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Negotiations of Muslim-Christian relations

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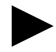

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Introduktion

Muslim-kristen relationer til forhandling – Negotiations of Muslim-Christian Relations

Lise Paulsen Galal (temaredaktør)

Forholdet mellem muslimer og kristne har historisk set varieret imellem alt fra fredelig sameksistens til voldelig konflikt. Aktuelt har konflikten i Syrien og IS's voldelige overgreb mod kristne og andre minoriteter på den ene side og terror begået af muslimer på den anden side ført til en øget opmærksom på muslim-kristen relationer og en tendens i Vesten til udelukkende at se muslimer som skurke og kristne som ofre for muslimske overgreb. Ser man nærmere på relationen i tid og rum, holder denne forestilling ikke. Som den britiske professor i kristen-muslim relationer, Hugh Goddard skriver i bogen 'Den sande tro' (2011), så har "forholdet mellem muslimer og kristne, islam og kristendom været præget af gensidige erobringer, brutale krige, politiske modsætninger og økonomiske interesser, men også af gensidig intellektuel nysgerrighed, ønske om dialog, fælles interesser og hverdagens sameksistens" (Galal 2014).

Relationen mellem muslimer og kristne kan studeres fra flere vinkler. Goddards hovedfokus er på de muslimske og kristne religiøse tænkeres skrifter, samtidig med at han relaterer disse til den pågældende politiske og samfundsmæssige kontekst. Den kan også studeres som aspekt af en politisk historie, hvor fx krige, kolonisering og nationalstatsdannelse har spillet en stor rolle for udviklingen af forholdet mellem muslimer og kristne (se fx Galal 2012, Thorbjørnsrud 2015). Relationen kan endvidere undersøges gennem studiet af hverdagslig interaktion på uddannelsesinstitutioner, på arbejdsmarkedet, i privatsfæren og i det offentlige rum (se fx Tidsskrift for Islamforskning, vol. 8, nr. 2). Det er karakteristisk, at en stor del af disse studier tager aktuelt udgangspunktet i muslimske migranters og deres efterkommeres på forskellig vis problematiske møde med en aktuel og vestlig, sekulær kontekst (Kivisto 2014). Endelig kan man nævne studier, der fokuserer på initiativer, der er direkte målrettet forsøget på at skabe bedre relationer mellem kristne og muslimer gennem forskellige former for brobygnings- og dialoginitiativer (Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty 2007; Hansen 2015; Rasmussen 2007).

De ovennævnte tilgange afspejler, at forholdet mellem kristne og muslimer ikke blot spiller en rolle i varierende kontekster, men også konvergerer med andre, meget forskellige relationer. For det første er selve afsættet for studierne ofte konflikten og/eller problematiseringen, der som udgangspunkt modstiller muslimer og kristne og dermed etablerer en forskelssætning på baggrund af

religion. Netop fokusset på konflikten gør for det andet, at aktuelle studier har tendens til snævert at beskæftige sig med problemstillinger, som Vesten aktuelt er optaget af, i dette tilfælde konflikten i Mellemøsten og immigrationen til vestlige lande. Det medfører for det tredje en konvergens af kategorien muslim med kategorierne mellemøstlig og/eller immigrant. For eksempel kommer det til at betyde, at kategorien muslim får tilskrevet vanskeligheder, der egentlig knytter sig til problemstillinger, der udspringer af migrationen og ikke religionen. På samme måde konvergerer kategorien kristen med kategorien sekularist, hvorved der skabes en falsk dikotomi mellem muslim og (kristen) sekularist. Endelig kan økonomiske eller politiske uoverensstemmelser ende med at blive indskrevet i et modsætningsforhold på baggrund af religion.

Et problem ved disse dominerende tilgange, at den uproblematiske relation i langt mindre grad gøres til genstand for analyse, hvilket gør, at dikotomien muslim-kristen konstant reproduceres. Et andet problem er, at de forskellige konvergenser af kategorier gør, at det ikke altid er lige klart, om hvilket forhold vi egentlig får ny viden. Der synes ikke mindst at mangle klarhed om kristendommens eller den kristne tros betydning for relationen, idet den ofte omskrives til at handle om sekulære institutionaliseringer. Disse konvergenser skaber desuden det tredje problem, at når kategorierne kristen og muslim aktuelt tilskrives geografiske identiteter (Vesten og Mellemøsten), så får vi ikke viden om for eksempel forholdet mellem kristne og muslimer af mellemøstlig oprindelse, der er bosat i Europa.

De tre artikler under dette tema indskriver sig for vidt i ovennævnte eksisterende traditioner for at studerede muslim-kristen relationer. De tager alle afsæt i Mellemøsten eller mellemøstlige immigranter i Danmark. Henrik Lindberg Hansen og Lise Paulsen Galals artikler handler om religionsdialog i hhv. Egypten og mellem Danmark og Egypten, mens Anne Rosenlund Jørgensens artikel handler om mellemøstlige kristnes intime relationer til muslimer i Danmark. Hvad de første to artikler dog på hver sin måde bestræber sig på, er at undersøge baggrunden og omstændighederne for religionsdialogen i et forsøg på at undersøge dialogen i sin samfundsmæssige kontekst. Hansen analyserer således den officielle religionsdialog i Egypten efter den egyptiske januar-revolution i 2011, mens Galal undersøger rammerne for religionsdialog, som de defineres og praktiseres af danske dialogarrangører. Galal demonstrerer som Hansen, hvordan den politiske kontekst ikke blot styrer med også forstyrrer idealet om den gensidige og åbne dialog. Jørgensens artikel tager fat på et underbelyst emne, nemlig hvordan forholdet til muslimer forhandles af mellemøstlige kristne, når der opstår intime relationer imellem dem. Dermed får hun ikke kun manet i jorden, at kristne ikke kun er lig med europæiske sekularister, men

også at muslim-relationen kan undersøges i som udgangspunkt positive relationer, nemlig forelskelsen og det intime samliv.

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Interreligious Dialogue and Politics in Revolutionary Egypt

Henrik Lindberg Hansen

Abstract

This article analyses the socio-political dynamics of religious belonging in Egyptian society prior to the revolution and how these have been carried into the revolutionary flux with a focus on official dialogue. Official dialogue, it is argued, is a dialogue form specific to Egyptian society and politics used as a way of negotiating interreligious relations and political ties. First the Egyptian concept of official dialogue as a socio-political phenomenon will be analysed applying theories from sociology and political science, followed by an analysis of how interreligious relations and official dialogue was influenced by the upheaval in socio-political structures following the 2011 revolution.

The article focuses on one type of dialogue in Egypt, official dialogue, and its relation to society and politics to discuss the influence of the revolution on Muslim-Christian relations.[1] The term *official dialogue* is an in vivo concept, i.e. a concept taken from the field analysed, and as such the article endeavours to detail what the term encompasses in Egypt. The meeting of leaders representing different religious communities at holidays or connected to sectarian incidents is in Egypt often termed official dialogue by the participants, the media and in the general dialogue environment. The meetings often include representatives of political, police and military authorities, highlighting the political significance of the meetings. As this article ventures to detail, the practice of official dialogue is built on the Egyptian societal structures often termed 'clientelism', where leaders (religious and otherwise) of disparate national and local networks gain political influence by representing their group towards or in opposition to the ruling national entity. As such, the article builds on theories of clientelism, as developed by for example Nazih N. Ayubi and Holger Albrecht, as well as Social Movement Theory as described by Salwa Ismail, Diane Singerman and Carrie Rosefsky Wickham. It

[1] Currently in Egypt the term “revolution” is juxtaposed to the term “coup” in the discussion of the legitimacy of the removal of the Muslim Brotherhood from power in 2013. I will use the term “revolution” here for both the 2011 and the 2013 events, but without choosing sides in the ongoing struggle between Islamists and the military; the term will signify the fact that mass demonstrations somehow prompted the early termination of the ruling entity.

should be noted that there are a number of other dialogue types practised in Egypt, such as diapraxis and academic dialogue (Hansen 2015), but these will not be the focus of the article.

Interviews in 2009-10 and again in 2013 with people working in the field of dialogue in Egypt have built an understanding of the practice of official dialogue, and how it is related to the societal dynamics of Egypt. The interviews were done among people working with official dialogue from the Muslim Azhar University and the Coptic Orthodox Church, as well as people in opposition to the idea of official dialogue as the negotiation of informal political relations from the Muslim Brotherhood, critical voices from the Azhar and the Coptic Orthodox Church and people from minority Churches and the NGO environment.[2] It is argued that official dialogue is a tool to establish, consolidate or negotiate relations between societal groups defined by religion as well as socio-political belonging. Theories of clientelism and social movement describe how informal politics and networks define social relations and how they are negotiated in Egyptian society, and have been found to correspond very well with the analysis of official dialogue. The article therefore starts by describing theories of clientelism and social movements and how these dynamics are part of politics and religion in Egyptian society, to provide a basis for understanding official dialogue as a tool in the informal politics of Egyptian society. This is followed by a description of the socio-political setting followed by the 2011 revolution, pertinent to Christian-Muslim relations. The article then moves on to detail official dialogue and how it functions on the local as well as the national level. Finally, it is argued that official dialogue has been a tool of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the renegotiation of Egyptian society following the 2011 revolution, to establish and consolidate relations with the changing political powers. This has been especially necessary, as the revolution opened the question of the legitimacy of Christians having a voice in the informal politics of Egypt, as will be argued.

Clientelism, social networks and religion in Egypt before the 2011 revolution

In this article I argue that there was a discourse of official dialogue in Egypt in the time of study, which was highly dependent on the socio-political structures. Religion delimited social groups, where people

[2] The article is based on my experience working with dialogue in Egypt, existing literature on Egyptian society, politics, and religion, participatory observation, and qualitative interviews. The interviews were open-ended conversations controlled by the interviewee, but held within topics by the interviewer. The focus was on a total of 29 interviews. The interviewees were either working explicitly with dialogue, or people who influenced the interreligious discourse in Egypt.

found belonging and built their lives, which enabled the leadership of these communities to negotiate their social influence to the benefit of the group. To develop this, it is first needed to briefly address the socio-political dynamics that official dialogue built on.

Egyptian politics before the revolution in 2011 was marked by the fact that citizens were dependent on societal groups to build their livelihoods and for belonging – rather than expecting a state to guarantee their lives. This led sociologists and political scientists to describe Egyptian society as heavily dependent on corporatism, clientelism, paternalism, and other concepts emphasizing informal networks both horizontally among for example families, work communities, or local neighbourhoods and vertically ideally linking the elite of the country to the less fortunate through chains of dependency and favours (Ayubi 2006; Singerman 1997; Ismail 2006).[3] The way to maintain power by the state was then to co-opt groups by tying their prosperity to the prosperity of the state. In the everyday language of Egyptians the concept of *wasṭa*, connections (Singerman 1997, 164), was used to denote a social glue equivalent to clientelism (Albrecht 2007, 21 and 52). Apart from the clientelist structures, the coercive abuse of power also pushed people to look for security and meaning in their local networks; networks which often were determined by and strengthening religious demarcation of societal groups.

As the divide between the elite and the poor in Egyptian society grew, the millions not cared for by the state turned to their local networks to secure their livelihoods. This was the case for many Muslims who felt their daily lives threatened, rather than protected by the regime. These turned to their local networks to secure their lives through, for example, job opportunities, fair trials by local customary judges outside the state judicial system, and loans (Ismail 2003; Wickham 2002, 153; Singerman 1997). This was often centred on the local mosques and the growing number of NGOs connected to these, leading to an amorphous Islamic movement with a focus on social justice by providing what many felt the regime should have provided (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999). The growing use of religion to delimit societal belonging also influenced the more affluent middle class of Egyptian society. This part of society led relatively secure lives and often had less interest in showing their Islamic orthodoxy through political action. Following the trend of adopting Islamic legitimating of their lives, they instead applied it to their consumption. This was evident when people bought Islamic elevators reciting the

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3 Concepts such as clientelism and paternalism are to some derogative, as they feel it only applies to pre-modern societies. This is, however, not the case (Abercrombie and Hill 1976, 413; Ayubi 2006, 169), modernity and clientelism are not contradicting terms (Lemarchand 1972) as they partake in most modern societies. Furthermore, clientelism is not a necessary part of a stable Egyptian culture (Ayubi 2006, 168), but rather a significant part of the contemporary construction of a society such as the Egyptian.

Qur'an, Muslim fridges, or Islamic nail polish, highlighting themselves as good believers through their consumption (Abdelrahman 2004). The growing use of Islam as political and social legitimating had the secondary effect that many Christians felt that they did not belong to the same extent as the majority group of believers, and this alienated Christians from their compatriots.

The local networks were not unified, but scattered all over Egypt with some or no affiliation with more organised national groups. The Muslim Brotherhood (a conservative organisation, focussing on Islamic pietism and social justice to the improvement of society) had a special status, as they were the only real opposition to the regime and the major Islamic point of entry into political life. This made the Muslim Brotherhood the obvious choice for a person from the Islamic movement with political aspirations for example in the trade unions or parliament (Wickham 2002). As the co-optation of these local networks were central to the power base of the regime, the political battles were more often fought here through relation-building (based on clientelism), than through political struggle for votes in parliament. The description of the local networks furthermore explains the continued influence of the Muslim Brotherhood as rooted in a very dynamic, scattered and diversified pattern of local networks, despite repeated attempts of the regime to uproot the organisation.

Christians, not partaking in the Muslim identity of many of the social networks, sought networks according to their own religious belonging. The Coptic Christians expected the Church to provide them, what the Muslim social networks provided their compatriots sustaining the system of patronage (Sedra 1999, 228; M. Guirguis and van Doorn-Harder 2011, 156). According to Hassan (Hassan 2003, 152),

> In most dioceses, the relationship between individual and church is not just pastoral but resembles a citizen-state relationship. Even though his relationship to his church does not carry with it the same element of compulsion as does the state-citizen counterpart, the demands made by a Copt on his church are similar. He expects it to not only cater to his spiritual needs but also to help him with educational, occupational, housing, and medical problems.

The Coptic Orthodox Church was a top-down controlled institution (M. Guirguis 2012; Galal 2009, 242; Vogt and van Doorn-Harder 2004, 145; Abu-Nimer, Khoury, and Welty 2007, 147), enabling the Church leaders to represent the majority of Coptic Christians in political matters of concern to the Copts. Clientelism was for example found in the cooperation between the former president Mubarak and the late Pope Shenouda III, where relations with the President for example would provide direct access between

bishops and governors during tensions between Muslims and Christians in the governorates. To reciprocate the Pope would for example actively push for Copts to vote for Mubarak, which was especially obvious during the 2005 elections (Galal 2009, 222). This was essential to what will be described as official dialogue.

The political context of official dialogue following the 2011 revolution

While the 2011 revolution did not change much in terms of the political system and left the clientelist system intact (Aoudé 2013), it did renegotiate who was in power (Wickham 2013, 154). This led to a struggle especially between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamist movement on the one side, and the military and the traditional system on the other side. Pertinent to this article, is how the revolutionary flux influenced the understanding of the role of Christians in Egyptian society. The Christians as central to the discourse of national unity became a signifier in the political positioning of various other groups vying for political power, and this heightened the discussion of Christian legitimacy in the end producing a number of dialogue initiatives as well as escalating incidents. To discuss dialogue in the revolutionary period, it is therefore needed to briefly touch upon the revolutionary renegotiation of the political scene.

As explained in the beginning of the article, Egyptian politics under the rule of Mubarak was defined by the negotiation of power between the regime and different groups often delimited by religion. In brief; the Azhar, the Coptic Orthodox Church, and the Muslim Brotherhood were inside the definition of Egyptian national community, where they had each their socio-political role. The Mubarak regime was in power supported by the Azhar administration (Soliman 2011, 56 and 65). The Muslim Brotherhood was the opposition, and recognised (in practice, not rhetoric) as such by the regime as they were too influential to just brush aside (Albrecht 2007, 81; Scott 2010, 49). The Christians, especially the Coptic Church, had their own community within the national community that gained societal position by maintaining positive relations to the regime (Hassan 2003). These different groups consequently all had their positions and roles within the circle of national community (which defines the societal order): there was a hegemonic socio-political order, which allowed its people and groups to act and predict the actions of the others (Laclau 2007). Outside the circle of national community, there were a number of smaller groups, the ones of interest here being the more radicalised Islamist groups. Before the revolution much of the criticism of Christians being part of the legitimate societal order would come from groups outside the order. With the revolution, the hegemonic order of society was dissolved and

the public debate about the weaker societal positions was opened for debate: as Egyptian societal positions were renegotiated, the position of minorities was unstable and open for discussion. This was especially the case for the Christians, as they held a key position in the discourse of national unity, as will now be argued.

With the revolution the position of Christians became a signifier or 'bargaining chip' in the positioning of other groups (L. Guirguis Forthcoming). Those who accepted Christians as part of national community were opposed to other positions, where Christians were not accepted as members of national community. This was already a discussion before the revolution, but most often not accepted within the legitimate political circle that defined who belonged to the national community;[4] with the revolution the circle of legitimacy *itself* was renegotiated and this allowed for the question of the societal position of the Christians to enter the debate to a larger extent. The societal position of the Christians was, however, not only visible in this more negative debate about how inclusive a Muslim state can be, but Muslim-Christian unity was also a powerful political symbol in protests and demonstrations: the slogan 'Muslims and Christians together' was used since the 1919 revolution to signify a unified Egypt against an oppressor, a slogan that only could be used meaningfully if there were Christians present at the demonstrations. The Copts as a symbol of national unity was also used by the military after the 2013 revolution when the commanding officer announced that power was taken from the Muslim Brotherhood flanked by the Grand Sheikh of the Azhar and the Coptic Pope - and again during the presidential elections in 2014, where the Pope openly backed the military candidate for presidency, Abdul Fatah Saeed Hussein Khalil el-Sisi.

