinctly different and as such, "unpatriotic" circles, as explored through residents' anecdotes in the next chapter. The identity of the new rulers thus appeared to fall outside the nationalist claim to shared identity and equal inclusion. The bases on which inclusion and belonging were conceptualized under the Muslim Brotherhood seemed more limited and exclusionary, especially when compared to the fluidity of personal relations through which inclusion and power-sharing could be negotiated under Mubarak, where ideological assimilation was not required. Therefore, in order to situate the relationship constructed between national belonging and Islam in 'Ain el-Sira, it is critical to differentiate between the place of Islam in residents' everyday lives, in contrast to the ways in which it was presented by the Muslim Brotherhood, as an exclusive field of power.

Conclusion

The advent of the January 25 revolution has brought issues of national identity, political Islam and opportunities for representation between them, to the fore. However, as noted in discussions with residents, the neighborhood of 'Ain el Sira had been relatively uninvolved in the protests. As Saeed, a senior worker in a car repair shop, argued, "The time of the events of the revolution was a very uncertain time for us, even though most of us welcomed the fall of Mubarak's corrupt

regime. We had hopes for things to change for the better but none of the people I know joined in the protests.”¹⁵⁶

The relative disinterest expressed by residents toward political participation is not surprising given their general detachment from ideological politics and formal political participation. As Bayat argues about non-movements in neoliberal cities, “Non-movements [are] concerned more with practice than protest, [oriented] toward action rather than being ideologically driven.”

Therefore, this chapter focused on the specificities of social organization and some of the everyday practices of the “non-movements” in ’Ain el-Sira. In doing so, it sheds light on some of the banal spaces through which popular constructions of national belonging and inclusion develop in one of Cairo’s working class urban neighborhoods. In doing so, banal everyday interactions become situated as discursive spaces through which citizens come to recognize, as well as re-organize, the limits of inclusion in the national community and their positions within its power bases. Interactions and familiarity with local state personnel act as some of these popular banal spaces, highlighting the informal and individualized power relations that have developed among national authorities and citizens of the community as a mode of recognition within the national project.

This chapter has also argued for a differentiation between religion as a normality in residents’ everyday lives, and between experiencing it as an exclusive field of power under the Muslim Brotherhood. The positionality of the Muslim Brotherhood within the discourse of national belonging in the neighborhood was observed through two aspects. First, the general level of ignorance regarding the existence of the organization and its power as a contending political force prior to the January 25 revolution has allowed some of its affiliate institutions to exist

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Saeed.

without much resistance. As such, it seemed that little or no ideological attachments with the organization seemed to have existed among residents during that period prior to the January 25 revolution.

In addition, and this is the second aspect, the absence of familiarity and networks of interest among residents and the power bases of the Muslim Brotherhood have further complicated the latter's integration in the community. The Muslim Brotherhood's absence from local forms of social organization and networks of interest in the community has situated them as foreign and unfamiliar groups, threatening already-established channels of power-sharing and cooperation. More so, their religious narrative lost its mobilizing resonance as it came into contact with local forms of social organization and local power groups. Therefore, informal power relations and the differentiated modes of inclusion into the national project, becomes the focus of understanding the limits of Muslim rule in 'Ain el-Sira.

Informal power relations are critical in understanding the differentiated channels through which sentiments of national belonging and inclusiveness within the national project become constructed through local everyday interactions. The next chapter will explore, through residents' anecdotes, some of the ways in which residents formulated their positions toward the Muslim Brotherhood as they engaged in local power struggles over inclusion and equality within the new national project.

Negotiating the limits of Nationalism under the Muslim Brotherhood's Rule: Voices from 'Ain El-Sira

Ain Al Sira's public life is the main focus of this chapter. Public life in this work is imagined as a conceptual category that would aid in capturing conceptions of belonging in their fleeting and incorporeal forms.¹⁵⁷ Public life in our case encompasses residents' interactions with one another and with bodies of the state. By focusing on the nature of relations created among members of the community, it becomes possible to delineate instances in which residents negotiate the limits of inclusion and belonging in the neighborhood. Additionally, relations created between residents and bodies of the state reveal some of the spaces in which inclusion in the national project and recognition of the national authority, is negotiated and expressed on the local level.

¹⁵⁷ Navaro-Yashin, Yael. *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2002, 3.

This chapter specifically focuses on residents' experiences with the local practices of the Muslim Brotherhood during their year-long rule. Residents' engagement with the practices of the Muslim Brotherhood, reveal discursive spaces in which impressions of the new national leader and his nationalist discourse, become constructed on multiple references, other than religion. More so, residents' increasing opposition to the rule of the new Islamic authority, is analyzed as part of the creative processes of imagining the nation, constructing the limits of national belonging from a local perspective. The discussion thus moves away from positing nationalism against religion and instead attempts to deconstruct the references along which modes of national belonging are negotiated and experienced within social relations operating at the level of everyday public life. The chapter will begin with an interview with one resident of 'Ain el-Sira, whose views make clear some of the nuances and references along which nationalism is conceptualized.

Understanding Residents' Conceptions of the State and the Nation

Rasha, a 28 year-old volunteer at the center whom I've met during the time I spent there is also a schoolteacher. She talks about her understanding of nationalism and the references according to which 'belonging' to the nation is expressed. Her words serve as a line of thought to be followed in capturing the 'how' of national belonging for some residents of the area. When asked what the term *wataniyya* -meaning nationalism- meant to her, Rasha argues that "nationalism is difficult to decipher, as different people, some of which she may consider to be corrupt and self-interested national figures, identify themselves as nationalists as much as do revolutionary and opposition figures"¹⁵⁸. She argues that nationalism has less to do with the abstract idea of the nation, and more to do with the people that reside in it and the things they do

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Rasha

to better their country. “What is Egypt without its people?” She asks. “Egypt lies not in the sentiments one has towards its symbolic events and historical structures, such as the Pyramids of Giza or the 1973 war”. Her imagination of Egypt is rather implicated with its people; the community which makes it up. Additionally, Rasha’s words expose an overlapping of two concepts; those of nation and state. She asserts that it becomes difficult to discuss national sentiments, when the contours of the *state* are yet to be defined. For her, nationalism can only flourish and become discernible when the state makes itself apparent through provision of services, be them security-related, medical, infrastructural or educational. She states that it is because of the lack of these provisions that so many young people have lost faith in their nation and opted to move abroad and move elsewhere. She argues that the absence of the basic role of the state, which is to protect and provide for its citizens, makes it farcical to speak of national sentiments.

Although Rasha’s words may evoke resonance with the discourse of citizenship; that is citizenship entitlements which range from economic security to the right of political participation, as well as individual rights of speech, faith and property, it is important to point out some of the variations and expansions to the discourse of citizenship in this study.¹⁵⁹ That is, instead of limiting our understanding of residents’ notions of belonging to that of citizenship practices, this work aims to expand the parameters of this conceptualization to go beyond the western-oriented categories of the citizenship discourse. The point is rather to expand the issues of inclusion and belonging to include the micro-scale, often invisible processes which make possible the attainment of rights and needs within a faltering welfare system. That is, acquiescing to the idea that residents simply do not enjoy most of their citizenship rights certainly overlooks

¹⁵⁹ See Marshall, T. H., and T. B. Bottomore. *Citizenship and Social Class*. London: Pluto Press, 1992.

the nuances related to the differences between “entitlement” and “empowerment”.¹⁶⁰ Utilizing the discourse of citizenship in the case of ‘Ain el-Sira draws an image where residents lack their entitled rights. However, in doing so, it also overlooks the local and original processes and negotiations - the spaces of local forms of agency - which essentially shape residents’ efforts at securing their needs. Such processes entail a sense of empowerment and agency which are not reflected in the discourse on citizenship. More so, the idea of citizenship becomes more complicated in a non-democratic setting, particularly in Egypt where the terms of the social contract between state and citizens has continued to falter, particularly during Mubarak’s thirty years rule and as such, the parameters of citizenship entitlements appear to vary along time and across social classes and locales, becoming more arbitrary and subjective. Although citizenship discourses may be useful in understanding and expressing the status of members of a local community, this work argues for a broader articulation of the processes which make possible the attainment or loss of citizenship rights, those which are intricately related to an understanding of the local and informal relations established between members of the community and the ruling regime.

Rasha’s words are particularly telling of the neo-liberal economic policies that have been introduced under Mubarak, which signaled the retraction of the state from the market, but also coupled with an inefficient and over-burdened bureaucracy and state resources, leading to mass discontent over the performance of Mubarak’s government. But Rasha’s words are also telling of some of the ways in which the nation (*El watan*) and the state (*El dawla*) can be read in terms of one another. In one way, her words express an intrinsic link between the two, whereby the efforts

¹⁶⁰ Gupta, 21

of the state are seen as the main building blocks for any sentiments of patriotism or nationalism to flourish. Other romanticized or emotive expressions of national sentiment, she argues, are empty expressions, void of any real affect. As such, her understanding of nationalism hinges on the *performative* aspects of statehood and governance. That is, the ways in which the state performs on an everyday level in securing the needs of its population, That is, not only does Rasha express a dismissal of romanticized images of the nation, but she also links notions of national belonging to the more mundane, day-to-day interactions with the many faces of the state, such as through the provision of different service including maintaining security in the area and responding to citizens' complaints and day to day livelihood problems.

Rasha's words however, also reflect a sentiment of detachment from the efforts of the state, as something that she does not experience or enjoy in her everyday life, and something she can do little to effect. It becomes a problematic that lies outside her reach and control, yet one that infiltrates her personal undertakings in the most powerful ways. It is within the spaces between her own understandings of the nation and her daily experiences within it, that Rasha locates discursive spaces in which the nation is constructed. Her words allows for a shift away from macro-view analyses that focus largely on the political sphere of nationalism. In her book, *Faces of the State*, Yael Navaro-Yashin argues that the sphere of national politics has already been repeatedly critiqued by everyday citizens. That is, processes of political critique and deconstruction should no longer be seen as the job of politicians and intellectuals. The seeming result is that the 'political' continues to exist, surviving its own deconstruction, and so it becomes more useful to focus on different levels of analyses for understanding citizens'

constructions of nationalism and the nation, specifically through understanding negotiations around power disparities operating on the level of everyday state-society practices.¹⁶¹

Situating Political Ideologies in the Neighborhood

The conceptual framework from which Rasha speaks appears to be distant and detached from any identifiable political ideology. Her work with Al Geel center (to which we will shortly turn) has allowed her to engage with many of the intellectuals, artists and activists that frequent it, exposing her to numerous political debates and the wide array of individual opinions that become discernable within them. However, Rasha's position as resident of the neighborhood as well as worker in the center gives her a unique position. That is, she is part of both spaces in which the nation is experienced through daily struggles, and one in which it is discussed as a more abstract object of debate. On speaking with her about her own ideological orientation, Rasha clearly demonstrates a conscious disassociation with any specific political ideologies. She describes political ideologies such as liberalism as imported from the west, ineffectual, sometimes harmful, when dealing with the troubles of Egyptian society. She also argues that the stunted growth of the socialist movement in Egypt is due to the radicalness of its members and their detachment from the real needs of society, arguing that their methods are irrelevant to the needs of the Egyptian people.¹⁶² However, Rasha proceeds to express her desire in seeing a "truly Egyptian" ideology and a "truly Egyptian" political party that can sustain it, one that can encompass the nature of the Egyptian people and help bring them together, rather than divide them. "We need something that has the freedom values of liberalism", she says, "but with a respect to the basic Islamic values of society. We could use the values of equality in socialism but by seeing what the

¹⁶¹ Navaro-Yashin, 4.

¹⁶² Interview with Rasha

people really need.”¹⁶³ Rasha’s description of ideology emanates from her position as resident of the neighborhood and as such, it is a description implicated in the specific material and moral needs of her own community. Her position does not entail a break away from the discourse of political ideologies in their totality, she rather re-situates their frames of meaning through local understandings of the role of the state. Ideology becomes imagined, not as emanating from a loyalty to certain universal principles or values, but rather as a necessary governing framework for local Egyptian needs and aspirations. The majority of residents I spoke with also harbored feelings of indifference towards subscribing to any of the political ideologies mentioned above. Their impressions of political parties were largely negative and many disregarded the idea of joining as pointless, and irrelevant to their needs. Residents’ lack of concern with politico-ideological loyalties however, bring into view alternative references for the creation of nationalist loyalties and the construction of national subjectivities. That is, the space of the “political” becomes broader and more fluid, allowing everyday mundane acts to be seen as generative mobilizing forces. The task at hand therefore entails a process of “tracing the political” through discursive acts of meaning-making, rather than situating it in one or multiple domains.¹⁶⁴

The following sections will explore some of the sites through which varying associations with the national authority are constructed. These spaces uncover power relations that are central to residents’ understandings of inclusion within the national project and among the national community. Residents’ attitudes towards the authority of the Muslim Brotherhood is seen as an example of the fluid processes of identity formation and national belonging that takes place through everyday community life. They also signal to the different references along which

¹⁶³ Interview with Rasha.