During the 2011 revolution, scenes were reminiscent of the 1919 revolution with Muslims and Christians demonstrating against oppression in unity for the sake of their common nation. The incidents following the revolution did, however, leave many Christians fearing for their future in Egypt as Christians (Galal 2012, 45). The period following the 2011 revolution saw a number of negative incidents against Christians, based on the socio-political climate. The most prominent of the negative incidents happened in October 2011 in Cairo, where armoured military trucks rammed into Copts demonstrating an incident in a village, and the interim military government asked civilian Muslims to come to the aid of the military in the media (Iskander 2012, 174; McNamara et al. 2014). Especially following the military ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood President in 2013, there was an explosion of attacks where Coptic Churches and shops became the focal point of Islamist frustrations (McNamara et al.

4 Laure Guirguis (forthcoming) argues that this was already the case during the 2005 elections and not diminished after the 2011 revolution. See also Iskander (2012, 15).

2014), as these were seen as promoting the military regime. According to Human Rights Watch at least 42 churches in different governorates were attacked in August 2013, of which about 37 were damaged or burned (Human Rights Watch 2013).

The 2013 revolution changed the conditions for Muslim-Christian relations: the Muslim Brotherhood was pushed into a defensive camp of Islamists also comprising radical elements, when the Muslim Brotherhood President was deposed by the military following massive demonstrations against the rule of the Brotherhood, while the Christians were on the side of the (also Muslim) liberals and the military. The political dichotomisation following the 2013 revolution highlighted the Christians as a political and religious opponent to the Islamist movement spearheaded by the Muslim Brotherhood. This left the Christians salient as a focal point for Islamist frustrations after the military deposing the elected Islamist president and reverting the Islamist position to the times before the 2011 revolution, where they were unable freely to participate in the political process. At the same time as the post-2013 situation created obvious enemies for the Christians in the Islamists, it also provided obvious allies in the (also Muslim) liberals and the military (Hulsman 2013). Most Copts voted against the Muslim Brotherhood in the 2012 elections and sided with the military in the 2013 revolution; this muffled some of the more moderate voices in the Muslim Brotherhood and legitimised that the more radical voices from the Islamist movement targeted Christians and Christian property and churches. Many Muslim Brotherhood leaders believed that the best way to maintain political legitimacy was through non-violent demonstrations. This did, however, not stop leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood from delivering hate speeches against their political opponents, including the Christians, undoubtedly leading to violence on the ground (Human Rights Watch 2013), as was obvious from an Egyptian Muslim interviewee:

> The military is not supposed to be vengeful and randomly arrest people because of their political affiliation. But the Muslim Brotherhood is no better with their hate speeches against their political opponents; they might not be overtly violent as an organisation and we cannot generalise that all their members resort to violence, yet the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood are provoking the Islamist movement and pushing laymen to violence in the name of defending their "religion".

It is difficult for the average Egyptian to make out who advocated violence and who peaceful demonstrations in the revolutionary turmoil, and many questioned the political legitimacy of the Islamic bloc and the Muslim Brotherhood following the 2013 revolution.

Before describing the influence of the revolutionary period on dialogue in Egypt, it is first needed to analyse, what official dialogue as a specifically Egyptian phenomenon. While there are a number of

different types of dialogue in Egypt, official dialogue is partaking in the socio-political dynamics of the country. Official dialogue has played a significant role in the revolutionary period, as will be described later, after an introduction to the concept as it was used in Egypt in the period of study, before the revolution.

Official Dialogue at the local level

Official dialogue as a way of negotiating Christian-Muslim relations in Egypt was present on the local as well as the national level during the time of my work and fieldwork. I stayed in a village close to Minya in Upper Egypt for a combined three months between 2006 and 2010. Living with the local priest and his family, I had the chance to better understand how socio-political relations were negotiated between religiously defined groups on the local level. Living in Cairo 2004 to 2010, I followed the meetings of Christian and Muslim leaders and interviewed leaders from the Azhar, the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Muslim Brotherhood to better understand what official dialogue is. It became obvious how the above described features of society had crystallised into a discourse of Muslim-Christian dialogue termed 'official dialogue', as one of the major discourses of dialogue in Egypt.

The negotiation of relations between Muslims and Christians was not consistently termed official dialogue on the local level, while this was the case to a larger extent on the national level. On the local level, the practices negotiating power dynamics was interchangeably called official dialogue, dialogue, meetings and visits. It is, however, clear that the socio-political dynamics on the local as well as the national level allowed for the Coptic Church to enter into relations with political authorities through what was termed official dialogue. It is the aim of this section of the article to describe official dialogue by showing how the local and national levels worked together to navigate the socio-political dynamics of Egypt.

Before moving to the village in 2006, the priest told me that relations between Muslims and Christians in the village were very good compared to other parts of the region. This was, according to the priest, due to the fact that Muslims were visiting Christians in the churches, and Christians were visiting Muslims at the mosques, which was spoken of as a form of dialogue. Arriving at the village it was, however, evident that these visits did not encompass the average Christians and Muslims, but rather leaders, who would meet and discuss issues of importance to life in the villages. There were informal meetings prompted by ad hoc issues, but also more formal gatherings connected to national holidays, such as the Christmas celebration in January 2007. At this occasion the priest celebrated Christmas at the Church for the Christians, and then withdrew to his

office, where I was invited to join a meeting between the priest and local Muslim dignitaries, who came to congratulate the priest, and through him the Christians, on their holiday.[5] The meeting involved a feast and informal talk and joking, without breaching any faith issues.

When discussing the meeting with the priest afterwards, he explained that a meeting like this helped consolidate his influence through which he was able to maintain good relations between Muslims and Christians. With the absence of a functional judicial system and a neutral police force, local Muslim and Christian groups built security for their group by elevating their social influence in the area. The priest and his family explained that this was done partly by increasing the wealth of the group and by maintaining good relations with other influential groups.

The visits during the Christmas celebration could, however, also be understood simply as friendly visits without any further societal implications. To better understand this, I asked the priest how he viewed his relationship to the Muslims. He replied in the abstract about Muslims in general and explained that it was not possible to have Muslim friends as a Christian, as they could not be trusted. Muslims varied in his understanding from terrorists that are out to convert or eradicate Christians, to Muslims who tolerated Christians for the sake of maintaining positive business and generally peaceful relations - which was also the reason why he nursed relationships through various meetings. But he believed even the Muslims participating in these meetings secretly hated the Christians. While I stayed in the village, several Muslims with a seemingly very positive attitude towards the priest and Christianity had visited the Church. When I addressed this, the priest agreed that these were special and genuinely liked Christians, but he believed them to be Christians in their hearts, since Islam only can inspire hatred in his understanding. He only found very few of his Muslim acquaintances true friends, and it was clear that he saw most of his positive relations as a way of maintaining social cohesion and business relations, more than personal relations of friendship. As explained by Marilynn B. Brewer, the understanding of outgroups perceived as threatening influences the understanding of the individual members of the group (Brewer 2001). The understanding of Muslims as an amorphous, threatening outgroup was very clear in the interview with the priest; Muslims were understood as competitors and at times enemies, but the need for positive relations of the Christian minority community in the village pushed the priest to negotiate on behalf of the Christians. This in turn built relationships, which the priest would have to explain as an anomaly for this to make sense in relation to his general understanding of Muslims. The use of religion as a social delimiter

[5] I was invited to various meetings by the priest, without having any direct function at the meetings. It was my impression that my presence, being a Westerner, elevated the status of the priest.

then becomes very clear in the narrative of the priest, as well as the understanding of dialogue as a tool to negotiate social relations.

The authority, status and wealth of the religious leaders in the local networks were especially important for these to represent their groups and consolidate their influence and security (Ismail 2006, 48–52). It was therefore natural to the villagers, I spoke with, that the priest was also a thriving businessman with a focus on agriculture. I was invited to a meeting between the priest and an influential Christian businessman in Cairo, where the cultivation of the land was discussed as a specifically Christian issue. While the land would benefit the priest personally, it would also benefit Christians, as it would consolidate the influence of the priest to the benefit of the community. The influence of the local Christian community was furthermore discussed as promoting the lives of the Christians on the national level, as the combined status of the Christians led to a better position of negotiating for the national Church leaders, combining the local and global level of clientelism and corporatism. This will be discussed further when describing the national level.

The potential impact of the status of the priest on the local level became clear in December, 2006. The men of the local Christian bakery were working abroad leaving the shop and family vulnerable. A man from a Muslim family demanded his bread for free, but when this was denied him he returned with a larger group of men to take the bread and the valuables of the house by force. As the situation threatened to escalate, news spread and the Christians hurried home to protect their families. Following the incident, I discussed the matter with the priest and his family. According to the priest, they have relatively few of these incidents because of his standing and his good relations to Muslims leaders. His influence furthermore enabled him to engage the local police, who on his complaint arrived after the incident and arrested a male member of the family, who attacked the bakery.[6] This helped ensure, according to a member of the family of the priest, that similar incidents would not happen again, as the influence of the priest was clear and future attacks would have consequences. The Christians, I spoke with in the area, categorised the assailants consistently as 'Muslims', and the issue as a Muslim-Christian issue. The connections and influence the priest gained through meetings with religious representatives, termed official dialogue (although inconsistently), then enabled him to secure some level of what was felt as justice for the Christians in the village. This underlines the socio-political impact of the dialogue on the local level.

[6] Ismail explains how the police most often did not function as law keepers, but rather were seen as a threat in the less privileged areas of Egypt (Ismail 2006). The priest did, however, through his influence manage to use the police to make sure there was some consequence following the attack.

Official dialogue on the national level

Official dialogue on the national level was manifest during my fieldwork and work in Egypt 2004-10 in at least three types of situations: meetings involving high level clergy, where issues of mutual interest were discussed, celebrations during Christmas and Ramadan, and meetings between clergy and government officials following violent incidents. My knowledge of these is primarily based on the media and interviews with a range of people involved in or critical towards official dialogue, as I only had the opportunity to join the high level dialogue meetings between international representatives of religious institutions. The third type of meeting clearly connected the local and national levels of official dialogue, as the national level directly interfered with the local, and as such it will be described more thoroughly.

Azharite Sheikhs and Coptic Orthodox clergy met regularly to discuss issues of mutual interest. It was generally agreed that the topics never involve faith articles, because it was believed, as an Azharite Sheikh involved in the meetings commented, that it will only lead to tensions and arguments. Across the people interviewed at this level of engagement between clergy, it was taken for granted that Christianity and Islam were different and incompatible as religions. They would instead meet to promote good relations between the faith communities, and discuss topics such as the position of children in the family, women in society, or how to address religious extremism. These topics were meant to galvanise relations against what would otherwise corrode them. Among the interviewees, the negative influences were found in satellite evangelists, a non-specified enemy in the West, and religious extremists, such as terrorists. The meetings were often televised, where Muslim and Christian clergy would sit together and publicly share what they had discussed in the private meeting. The meetings also resulted in projects, such as 'the reading for all' campaign initiated by the regime in 1992-1993 (Makari 2007; M. Guirguis and van Doorn-Harder 2011) and the recent 'Family House', which will be described later.

A symbol of positive relations between the Azhar and the Coptic Church was the celebration of the breaking of the fast during Ramadan and the celebration of Easter and Christmas, where the Coptic Church invited different Muslim officials (religious and otherwise) to join celebrations at the church (Galal 2009; Makari 2007, 85; M. Guirguis and van Doorn-Harder 2011, 168; Abu-Nimer, Khoury, and Welty 2007, 161). These meetings were started during the 1919 revolution (M. Guirguis and van Doorn-Harder 2011, 101), and participating in these consolidated the socio-political relations publicly. These events were signifiers in the construction of relations, incorporating the Church into the clientelist system of the country, according to a Coptic intellectual and activist interviewed. Especially

the presence of the army - and not just government representatives - shows that these meetings were part of a system, where religious influence was translatable into political influence, using Bourdieu's understanding of how symbolic capital brings together influences promoting social standing (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). The presence of regime and military representatives showed their support for the Church as a legitimate part of the country. The direct political implications of relations between the regime and the Coptic Church were furthermore sustained by the fact that the Coptic Church openly supported candidates during presidential elections in return for being part of the clientelist system that for example improved the chances of the Church for permissions to build and repair churches (a controversial issue)[7] and established direct contact between Church leaders and governors during incidents between Muslims and Christians (Hassan 2003, 114).

The third manifestation of official dialogue took place after incidents between Muslims and Christians. Some incidents involving Muslims and Christians were particularly violent and gained national attention through the media. The case of the attack on Abu-Fana Monastery in Minya in May 2008 illustrates how local matters between Christians and Muslims involved Church leaders also from the national level in the resolving of the matter through extra-judicial reconciliation meetings. Previous to the attack there had been tensions between the Monastery and some Muslim families living in the area. The Muslim families felt that the continuous expansion of Monastery farm lands encroached on their possibilities. As I was informed living in the village, irrigating the desert was a delicate matter until the land was formally owned. Desert areas were owned by the State, but these could not be purchased before the buyer had proved intent of irrigation by actually irrigating the land. The period between starting irrigation and formally purchasing the land was therefore vulnerable, and tradition was to build a wall around the land being irrigated to lay claim to it. The attack was a reaction to the Monastery building a wall to lay claim to a piece of desert land. Around 60 armed Muslims attacked monks and labourers building the wall and destroyed buildings and property belonging to the Monastery, resulting in the death of a Muslim labourer and the injuring of several others. During the attack, the assailants furthermore kidnapped three Monks, subjected them to torture, and attempted to forcibly convert them to Islam (U.S. Department Of State 2008).

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[7] A law was passed in 2005 permitting repairs without permit, but restrictions still applied, as repairs were restricted at the local level. According to the law, the objections of local Muslim residents and businesses were also expected to be taken into consideration (McCallum 2008, 72). Local authorities then often prohibited the building and repair of churches as they feared that this would lead to disorder and attacks from Muslims.

The police arrived a few hours after the incident leading to the arrest of Muslims and Christians alike. It was accepted by the judiciary system that matters can be resolved through customary reconciliation meetings, even in cases such as this, which had the public - national and international - attention. The matter was initially resolved through reconciliation meetings, but the resolution eventually fell apart leaving no one responsible for the attack in the eyes of the law (U.S. Department Of State 2009). It is interesting to the topic of this article, who participated in the reconciliation meetings: Coptic businessmen (economic capital), the diocese (cultural or religious capital), a member of parliament, an attorney, the police (all representatives of social capital), and eventually Pope Shenouda (World Watch Monitor 2009). As such, all three of Bourdieu's types of capital (economic, cultural and social) are in play constructing a socio-political field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), where religious (cultural) capital plays a significant role in determining social relations between religiously defined groups.

A Muslim Brotherhood lawyer interviewed was critical towards official dialogue, especially when it infringed on the legal system through reconciliation meetings. He formulated his concept of dialogue specifically against official dialogue, as he believed it was building the problems rather than helping them. The reconciliation meetings followed by public displays of unity between religious leaders circumvented the legal system were an expression of official dialogue, according to the lawyer, but they helped the culprits go free of any charges. Instead he believed dialogue should gather the religious leaders and thinkers to root out the negotiation between religious leaders in matters of law and promote a judicial system, where religion plays no role. As such, the lawyer was in line with many Human Rights Organisations, highlighting that the reconciliation meetings lead to impudence among the culprits, as they are not persecuted by law (Human Rights Watch 2012).

It should be clear, that religion was important as a cognitive 'border guard' separating Muslims and Christians.[8] This cognitive identity marker was addressed with a discourse of national unity, superimposing the national identity on the religious identity. In the vocabulary of Tajfel (Postmes and Branscombe 2010), official dialogue was positioning the groups of Muslims and Christians in society. This positioning was, however, not addressing societal identity borders between Muslims and Christians: the 'border guard' was not contested to allow for Muslims and Christians to function also

8 Galal (Galal 2009, 227) talks about marriage as a border guard maintaining the distinction between societal groups, in this case Muslims and Christians, by maintaining the separation of blood relation. This is similar to Bourdieu’s thoughts on “admission fees” without which people are not allowed to participate intimately with people of another social group (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 107).

on the more intimate level, such as marriage. This also explains why faith issues were not addressed: official dialogue was diplomacy between groups, but not an attempt to break down the barriers defining these groups as different social groups.

Official dialogue was thus a tool to promote the relations between societal groups delineated by religious belonging by making the ties official: official dialogue legitimised the regime cooperating with the Coptic Church through the authority of the Azhar. This was especially obvious after violent incidents, where high officials from the Coptic Church, the Azhar, and regime representatives would meet to sustain the discourse of national unity (Galal 2009). These displays of national unity between the high officials were, however, not only presenting a united front against violent extremists, but also against other opponents of the regime including moderate groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood: the religio-political dynamics not only tied specific groups of society closer together, but also as part of the act defined others as political opponents. The national dynamics of dialogue were thus not just between Islam and Christianity, but were rather influenced by a number of different societal groups influencing each other in multiple ways.

Like at the local level, official dialogue not only utilised the political dynamics of the country, but also helped sustain them. The political difference between Muslims and Christians was institutionalised through official dialogue. Furthermore, the senior clergy of the Azhar and the Coptic Orthodox Church gained influence in society by taking on the responsibility of representation, which included negotiating for their community in cases of conflict. This is likely to perpetuate existing power structures, including the system of clientelism.