¹⁶⁴ Navaro-Yashin, 15.

residents engage the politics of nationalism at times of transitions, such as during and after the twelve months in which the Muslim Brotherhood were in power. The influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the neighborhood is first analyzed through its interactions with Al Geel center, demonstrating ways in which frustration with the Brotherhood's rule had simultaneously been expressed through a reaffirmation of local social relations and residents' belonging to other modes of power and social and political collectivities.

The case of Markaz Al Geel: Creating and Shaping Local Community

Al Geel Youth Center, (meaning center of the Generation) was established in 1994 by the late Ahmed Abdallah Rozza, a popular activist and resident of the neighborhood. The acclaimed leftist is considered a 'son' of the neighborhood. His role and legacy in leading the student movement of the 70s and 80s is recalled by all those who know him. One of 'Abdallah's life-long goals had been to increase the spaces available for the inclusion and participation of Egyptian youth and young adults in political and cultural life. The center was thus established as an educational and research center where children and young adults from the neighborhood could learn new skills, explore their individual hobbies and potentials, and can access alternative spaces of knowledge through the center's library which continues to harbor diverse Arabic novels and publications. Acting as the cultural, artistic and political hub of the neighborhood of Al Geel center will be explored through its acting as a space of identity struggles as the Muslim Brotherhood gained control over it.

The way in which Al Geel performs its role within the neighborhood does not include providing materially for residents. One of the reasons behind this is the scarcity of consistent funding. Consequently, the center has always run on members donations. Additionally, Abdallah's vision rested in differentiating between the cultural activities of Al Geel and between those charitable

institutions whose role is limited to short term material aid to impoverished families of the neighborhood. However, Al Geel's dissociation from the popular activities of charity has meant that a cultural research center like this one becomes faced with the difficulty of attracting and maintaining solid members and a social following. Yet, despite these hardships, Al Geel has continued to exist for the last 20 years. The center had been under 'Abdallah's direct management since its establishment in 1994 and until his death in 2006, though this does not mean that he unilaterally ran the space. As explained by Ayman, a 30 year-old resident in 'Ain Al Sira, a political activist and volunteer at the center, that it is perhaps due to 'Abdallah's beliefs in shared management, and his delegation of responsibilities and tasks that the center managed to survive following his departure.¹⁶⁵ Focusing his efforts on the children and youth of the neighborhood, the center became a popular space for them to meet especially during national holidays and religious events such as the month of Ramadan when group iftars and performances are held by the center. In many ways, the center shaped up as a space for imagining alternative modes of "being" in public life. 'Abdallah's mission was focused on providing young adults with the necessary leadership skills to help them in their own individual paths¹⁶⁶. In fact, many of those who carried on running the space are residents from 'Ain el Sira who grew up learning at the center. That is, over time, Al Geel had managed to create a community around it, fostering friendly ties with residents and neighbors, cementing its presence as a familiar part of the locality of 'Ain Al Sira.

In her work in *Al Zawya Al Hamra*, Farha Ghannam describes the familiarity between residents of a specific locality as often helpful in procuring and safeguarding social capital, which to its

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Ayman

¹⁶⁶ This observation was made as I explored the center's library. Among the many books, newspapers and archived articles, research and analyses on youth empowerment and civic engagement were the most dominant themes. Most of those publications were Ahmed 'Abdallah's own work, published over the course of his life.

end, facilitates mutual understanding as well as the formation of social relationships.¹⁶⁷ During a talk with Al Hagg Yasser, son of the owner of the *'ahwa* that one must pass by to get to the entrance to the center, he mentions that those working in the center are *'ahl el mante'a* (meaning historically belonging to the neighborhood), and are well known to the people. Al Hagg Yasser's position within the power relations of the neighborhood are important to our understanding of the survival of the center as it becomes controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood. Al Hagg Yasser's family are fish tradesmen and they established their *kar* (their career or occupation) thirty five years ago in 'Ain el-Sira. But now his and his father's *kar* is this coffee shop, which is one of the oldest and biggest in the area, built twenty years ago. His uncle is also one of the most famous drug dealers in the neighborhood, and he is regarded as a powerful and well-connected man. El Hagg Yasser's family enjoys significant weight in the neighborhood, given their occupational positions and the networks of relations they have constructed along the years. In explaining his attitude towards the center, Al Hagg Yasser explains his father was a good friend with the late 'Abdallah and that everyone at the coffee shop are on good terms with the people working there. "Even those visitors who come to the center", he says, "are treated as if they belong to the place, because we know what kind of people they are and who they're coming to visit."¹⁶⁸ Merchants and residents living around the center have grown familiar with those who work there and frequent it, and rarely does one witness feuds or disagreements among them. It is possible to see from conversations with residents the importance of gaining knowledge on others, as it enables them to best "place" one another.¹⁶⁹ Perhaps it is this familiarity and amicability with residents of the neighborhood, particularly with the local notables such as Al-Hagg Yasser's family, which

¹⁶⁷ Ghannam, Farha. *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, 80.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Hagg Yasser

¹⁶⁹ Ghannam, 80.

had secured the center's position in the area. This idea of gaining knowledge about others will also prove to be central in understanding residents' reactions to the increased presence of the Muslim Brotherhood in other locations in the neighborhood.