National unity or 'official nonsense'

Central to official dialogue was the discourse of national unity (Galal 2009). Most of the interviewees talked about some form of national unity (Sedra 1999; Makari 2007, 33) that went beyond the obvious fact that Egyptian Muslims and Christians were Egyptians (McCallum 2008, 62), even though they seemed aware of the obvious tensions in the country (Krämer 1998, 43). Some of these interviewees seemed unwilling to recognise the growing divide in Egyptian society and preferred not to mention the problems (Iskander 2012, 100), even though most of them were actively working with Muslim-Christian relations (Abu-Nimer, Khoury, and Welty 2007).

A major reason for the discourse of national unity is likely to be found outside religious belonging. As Ayubi points out, the Egyptian regime was to a large extent dependent on populism to maintain its legitimacy. This had been the case ever since Nasser. The basic

argument of Ayubi is that the regime needed to establish some sort of unity in a country based on strong communal belonging to be able to rule this otherwise disparate society. To this end the discourse of national unity was an obvious remedy (Ayubi 2006, 209), and it was propagated through schools, media, official religion - and what was termed official dialogue by the people interviewed.

The discourse of national unity was often used in various efforts of dialogue, but also by many Muslims and Christians when addressing issues of discontent between religiously delimitated groups in Egypt. It often felt as amounting to treason to question this discourse. Even though the discourse of national unity was helpful in some situations, it also helped gloss over many of the real problems present between Muslims and Christians in Egypt (Galal 2009; Hansen 2015, chap. 3). Some of the televised meetings between Sheiks and priests would actively ignore the sectarian issues by reiterating the idea of unity as if it was actually, generally present. This meant that for some of the interviewees that dialogue was a precarious topic in as far as it meant admitting to problems based on religious difference. This changed with the 2011 revolution with the renegotiation of socio-political relationships, as will be the topic in the next section of the article, leading to more focus on dialogue as well as more sectarian incidents.

Official dialogue then publicly manifested unity between Muslims and Christians through the leaders of the communities. The effect of this was obvious when lay people said: “Muslims and Christians go and visit each other in their churches and mosques. There are no problems” without including themselves or other lay people physically in these meetings. But in the period, I did the interviews, many people were disillusioned with these dialogical manifestations as they did not see any tangible result in society, where tensions were growing – this led to one of the Muslim interviewees calling it 'official nonsense'. Among Christians the ties between the Church leadership and the state officials had also led to discontent as they felt continuously more pressed in society, while many felt that the Pope was not critical enough towards the regime and its lack of action against Muslim perpetrators and the general lack of social justice, according to the leader of a Coptic NGO with a focus on discrimination against Christians in Egypt.

Official dialogue can then be summed up as follows: the focus of official dialogue is to establish, maintain and/or improve relations between religious groups; official dialogue addresses societal relations to the exclusion of debates on articles of faith or religious practices; official dialogue is involved in the general structures of society by representing the two major religious groupings through diplomatic activities; official dialogue sustains the political ties between the Coptic Orthodox Pope and the President, strengthening the clientelist structures of Egyptian society; official dialogue is specific to the

Egyptian social dynamics; official dialogue maintains religion as a 'border guard' between societal groups (in reality sustaining the legitimacy of religion as a societal delineator) and functions as diplomacy between these groups; while constructing relations between certain groups, official dialogue also helps define other groups as opponents; and finally, official dialogue sustains and benefits from the discourse of national unity - a political discourse that promotes unity among otherwise disparate social groups (Ayubi 2006, 209).

Official dialogue following the 2011 Revolution

The last section of the article will look at manifestations of official dialogue during the revolutionary period from 2011 until 2013. The focus is to trace manifestations of official dialogue in the revolutionary period. Official dialogue from before the revolution was carried into the revolutionary period, and used as a tool to negotiate relations between the entities in power, the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Azhar in the revolutionary process. This was clear when the Coptic Orthodox Church after the 2011 revolution invited different ruling entities to celebrations of great token value, such as the Christmas celebrations, with the aim of positioning themselves positively in Egyptian socio-politics. The political ties, essential to official dialogue were especially visible in the news coverage of the Pope very publicly supporting the military removing the Muslim Brotherhood President from power in 2013.

The revolution opened up debate generally in Egypt providing more freedom of speech and seriously questioned the discourse of national unity, which was the backbone of many of the pre-revolutionary dialogue initiatives. The legitimate questioning of the discourse of national unity opened to a positive debate about the presence of Christians as Egyptian citizens and their hardships, the implications of which is the topic of this section, but it also opened to a critique of the influence of the Christians in socio-politics leading to more sectarian incidents, as has been discussed earlier in this article. It did, however, seem that the positive approach to Christian citizenship often was reactionary to the negative approach, sectarian incidents spawning discussions and Muslims making human chains around churches to protect them, or Facebook declarations of solidarity with the Christians following the Maspero incident in October 2011, but there were also initiatives aimed at changing the general Egyptian attitude, as will now be shown.

A major change was the fact that a number of NGOs, not specifically working with Muslim-Christian relations before, began to more openly address sectarian issues. Examples of this can be found with Nahdet el-Mahrousa and their *Misriyati* initiative and Hisham

Mubarak Law Center and their *Don't label Me* initiative. Although not manifestations of official dialogue, they are interesting as they underline that the revolution brought a heightened awareness of sectarian issues and an inclination to work against them in Egyptian society during the revolution. A young Muslim activist working in Nahdet el-Mahrousa formulates it this way:

> From my own experience working with Misriyati on diversity issues, I feel there is in general much more openness and willingness now after the revolution to talk about the injustices, discrimination, and related personal experiences in groups where both Muslims and Christians are present... (This applies on all levels, not only religious issues) although there certainly still is both 'shyness' and 'defensiveness' ... I guess the level of openness really depends on the group and the level of trust.

But she continues:

> Two years later [after the 2011 revolution], a number of sectarian violence events have taken place (including the attack on the ‘patriarchal’ cathedral in Abassiyya), and the Islamist ideology is in power... I think now the general feel is one of ‘fear’... and I think there is hardly any trust in the possibility of true dialogue... I think at this point the general population of Christians (as well as Muslims that do not have an Islamist ideology) see no significance to ‘dialogue’ as there is no trust.

The enthusiasm immediately following the revolution was challenged by the worsening situation after the revolution: the sectarian incidents increased, the financial situation was desperate, and political liberty was still needed. This underlines the growing awareness during the revolutionary period, which is the topic of this article.

The response to the elevated insecurity among Christians in Egypt varied greatly. The Coptic Orthodox Church as an institution seemed to lean towards official dialogue as before the revolution, but with changing allegiances according to the political climate, underlining the political use of official dialogue. In the beginning of the revolution the Coptic Orthodox Pope asked the Copts to not partake in the revolution, though many non-clergy Copts did not follow his request (M. Guirguis 2012, 512; Iskander 2012, 162). During the Christmas celebrations of the period, the Coptic Pope moved to accommodate the new political situation by using the same clientelist signifier as during the Mubarak regime: he invited the army and major political parties to participate in the Christmas celebration at the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Cairo, which traditionally has been, as described, a major signifier of peaceful relations in the official dialogue. The Muslim Brotherhood accepted the invitation in January 2012 and 2013, signalling willingness to political cooperation in the future, and by this, that they were open to maintain the

clientelist mechanism of the Pope representing the Coptic Church as a political entity. The Salafist politicians failed to show at the Christmas celebrations – some of them even declaring it religiously unsound (Hauslohner 2012). In March 2012 the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood followed up on the budding relations by visiting the Coptic Cathedral – as the first guide of the Muslim Brotherhood ever to do so officially – to wish the Pope well after his operations. Although the Muslim Brotherhood sent greetings through their homepage, they did not participate in the 2014 Christmas celebrations of the Coptic Church after the new round of political turmoil in 2013. It is not likely they were invited due to the changes in the political climate - the Muslim Brotherhood again being prohibited as an organisation. Instead, the interim president visited the Coptic Cathedral in the week before the Christmas celebrations and Coptic crowds cheered after the Christmas greeting of el-Sisi had been read.

With the death of Pope Shenouda in 2012, the newly elected Pope, Tawadros II, declared publicly that he would steer the Coptic Church clear of politics, but this does not seem to have been possible for him (Samaan 2012). This was especially clear during the 2013 revolution, where the Pope publicly supported the military removal of President Morsi from power, and in 2014 where the Pope openly promoted the presidency of el-Sisi. Many Copts were dependent on the patronage of the Coptic Orthodox Church and it was difficult for the new Pope to leave the worldly needs of his flock unheeded, as the Christians needed the same basic security as the rest of the population. The Pope was thus walking a tight rope between Copts demanding their democratic rights through demonstrations, the need for a place in the clientelist system by maintaining the discourse of national unity (i.e. within the legitimate circle of national belonging) through official dialogue, and an established hierarchy of power that could not easily be dismissed. The 2013 revolution did, however, ease the choice for the Coptic Pope, as most Christians frightened by the escalated violence targeting Christians were throwing their support behind the military, making it obvious for the Coptic Church to re-establish relations similar to those before the revolution.

It was not only the Coptic Pope who kept the interreligious discourses of the Mubarak era alive. Less than a month after the high profile attacks on the Copts in Maspero in 2011 involving the Egyptian military, the Grand Mufti of the Azhar denied any sectarian discrimination against Christians, maintaining the discourse of national unity. He instead blamed the turbulent times and a few Salafis.

A document released in June 2011 'al-Azhar Declaration on the Future of Egypt' underlined what the Azhar hoped to gain from the revolution, while at the same time committing themselves to democracy and religious dialogue: the Azhar wanted to establish itself as an independent, critical voice in Egyptian society (Bohlander

2014). The document furthermore stated that religion cannot be used against the rights of other people – also underlining the rights of the Christians in Egypt. Many of the demands for institutional autonomy of the Azhar was rushed through by law during the interim reign of the SCAF (the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) in January 2012, but the consequences of this is yet to be seen when the revolutionary dust settles as there was an outcry from the Muslim Brotherhood and a number of scholars (Brown 2012). However, with President el-Sisi demanding that the Azhar initiated a reformation of Islam in late 2014, the state control of the leadership of the Azhar seems intact.

The largest and potentially most influential post-revolutionary dialogue initiative was started by the Azhar in cooperation with the Coptic Church. The initiative was named 'Family House' (*Baīt al ‘Ayīla*) and gathered artists, politicians, intellectuals, and religious leaders for workshops and debates on how to maintain positive relations between Muslims and Christians in Egypt. The initiative was already in the making before the revolution, as the Grand Sheikh of the Azhar called for the initiative after a church bombing in Alexandria in December 2010 and the first meeting took place just before the revolution on January the 17th 2011 – but the initiative first gained momentum after the revolution, as formulated by a Muslim interviewee:

> When the revolution came and several sectarian clashes took place, the actual implementation and work of the initiative started to spread, you can say that the revolution affirmed the need of such initiatives and without it, it could have simply passed by like any other useless initiative.

The Grand Sheikh of the Azhar and the Coptic Pope took four year turns in heading the initiative underlining the cooperation between the Azhar and the Coptic Orthodox Church. According to a young Muslim woman from the dialogue environment, the initiative was inclusive and encompass, Azhar scholars, priests, journalists, theologians, famous actors, and prominent business men: different types of people and intellects are engaged in this initiative. The initiative was initially called the National Reconciliation Initiative, but was later named ‘al Baīt al ‘Ayīla’ or ‘The Family House’. A place where all Egyptians can meet based only on their citizenship, from all backgrounds, renouncing violence and sectarian clashes, spreading the message of peace and love. The initiative includes both Christians and Muslims for the purpose of educating, enlightening and delivering a correct image of each religion to the other.
The participants of the initiative were publicly visible through national television pushing for a more tolerant stance towards other religions, but the initiative also had access to a number of centers in

the different governorates of the country, where youth met for week long retreats to get to know each other better despite religious differences.

The initiative seemed to be relatively low profile compared to the ruckus of the political turmoil during the revolution, but it seemed a sturdy initiative based on some of the more respected Muslim and Christian voices in contemporary Egypt. The initiative did not differ immensely from the pre-revolutionary official dialogue and was as such another example of dialogue based on the clientelist structures, but it did differ in important ways: it included a broader segment of Egypt's influential elite also encompassing for example artists and actors, which potentially pushed the initiative beyond the political use of official dialogue. This could be an indicator that the revolutionary period has opened both the non-religious and non-political environment to involve people from outside the traditional environment of official dialogue - and vice-versa. But it is still in 2015 too early to say, if this more open attitude towards Muslim-Christian tension will endure.

Conclusion

The Egyptian socio-political structures have seemingly remained intact throughout the post-revolutionary period, this is witnessed not only in politics, but also in the official dialogue analysed in this article. The positions of the political players have, however, been negotiated leading to a more open public debate and the questioning of the discourse of national unity, fundamental to both dialogue initiatives and the glossing over of sectarian issues. This has led to elevated sectarian issues and a discussion of the societal position of the Christians in Egypt, but it has also led to some very interesting new dialogue initiatives by the people working with dialogue. One of the more interesting of these from official dialogue, *Baīt al ʻAyīla*, is found in a cooperation between the Azhar and the Coptic Church involving also the media and prominent public figures. The size of the initiative and the involvement of for example artists and actors indicate are more open attitude towards the problems the Christian minority faces.

Based on observing the political situation in Egypt, it seems the open debate has been silenced. The interim governance of the military and the following President el-Sisi took steps to control the public debate, for example by shutting down a political satire show "The Show" commenting on Egyptian politics and hosted by Bassem Youssef – a hallmark of democratic blossoming during the revolution, and by introducing laws against unlicensed public gatherings to limit demonstrations, prohibiting journalism contradicting official statements of the regime, and strengthening the regime control over

NGOs. It furthermore seems the open debate of sectarian issues has drowned in the dichotomisation between Islamists and non-Islamists, as the Islamists are blamed for any problems between Muslims and Christians, closing any further discussion about the very real problems for Christians ingrained in Egyptian society. While this ends the article on a rather bleak note, it is hoped that some of the initiatives started in the revolutionary period will continue to promote positive relations between Muslims and Christians in Egypt.

Author biography

Henrik Lindberg Hansen, originally a master of Theology, moved to Egypt in 2004, where he worked for six years with religious dialogue between Muslims and Christians for the Danish organisation, Danmission. In 2010 he started his doctoral work at School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. After finishing the Ph.d., he moved back to Denmark where he rewrote the thesis into a book, which I.B. Tauris published in 2015 with the title *Christian-Muslim Relations in Egypt: Politicis, Society and Interfaith Encounters*. Currently, Henrik is working as an analyst for the government in Nuuk, Greenland.

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Reframing Interfaith Boundary Crossing and Maintenance: Middle Eastern Christians' Narratives on Intimacy with Muslims

Anne Rosenlund Jørgensen

Abstract

By exploring narratives of Middle Eastern Christians (MECs) in Denmark I want to open an important, yet overlooked, window on invisible intra-ethnic relations in an immigrant context in Denmark. The subject of research is negotiations of boundary maintenance and strategies for recovering from boundary crossings in cases of interfaith intimacies between MEC women and Muslim men in Denmark. The research focuses on different contextual aspects of intimate boundary crossing and argues that already at the stage of dating, the relationship challenges boundaries and erodes families and communities. In order to explore some very diverse narratives, I ask: How do MECs in Denmark, who carry experiences of intra-ethnic interfaith intimacies with Muslims, negotiate boundary maintenance at the levels of the individual, the family and the MEC community?

> Well, we have lived together in the Middle East since many years ago. (…) What is it about the two of us that makes us different from each other? Well, of course it is religion. (Assyrian Priest in Denmark)

This quote is from an interview conducted by a colleague in the research project DIMECCE[1] with the priests of the Assyrian Church of the East in Denmark elaborating on the relationship between Christian and Muslim immigrants in Denmark from the Middle East. In his words, religion is what separates the two groups from each other and implicitly he argues that if you remove religious affiliation, they are 'the same'. This attitude towards a demarcation between the two groups is seen among Christians in the Middle East as a twofold strategy: being a Christian minority and 'different' to the majority, but 'the same' in regard to national and/or ethnic identification (Galal 2012).

Public and scholarly attention to the relationship between Christian and Muslim immigrants from the Middle East in Denmark has been absent, probably mostly due to a tendency in Denmark to

[1] The HERA financed project *Defining and Identifying Middle Eastern Christian Communities in Europe*. See official webpage: https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/dimecce/ (Accessed 29 September 2015)

disregard religious difference among Middle Eastern immigrants, who are regarded as 'the same' (Sparre et. al. 2015) and as such MECs remain invisible within a perceived Middle Eastern Muslim immigrant group. However, on the topic of Christians in the Middle East, there have been a few articles in the local media recently featuring violent harassment of MECs by Muslim groups in Denmark (Johansen 2014, Khader 2014).

In general though, intra-ethnic interfaith relations elicit neither public nor scholarly attention, because they do not symbolise a so-called clash between something Danish (white) and something ethnic (brown or black). Immigrants from the Middle East, whether they are Christian or Muslim, are both conceived as 'the significant other' in the public mainstream attention and thus regarded as 'the same' (Hunter & McCallum 2014, Sparre, Galal & Jørgensen forthcoming). Therefore, this article's aim is to direct scholarly attention to the under-researched subject of intra-ethnic negotiations of MEC relations with Muslims in Denmark, and to open an important window on hitherto invisible intergroup relations and boundary negotiations within an immigrant context. Through a new analysis of narratives of MECs gathered during my time at the Danish component of the first research project exploring MEC immigrant communities, *Defining and Identifying Middle Eastern Christian Communities in Europe* (DIMECCE), I take a look at the invisible subject of inter-faith intimacy as an act that challenges boundaries across levels of community, family and individual (Connolly 2009, Galal 2009).