Al-Geel Center between the State and the Nation

The spaces of Al Geel center had been rented out from *Gam'iyyit tanmiyyit el mogtama'* (The Association for Community Development), which is a state-owned charity institution in 'Ain Al Sira. Residents' discussions of the center always entailed an emphasis on its link with the Association for Community Development. This kind of association had seemingly furthered a sense of familiarity and legitimacy for the center's presence in the area. It is clear from discussions that associating the center with one of the representative bodies of the state helps in giving it more legitimacy, allowing its presence to be viewed as unthreatening. Many also relayed that they feel they can always resort to the Association for Community development- whose building is right next to the center's- in the incident that troubles from the center may arise¹⁷⁰. Antagonism between residents and members of the center however, had never taken place until the Muslim Brotherhood took control of the space, an incident to which we will shortly turn. It is important to note however, that the center did not follow a statist agenda, its owner a revolutionary figure and highly critical of many aspects of the governing regime and the center's library harbored numerous analytically critical publications on social and political issues in the country. The center did however, embrace a clear nationalist identity, as per the nationalist orientation of its owner Ahmed 'Abdallah and in the sense that its efforts were constantly expressed as geared towards the advancement of the future generations of the nation. Educating children in the history of Egyptian music, theatre and literature, the center often hosted poetry

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Al Hagg Yasser.

recitals and music performances adapted from the productions of Salah Jaheen and Sayyid Mekkawi, two of Egypt's most popular artists, known for their composition of nationalist songs and poetry, as well as their own involvement in the political debates and national events under Nasser¹⁷¹ The networks of relations implicated around Al Geel allow us to see the identity lines along which the center continued to operate. The political developments that took place in the center during Mohammed Morsi's presidency bring such nuances to the fore.

Changes in the Management of Al Geel

In order to better situate the ways in which residents experience and express lines of social- as well as national- belonging, it is best to take a look at one particular incident that has taken place during the Muslim Brotherhood's assuming of power in 2012. After 'Abdallah's death, ownership of the center was first passed on to his mother in 2006, making her the legal owner of the space. Active about maintaining 'Abdallah's legacy and in furthering his message, 'Om Ahmed ensured that the place remained open and in operation through closely keeping up with 'Abdallah's friends, colleagues and students; those who were actively involved in operating the space. In fact, the center successfully maintained its activities in the years in which she had lived.¹⁷² It was after the death of 'Abdallah's mother that legal ownership of the center was passed on to his nephew, Nabil. Known for his religious views, Nabil's influence over the center would become more apparent as the Muslim Brotherhood rose to power in Egypt in June 2012. Both a member of the Brotherhood and enjoying legal rights in the center, Nabil was able to make changes regarding the nature of activities provided by the center. According to Reda, one

¹⁷¹ Enter information on Salah Jaheen and Sayyid Mekkawi.

¹⁷² Interview with Omar and Reda

of those most active members in maintaining and running the space and a close friend and student of the late ‘Abdallah, the changes that took place in the center in the year the Muslim Brotherhood assumed power, were catastrophic and quite radically different from Abdallah’s vision. For instance, cultural and artistic activities came to an almost complete halt. According to stories told by members, Nabil had never been involved with the center, nor with the people running it before ‘Abdallah’s death. He had objected to most of the activities curated by the center as they fell outside his own ethical and moral views. Mixed-gender activities were halted, and the center began to operate with a focus on charitable activities. All in all, Nabil’s approach to community development was religiously and politically driven. He gave access to the space to groups who would have never, and did not, subscribe to the late ‘Abdallah’s vision of youth empowerment and who found the space better utilized in other ways. For instance, it was discovered that Nabil had been allowing members of the Muslim Brotherhood, among groups from other charitable organizations, full use of the space to carry out personal meetings or to use for other operations such as giving out food supplies¹⁷³ These activities were seen by ‘Abdallah’s colleagues, as a way for the Muslim Brotherhood to establish a better footing and following in the neighborhood.¹⁷⁴ And in a complete dismissal of its founder’s legacy, a large-sized banner carrying a new name for the center, was put up, ignoring the fact that the center already had a name. These changes were noticed by local residents who identified the new management as part of groups that they had no connections with. Lack of proper management on behalf of those originally running the place, have in part, allowed for the take-over of the center. But it was also that this kind of radical and flagrant take-over was unexpected, says Reda, and the short-lived take-over was possible through gradual infiltration.

¹⁷³ Interview with Omar

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Omar and Reda

The Muslim Brotherhood's abrasive take-over of Al Geel center had in fact mobilized some of the local residents, headed by Al-Hagg Yasser's family, against them, culminating in an attack on the center two months before the June 30th protests took over the nation. After a false rumor had somehow spread that members of the Brotherhood were storing weapons in the center, neighborhood residents took it upon themselves to chase the Brotherhood out of the space. And even after realizing there was no truth to the circulating rumor, many insisted on their stances, and in fact members of the Brotherhood were physically and aggressively driven out of the center and have not attempted a return since. This incident eludes to the centrality of the forces of knowledge and familiarity among residents in the neighborhoods and the extent to which the Muslim Brotherhood's presence in the area was implicated in already-existing local power relations and social structures. The exclusionary practices of the Brotherhood as seen by their way of running the center are only one of the ways in which their presence had set in motion local rejections of their rule, setting in motion nationalist demands for the take-over of the Military.

Situating the Muslim Brotherhood: Voices from the Neighborhood

The appearance of the Muslim Brotherhood as the official political authority in June 2012 had brought with it debates about the modes of national loyalty that a religious organization would bring to its practice of power. The more frequent and nuanced usages of the language of political Islam by the Muslim Brotherhood, brought into view the ways in which they positioned themselves within the nationalist discourse. At one point during my fieldwork, one of the residents spoke of his aversion against the Muslim Brotherhood by arguing that they resembled a different *tayfa* (sect or denomination) than the rest of Egyptians. Another worker at the coffee shop, Hamed, recalled the violent break-up of a peaceful sit-in in front of the *ittihadiya* palace on

the fifth of December, 2012, commenting on the use of violence against peaceful protestors, he said that with the brotherhood, *mane'rafsh akherhom eh*, meaning we do not know to which lengths the Brotherhood may go in clamping down on the people¹⁷⁵. The lack of conceivable limits to state power due to lack of familiarity with the Muslim Brotherhood, created an imaginary where social life under the brotherhood's rule, was risky and unpredictable, as it remained within the realms of the unfamiliar, yet one which has also been disclosed as prone to the use of violence and oppression. Another resident argued that the brotherhood was after what was best for its "people", what he called *maslahet el gama'a*. In his reference to *al-gama'a*, he was pointing to the heads and leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as to the broader social groups that are loyal to it, and identify with it. These groups are simultaneously acknowledged and identified by the Muslim Brotherhood as 'of them', or belonging to them. In his public speeches, Mohammed Morsi did not hesitate to repeatedly use the words *ahli wa 'asheerati*¹⁷⁶, in addressing the people, or what seemed to be, the Muslim Brotherhood's supporters. The national discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood, experienced through Morsi's public speeches and statements made by members of the organization about silencing all forms of opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood, had exposed the Egyptian public to what was experienced, as a powerful exclusionary discourse, one which set the Muslim Brotherhood apart from the national community. For many residents, it appeared that the Muslim Brotherhood's interests lay outside of their own social circles and local power relations, and were geared instead towards the groups

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Shedin, coffee shop worker.