Studies of Middle Eastern Christians in Denmark

DIMECCE explores migrant experiences of MECs in UK, Sweden and Denmark.[2] I have been affiliated with the Danish component at Roskilde University since late 2014. In this time I wrote a Master's thesis based on five interviews[3] I conducted to explore narratives of MECs who had opted out of either Orthodox or Catholic MEC communities in Denmark, namely the Coptic Orthodox Church[4], the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Ancient Church of the East[5]. I found that the reasons for leaving were

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[2] See official web page of the research project: https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/dimecce/ (Accessed 29 September 2015)

[3] The interviews were conducted as semi-structured and open ended and they lasted between 1- 2,5 hours.

[4] Most Christian Egyptians belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church, which was established in 42 AD. Today it is a diasporic Church with congregations all over the world. The Danish Coptic Orthodox Church is located in Taastrup. Read more: Sparre et. al. 2015.

[5] The Iraqi Christians in Denmark belong to the Chaldean Catholic Church with churches in Aarhus and Copenhagen, or the Assyrian Church of the East in Aarhus, or the Ancient Assyrian Church of the East. The latter two are Orthodox whereas the Chaldean Church is Catholic. Read more: Sparre et. al.

multiple and that it was not always pure choice; rather, for some of the interviewees, it followed from experiences of social exclusion from the MEC communities, and this social exclusion in turn was due to direct or indirect intimate relations with Muslims. Thus, the thesis made interesting reading as it revealed hidden and unofficial policies of some of the established MEC communities in Denmark. These policies are worth studying further to explore the boundaries between Christians and Muslims from the Middle East in Denmark and challenges to them.

My research draws on interviews with three MECs who experienced intra-ethnic interfaith intimacy – either directly or indirectly – with Muslims in Denmark. The first lays the foundation as it explores how an individual negotiates boundary maintenance and crossing and recovers from the consequences, whereas the last two interviews are with parents whose daughters were dating Muslim men. An analysis of the narratives points to the need for exploring intra-ethnic interfaith intimate relations further in future research, as religious immigration and translocation forces new perspectives and puts new pressures on the boundaries between these two groups who have lived together for centuries, and on the processes of their reproduction and maintenance (Barth 1994). Of particular interest is the sense of invisibility of the MECs within the new Danish context.

The subject of interfaith intimacies refers to the private sphere and consequently methodological and ethical considerations arise, such as a need for anonymisation and sensitivity regarding dissemination. Therefore I have totally anonymised the interviewees and removed information regarding name, age, denominational belonging, city of residence, time of arrival in Denmark and occupation. However, these deletions are not without consequences for the research result because important aspects of analysis may be lost and interesting comparative elements perforce left unexplored. As an example it would be interesting to explore differences in boundary maintenance and policies of interfaith intimacies between the MEC communities in Denmark as in many respects they originate from different religious, political and (im)migrant contexts, mainly Iraq and Egypt (Sparre et. al. 2015).

Towards a definition of invisible intra-ethnic interfaith intimacies

> Crossing boundaries sexually in the form of intermarriage challenges the communities, blurring their boundaries, eroding their cultural distinctiveness, and, in the case of minorities, jeopardizes their survival. Communities harbour a vital interest

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2015.

> in controlling this threat through sexual prescription that can help establish and sustain a particular political order. (Connolly 2009: 504)

Aaron, a middle-aged Christian from the Middle East living in Denmark, was actively involved in one of the MEC communities[6] until recently, when he discovered that his daughter was dating a young Muslim man of Middle Eastern origin – a relationship he was furious about when I interviewed him. Not only did it affect the internal relationship between members of the family negatively, it also affected the status of the parents within the MEC community they had been involved in all of their lives, whether in Denmark or in the Middle East. They now experienced social exclusion, both from the community members and the priest. As such, indirect interfaith intimacies with Muslims (by being the parent of a daughter having direct interfaith intimacy with a Muslim) caused social exclusion from the community. He exemplifies by explaining how members of the community talk behind his back: "*They all talk about (name of his daughter) and her problems – well you must excuse me – like bitch*". Aaron, although he himself did not cross the interfaith boundary, experiences the MEC community's policy towards boundary crossing: because it threatens the community, he as a parent is socially excluded and given the responsibility of either terminating his daughter's relationship with the Muslim man or breaking his own contact with her. His example shows us how intimate boundary crossing becomes a challenge not only to the individual and her parents, but also to the community. As such an exploration of negotiations on boundary maintenance and the struggle for 'survival' on individual, family and community levels is relevant. In this article I explore only the negotiations from an individual and parental perspective, but I strongly recommend that this is explored further by including a comparative analysis of the communities' negotiations of boundary maintenance across denominations.

Interfaith intimacies

Aaron's narrative exemplifies how interfaith relationships are already problematic as early as the dating stage. It also highlights how intimate romantic boundary crossing – that is, a possible marriage in embryo – does not affect only the involved parties: it is seen as a

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[6]In Denmark there are four identified "traditional" Middle Eastern Christian communities: the Assyrian Orthodox community represented by both the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East; the Chaldean Catholic community represented by two churches, on in Aarhus and one in Copenhagen and five small congregations in other parts of Denmark; the Coptic Orthodox community with a church in Copenhagen, and finally the Syriac Orthodox community, which has just established a congregation in Næstved.

threat, something that challenges and even erodes both the family and the wider community. As such, the body of the daughter and the possible sexual boundary crossing between her and her Muslim boyfriend becomes a symbolic boundary marker of the body politics within the socio-political environment of the community and family (Connolly, 2009: 499). Therefore, instead of working with the term interfaith marriages, as Connolly (2009), Singla (2012) and Galal (2009) do, I subscribe to the term interfaith intimacies, since I argue that interfaith relationships begin to disturb and erode the boundaries of communities and families back in their tentative beginnings when they cease to be platonic. In other words, already at the stage of falling in love, dating or becoming boyfriend and girlfriend, the individual, the family and the community are affected and jeopardised.

In an immigrant context, most research in Denmark on interfaith intimacies has concentrated on ethnically mixed marriages – for example a marriage between a white (often secular or Christian) and an ethnic immigrant minority (often Muslim, Hindi, etc.) (Singla 2015, Poulsen 2012, Rytter 2007). Miri Song (2012) problematises this aspect and points towards a tendency to overlook important research on immigrant groups when the focus is on two significantly different groups. She asks: "How should we conceive of the experiences of people who are mixes of two non-white groups?" (Song 2012: 569). Connolly (2009) is one of the few researchers exploring intra-ethnic marriages crossing religious boundaries. She focuses on Christian Protestant converts in Indonesia marrying Muslim compatriots; her research therefore does not cover interfaith marriage in an immigrant perspective. Galal (2009) also explores intra-ethnic interfaith marriages, but her research is among Coptic Christians and Muslims living in Egypt. Thus, research on intra-ethnic interfaith intimacies has been on marriages in the lands of origin. What remains rather unexplored is how an intra-ethnic group explores interfaith boundary crossings in a context of migration.

Muslims and Christians as an intra-ethnic group? Ambivalence and challenges in terminology

Importantly, the argument that Middle Eastern immigrants share ethnicity is a highly contested statement and a rather vulgarised claim. I argue that they all experience this simplification in a 'Western' society because in media and society, MECs are invisibilised – racialised and perceived as a mono-ethnic group: Muslims. As an example, almost without exception, all MECs interviewed in the DIMECCE project had experienced being mistaken for a Muslim because of their Middle Eastern or Arabic appearance (Hunter & McCallum 2014, Sparre, Galal & Jørgensen forthcoming).

2015). Thus, the religious differences are publicly invisible and the Middle Eastern 'Muslim' visual characteristics salient.

What is needless to emphasise is that many MECs would deny the claim that they share ethnicity, origin or even nation. As an example, an Assyrian from Iraq would probably deny the fact that they and Muslims share the same country of origin, since they originate from Assyria and not Iraq. Moreover, many Iraqi Christians would deny an Arabic ethnicity, saying it is a Muslim ethnicity, whereas many Coptic Christians would be more inclined to use it.

Thus, it is hard to capture a term that is able to contain the ambivalences, policies and strategies within different MEC communities. However, since they share some appearance traits with most Middle Eastern Muslims I use 'Middle Eastern' ethnicity as a definition of intra-ethnicity to capture the diverse group of people in Denmark who originate from the Middle East and are considered 'the same', even though it is an oversimplification of an extremely complex group.

Capturing narratives on intra-ethnic interfaith intimacies

Having clarified terminology with certain reservations, I present the research question, which is: How do MECs in Denmark, who carry experiences of intra-ethnic interfaith intimacies with Muslims, negotiate boundary maintenance on the levels of the individual, the family and the MEC community?

To be able to capture the diversity and complexity within and between the narratives, I use Michael Jackson's approach to analyse the narratives as storytelling:

> In so far as tragedy has the effect of sending one deep into oneself, it is characterized by social withdrawal, silence, and retreat. Storytelling brings one out of oneself. It involves a decision to speak out, to share one's story with others, to see one's situation from afar, and even, in time, to see its comic side. Accordingly, the tragic and the comic cannot be treated as distinct genres, but as terms that mark the opposite ends of a continuum. (Jackson, 2012: 184-185)

Using this claim that storytelling is a means to recover (Jackson 2012) I approach narratives as dynamic and process-related, thus a continuum, not a genre. My analysis is twofold: one of my interviewees is a middle-aged MEC woman who has been in a relationship with a Muslim man in Denmark with whom she has two children. An analysis of her interview revolves around the individual perspective on intra-ethnic interfaith boundary crossing and boundary negotiations and her narrative shows how she has recovered from the consequences of intimate boundary crossing. The last two interviews constitute the parental perspective: both parents are affected by their daughter's intimate relations with a Muslim man and the narratives reveal how the parents and the whole family are affected by a

daughter's boundary crossing and the community's policy to survive. The analysis of all three narratives underlines the argument that not only is marriage a boundary marker, but already at the stage of dating the interfaith boundary has been crossed and the challenges appear.

The situational context of Middle Eastern Christians in Denmark and interfaith relations

This article derives inspiration from Connolly's (2009) study of intra-ethnic interfaith boundary crossing among compatriots in Indonesia. She subscribes to Barth's (1994) focus on boundaries and the diacritic marks that separate and differentiate groups or communities, rather than the cultural content enclosed by the boundaries. He argues that the processes of boundary maintenance are highly situational, and it is from this point of departure that I focus on contextual aspects in the narratives of MECs as they negotiate their individual and parental processes of boundary maintenance within the blurred area caused by interfaith intimacies in Denmark.

Below, I briefly outline the situational and contextual elements in these three narratives.

Firstly, the MEC communities have a long history in Iraq and Egypt, where the legislation on boundary crossing in the form of marriage gave preferential treatment to the Muslim majority. In Egypt, a Coptic woman converting to Islam could not be forbidden to marry by her parents (Galal 2012); in other words the parents lost authority over their child, and hence were likely to fight the conversion bitterly. In Iraq, the Baath party's legislation on interfaith marriage automatically converted a woman and her children to Islam if she married a Muslim man (Hanish 2009). In other words Islam as a religion is given preference by the marriage legislation in both countries, giving Christian minorities strong incentive to fight conversion and interfaith marriage. As such, most church institutions have strategically worked as socio-political actors, embedding the same policies on interfaith marriage in order to comply with national rules and conform nationally and ethnically with the majority (Galal, 2012).

Secondly, the MECs are affected by the Danish official and public attitude towards interfaith intimacies and/or marriages. Even though the Danish state has comprehensive marriage legislation[7] it does not regard religious difference as problematic. As such, the MEC communities are placed within a new political context that either renders interfaith marriage completely invisible or disregards it as an unimportant detail. However, although only forced marriage is

7 See the Danish legislation on marriages: https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=163352 (Accessed 13 November 2015).

formally illegal a fairly pervasive attitude among ethnic Danes looks down on the institution of arranged marriage and associates it with something un-Danish and Muslim (Schmidt, 2011).

Thirdly, The MECs carry a long history of relations with Muslims and a lot has been written about their history as neighbors and compatriots (Cragg 1991, Greene 2000, Hasan 2003, Hanish 2009). In interviews for the DIMECCE project, MECs living in Denmark all somehow related to their shared history with a Muslim population in the Middle East. Many of them argued that history was repeating itself with regard to persecution of Christians, citing the current attacks on Christians by ISIS in the region. Hunter and McCallum (2014), who constitute the UK component of the DIMECCE research team, have studied UK-based MEC immigrant attitudes towards their Muslim immigrant compatriots. They argue that MECs are not only sometimes the mistaken objects of Islamophobic discourse due to similar visual appearance, but also constitute a population where anti-Muslim prejudice is prevalent. Having read most interviews done by the Danish component of the DIMECCE research team, I would argue that the results could be similar in a Danish context. However, and most importantly, MECs all respond to the topic on relations with Muslims in Denmark, whether positive or negative, and most respond to their shared experience of mis-identification as Muslims from the general public. There is a tendency in most interviews to regard Muslims as ‘the significant other’, rather than the ethnically ‘white’ (secular/Christian) Dane and many tell stories of having fled from Muslims and of seeking refuge in an anticipated Christian country. In this regard, the history of Muslim-Christian relations is present and certainly reproduced in the narratives of MECs in Denmark.

Fourthly, the positions of MECs are turned upside down: in the Middle East they appeared as a religious minority within the national and/or ethnic majority, whereas in Denmark they are part of an ‘ethnic’ minority within a religious majority in Denmark. However most MECs distinguish between a Danish Christianity and a Middle Eastern Christianity as two different versions, the latter being more morally founded and consequently, most MECs might regard themselves as part of a minority within a minority. According to Barth (1994) the double minority aspect intensifies a group’s struggle for survival as a community and the importance of boundary maintenance becomes even more pivotal.

Fifthly, the issue of interfaith intimacies is not neutral when it comes to gender. Much research on interfaith marriage, intimacy and sexual boundary crossing has demonstrated how often women become the symbolic boundary marker due to their biological capacity as child-bearers and their social role in communities, where they often raise the children culturally and religiously (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989; Connolly 2009; McClintock 1997; Scheper-Hughes and Lock

1987). Mary Douglas points towards this as far back as 1966, arguing that a group's demarcation between something pure and something dangerous or impure could be viewed as a result of patriarchal dominance. Thus, as Connolly (2009) states:

> The subsequent conflation of women's bodies with the body politic means that control of their bodies and fertility is key to the maintenance of the group's boundaries and status. (Connolly, 2009: 499)

Gender perspectives, then, have been studied within a Middle Eastern context (Galal 2009). However, the gender perspective is also in evidence regarding interfaith intimacies among MEC migrants situated in Denmark, as we shall see in this article. At least one study concludes that a negative attitude toward relationships between Western ('secular') women marrying male ethnic others of Muslim faith exists even in more secular regions: "Crossing religious and ethnic boundaries generally disturbs conventions and can engender hostility," argues Nieuwkerk (2006: 1) in her study of Western women embracing Islam.

Thus there are many nuances to the tension between MECs and their Muslim compatriots in Denmark. Historical, political, public, social and personal aspects enhance, challenge or jeopardise the narratives of boundary maintenance and the strategies to recover from boundary crossing. In this regard Barth's call for exploring boundary maintenance, as opposed to the content contained by them, makes sense.

A bracelet with a cross and a necklace with Fatima's hand

Elizabeth is a middle-aged MEC immigrant and has lived in Denmark for many years. When I met her at the interview, she wore a bracelet with a cross and a necklace with Fatima's hand, symbolising how boundary crossing between the two religious groups, and their shared history and geography, is embedded within her life and how she is not afraid to make that physically visible.

Elizabeth has a Muslim boyfriend, with whom she has two adult children. Although her boyfriend now lives in Lebanon, it seems they are still very close and they visit each other whenever they can.

When describing how they met, she calls herself *a bandit*, encapsulating her position as a naughty child from a parent's perspective and emphasising the humorous distance she has put between herself and the situation, which is now a long time ago. Moreover, the quote emphasises the forbidden aspect of the relationship and her awareness that she broke the rules by falling for a Muslim man and engaging in a relationship with him.

She is quite frank about the consequences it had, the first and most devastating of which was that her mother broke contact with her immediately after she told her about the relationship. At that time, she had only just started dating this man, and therefore Elizabeth's narrative emphasises that the act of boundary crossing provokes a reaction already at the level of dating. Elizabeth and her mother never did resume contact, not even before her mother died 10 years ago. She tries to explain: "*Because we have that culture where you do not marry a Muslim (...) and if (you do), you (the parents/family) just have to leave and forget about it (the family member marrying a Muslim)*". Hence, the relationship is forbidden according to the family, but also by the cultural community to which they belong, namely the MEC community. As such, her mother felt she had no choice, but was obliged to break contact with her.

When Elizabeth narrates what she told her daughter about the rift, she says: "*I did not marry one of my family (a Christian) and then I am out*".

Thus, Elizabeth is conscious about having crossed a boundary and when she reflects about it, she is straightforward about the consequences and the reasoning behind it: "*Now I see that my mother was right – when you marry a Muslim you can never agree; there will always be conflict*" and in a sarcastic tone she says she might consider doing the same with her daughters, even though I think it is meant as a joke, to justify her mother's decision.

When interviewing Elizabeth she seemed surprisingly calm when talking about the situation, and she often brought the subject into play on her own initiative. It felt like she had come to terms with the circumstances a long time ago and now acknowledged the hidden rules within the community and family regarding intimate relations with Muslims and the consequences of breaking them. It did not seem taboo for her to talk about it; rather, she cast a comic light on her intimate boundary crossing and the consequences it had. As Jackson (2012) argues: the tragic and the comic are terms that mark the opposite ends of a continuum in the process of recovery. After the passage of enough time, Elizabeth's narrative exhibits signs of recovery. What must have been experienced as quite tragic – the loss of contact with her beloved mother – is a situation she is now able to joke about.