¹⁷⁶ A historically unfamiliar term to be used by Egyptian leaders, the term *'asheera*, often translated to mean extended family or clan, sits uncomfortably with the values of the modern national community which situates its unity and connection beyond familial, clan-based and tribal relations. The use of the term *'asheera* also insinuates a plurality of clans, and thus imposes a kind of difference or disassociation from other non-clan members. In the case of Egypt, Morsi's use of the term implied that he was addressing his own people; members and those loyal to the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood, and thus understood to be set apart from the Egyptian population as a whole.

and constituencies that have pledged loyalty to the organization. Groups which residents were not a part of, as we will see examples of.

Constructing Community Boundaries: The Politics of Recognition

Residents of the neighborhood imagine themselves to be part of social orders and networks of belonging that gradually became more visibly different from that of the Brotherhood's. For example, Rasha argues that the politics and social norms of the neighborhood were not influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood's coming to power. *Ihna 'andina nezamna*, "we have our own order", she argued, and no outsider can enforce their own rules onto the residents of the neighborhood.¹⁷⁷ Describing the Muslim Brotherhood as "outsiders" entails a framing of the organization as one which does not share the same modes of belonging with residents and whose existence as part of the social structure of the area is weak. She continues to argue that residents living in nearby quarters have grown familiar with one another, and can easily spot outsiders and changes in the behavior of their neighbors. She describes groups of young men from the neighborhood that had quickly converted to following the Muslim Brotherhood after their victory; growing their beards, attending their rallies, and generally expressing support to them. Many of those were considered "opportunistic supporters" by residents of the neighborhood and their transformation was not taken seriously by people. They were often even laughed at and made a mockery of.¹⁷⁸ The politics of recognition within the neighborhood are of important analytical value as they set the limits for the influence of emerging power groups as they become understood along the references of local familiarity and recognition specific to the locale.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Rasha

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

Locality, as Arjun Appadurai reminds us, is an inherently fragile social achievement.¹⁷⁹ Locality in this sense, “is a structure of feeling, a material reality and an attachment to a particular community” (Singerman, Ammar, 2006; 253). It is about physical and emotional processes that must be recreated and reinforced in everyday life. The politics of recognition, as such, are to be seen as the creative and generative political forces of the locale.

I argue that precisely these spaces of recognition are of a significant importance in turning respondents from the neighborhood against the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood. As many respondents mentioned -in what appeared to be common knowledge- that a number of the “thugs” that were used by the Muslim Brotherhood in the violent break-up of the presidential palace sit in on December 5th, were residents of ‘Ain Al Sira.¹⁸⁰ “We recognized them when we saw them on television,” explains Amin, a regular at the *ahwa*. “Some of those thugs are convicts and known in the area. We even just learned that one of them has been sentenced to two years in prison”.¹⁸¹ Amin proceeded to state that “we understood what kind of people the Muslim Brotherhood was recruiting; convicts, and poor people that could be bought off by material promises”.

The social groups which were seen as supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood, had been drawn out, recognized and framed by residents, as “others”; be them criminals, convicts, bought-out religious men, extremists or power-hungry politicians. Through residents’ words, it becomes possible to see how the Brotherhood itself had been externalized as a body of authority that was seen as operating within different interest groups and relations of power; uninterested in an inclusive nationalism. Escalating feelings of foreignness to the Muslim Brotherhood, residents’

¹⁷⁹ Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. 1. Vol. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, 179.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Amin

externalization from its political community and base of supporters, also obscured potentials for creating relations with the organization. This is the next point to which we will turn.

Understanding Changing Attitudes towards the Muslim Brotherhood

The ascendance of the Muslim Brotherhood to power was differently received at different times. In the period during the parliamentary elections of 2012, many residents in the area were ready to support candidates of the FJP. Mohamed, 27, a resident of ‘Ain Al Sira, argues that most of the people in the neighborhood were eager to give their votes to the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). We thought their religiosity and *iltizam* could bring better chances for pious governance.¹⁸² Members and campaigners appeared in the neighborhood and began offering ways to help people, especially the poorer families in the neighborhood, often by providing them with money and food rations¹⁸³ Hagg Yasser explains that him and his wife used to love watching preacher *Sobhi Saleh*¹⁸⁴ speak on his talk show before the Muslim Brotherhood “became known”¹⁸⁵. He also says that he used to advise his family members and friends to vote for the FJP during the parliamentary elections of 2012. He proceeds to comment however, that himself and others, were unaware that the FJP and the Muslim Brotherhood represented two sides of the same coin. “We did not know they were the same thing” says Hagg Yasser. And many of the poor and illiterate residents here had the same impression when the Islamic group first started coming to campaign in the neighborhood. Through powerful media campaigns, the Muslim Brotherhood became increasingly framed as an organization that was intending on social

¹⁸² Interview with Mohammed, frequent coffee shop visitor and resident of the neighborhood.

¹⁸³ Ibid

¹⁸⁴ Sobhi Saleh is a lawyer and active member of the Muslim Brotherhood who had repetitively voiced his anti-Mubarak views through television shows and articles. He gained much popularity after the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood, gaining enough voices to become a member of the 2012 parliament.

¹⁸⁵ El-Hagg Yasser; eluding to the fact he didn’t know about the Muslim Brotherhood, but had only knowledge of the dangers and risks related to extremist groups.

and political projects detrimental to the security of the Egyptian nation. On realizing that their religious identity was linked to a much more politicized organization, many residents became weary of the politics of the Brotherhood. Television sensation, Tawfik Okhasha, was cited by Hagg Yasser as one of the people that had “awoken” him and his family to the dangers of the Muslim Brotherhood, but he argues that they were also able to see their tactics first hand in their own circles.¹⁸⁶ The fall in the appeal of the Brotherhood is described by respondents through a number of personal incidents taking place at the level of the everyday.