It is important to mention, though, that Elizabeth does not have any religious or social bonds with the established Middle Eastern Churches or communities in Denmark. She practices a solitary form of religious belonging in a Danish Lutheran cathedral, where she uses the church room as a meaningful space (Cresswell, 2015) to sit and pray and light candles, thus producing her Christian identity, which is not produced in any other places or social contexts in her life. Therefore, she is not positioned as a member within a specific MEC community in Denmark and hence has no duties, rights or obligations

ithin the community (Tan & Moghaddam 1999). Thus, she is able to speak her mind without thinking of any social consequences from the community because she has never been affiliated with one in Denmark. The time of being involved in a community was long ago and as a child and teenager in the Middle East. At the end of the interview, when I tell her about my own motivation for interviewing her – namely the fact that she is *not* affiliated with an MEC community – she says: "*Yes, I am very different. If for example you interview other Christians in other churches, then you will see something completely different, not like me.*" Hence, with self-awareness she positions herself outside the MEC community in Denmark in general. Here you could question why Elizabeth's narrative is important in this analysis at all, when she expresses no sense of belonging to the MEC communities in Denmark. I return to this point later.

Besides having a Muslim boyfriend for many years, her best friends are Lebanese Shia Muslims. She has no MEC friends, besides her relatives in Sweden. When I ask her if all her friends are Muslim, she says: "*Yes yes, I have the best friends, even though we are….*" The sentence is cut of as if she needs words and hence the sentence contain an implicit 'but' which covers *the* specific and salient difference or boundary between her and her group of friends, namely a religious demarcation.

Elizabeth has many family members in Sweden, who are much engaged with the MEC communities there. When arriving in Denmark as an asylum-seeker with her mother, they intended to go all the way to Sweden, but they were caught by the Danish police and registered in Denmark and thus, they were given asylum in Denmark instead. And in that regard she says: "*I say thank God, because I would not have liked it in Sweden. I have been there many times and I do not like it.*" Elizabeth does not have much contact with the relatives in Sweden and it remains an unanswered question why she does not like it there. She herself emphasises her lack of social needs in general and how she likes to be alone. However, I would argue that this is an indication of recovery since she does not miss the contact with MEC communities and she displays no regret as to how her life has turned out. She somehow uses her Shia friends in Denmark as an alternative, arguing that there is no need to join the family and relatives in Sweden, as she has her close circle in Denmark. Therefore I argue that her Shia friends are considered more able to embrace her intimate boundary crossing and her ambivalent notions of belonging than her relatives in Sweden; together with her friends she travels to Lebanon; they often visit each other and dine together, and her best friend even goes to church with her sometimes, even though she is a Muslim.

We can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and difference. The features that are taken into account are not the sum of 'objective' difference, but

only those which the actors themselves regard as significant (…) Some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied. (Barth 1969: 14)

There is no doubt that Elizabeth put a lot of emphasis on her Christian identification and argues that she will never become a Muslim: "*I am born Christian and I will die Christian.*" Using Barth's terminology, religious identification becomes an important difference between her and her Lebanese Shia Muslim boyfriend and friends in Denmark in her narrative. However, in practice I would argue that she plays down the difference and practices a more diverse and fluid transition between the religious demarcations. As an example, she talks much about her inspiration from the Shia Muslim history and culture and reads a lot of Imam Ali's texts and the Quran: She says: "*I love Imam Ali.*" Furthermore, she is very supportive of the Hizbollah movement in Lebanon, arguing that they protect the MECs in the region and that Lebanon is now the only safe haven for Christians in the Middle East. Thus, the boundary is very fluid between her Christian identification and her notion of belonging to a Lebanese Shia Muslim community. Another example arises when discussing national identity at the end of the interview. She argues that she is equally Iraqi and Lebanese, but she does not identify with an Arab ethnicity; she subscribes to a Middle Eastern ethnic identification, able to embrace her ambivalent notions of belonging to a past and imagined Iraqi Christian community and to the newly adopted Lebanese Shia Muslim community.

Having a Middle Eastern appearance, being well read in Islamic literature and having almost exclusively Muslim friends and no attachment to MEC communities in Denmark, she becomes almost invisible as a Christian, which makes her able to practice a fluid transition between the two groups. An example of this is when she describes her relations with a Muslim colleague at work, with whom she often discusses Islam. After having worked together many years it is revealed to him that she is not Muslim but Christian, and she says:

"He said: 'What?' I say 'Yes, I am not a Muslim, but it is fine – we can talk and we can discuss (the subject of Islam).' Of course he had a shock and he said to me: 'Elizabeth, you are not Christian but you are better than a Muslim, because you have read and know everything (...).' But I will never be Muslim of course – I read, I have it – I love Imam Ali, but I will never be."

Thus, she is actually able to pass as a Muslim and she is considered 'the same' until she reveals her religious identification as a Christian. The invisibility allows her to maintain agency in regard to boundary maintenance and boundary crossing. I argue that by practicing a solitary form of religious belonging and identity, and by positioning

herself as detached from her family in Sweden and MEC communities over there, she carves out her right to determine when she wants to cross the boundary and when she wants to maintain it, and that is why her unique narrative is so important in this analysis.

The boundary is crossed when engaging with Shia Muslims, who are considered as allies in Elizabeth's narrative and as having a joint history with Christians in the Middle East. As she explains: "*I grew up with them (Shia Muslims in Iraq) and I was very happy about it,*" meaning they have always been a part of her life in a positive way and therefore it is natural for her to continue the relationship with them. Shia Muslims protect Christians in the Middle East and share the same cruel fate in Iraq these days in attacks from ISIS, as Elizabeth explains, and thus one can engage with Shia Muslims without being robbed of one's religious identification as a Christian: they are able to live side by side with mutual respect for each others' religious differences. Implicitly, it would be different trying to engage with Sunni Muslims, seen as the ones behind ISIS.

However, she argues that ISIS should not be able to call themselves Muslims: "*They do not have anything to do with religion, they are just criminal people.*" As such, she does not explicitly express distance from Sunni Muslims, but it is implicit in the way she keeps reiterating the boundary between Shia and Sunni Muslims, whom she consider dangerous to Christian communities in the Middle East and dangerous to MECs in Denmark, when she tells about being harassed by them and having felt threatened when wearing her cross around her wrist.

To conclude, Elizabeth practices rather dynamic boundaries between the two groups and they are constantly negotiated within her narrative, although in a very calm way as if she can easily move back and forth when crossing boundaries. What is most remarkable is how she has recovered from the intimate interfaith boundary crossing in her younger years, by feeling strongly involved with Lebanese Shia Muslims and having become almost 'the same', by adopting shared political, cultural and national/regional identification with Lebanese Shia Muslims. However, the religious identification as a Christian is constantly salient in the narrative, and a demarcation between her solitary Christian life and her social Shia Muslim life.

Thus, the intimate boundary crossing is what positions her outside the MEC communities in Sweden and her family in the first place, but she has recovered from the loss by engaging in new meaningful social networks that are able to embrace her ambivalent notions of belonging, namely the Shia communities, and now she experiences a freedom to cross boundaries or maintain them whenever she wishes.

Elizabeth's body and intimate relations with a Muslim man became political, and her mother and others affiliated with MEC communities were forced to break contact with her in order to survive (Connolly 2009). Somehow she recovered by adopting a new and meaningful notion of belonging to a Shia Muslim community without having to

sacrifice her sense of religious identification as an MEC. As such, she can speak freely about it and shed a comic light on her story on interfaith intimate boundary crossing.

The parental position

The narratives of Mariam and Aaron are very different to Elizabeth's narrative. They are both in the middle of a situation where a daughter is dating a Muslim man in Denmark, and both narratives are highly marked as stories of suffering and tragedy with themselves at the centre, whereas Elizabeth has put the tragedy far behind her after a long recovery period. As such, their stories do not have the same comic distance to interfaith intimate boundary crossing and, importantly, they are not the ones acting, but rather the ones acted upon (Jackson 2012: 35) because of their relational bonds with those acting. As Jackson puts it:

> Storytelling (…) (allows) us to feel that we actively participate in a world that for a moment seemed to discount, demean, and disempower us. (Jackson, 2012: 35)

That became rather salient when Mariam asked me to help her persuade her daughter to stop seeing her Muslim boyfriend when I interviewed her. She was desperate to solve the situation and felt deeply disempowered and extremely affected by the consequences of her daughter's interfaith intimate boundary crossing, since the community had socially excluded her and moreover, her own contact with her daughter had become restricted. As such, she partly used the interview and storytelling as a strategy to seek help, allowing her to feel that she could actively do something about her situation.
The same strategy was not as strongly in evidence when interviewing Aaron, although he felt furious about the situation: "*She is in love with a – he is a Muslim and we hate Muslims you know, because if there were no Muslims in our country we would not have moved, so we hate them now – much.*" Very explicitly, Aaron regards his daughter's relationship with a Muslim man as a general and symbolic betrayal of MECs. The romantic relation becomes a break of a clear demarcation between Us (as Christians) and Them (as Muslims). The relation becomes political and the daughter's body becomes political (Connolly 2009).

Generally, Aaron's narrative bears the mark of being a history of suffering. The narrative carries a number of examples of how Muslim compatriots had destroyed elements of Aaron's life and left him feeling robbed. An example he cites is how his father's shop in the Middle East was destroyed by Muslims. He emphasises how almost no Christians are left in his previous homeland because of Muslims.

This story carries the same Islamophobic views as other MEC narratives; a view that history repeats itself when Muslims seize Christian domains. He argues that they will take over Denmark also, exemplifying it with the allowance of building mosques in Nørrebro. So the fact that Muslims have now even taken his daughter confirms his suspicion and underpins his distrust. There is no doubt that he carries strong anti-Muslim feelings and that he does not distinguish between good and bad Muslims: they are all bad in his opinion and you can never trust them. He regards the motive of the Muslim boyfriend for starting the relationship with his daughter as having nothing to do with love and he says: "*And man Muslim, if he marry Christian, he say oh it is very good because he goes to Paradise.*" Thus, the incentive for being romantically involved with his daughter is to fulfill his Muslim missionary task so that he is able to go to heaven, which again is symbolic of how Muslims seize his and other Christians' domains; his daughter's body is thus his and the MEC community's domain.

Mariam, who is in the same situation – having a daughter with a Muslim boyfriend in Denmark – is more nuanced towards Muslims. She says: "*I had problems with Muslims, but we have many Muslims (who) are very, very good.*" However, Mariam is very disturbed by the fact that her daughter has a Muslim boyfriend and she fears that her daughter has already converted: "*I do not know what has happened to her, she is not behaving as she used to and she is totally different, because she – well – she wears (blouses with) long sleeves, well like Muslims and she does not like to eat pork.*" Mariam tried asking the police in Denmark for help with getting her daughter to end the relationship, but the police were confused about the request, since her daughter is over 18 years, the legal age of consent (*myndig* in Danish). Mariam savours the word *myndig* twice as though she was trying to pronounce it correctly, emphasising the fact that this term was alien to her, and she says: "*Yes, you can't do anything because your daughter is now xx years – not like in Iraq where it is yes or no.*" She explains how in Iraq, the parents can decide who your daughter is allowed to marry; in other words, you do not have a term like *myndig* determining a legal age. This is an example of how an immigration context situates the interfaith intimate boundary crossing differently than if it had occurred in the Middle East, where legislation is much more sensitive towards religious differences as well as to parents' rights to control their children's partner choices than in Denmark. She sought help from the state authorities; however she was only met with an uncomprehending attitude from the police. They actually ended up helping the daughter by convincing the mother (Mariam) that she could not do anything about it.

Even Mariam's psychologist neglected the problem. Mariam says: "*Also I speak with my psychologist and she said to me, it is no*

problem, Muslim or Christian it is the same God. I said to her no! Christians are different from Muslims."
Mariam's struggle for boundary maintenance is affected by state policy. Her status as a mother has been stripped of agency, and this gives rise to a sense of powerlessness in Mariam's narrative, because she is affected by her daughter's intimate relations with a Muslim man. In the MEC community she used to be part of, she is now experiencing the same kind of informal social exclusion that Aaron describes – the feeling that other members of the MEC community are distancing themselves. Consequently, she feels forced to leave the community and find another place to practice religious belonging.
Aaron, like Elizabeth, is quite frank that he and the rest of the family would have to break contact with their daughter in the near future in order to regain membership of the MEC community, unless she ends the intimate relation with the Muslim man.

To conclude, while the narratives of Mariam and Aaron offer a different perspective to Elizabeth's on intra-ethnic interfaith intimacies between MECs and Muslims, they all show that one woman's interfaith intimate boundary crossing affects not only herself, but also the parents, since her individual choice of boyfriend affects her parents' position in the MEC community. Second, we see how the parents end up in a situation where they have to follow community policy – namely break contact with their daughter – in order not to pose a threat to the community. Therefore the body of the woman becomes political, at both family and community level; the struggle to maintain boundaries becomes the community's struggle to survive.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of three narratives of MECs having experienced the consequences of interfaith intimate boundary crossing with Muslims several points have been made.

First of all, the boundary crossing becomes problematic and causes a threat to the individual, family and MEC community already at the stage of dating, since all three narratives regarded romantic relations and not legal marriages. Moreover, in all three cases it was daughters dating Muslim men, and thus it is possible to argue that this is not just coincidental with reference to previous studies on gendered matters of intimate boundary crossing.

Secondly, the boundary crossing is situated differently in an immigrant context than in the Middle East. From one point of view this offers an invisibility that allows fluid boundaries between the religious groups, as in the case of Elizabeth, who benefited from this possibility, whereas from another point of view it can be experienced as constraining and disempowering, as in the case of Mariam when

she was left with nowhere to turn once official solutions to the problem with her daughter had failed.

Third, the MEC communities are already struggling for survival as an invisible institution. The enhanced minority status leaves an individual young woman with one option: leave your Muslim boyfriend or be excluded from the community. If a daughter does not leave her boyfriend, the parents are faced with a similar option: break contact with your daughter or the community will break contact with you. Thus, belonging to a community leaves an individual – or family – with rather inflexible demarcations of boundaries and consequently there is little space for negotiating boundaries between the two religious groups; the policy of the community defines them. If you are not a member of a specific MEC community, like Elizabeth, you are able to produce dynamic and fluid boundaries between the two religious groups and you are allowed to negotiate the boundary constantly.

What is interesting in this research is how the Muslim-Christian relation is negotiated within new frames, which are not based on ethnic differences but religious ones. Equally fascinating is how an invisible community within an ethnic group struggles for survival by controlling intimacies with 'the significant other' group in a new political environment that almost completely disregards religious differences. The new frames offer new insights into Muslim-Christian relations and into the changes in fluidity of boundaries between the two groups, depending on whether one is an individual, relatively independent of a community, or struggling for survival. However, this research is very limited and it is hard to conclude anything on the basis of only three interviews. For this reason I strongly recommend more research on the subject of intra-ethnic interfaith intimate boundary crossing in an immigrant European context.

Author biography

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Dialogens arrangement: Når muslimer og kristne mødes

Lise Paulsen Galal

Abstrakt
Denne artikel sætter fokus på religionsdialogen som et arrangeret kulturmøde, der har til formål at skabe fredelig sameksistens og forsoning på tværs af religiøse tilhørsforhold. Med afsæt i en teologisk forståelse af dialog undersøges, hvad arrangementet betyder for den transformation af deltagerne, som religionsdialogen anticiperer. På baggrund af interviews med dialogarrangører og observationer af dialogarrangementer analyseres det spændingsfelt af forskelle, som arrangementet har til formål at overskride. Der sættes særligt fokus på betydningen af arrangementets rituelle karakter og de forskelssætninger af subjektet, som indrammer dialogen.

I slutningen af juli 2015 kunne man følge en diskussion i Kristeligt Dagblad, hvor en række debattører udtrykte kritik af Københavns biskop, Peter Skov-Jakobsens rolle som initiativtager til et nyt tværreligiøst forum med titlen jødisk-kristent-muslimsk forum i København. Initiativet var en reaktion på skudangrebene på Krudttønden og synagogen i København i februar 2015 foretaget af en tilsyneladende radikaliseret, ung, muslimsk mand. Etableringen af forummet foregik i et samarbejde mellem religiøse ledere fra de tre religioner med blandt andet det formål at bekæmpe religiøst betinget hate crime og at sikre religionsfriheden, herunder mindretallenes (Skov-Jakobsen 2015). Sognepræst Marie Høgh kritiserede blandt andet biskoppen for at blande religion og politik (Enevoldsen 2015). Initiativet er et eksempel på et af mange, hvor dialog anses som redskab til konfliktløsning og fredelig sameksistens. Baggrunden og kritikken afslører samtidig, at motiver, personer og politisk kontekst er væsentlige aspekter af dialogens udformning og responsen på samme.

Det er ikke usædvanligt, at dialoginitiativer motiveres af konkrete hændelser. Et andet eksempel er 'Det arabiske initiativ', som den danske regering introducerede i 2003. Hvis dette ikke var direkte motiveret af terroranslaget mod USA den 11. september 2001, så var denne og senere andre konflikter, såsom Mohammed-tegninge-krisen i 2005-06, med til at legitimere initiativets fortsatte eksistens. Med 'Det arabiske initiativ' ønskede regeringen at styrke demokratiseringsprocesser i Mellemøsten og Nordafrika, men også at

styrke dialogen med den arabiske verden.[1] Et 'Dansk-Egyptisk Dialoginstitut' blev etableret i Egypten, og forskellige aktører (ngo'er, uddannelsesinstitutioner m.fl.) igangsatte diverse dialoginitiativer i regionen med støtte fra initiativet. Så sent som i oktober 2015 offentliggjorde Udenrigsministeriet en evaluering, der viste, at netop dialogen og samarbejdet var en helt central del af programmets succes (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark 2015). Men hvad har dialogen mellem muslimer, kristne og jøder i Danmark at gøre med dialog som redskab i understøttelsen af demokratiseringsprocesser i Mellemøsten? Og hvad er det, der gør dialogen til et fejret instrument til konfliktløsning?

Svarene på disse spørgsmål kan ligesom dialogens væsen studeres fra flere perspektiver, som for eksempel filosofiske, teologiske, politiske og sociologiske (se f.eks. Hansen 2015; Rasmussen 1997; Riis 2006). I denne artikel vil jeg i modsætning til mange af disse studier ikke forsøge at definere, hvad dialog er, eller hvad den *bør* føre til, men se på dialogen som et *arrangement* med egne karakteristika, der finder sted i konkrete samfundsmæssige og politiske sammenhænge. Denne tilgang er inspireret af de spørgsmål, vi stiller i forskningsprojektet 'The Organised Cultural Encounter', som er et kollektivt forskningsprojekt, der udforsker forskellige typer af 'arrangerede kulturmøder'.[2] Projektet undersøger arrangerede kulturmøder som en social praksis, herunder hvordan organiseringen af kulturmøder finder sted, hvad der sker i mødet, og hvad dette producerer.

Arrangørerne fremstiller ofte dialogen som et nærmest neutralt og universelt redskab til konfliktløsning, der ikke kun handler om at ændre eller transformere relationen mellem deltagerne, men også om løsning af makropolitiske konflikter. Der synes at være en forventning om, at ændringer på et mikroniveau baseret på 'nære' og 'personlige' møder kan føre til ændringer på et makroniveau. Spørgsmålet er, hvordan bagvedliggende motiver og politisk virkelighed er med til at strukturere dialogens udformning, gennemførelse og resultat. At besvare dette spørgsmål kræver, at man undersøger dialogen i dens konkrete situeringer.

Netop *religions*mødet er, med hændelser som de ovennævnte, blevet fremstillet som særligt vanskeligt. Som Titus Hjelm skriver, så har den politiske opmærksomhed over for religionen nået nye højder de seneste ca. 20 år. "Fear of 'parallel societies', religiously inspired terrorism, human rights violation, and loss of national identity in the face of mass immigration" har alt sammen ført til stigende bevidsthed om religionen som kilde til sociale problemer (Hjelm 2014: 213). Mens den politiske udmelding i en europæisk kontekst er, at religiøst

[1] Se http://detarabiskeinitiativ.dk/om/ (læst 1. december 2015).
[2] Projektet er finansieret af Det Frie Forskningsråd med bevillings-ID: DFF-1319-00093. Se også projektets hjemmeside: https://organisedculturalencounter.wordpress.com/

tilhørsforhold kun kan tolereres, så længe det underordnes loyalitet over for nationalstaten (Wolf 2012: 37), så synes religionsdialogen at tage et andet afsæt.

I denne artikel er fokus på det interreligiøse dialogmøde og herunder særligt mødet mellem muslimer og kristne. Med udgangspunkt i erfaringer fra deltagelse i dialogarrangementer mellem danskere og egyptere, kristne og muslimer i Danmark og Egypten, og fra interviews med arrangører og iagttagere af dialogmøder i og mellem Danmark og Mellemøsten, vil jeg argumentere for det frugtbare i at studere religionsdialogen som en særlig form for social praksis. I den forbindelse sætter jeg særligt fokus på, hvordan arrangementet har karakter af et overgangsritual, der gennem forhandlinger af forskelssætninger har som mål at etablere rammer for en mulig transformation af deltagerne. Med andre ord kigger jeg på organiseringen bag og kategoriseringerne under dialogmødet, samt på hvordan udefra kommende 'forstyrrelser' bliver produktive.[3] Først vil jeg give et kort indblik i baggrunden for religionsdialogen i Danmark.

Hvem arrangerer?

Organisatorer af religionsdialog i Danmark er hovedsageligt kristne organisationer og institutioner som for eksempel missionsselskaber og kirker, samt ngo'er, der arbejder med spørgsmål relateret til indvandring. Som missionsselskab på et folkekirkeligt grundlag har Danmission således mange års erfaring med dialogarbejde både i forbindelse med indvandring til Danmark og i udviklingsarbejdet.[4] Et andet eksempel er stiftssamarbejdet 'Folkekirken og Religionsmøde', der blev etableret i 2002 med det formål at styrke folkekirkens engagement i det flerreligiøse samfund, herunder at fremme dialogen.[5] Et sidste eksempel, jeg vil nævne, er Islamisk-Kristent Studiecenter, som blev etableret af muslimer og kristne i fællesskab i 1996, og som udover Danmission har været en stærk drivkraft i arbejdet med at fremme religionsdialogen i en dansk kontekst. Også muslimske organisationer og foreninger arrangerer dialogarbejde. En institutionaliseret version heraf er Dialogforum, der blev etableret i 2002 af unge nydanskere med tyrkisk baggrund, og som har tætte bånd til Gülen-bevægelsen.[6] Også jødiske organisationer og institutioner har været aktive, som nævnt i indledningen.

De ovenstående initiativer tager direkte afsæt i forskelle mellem religioner og ønsket om at bygge bro over religiøse

[3] Stor tak til Kirsten Hvenegård-Lassen, RUC, for læsning, kommentarer og forslag til ændringer.
[4] Se http://danmission.dk/hvad-gor/dialog/ (læst 15. oktober 2015).
[5] Se http://www.religionsmoede.dk/index.php/om/folkekirke-og-religionsmode (læst 4. november 2015).
[6] Se http://dialogin.dk/pages/profil/om-foreningen (læst 8. august 2015).

modsætningsforhold, samtidig med at de ser religionen som en del af løsningen. Derudover findes en række andre dialoginitiativer i Danmark, hvor religion indgår som en kategori blandt mange andre, men ikke som en særlig privilegeret position. Eksempler er 'Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråds Dialogambassadører'[7] og 'Grænseforeningens Kulturmødeambassadører'.[8] Der er glidende overgange mellem de forskellige modeller for arrangerede kulturmøder. På tværs af initiativerne finder man ønsket om at nedbryde fordomme om etniske, nationale, religiøse og nogle gange også kønnede forskelle. Et andet fællestræk er ideen om, at dialogen gennem organiseringen heraf er anvendelig for nedbrydning af sådanne fordomme. Ved at styre dialogen, i sammenligning med hverdagens samtaler, gøres forandring mulig. Til det formål findes også manualer eller håndbøger, der vejleder læseren i at anvende dialogen som redskab.[9]

I det følgende er det arrangementer, som eksplicit ønsker at bygge bro over religiøse modsætningsforhold, der belyses. Danmissions arbejde med dialog er et illustrativt eksempel den forbindelse. I udviklingsprojekter i blandt andet Mellemøsten indgår religionen som betydningsfuld faktor, idet forskelle, fjendskab og konflikt mellem mennesker med forskellige religioner ses som en barriere for det samarbejde, der er nødvendigt for at skabe udvikling og/eller forandring. Blandt andet med støtte fra det arabiske initiativ og i partnerskab med lokale organisationer, har Danmission derfor det seneste årti stået bag en række dialoginitiativer i blandt andet Libanon, Jordan og Egypten. Initiativerne svinger mellem at have karakter af konference, hvor vidensformidling står i centrum, til at have karakter af workshop, hvor deltagerne "sætter sig selv på spil". I det sidste tilfælde lægges der vægt på, at dialogen er erfaringsbaseret, som også Henrik Lindberg Hansen identificerer som en af flere dialogtyper (Hansen 2009). De enkelte arrangementer er sjældent rent det ene eller andet, men har elementer af begge dele.[10] Deltagerne kan være religiøse ledere og/eller professionelle og frivillige i ngo'er, eller civilsamfundsaktivister engageret i at styrke lokale forhold og udvikling. Hvor indsatserne er skrevet ind i forskellige udviklingsperspektiver, er det kendetegnende, at der samtidig blandt aktører som Danmission er en forestilling om en spill-over effekt fra indsatsen i Mellemøsten til indsatsen i Danmark. Således forventes danske deltagere i dialogarrangementer, der foregår i Mellemøsten, til en vis grad at vende hjem med erfaringer, der kan komme den hjemlige dialog til nytte.

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[7] Se http://duf.dk/dufs-arbejde/dufs-dialogambassadoerer/ (læst 5. december 2015).
[8] Se http://www.ambassador.graenseforeningen.dk/ (læst 5. december 2015).
[9] Både Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd, Danmission og Folkekirke og Religionsmøde har udarbejdet sådanne guidelines.
[10] Ifølge interview med dialogkonsulent ved Danmission, Agnete Holm.

Religionsdialog mellem teologi og social praksis

På trods af utallige studier af muslimers møde med det såkaldte sekulære kristne Europa (jf. Kivisto 2014) og ikke mindst af de problemer, det fører med sig af manglende integration, intolerance og terrorisme, har religions*dialogen* ikke fået nogen særlig opmærksomhed i studierne af, hvordan man for eksempel sikrer bedre og mere ligeværdig medborgerskab. En undtagelse i den forbindelse er dog antologien 'Vendepunkter', der blandt er optaget af det religiøse sprogs betydning for konflikt og forsoning (Sjørup 2007). I den interkulturelle kommunikationsforskning betragtes religion primært som en identitetskategori blandt andre, der kan føre til gensidige misforståelser baseret på forudforståelser og fordomme (se f.eks. Tranekjær 2007). Hvorimod religionsdialogen som sådan til gengæld sjældent har været genstand for interkulturel kommunikationsanalyse (Wolf 2012: 38). Alain Wolfs forsøg på en sådan indskriver sig til gengæld i rækken af forsøg på at indkredse en ideel model for 'sand' dialog, som han dernæst måler forskellige politikker for religionsdialog op imod. På denne baggrund peger han på nødvendigheden af at tage religionen eller snarere troen alvorligt, hvis man vil dialogen (ibid.: 46).

Netop dette afsæt i at tage religionen alvorligt er måske baggrunden for, at religionsdialogen – som genstandsfelt for forskning i en dansk sammenhæng – i høj grad er blevet overladt til dens udøvere. Det vil sige, at mens udøverne typisk er kristne aktører, er det primært teologer, der har forsøgt at forstå og begrunde religionsdialogen. I Danmark har teologer som blandt andre Theodor Jørgensen, Hans Raun Iversen og Lissi Rasmussen skabt teologisk grundlag for en tværreligiøs dialogpraksis, som de til dels også selv har været aktivt involveret i. Således er Lissi Rasmussen en af initiativtagerne, bestyrelsesformand og daglig leder af Islamisk-Kristent Studiecenter, ligesom Hans Raun Iversen er bestyrelsesmedlem samme steds.

Overordnet set kan religionsdialogen inden for en folkekirkelig og dansk teologisk kontekst ses som en videreudvikling af og erstatning for missionsbegrebet. I en erkendelse af, at tvang, trusler og lokkemidler i kombination med kolonialisme og imperialisme ofte har været virkemidler til at få ikke-kristne til at konvertere, er missionsbegrebet i den folkekirkelige sammenhæng blevet omdefineret til at handle om dialog. Denne udvikling har sin parallel i udviklingen af en global teologi, som ifølge Wolf er inspireret af begrebet 'dialogisme' (Wolf 2012). Denne forsøger på forskellige måder at adressere behovet for at kunne samtale med andre, om deres opfattelser af sandheden, selv om den er i modstrid med ens egen. Særlig fremtrædende i den forbindelse er den tyske teolog og filosof, Paul Tillich, som gennem analysen af mødet mellem buddhisme og kristendom opstiller retningslinjer for en meningsfuld dialog, der

blandt andet involverer begge parters evne til at repræsentere sin egen religiøse tro (ibid.: 40). Et fortsat relevant element fra traditionel mission er derfor vidnesbyrdet, som argumenteres mulig at forene med dialogen (Jørgensen 2000).

Tre aspekter synes at være særligt centrale for religionsdialogen. Det første er netop vidnesbyrdet, eller ideen om at ”den kristne tro er et godt udgangspunkt i mødet med dem, som bygger deres liv på andre traditioner” (Vejledning i religionsmøde 2008). Det er gennem en tydelig formulering ”af egen tro” og åbenhed ”om egne motiver”, at samtale under trygge former for begge parter bliver mulig (ibid.). Det andet aspekt er spørgsmålet om, hvad der adskiller henholdsvis forener menneskene, hvor religionsdialogen synes at stræbe efter, at deltagerne får oplevelsen af at være menneske sammen, eller med Grundtvigs ord ”Menneske først – kristen saa”. Theodor Jørgensen formulerer det således: ”Det bærende i religionsdialog må være et engagement, som man erkender og anerkender at være fælles om. Det er kort fortalt at være menneske og helst et godt og sandt menneske.” (Jørgensen 2000). Der er samtidig en opmærksomhed på, at det universelt menneskelige potentielt udfordres af det partikulære, eller forskelssætningerne, og at man dermed løber en risiko ved at indgå i dialogen (ibid., Vejledning i religionsmøde 2008). Det tredje aspekt er, at *mødet* eller *relationen* i sig selv har en transformativ karakter. Dét at være sammen og anerkende hinandens tilstedeværelse synes lige så vigtig som troens ord. Investeringen i dialog og nærhed i relation til religionsdialog trækker samtidig på en arv fra grundtvigsk inspirerede ideer om oplysningen som et dialogisk (i øjenhøjde), folkeligt (i kontrast til elitært) og integrerende projekt. Her trækkes desuden på en protestantisk (Luthersk og Grundtvigsk) forståelse af kristendommen som placeret i hverdagslivet. En tilgang, der er yderligere accentueret i forståelsen af diapraksis som en udvikling af religionsdialogen, hvor det er igennem fælles handlen, at man begynder at forstå og anerkende hinanden som ligeværdige mennesker på tværs af religion (Jørgensen 2000; Rasmussen 1997).

Der er hos forfatterne og i manualerne en opmærksomhed på, at religionsdialogen er vanskelig, risikofyldt og potentiel konfliktfyldt. Vejledning i religionsmøde (2008) taler om villigheden til ”at udsætte sig for åbenhedens risiko”. Derfor kræves netop et faciliteret eller arrangeret møde, der følger specifikke retningslinjer for dialog, som deltagerne bør tilegne sig. Der synes at være konsensus om, at efterfølgelsen af sådanne retningslinjer åbner mulighed for at håndtere eller endda overskride de spændinger, der udspringer af den sociale virkelighed og dennes indlejrede magtrelationer. Det sker ved at møde ’den Anden’ som menneske frem for repræsentant for en kategori, for eksempel ’muslimen’. Ambitionen om at opstille idealmodeller for dialog har betydet, at der kun i begrænset omfang er forsket i, hvad der konkret sker i et møde, der er arrangeret i overensstemmelsen med religionsdialogens specifikke retningslinjer. Vil man nærme sig dette,

kan man for eksempel spørge, hvordan nye subjektpositioner forhandles, overskrides og skabes i religionsdialogen.

For at besvare dette spørgsmål er der grund til kort at opholde sig ved forståelsen af kultur, som noget folk gør, og ikke som en determinant, der eksisterer isoleret fra praksis (Abu-Lughod 1991; Ortner 2006). Det medfører, at kultur er noget, der skabes i praksis, og derfor må analyseres i dens empiriske sammenhæng og som et resultat af historisk situerede institutioner og subjektiviteter etableret gennem disciplinerende praksisser (Foucault 2002). Religionsdialogen bliver som et arrangeret kulturmøde således produktivt i dets bestræbelse på at skabe gensidig forståelse. Det er gennem udforskningen af denne produktivitet, at vi derfor får en større forståelse af i dette tilfælde religionsdialogen som social og disciplinerende praksis. 'Et arrangeret kulturmøde' er i denne sammenhæng defineret som et møde mellem mennesker (professionelle, såvel som ikke-professionelle), der er bragt sammen i kraft af deres tilskrevne kulturelle forskellighed med det formål at etablere relationer, samarbejde og/eller fredelig sameksistens på tværs af forskellene.

De tilskrevne forskelssætninger er derfor en forudsætning for det arrangerede religionsmøde. Forskelssætningerne er resultatet af en subjektiveringsproces, hvor aktører handler på – act upon – samtidig med at de påvirkes af – enacted or determined by – eksisterende kulturelle betingelser (Foucault 2003, 2002; Hall 1996; Staunæs 2003). Processer af subjektivering er dermed altid influeret af kollektive kategoriseringer, som muliggør og begrænser specifikke handlinger. Hvad angår arrangerede kulturmøder, er sådanne kategoriseringer eksplicitte med normativt prioriterede positioner. Det vil sige, at mens enhver subjektivering kan opfattes som kulturel ontologisk set, så er det den eksplicitte kulturelle subjektivering, der udstikker rammerne for det arrangerede kulturmøde, og dermed den eksplicitte religiøse subjektivering, der definerer rammerne for religionsdialogen.