Processes of Exclusion

On asking him what made him feel antagonized by the Muslim Brotherhood, Hagg Yasser proceeds to describe the incident of the state-owned bakery down the street that came to be controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood, catering to the needs of members of the organization. “The Minister of Internal Trade at the time, was himself a member of the Brotherhood”, says Hagg Yasser, and he had ordered that 5000 loaves of bread to be taken to the offices of the FJP every morning, to be distributed to members of the organization.¹⁸⁷ Hagg Yasser’s narrative did not differ from those told by other respondents, such as workshop owners and coffee shop visitors, when asked about the operations of the neighborhood bakery. Others recalled that the same was being done in the butane gas cylinder warehouse in the neighborhood, amidst a nationwide energy distribution crisis. More so, Wael, 30, a regular at the coffee shop, recalled how he had been forced to leave the company in which he has worked for eight years, when the Muslim brotherhood came to power and bought shares into it. His and others’ dismissal was to make room for new appointments from within the Brotherhood.¹⁸⁸ Residents’ stories show one of the

¹⁸⁶ Interview with el-Hagg Yasser

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Wael

ways in which members of the community experienced externalization from the interests and power networks of the Muslim Brotherhood. Their exclusion from the Brotherhood's social and political community was also directly affecting their daily livelihoods.

The changes in attitudes towards the Muslim Brotherhood are telling. First, they show that the significance of religiosity, as a value in and of itself, does not continue to supersede all other identity markers, but one that changes according to local needs. The advantage enjoyed by the Muslim Brotherhood due to their self-acclaimed religiosity and piety, gradually waned as residents increasingly engaged with the local practices of the new regime, which were experienced as exclusionary and unequal. The appeal of the Muslim Brotherhood based on its upholding of religious values did not in fact, ensure its survival, as religion continued to occupy normalized spaces in popular and national discourse independent from the body of the Brotherhood. In her work on the politics of conservatism in Egypt, Egyptian sociologist Hania Sholkamy describes the public life of religion in Egypt as having seeped into everyday modes of governmentality and subject-making. Egyptian media for instance, shows no shortage of religious content, no president came to power who did not publicly and systematically use religious symbols and frames of reference and engage in promoting religious institutions. There has hardly been any absence of religious scholarship and observance within Egyptian society.¹⁸⁹ In many cases, arbitrators of social conflicts and disputes are religious scholars, or popular religious figures.¹⁹⁰ Thinking of Egyptian society along divisions between revivalist piety and liberal secularism is therefore, futile and fruitless¹⁹¹. Most of the young people in Egypt hold to

¹⁸⁹ Ibid

¹⁹⁰ Sholkamy, Hania. "Creating Conservatism or Emancipating Subjects? On the Narrative of Islamic Observance in Egypt." *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin* 42.1 (2011), 49.

¹⁹¹ Schielke, Samuli. "Ambivalent Commitments: Troubles of Morality, Religiosity and Aspiration among Young Egyptians." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39 (2009), 161.

something of both, with different degrees and at different times.¹⁹² That religion exists as part of everyday political, social and economic life means that its modes of reference change according to situational needs. The question thus becomes, not about the place of religion as a “simple...and homogenized package”¹⁹³, but about the specificities of the practices of an Islamic authority and its intersection with community relations and interest groups. Understanding attitudes towards the Muslim Brotherhood is thus telling of the ways in which the values of nationalism, national belonging and equality among members of the nation, are re-appropriated and understood by local residents, through every day happenings in a neighborhood like ‘Ain el-Sira.

I argue that these transformations in attitudes also reveal antagonistic social predispositions towards politically and ideologically identifiable nationalist projects. The fact that the Muslim Brotherhood as ruling party, identified with an ideologically recognizable mode of rule- that of political Islam- had resulted in antagonizing many groups from readily subscribing to their project. This is particularly true as the discourse on political Islam had historically been tied with national security fears and regional power conspiracies. For instance, one electronic store owner, *al-hajj* Magdy, describes a phase of his life a few years back in which he was *multazim*, spending a lot of his time in the mosque and forming relationships among its regular visitors. However, he later became less involved as he learned that National Security Forces were targeting Islamic groups, particularly those whose activities take place in private mosques. “Having seen the clamp down of the security forces with my own eyes”, explains hajj Magdy, “I decided against becoming involved again and kept my visits to the mosque almost only for daily prayers. “It had not been until Mohammed Morsi came to power that we understood the dangers of some of the

¹⁹² Ibid

¹⁹³ Sholkamy 49

sheikhs and Islamic groups in the area, who turned out to be *Ikhwan* with specific political gains in mind, and not simply *do'ah* (preachers) talking about religion, which is a central topic in our lives.” (Hajj Magdy; 2015). The demonstration of a clearly identifiable ideological project by Muslim Brotherhood leaders had created rifts in the kind of religious unity first acclaimed by the Islamic group. This kind of aversion to clearly defined ideological projects is consistent with Egypt’s historical experiences with previous ideological projects of nationalism, as discussed in chapter 2. The national and territorial registers along which ideological projects were able to gain ground and enjoy popular support, such as with Egyptian socialism, were not available to the Muslim Brotherhood. The latter, which exists as a force independent from the Egyptian Military Institution, and one which has continued to disengage and externalize local social actors from its discourse and project of nationhood.

Neo-Liberalism and the Creation of Political Civilities

Familiarity with, and recognition of, national authority and leadership in Egypt, is greatly intertwined with the national regimes’ adopted modes of governance. For more than a decade before its fall, Mubarak’s regime had put forth a neo-liberal mode of economic governance. The neo-liberal restructuring of the market towards more privatization was accompanied by a less obvious restructuring of social and political civilities, which are constitutive of the modes of interaction among subjects of the nation.¹⁹⁴ I argue here that the project of neoliberalism in Egypt did not cede at a shift in economic policies and foreign investment decisions, but has seeped into modes of everyday governance and processes of forming national subjectivities. The rationalities of governance and the relations established between residents and representatives of the nation and employees of the state, have continued to stem from within a neoliberal rationality of

¹⁹⁴ Ismail, 845.

operation¹⁹⁵. Such a rationality entails a proliferation of individual and personalized spaces for profiting and money-making, often operating outside the limits of the law. That is, the ways in which neoliberal governmentality has intersected with an over-laden and poorly managed government and bureaucracy, led to a rise in the number of incidents in which residents improvise means of making and maintaining their livelihoods. An informal economy of entrepreneurs and middlemen, has grown to cater to the growing demands of residents of the neighborhood, as described in chapter 3. And despite the seemingly receding role of the state in providing for its citizens, its presence remains to be felt through the intermediary spaces between the law and its selective enforcement.¹⁹⁶ As Timothy Mitchell alerts us, the practices of neoliberalism do not, in reality, signify a retreat of the state.¹⁹⁷ But the point would be to recognize the kinds of social and political power relations that have managed to flourish within the modes of neo-liberal governance. Realizing the spatial strategies and manifestations of neoliberalism in everyday life, allows for a clearer understanding of the references along which nationalism and acceptance of national authority, can be construed in everyday life in ‘Ain el-Sira.

One of the most obvious changes the area witnessed over the past thirty years, is that of residents adding new extensions to residential blocks. By the time this research was being conducted, almost all buildings had significant additions to them, sometimes adding two or three new rooms to apartments. Apartment buildings as such, were seen to extend onto pavements and streets, causing the majority of roads in the neighborhood to become much narrower. The wide sidewalks that used to run along the sides of all the main streets have become occupied by tens of

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁹⁶ Ibid

¹⁹⁷ Mitchell, Timothy. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

coffee shops, workshops, small kiosks and other miscellaneous stores, including clothes shops, hairdressers, barbers, and mobile phone stores. The physical changes taking place in the neighborhood, are very much linked to the proliferation of a culture of privatization in Egypt over the past decade.

More so, the appearance of alternative means of obtaining permits, has allowed for a surge in the trend of customizing living quarters in 'Ain el-Sira. Building extensions and opening businesses could initially only take place through obtaining *tasareeh* (permits) from the municipality and would only be afforded to small, specific changes to the area. However, the growing consumer market for construction, meant that residents were continuously engaging with state authorities to obtain the necessary permits. Lengthy and uncertain process of obtaining legal permits had led to trends in evasion, most of which were made possible by employees of the municipality, who could be bribed off. A class of middlemen from within the area congruently emerged, as possibilities for material benefits from private constructions unfolded. The middlemen in this case are contractors (*me'awleen*) that take on the complete process of constructing the buildings. The contractor becomes responsible for building the extensions, providing man-power and resources, as well as securing a legal permit from the municipality.¹⁹⁸ In order to do so, the contractor must have established strong relations with personnel from within the police apparatus, as well as with employees from the municipality.¹⁹⁹ I argue that relations of mutual reciprocity, enabled by the multiple foci of power inherent in the modes of neoliberal governmentality, has allowed groups of residents to establish relations within the power networks of the state. Inclusion within these networks is one of the ways in which residents create their own stake in the national polity and imagine their places as citizens. Personal

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Alaa, car workshop owner

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Alaa

relations as such, centrally figure in residents' conceptions of national authority and the possibilities of their inclusion within it. Fears over the Muslim Brotherhood's take-over of these spaces amid calls by national and public figures to protect the nation from the dangers of "ikhwanization" of the state apparatus, have caused many groups in 'Ain el-Sira to resist the Muslim Brotherhood's rule.

The case of the contractors is only one of the manifold ways in which residents negotiate spatial power with national authorities. Another trend in the neighborhood that provides insight into the ways citizens become part of power relations of the nation, is a rather more political one. Some of the old and well-known coffee shop owners (*ahawy*) in the area have been engaged with Mubarak's regime as electoral brokers (*samasret intikhabat*).²⁰⁰ Al Hagg Yasser, is the son of the owner of one of those coffee shops. During parliamentary elections, groups of residents performing as middlemen engaged in processes of selling and buying votes for certain NDP candidates. The ability to foster spaces of mutual interest between the national authority and local middlemen, has awarded the latter political and social weight in the neighborhood while simultaneously maintaining the NDP's power in the electoral district. Fostering these relations of mutual benefit and reciprocity, has been central in creating national subjectivities. Engaging with Mubarak's regime in this case, did not entail subscription to its ideological or political stances, but is formed on the basis of personal and utilitarian relationships between citizens and bodies of the state; a kind of political sociability that did not develop with the members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

I argue that the lack of spaces of engagement with the Muslim Brotherhood have more to tell about their positionality in neighborhoods like 'Ain Al Sira, than macro-view analyses usually

²⁰⁰ Interview with Omar

show us. Main stream discourse has continuously situated the popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood within impoverished *sha'bi* areas. However, the image presented from 'Ain el-Sira points to a rather different view. It brings to light the historical and local specificities inherent in processes of power negotiations between local notables and the national authority. Antagonism from the Muslim Brotherhood's modes of rule is particularly true for the local interest groups discussed above, who had secured their positions with the former regime's tactics of inclusion and profitability. Sentiments of 'externality' from the interests of the Muslim Brotherhood is repetitively echoed in respondents' words, who describe the Muslim Brotherhood as "traitors" of the nation, geared towards securing their own organizations' interests. Hostility towards their rule also tapped into local registers, whereby residents from the neighborhood, classified as thugs, convicts and outlaws had become identified as under the political control of the Muslim Brotherhood, uncovering a kind of territorial threat that had rendered long-term power relations in the locale as unstable and under threat.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the ways in which social relations and recognition of "others" in local neighborhoods, have been central to understanding the national resonance of the Muslim Brotherhood in the neighborhood of 'Ain el-Sira. It has also explored the ways in which interactions with bodies of the state can be seen as generative spaces for understanding popular constructions of the values of national inclusion on the local level. In other words, the chapter attempted to demonstrate some of the ways in which experiences of national loyalty and inclusion within a nation whose ideological project is incoherent and difficult to define, become elaborated on more informal and personal relations between residents and representatives of the state. The Brotherhood's inherent externality from the power relations and interest groups

created in the neighborhood has arguably mobilized many against them. Interestingly so, these structural features of informality and personal rule have also been maintained by the Muslim Brotherhood, and their presence in the neighborhood was more like pitting systems of patronage against one another.²⁰¹ Another critical argument in this chapter is related to popular aversion to ideologically limited nationalist projects and how even political groups operating within the popular sphere of religion, could become delegitimized, as their respective modes of inclusion and equality existed on the conditionality of subscribing to the ideology of the state. All in all, this chapter has discussed some of the many ways in which the spheres of religion and Egyptian nationalism ought to be read as discursively expressed in relation to one another, with a sensitivity to the local practices and events which essentially come to define their limits.