Mens der eksisterer spredte studier af, hvad der kan defineres som arrangerede kulturmøder (jf. Askin and Pain 2011; Müller 2012), så har religionsdialogen hidtil kun i begrænset omfang været analyseret med et sådan perspektiv. Denne artikel tager det første skridt i analysen af religionsdialogen som et arrangeret kulturmøde. Baseret på interviews med dialogarrangører og facilitatorer samt casestudier af arrangerede dialogmøder[11], diskuterer jeg, hvordan religionsdialogen i sit arrangement forsøger at håndtere det spændingsfelt, hvori deltagernes erfaringer med at blive 'acted upon'

[11] Det empiriske grundlag for diskussionen er seks interviews med danske arrangører af religionsdialog, skriftlige materialer om religionsdialog udarbejdet af arrangører, samt egen deltagelse i 3 religionsdialog-arrangementer med deltagere fra Danmark og Egypten. Disse var arrangeret i et samarbejde mellem Danmission, Islamisk-Kristent Studiecenter og den egyptisk NGO, CEOSS (Coptic Evangelical Organisation of Social Service).

og 'acting' forstyrres. Hvad jeg i det følgende belyser, er ikke en udtømmende analyse af den arrangerede religionsdialog. Hertil kræves flere case-baserede feltstudier. Det er i stedet et forsøg på at slå ned på udvalgte elementer af arrangementet, der inviterer til analytisk opmærksomhed. Denne analytiske opmærksomhed kan med fordel anvendes i kommende case-analyser.[12]

At sætte scenen: et 'safe space'

Allerede inden religionsdialogen er begyndt, er den kendetegnet ved at placere deltageren i et spændingsfelt mellem frygt og utryghed på den ene side og forventning om positiv forandring på den anden. Foranlediget af Danmissions egne spørgsmål til en kommende deltager, udfylder han dette spændingsfelt med følgende svar på spørgsmålet om, hvad han tror, bliver en udfordring:

> Mangel på forståelse og miskommunikation. Der skal være plads til at udtrykke sine holdninger uden at skulle føle sig forulempet, derfor er det vigtigt, at man har et "safe space", hvor der er plads til forskellige holdninger og meninger.[13]

Den positive forventning udtrykker han således:

> Jeg ser frem til at høre de andre deltageres historie. Jeg håber, at jeg denne uge selv bliver udfordret på mine egne synspunkter, rykker mine egne grænser og lærer noget nyt hver dag.[14]

Allerede inden afgang er den kommende erfaring med religionsdialog dermed indskrevet i erfaringens 'messiness', hvor retningen af forandringen er uforudsigelig. Som Sara Ahmed skriver i en artikel om ideen om lykke: "My starting point is the messiness of the experiential, the unfolding of bodies into worlds and what I think of as 'the drama of contingency', how we are touched by what comes near." (Ahmed 2007: 124).

Arrangørernes svar på dette uforudsigelige rod er forsøget på at skabe rammer – et safe space, hvor indenfor rodet kan håndteres. Det er en villet – med Masseys begreb – 'throwntogetherness' (Massey 2005: 151). Det er chancen for at møde en uventet nabo, der medfører en uundgåelig uforudsigelighed, som netop derfor kræver regulerende

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[12] Se endvidere fortkommende artikel (2016) af Kirsten Hvenegård-Lassen og Lise Paulsen Galal med titlen "Transformative spaces between chaos and order: On the analysis of organised cultural encounters" (foreslået til Ethnicities).
[13] Se http://danmission.dk/blog/2015/09/02/hvorfor-vil-du-til-libanon-og-oeve-dialog/ (læst 2. november 2015).
[14] Se http://danmission.dk/blog/2015/09/02/hvorfor-vil-du-til-libanon-og-oeve-dialog/ (læst 2. november 2015).

sociale institutioner (ibid.). Det er i den forbindelse, at arrangørerne træder til i etableringen af et særligt dialogrum, som ifølge dem kræver tid at opbygge. Som en af arrangørerne forklarer:

> Det kræver jo de første 2-3 dage at få skabt det der rum. Det som jeg – vi kalder et safe space, hvor folk langsomt kan udtrykke sig ud fra sig selv.

Det vil sige, at *frygt og transformation, rum og tid* er helt centrale aspekter af religionsdialogen, som skal håndteres af både arrangører og deltagere. Med Sara Ahmeds perspektiv kan denne konstellation anskues som subjekter såvel som kroppe, der frygter (føler) og skal transformeres (acted upon and acting) i tid og rum. Det er et rum, hvor spændingerne og ubehaget set fra arrangørernes side er produktivt (Askins og Pain 2011). Eller som Derrida udtrykker det: "Chaos is at once a risk and a chance" (Derrida i Massey 2005: 151). I religionsdialogen er det således i spændingerne mellem forsøget på at skabe orden og forstyrrelserne udefra, at noget produceres.

På den måde har religionsdialogmødet mindelser om overgangsritualet, hvor man hives ud af sin normale sociale position, for i et afgrænset tidsrum, en liminal fase, at skulle igennem en række prøvelser sammen med andre. Den liminale fase er kendetegnet ved kaotiske tilstande, som for at blive produktiv kræver streng rituel kontrol. Mens man træder ind til den liminale fase med én social position, ophæves denne under tilstedeværelsen i den liminale fase, hvorefter man træder transformeret ud igen og kan optage en ny social position i den samme kontekst, som man i sin tid forlod (jf. Gennep 1960).

For at transformation kan ske, skal der altså både være kaos, samtidig med at dette kaos skal styres. Her er det, at arrangørerne for alvor kommer ind i billedet. En måde at skabe denne form for organiseret kaos, er at rykke deltagerne ud af deres hverdagsliv, for at lade dem mødes et nyt og 'fremmed' sted og med nye og 'fremmede' mennesker. Derfor lader man for eksempel en gruppe danskere, der selv repræsenterer forskellighed og dermed indbyrdes fremmedhed, rejse til Egypten for at møde en ligeså sammensat gruppe. Det kan være et sted i Mellemøsten eller i Danmark, eller det kan, når det handler om interne danske møder være i en kirke eller et mødested indrettet til formålet. For at styre denne potentielt ukontrollable situation guider og faciliterer arrangørerne dialogen. De førnævnte manualer kan ses som en drejebog for en sådan facilitering, der afspejler ideer om dialogmødets formål, udfordringer og deltagernes rolle i relation til en ønsket forandring.

Som i overgangsritualet kan andre ritualer anvendes til at facilitere forandringen. I religionsdialogen kan dette være fælles bøn eller pilgrimsfærd, som jeg senere vil give et eksempel på. Den fælles bøn på tværs af religion er ikke ualmindelig og nævnes fx også af

Københavns biskop i forbindelse med jødisk-kristent-muslimsk forum. Også disse bør dog foregå under styrede former, som det fremgår af Vejledning i Religionsmøde (2008), afhængig af omstændigheder og format. Når det er nødvendigt med en omhyggelig forberedelse, skyldes det ifølge vejledningen hensyntagen til den enkeltes religiøse integritet.

At tildele roller: forskelssætningens paradoks

Hvis arrangementet skal lykkes, forventes deltagerne i et vist omfang at overgive sig til drejebogen. Allerede i forberedelsen af arrangementet tildeles de specifikke kropsligt indlejrede subjektiveringer, idet de inviteres på baggrund af tilskrivning af religiøs, etnisk og national identitet.

I forbindelse med de studerede dialogarrangementer mellem grupper af danskere og egyptere, som alle enten mødtes i Danmark eller Egypten, blev deltagerne således sammensat, så der både var muslimer og kristne i begge grupper. På trods af forsøget på at finde danske deltagere med både etnisk anden og dansk baggrund inden for begge religiøse grupperinger, endte 'muslim' oftest med at være lig med 'anden etnisk baggrund' og 'kristen' lig med 'etnisk dansk baggrund'. I modsætning hertil syntes den egyptiske gruppe alle at blive positioneret som etniske egyptere. Allerede i disse subjektpositioneringer trådte den politiske virkelighed ind og satte rammerne for de tilskrevne roller, som deltagerne forventedes at tage på sig. Dette blev yderligere understreget, da en af arrangørerne under et dialogarrangement i Minya, Egypten, tilskrev kategorierne særlige kulturelle kendetegn.

Dialogarrangementet bestod af en blanding af både akademiske og erfaringsbaserede fremlæggelser af modeller for dialogarbejde på den ene side, og på den anden side sessioner, hvor deltagerne blev delt i grupper for at diskutere og for at træne dialog. Inden det første gruppearbejde blev ideen med dette præsenteret af en af de danske medarrangører, der udover at give os ideer om, hvad vi skulle starte med at tale om, også indledte med følgende karakteristik af deltagerne. Hun påpegede, at de respektive deltagere fra de to lande ikke skulle undre sig, hvis deltagerne opførte sig forskelligt i dialoggrupperne. Danskerne var ifølge hendes fremstilling nemlig vant til eller foretrak at snakke sammen først og dernæst danse, mens egypterne var parate til at danse først og dernæst snakke sammen. Ideen bag hendes analogi var, så vidt jeg forstod, at danskerne godt kan være reserverede og have behov for at lære hinanden nærmere at kende, inden de kaster sig ud i en åbenhjertig debat, mens det modsatte altså skulle gøre sig gældende for egypterne. Det betød også ifølge den danske arrangør, at egypterne skulle give plads til danskerne for at tale, for ellers ville de ikke tage ordet.

Karakteristikken vandt muligvis en vis genklang hos danskerne, men da vi kom ud i grupperne, brugte den gruppe, jeg deltog i, en del tid på at forklare de egyptiske deltagere, hvad hun havde ment. De kunne ikke umiddelbart genkende sig selv i karakteristikken og havde i det hele taget ikke fanget pointen med 'at danse'. Det var karakteristisk for den gruppe, jeg var i, at flertallet af egypterne talte længere og mere engageret end flertallet af danskerne. Havde arrangøren så ret? To af de fire danskere i gruppen argumenterede åbent for deres manglende engagement med, at de havde deltaget i mange af denne slags dialogarrangementer, hvoraf dette var en i rækken. De havde derfor ikke så meget at sige om det spørgsmål, vi var blevet bedt om at diskutere, nemlig hvad vi gerne ville opnå, inden mødet var slut.

I forbindelse med et andet arrangement i samme møderække, som foregik i Danmark, havde jeg følgende oplevelse:

> Jeg sidder på en af de bagerste rækker i en blandet gruppe af egyptere og danskere. En yngre kvinde og muslim fortæller om muslimer i Danmark. Ved siden af mig sidder en kvinde på omkring de 50, der på et tidspunkt på engelsk hvisker mig i øret: hvorfor taler de så meget om religion?

De nævnte eksempler illustrerer, hvordan drejebogens kategorier ikke altid resonerer med deltagernes forventninger. For det første giver de tilbudte subjektpositioner ikke altid mening for deltagerne, som eksemplet med de dansende egyptere illustrerer. For det andet træder andre subjektpositioner ind og forstyrrer drejebogen. Det gælder når de tilsyneladende professionaliserede danske dialogdeltagere har mistet engagementet, som får dem til snarere at træde ind i subjektpositionen som 'professionelle' repræsentanter for en kategori, end som nysgerrigt søgende 'fremmede' over for andre 'fremmede'. Noget der om noget syntes at svække muligheden for gennemførelsen af den erfaringsbaserede dialog. For det tredje afslører den egyptiske kvindes skepsis over fokusset på religion, hvordan der ikke altid er overensstemmelse mellem organisatorernes drejebog og deltagernes.

På trods af en anerkendelse af relevansen af at bringe kristne og muslimer sammen blandt både egyptere og danskere, afspejlede kvindens skepsis en udbredt holdning blandt egypterne. For dem var dagsordenen ikke at *forstå* 'den Anden', men at sikre rammer for sameksistens *med* 'den Anden' gennem civile og sociale rettigheder. Mens udfordringen blandt ikke mindst de unge muslimske deltagere i den danske gruppe på dette tidspunkt (i 2004) var at finde og definere sin egen position som muslim i det danske samfund for dernæst at diskutere rettigheder og anerkendelse.

Eksemplerne illustrerer, at dialogen ikke kan afkobles fra den kontekst og de personer, der deltager. For det første kan dialogen ikke isoleres til kun at handle om religion, og deltagerne kan ikke isoleres

til at optræde alene på baggrund af én tilskrevet subjektposition. For det andet er konteksten for, hvad deltagerne vender tilbage til, styrende for hvad der sker under dialogen. Spørgsmålet er, hvad arrangementets karakter og drejebogen kommer til at betyde for, hvad sådanne udefrakommende forstyrrelser kommer til at producere. Med overgangsritualet i mente kan man stille spørgsmålet om, hvilken ny position deltagerne forventes at træde ud i, når de forlader den liminale fase, og om denne er tilstrækkelig kontekstfølsom. Jeg vil i det følgende give tre eksempler, der viser, at religionsdialogen aldrig kun handler om religion eller tro, og at religionsdialogen kan have forskellige måder at tackle forstyrrelserne på.

Eksempel 1: Når erfaringen forstyrrer

Ligesom i ritualet forventes deltagerne at transformeres gennem dialogens udspændthed mellem kaos og orden. Således bliver frygten for at blive præsenteret for en anden sandhed en frygt, som det er facilitatorens rolle at transformere til noget produktivt. Et eksempel herpå var reaktionerne på en libanesisk kvindes tilslutning til brugen af vold.

> Og jeg kan huske et år. Jeg havde nogle deltagere, nogle shia-muslimer nede fra det sydlige Libanon, helt nede ved grænsen til Israel. Og en af pigerne oplevede, at hendes far blev dræbt for øjnene af hende af en israelsk soldat under krigen mellem Hisbollah og Israel […] Så hun havde jo en masse følelser, erfaring og smerte i sit forsvar for brug af voldelig modstand. Meget forståeligt. Og så sidder der nogle danskere, som jo selvfølgelig sidder og ikke er for voldelig modstand og bla bla bla. Og det, og pludselig blev folk så vrede, at flere muslimer trak ”nå men de er jo også korsfarende”, og jeg ved ikke, hvad der ikke blev trukket op, og 9/11, og pludselig så eskalerede det, ikk’. Så handler det om ”puhh.. okay, nu sætter vi os ned” […] Der fik jeg snakket med dem om, at det handler om, at vi lige hører på hende, ikk’. Og hun fik tid til at fortælle, og alle kunne forstå hende. Og så blev der også lyttet til og forstået den ikke-voldelige modstand. […] Og da hun forstod, at hun var blevet hørt, da kunne hun høre den anden side. Og det samme med… Der skete der så noget magisk, at de pludselig opdagede ”nå men det er jo ikke meningen, at vi skal være enige”.

Da jeg videre spurgte, hvordan det var magisk, var svaret:

> At der er en forløsning i rummet. Et sådan haaaaaa.. Det er ligesom om en spænding bliver forløst til… fra at være en ubehagelig spænding til at være en velkommen spænding, der

> godt må være der og godt kan rummes. Og en forløsning, som for nogen erfares som en forsoning. En forsoning, der ikke hedder "nu er vi blevet ens og enige", men en forsoning der hedder "nu kan vi godt rumme og forstå, at vi tænker forskelligt".

Under sin fortælling refererede facilitatoren til, hvordan hun blandt andet måtte forklare deltagerne dialogens 'spilleregler' for at få løst den opståede konflikt. De konkrete konflikter forventedes suspenderet i kraft af en gensidig accept af hinandens positioner. Facilitatoren forsøgte at at sige at skabe et trygt rum, hvor konkrete konflikter kunne italesættes og anerkendes som individuelle erfaringer. Denne suspendering blev yderligere understøttet af en kort pilgrimsvandring. Facilitatoren fortalte videre:

> Og så senere hen på sådan en uge, nogen gange gør jeg det, at jeg sætter folk sammen to og to, en kristen og muslim. Når jeg har lært dem lidt at kende, så kan jeg parre dem. Så sender jeg dem på en pilgrimsvandring sammen, og siger lidt om pilgrimsvandringerne i islam og kristendom. Og så går de afsted, og så dem der ikke rigtig ved, hvad de skal bruge deres tid til, dem giver jeg nogle spørgsmål, de kan tage med. Men det, de skal dele, er deres troshistorier, altså deres personlige troshistorier. Anfægtelser, tvivl og vrede på Gud, men også perioder hvor det har givet trøst, og alt sådan noget. Og så er der jo nogen, der siger, at de ikke er troende. Det er fint, de har stadig en form for ideologihistorie i det mindste eller en værdihistorie igennem deres liv. Ja, så det handler ikke om, at den ene skal derop og vise den anden, det handler simpelthen om at bygge relationer. […] Og når det så kommer tilbage efter nogle timers vandring, fordi det her tager nogle timer, så er de fuldstændigt… mange af dem er fuldstændigt benovede og har aldrig oplevet noget lignende, fordi de så finder ud af, at den anden har noget, der er lige så smukt, som det de selv har, noget de kan genkende. […] Og pludselig får man en indgang til den andens religion, som ikke handler om en indgang, der hedder via dogmatikken eller via den ene store religion over for den anden, men en indgang til den andens religion fra noget mere personligt og noget mere smukt. Og så får man interesse for den andens religion eller tro personligt gennem et andet menneske. Og så kan man bedre rumme den anden.

Det lykkedes tilsyneladende for facilitatoren hos deltagere at skabe lydhørhed over for den individuelle erfaring og derigennem opnå større forståelse for en anden holdning end ens egen. Denne forståelse for en anden erfaringsposition styrkedes yderligere gennem pilgrimsturen, hvor den individuelle og personlige troshistorie bliver

udgangspunktet for dialog. Der bragtes orden i det kaos, som den libanesiske kvindes opbakning til voldelig modstand medførte, ved at træne deltagerne til at se 'den Anden' som et *menneske.* Man kan sige, at forskelssætningerne på denne måde delvis opløstes og erstattedes af menneske-til-menneske-relationer. Det er samtidig værd at bemærke, at facilitatoren anvendte begreber som magi, forløsning og pilgrimsfærd i sin forklaring af, hvad der skete. Dette rituelle og religiøse vokabular eller register kan ses som et supplement til et andet register med fokus på refleksionen. Det rituelle register fremstår som et redskab til at skabe orden i kaos og etablere et safe space.

Tilbage står, at den position, der står parat til at gribe en, når man træder transformeret ud af dette safe space, synes at være positionen som menneske. Spørgsmålet er, om denne position bydes velkommen i den kontekst, man træder ud i, som i mellemtiden ikke har forandret sig, men hvor konflikten lever videre på en anden skala.