²⁰¹ Menza, 32

Conclusion

This thesis has dealt with nationalism and defined it, as a historical and social construction as well as a negotiated and experienced power relationship formed between citizens and the national elite. Exploring Egyptian nationalism in this work was more specifically focused on its positionality in relation to religion, which is often imagined to exist as “external” to nationalism. The previous chapters explored some of the ways in which this assumption appears limited in capturing the interrelated and interactive spheres of nationalism and Islam within local communities in Egypt. Analyses of the Muslim Brotherhood’s experience in Egypt in 2012 appeared specifically limited by such assumption, as the failure of the Brotherhood’s political project was continuously attributed to the group’s abuse of religious and Islamic teachings, in contrast to the allegedly more civil- even secular- modes of governance desired by the majority of the population. What these simplified arguments miss, are the social and economic forces at play in the creation of nationalist loyalties and in constructing the limits of national community; those which fall beyond a blunt opposition between religion and nationalism. Therefore, through focusing on macro discourses of Egyptian nationalism, chapter two discussed the interplay of territorial and ideological forces in creating the conceptual limits of national belonging. The discussion made apparent the centrality of the role of the Egyptian military in capturing the patriotic energies of the national public, valorizing the unified territorial nation through consistently asserting its control over it either through war victories or regional agreements and alliances. It was also shown that the popularity of the ruling regime and its ability to create a sense of shared identity and inclusiveness among wide scores of the population, preconditioned

its ability at furthering a specific political ideology, as was the case with Nasser's socialism. Therefore, instead of viewing the failed project of the Muslim Brotherhood as a negation of the use of Islam in national politics, it should rather be viewed as a large consequence of the Muslim Brotherhood's separateness from the patriotic institution of the army and the narrative of patriotism that is associated with it. More so, the group's distinct ideological orientation had further destabilized its patriotic image, particularly as it could not lay claim to any grand unifying nationalist narratives. Inclusiveness within the national project thus became acutely related to an ideological assimilation with the Muslim Brotherhood, rather than through a sense of general inclusion and equality as Egyptians.

Chapter three and four further explored these contentions through the daily experiences of residents of 'Ain el Sira, particularly through their interactions with personnel and bodies of the state. Again, instead of viewing residents' experiences and choices as falling along the binaries of religious and national loyalty, they were rather seen according to the modes and extents to which residents imagined their inclusiveness within the national project and the shared stakes they imagined to exist with the ruling regime. This work has argued that this struggle for inclusion is played out through daily interactions with bodies and representatives of the state. Through focusing on local power groups in the neighborhood and the kinds of relations they have fostered and maintained with different state bodies and personnel, it becomes possible to view those relations as generative sites for negotiating and experiencing the modes of inclusion, equality and belonging within the nation and the national project.

The two chapters focused on the social roles of large families in the neighborhood as well as owners of local businesses and those engaged in other forms of profiteering. Those included coffee shop owners, car workshop owners and local building contractors. It was shown how

those groups and individuals had managed to foster informal and personalized relationships with a number of state personnel and bodies in the neighborhood. Those which included local police and investigation officers, municipality workers and former NDP members and candidates. Residents' engagement in these mutually beneficial relations with state personnel, stemmed from the opportunities such relations offer. Those included increased spaces for residents to maintain control over their modes of social and economic organization, as well an increased chances for profiteering and money-making. The cases included business owners' functioning as electoral brokers for former NDP candidates. Included also are local contractors who have established strong relations within the local municipality and with local police officers. The development of these relations made possible a capacity for recognizing shared stakes between residents and state power groups and networks of interest. A mode of socio-political organization which was absent from the Muslim Brotherhood's positioning in the neighborhood.

Focusing on the kinds of power relations and networks of interest between residents and members of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is possible to see the lack of spaces of familiarity and mutual recognition between the two. First of all, many residents expressed not having known about the Islamic organization and its ideological project prior to the January 25 revolution. Islamic associations affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood such as the JS have continued to operate in the neighborhood although without being identified by the residents as politically affiliated with the Islamic group. More so, incidents like controlling the state-owned bakery and the butane gas cylinder warehouse, offering members of the Muslim Brotherhood advantageous access to their resources, had allowed a discourse of difference and "othering" to take over, causing the Brotherhood to be seen as an outside and unfamiliar power group. Residents' sentiments of separation from the project of the Brotherhood also appeared quite clearly in the

incident of the take-over of al Geel center. The move to “retrieve” the center demonstrates a moment where the values of community relations and the power of local networks, were set against the apparently distinct power networks inherent in the Brotherhood’s organization. All in all, it appears that the political, economic and social modes of organization in the neighborhood had allowed for an understanding of the Muslim Brotherhood as outside the realm of a nationally inclusive leadership. The struggle for inclusion and recognition, thus appeared distinctively arduous under their rule, sidestepping their claim of pious and equal rule.

Finally, this research has engaged with the works of historians and anthropologists such as Ziad Fahmy, Asef Bayat and Salwa Ismail, whose work is considered an important shift towards alternative understandings of historical and popular politics of national transformation. Focusing on “regular” citizens, the “non-movements” in everyday modern cities, this research has aimed to build upon their micro-view focus on the differentiated realms of social and political organization inherent in the regularities of everyday life of modern citizenry. Important also, is the force of the neo-liberal city, as a commercializing and individualizing mode of social and economic engagement which has been part of the discursive processes of the formation of modes of power-sharing and inclusion within the modern nationalist project.

This thesis has argued for an understanding of every day social, economic and political processes as spaces through which religion and national belonging appear as over-lapping discourses. The results are socially negotiated, popular understandings of national belonging negotiated on differentiated planes of individual interest, community histories, and modes of familiarity and trust. I argue that these understandings place Egyptian nationalism as one which is inherently pious and religious, yet that which continues to base its legitimacy in the modes of national

inclusion and the imagined spaces for power-sharing among power groups of the national regime.

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