Eksempel 2: Når storpolitik forstyrrer

Det allerede omtalte dialogmøde i Minya fandt sted i efteråret 2006, hvor kulminationen på Mohammed-tegninge-krisen trekvart år tidligere blev et uomgængeligt tema for dialogen. Mødet blev indledt med et oplæg af en dansk akademiker, der havde karakter af vidensformidling. Det var en kritisk, men også autoritativ analyse af, hvordan Mohammed-tegninge-krisen kunne forklares, set fra et dansk perspektiv. Oplægget kritiserede blandt andet Jyllandspostens dispositioner set i lyset af en generel anti-muslimsk diskurs i det danske samfund, og på den måde positionerede taleren sig som værende kritisk over for tegningerne. Det var en positionering, der tydeligt vandt genklang i gruppen af danske deltagere.

Alligevel fortsatte emnet med at poppe op i efterfølgende sessioner, hvorimod det ikke dukkede op i gruppearbejdet (hvor jeg deltog), hvor dialogøvelser var i centrum. Tilsyneladende blev gruppen af danskere mere og mere trætte af at skulle tale som tegninge-krisen. I forbindelse med et oplæg, hvor et af de aktive medlemmer af Islamisk-Kristent Studiecenter i København fortalte om centrets arbejde med diapraksis, blev han efterfølgende spurgt af en ung muslimsk, egyptisk kvinde om, hvordan centret havde reageret på tegninge-krisen. Herunder hvad de havde gjort for at bygge bro mellem muslimer og kristne. Dette forekom at være et yderst relevant spørgsmål på et dialogmøde, der netop havde fokus på forskellige dialogmodeller. Mens oplægsholderen forsøgte at svare, kom den akademiker, der havde holdt det indledende oplæg, op og hviskede til ordstyreren (som i dette tilfælde var mig), at denne skulle stoppe diskussionen og forhindre, at tegninge-krisen blev ved med at dukke op som emne.

Det var bemærkelsesværdigt, at den mest dominerende religionskonflikt i nyere tid i Danmark blev opfattet som et illegitimt emne. Det forstyrrede tilsyneladende på en forkert måde og blev i modsætning til den libanesiske kvindes fortælling i mit første eksempel ikke genstand for en påmindelse om at lytte til hinanden, men blev i stedet forsøgt gjort tavs. En opfattelse af, at man havde bekendt kulør, kombineret med en vis udmattelse blandt de danske deltagere, hvad angik emnet, kan naturligvis forklare reaktionen. En anden forklaring kan knyttes til sammenligningen med den libanesiske kvindes fortælling. Denne blev gjort tilgængelig gennem den personlige erfaring, mens tegningekrisen af danskerne synes at blive indskrevet i kollektive kategorier af danskhed, ytringsfriheds-fundamentalister, halalhippier, islamofober etc. Tegningekrisen var siden krisens kulmination i den danske kontekst blevet et omdrejningspunkt for italesættelsen af en række kollektive identiteter. Spørgsmålene fra de egyptiske deltagere i Minya kunne derfor opleves som endnu en et forsøg på at kategorisere danskere kollektivt som enten islamofober eller naive multikulturalister. Når samtidig disse kollektive kategorier ikke var i overensstemmelse med deltagernes selvopfattelse, gav det dem problemer i forhold til at navigere mellem karikerede subjektpositioner og en subjektposition som dansk kristen eller muslim med helt andre personlige erfaringer med religionsmødet. Tegningekrisen blev, som mens den stod på, en grænsemarkør, som det aldrig lykkedes arrangørerne at hjælpe deltagerne til at overskride. Tværtimod styrkede den grænsesætningen mellem 'os' (danskerne) og 'dem' (egypterne) og cementerede oplevelsen af Muhammed-tegningekrisen som et udtryk for en uløselig kulturel og religiøs konflikt mellem Mellemøsten og Danmark.

Eksemplet illustrerer, at religionsdialogen ikke altid lykkes med at skalere samfundsmæssige konflikter ned på det individuelle og interpersonelle niveau. Det synes særligt vanskeligt, når deltagerne indskrives i kollektive forskelssætninger, der er bundet op på specifikke kontekster, som ikke nødvendigvis forstås på samme måde af i dette tilfælde henholdsvis de egyptiske og danske deltagere. I dette tilfælde lykkedes det ikke at opløse forskelssætningen, som faciliteret af dialogen burde have sikret. Det efterlader igen en usikkerhed om, hvad deltagerne træder ud til, når de forlader mødet. Den ny position, der burde stå til deres rådighed efter mødets transformation af deltageren, bliver uklar, når man træder ud i en kontekst, der ellers forties.

Eksempel 3: Når den lokale kontekst forstyrrer

En aften efter middagen under dialog-mødet i Minya sad en mindre gruppe danskere og egyptere sammen. Den ene egypter, en præst,

fortalte den ene vittighed efter den anden, hvoraf mange med en vis ironi berørte det ulige forhold mellem kristne og muslimer i Egypten og gjorde grin med de religiøse eller politiske autoriteter.

> Den egyptiske stor-mufti, den koptiske pave Shenouda og en jødiske religiøs leder dør og kommer sammen i himlen. På grund af deres fremtrædende position giver ærkeenglen Gabriel dem hver især ret til et sidste ønske. Den jødiske leder starter med at sige: "jeg ønsker alle muslimer døde", hvorefter den muslimske stor-mufti siger: "jeg ønsker alle jøder døde". Shenouda har stået tavs, og Gabriel henvender sig til ham og spørger om hans ønske. Shenouda afviser ydmygt: "nej nej, jeg har skam intet ønske". Men Gabriel insisterer på, at det var en aftale, at alle tre havde ret til et ønske. Igen afviser Shenouda bestemt og siger: "jeg ønsker slet ingenting. Jeg vil være helt tilfreds med, at de to andre får deres ønsker opfyldt." (Galal 2007: 37)

Vittigheder, der som denne berørte relationen og distinktionen mellem kristne og muslimer i Egypten i dag, gav anledning til høj latter blandt både muslimer og kristne, men også en befriende følelse af at have et fælles sprog. De få danskere, der sad med omkring bordet, var selv enten oprindelig egypter eller havde stort forkendskab til muslim-kristen relationer i Egypten, hvilket var med til at forstærke oplevelsen af, at gruppen omkring bordet var en gruppe af insidere. Dialogen gennem vittighederne handlede om religionsmødet i Egypten og om det, der gjorde ondt i den forbindelse. Men i modsætning til de indlejrede tabuer i den arrangerede dialog, som ikke gjorde det muligt at berøre visse magtrelationer, så berørte vittighederne disse. De indlejrede tabuer var ikke kun defineret af arrangørernes tabuer knyttet til forsøget på at kontrollere kaosset i det liminale rum, men også af de forskellige samfundsmæssige kontekster. Mens Mohammed-tegningekrisen således delvis syntes at være et tabu for de danske deltagere, så handlede en anden af sessionerne om, hvordan en gruppe af egyptiske muslimske og kristne ledere i samarbejde havde forsøgt at skabe fred og forsoning efter knivoverfald i tre koptiske kirker med efterfølgende sammenstød mellem muslimer og kristne i Aleksandria i påsken samme år. Der var en åbenhed over for at tale om konkrete og voldelige konflikter. Hvad man til gengæld undlod at italesætte, var den grundlæggende ulige magtrelation mellem de to parter. Ved at indskrive dette tabu i jokens form, blev noget væsentligt fortalt, uden at nogen af de tilstedeværende følte sig personligt ramt af forskelssætningen på kristne og muslimer.

I modsætning til den erfaringsbaserede dialog under pilgrimsfærden blev vittighederne samtidig en symbolsk bekræftelse på, at hvad man end foretog sig under dialogmødet, ville deltagerne vende tilbage til en virkelighed, hvor forholdet mellem kristne og

muslimer var karakteriseret ved ulige magt bundet op i konkrete samfundsformationer. Den befriende følelse hang måske netop sammen med, at præsten gennem fortællingen af vittigheder ikke lagde ansvaret for forandring på den enkelte dialogdeltager, men forbandt ansvaret med samfundets magthierarki og struktur. Den fælles latter blev en kollektiv renselse og erkendelse af, at vi alle efter dialogmødet ville træde ud i et uforandret samfund, uanset hvor meget vi selv havde forandret os. På denne måde blev latteren en anden variant af en menneske-til-menneske-relation. Spørgsmålet er så, om netop det safe space, der indtil da var bygget op, gjorde denne fælles latter mulig.

Konklusion: det transformerede subjekt

Som deltager i den arrangerede religionsdialog forventes man at træde forandret ud af mødet. I 'Vejledning i religionsmøde' beskrives denne forandring som "et udtryk for udvikling i mødet med det, som er fremmed og nyt, og som en frugt af Helligåndens virke" (Vejledning i religionsmøde 2008). Det understreges samtidig, at nogle muligvis vil skifte religion, men at dette aldrig må ske under tvang, trusler eller med lokkemidler. Målet er dog ikke, som nævnt, at den enkelte deltager træder ud af mødet som konverteret til en anden religion. Hvilken form for transformation er det så egentlig, der lægges op til?

Som udgangspunkt skal de forskelssætninger, som defineres gennem afsættet for dialogen, forsvinde på bestemte måder, mens andre ikke skal. Den position, der står parat til at gribe en, er det at være menneske – først. Det ændrer dog ikke ved, at dialogen også etablerer andre positioner. En er positionen som den professionelle dialogdeltager, der forventes at igangsætte og være ambassadør for lignende dialogformer i egne sammenhænge. En anden er den 'gode' eller 'ægte' kristne, som er parat til at udsætte sig for åbenhedens risiko, og derfor møder 'de andre' med åbenhed og nysgerrighed. Men hvor træder muslimen ud, når dialogen ikke som missionen har konvertering som mål? Måske er det muligt at tale om en position, der med henvisning til kristendommen tilbyder en position som 'kristen' muslim?

I udgangen af religionsdialogens rituelle rum synes dialogen at adskille sig fra det klassiske overgangsritual. Der står ikke nogen tydelig ny social position klar på den anden side. Og slet ikke en position, der nødvendigvis anerkendes i den politiske og sociale kontekst, som den enkelte vender tilbage til. Det illustreres af denne artikels indledende reference til polemikken om Københavns biskop. Udfordringen er, at man med tilbagevenden til sin oprindelige sammenhæng træder tilbage i en kontekst, hvor den kollektive forskelstænkning, man i dialogen har forsøgt at overskride, er dominerende. At forbinde erfaringen fra religionsdialogen bliver

endnu vanskeligere, når man træder ud i en kontekst, der potentielt forties, som det er tilfældet i de to sidste eksempler. Problemet er, at konflikten, der skal forsvinde, befinder sig på en anden skala end religionsdialogens. De arrangerede dialogmøder kan give den enkelte oplevelsen af at se 'den anden' som menneske og dermed selv igennemgå en udvikling, men det transformerer ikke nødvendigvis samfundets kaos til orden. Mens religionsdialogen i sit ideal netop handler om at adskille det politiserede fokus på religion fra den enkeltes tro og Gudsforhold, ja, så adskilles de ikke i den sociale praksis.

Forfatterbiografi

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Muslim consumption and anti-consumption in Malaysia

Johan Fischer

Abstract
The purpose of this article is to further our understanding of the transformation of Muslim consumption and anti-consumption by an empirical case study of Malaysia. Much current anti-consumerist and anti-globalization discourse identifies boycotting as an immensely powerful force. I argue that insufficient attention has been paid to the micro-social logics of modern forms of religious consumption and anti-consumption in particular historical/national settings and that these issues should be explored in the interfaces between Islam, state and market. This article examines the political and cultural effects of the Islamic opposition's call to boycott US goods in Malaysia in the wake of 9/11 that coincided with a forceful stress on promoting modern halal (in Arabic halal literally means 'permissible or 'lawful') products and services. This article argues that from around that time, Muslim consumption in Malaysia became the subject of increasing consumer activism and I explore how Malaysian federal state institutions, Islamic organizations and consumers respond to and are affected by calls to boycott (anti-consumption) and boycott (consumption) a range of products. More specifically, this article examines the above issues building on ethnography from fieldwork with Muslim Consumers Association of Malaysia (PPIM), which is an organization that protects the interests of Muslim consumers and entrepreneurs, as well as Malay Muslim middle-class informants.

I am in the Al-Mujahideen mosque situated between the modern and relatively affluent middle-class suburb of Taman Tun Dr Ismail (TTDI) half an hour's drive from the capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, and the gigantic One Utama mall that also houses an IKEA outlet. This mosque is largely influenced by the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), the Islamic opposition party enjoying widespread popularity. It is October 2001, merely one month after the 9/11 bombings in the US. In the mosque, I am looking at an announcement that encourages boycotting American goods because of the war in Afghanistan and American support for the Israeli oppression of the Palestinians. The text under the picture reads: 'Every Malaysian Ringgit (the currency in Malaysia) spent on American products means another dead Palestinian.'

In TTDI itself, the site of my fieldwork, there is another mosque, the At-Taqwa, which is the main mosque chosen by the majority of my Malay Muslim middle-class informants, and more generally Malays in TTDI. The At-Taqwa, in contrast to the Al-Mujahideen, is ideologically as well as

financially dependent on state sponsorship and the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the dominant political party in Malaysia since independence from Britain in 1957. Immediately after PAS's encouragement to boycott, Persatuan Ulama (literally, 'those who know the law') Malaysia (PUM) or in English the Malaysian Ulama Association supported this call in the media. The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, condemned the PAS/PUM encouragement as being overly emotional. In fact, the state not only rejected the boycott, but also staged a media campaign to boost national consumption.

TTDI also borders on the lush greenery of Sungai Pencala that was the home of the commune of Darul Arqam. Darul Arqam or the House of Arqam is an Islamic group whose believers seek to follow the ascetic behaviour of the Prophet Muhammad in everyday life. Darul Arum's cultivation and marketing of an Islamic vision of Malay independence and prosperity through the production of a wide range of halal ('lawful' or 'permitted') products was of the greatest interest to Malays in TTDI. Darul Arqam successfully promoted this vision of communal self-sufficiency, and their halal goods were traded throughout Malaysia. The Malaysian National Fatwa (opinion concerning Islamic law issued by an Islamic scholar) Council banned the organization in 1994 reasoning that the movement and its leader, Ustaz (religious teacher) Ashaari, believed in the imminent appearance of the *Mahdi* (or hidden Imam, a Muslim man who leads the prayers in a mosque), a key idea in Shia belief that in Malaysian Sunni orthodoxy implies unseen power and sectarian secrecy. Simultaneously, the banning of Darul Arqam signified the nationalization of the proliferation of halal and concentrated its certification in the realm of the state where it has remained (Darul Arqam has now dispersed and a highway runs through the area). This article shows how organizations such as Muslim Consumers Association of Malaysia (PPIM), which is an organization that protects the interests of Muslim consumers and entrepreneurs, to a large extent has taken over, continued and institutionalized the work of *dakwah* (literally salvation) groups such as Darul Arqam that emerged in the wider resurgence of Islam in Malaysia starting in the 1970s. The central research question here concerns the Malaysian federal state and Islamic organizations' understanding of calls to boycott/buycott in the context of a global and increasingly regulated market for halal products and services and how PPIM and Malay Muslim consumers respond to and are affected by these discourses. A buycott is a type of positive boycott with a twist where the focus is on what to buy. Typically, a buycott will encourage consumers to buy locally manufactured products or may work as efforts by consumer activists to induce shoppers to buy products or services of selected companies (Friedman 1996: 440). Indeed, modern Malay Muslim middle-class identity in Malaysia is unimaginable without taking the divergent interpretations and practices of Islamic consumption into consideration. The empirical evidence presented in this article sheds new light on the way in which actual practices, puritan ideals as well as political and religious discourses all infuse the debate over boycotting/buycotting.

Elsewhere, I have argued that the more cultures of consumption assert themselves in Malaysia, the more controversies over what Islam is, or ought to be, are intensified. As new consumer practices emerge, they give rise to new discursive fields within which the meaning of Islam and Islamic practice are debated. One key effect of these transformations is the deepening and widening concern for halal commodities among Malay Muslims that I have labelled *halalization*. Halalization signifies a major preoccupation with the proliferation of the concept of halal in a multitude of commodified forms. Halalization has led to the emergence of new forms of aesthetic Malay communities based on different taste preferences in various middle-class fractions. This proliferation of halalization has incited a range of elaborate ideas of the boundaries and authenticity of halal purity versus haram (prohibited) impurity (Fischer 2008). This paper also forms part of a larger research project with the title *Islam, Standards, and Technoscience: In Global Halal Zones* (Fischer 2015). The central topic of this book is on 'the bigger institutional picture' that frames everyday halal consumption, the contact zones or interface zones between Islam and markets through techniques like production, trade, and standards. Methodologically, this paper is based on ethnographic material from fieldwork among federal state institutions, Muslim organizations and Malay middle-class groups, namely participant observation and interviewing undertaken since 2001.

This paper is divided into eight sections. Following this introduction, I will highlight why the Malaysian national context is of special significance. Then I discuss modern and globalized halal before moving on to the issue of how this paper contributes to the consumption/buycott and anti-consumption/boycott literatures. Then Malay Muslim middle-class consumption is discussed before entering into the ethnographic portion of the paper on PPIM and Malay Muslim middle-class consumers. The conclusion ties the findings of the article together and reflects on how Muslim consumption/anti-consumption is given new expression in the interfaces between Islam, state and market.

Consumption and anti-consumption in context

As it happened, global events were to dramatically change the context of Malaysia. A few weeks later, the US invaded Afghanistan during Ramadan in search of Osama bin Laden, this move was widely condemned in Malaysia and the Muslim world as an attack on Islam itself. The Islamic opposition in Malaysia encouraged direct military support for the Taliban against the Americans, whereas Mahathir claimed direct support was a counterproductive over-reaction.

In much the same way, Mahathir rejected the call to boycott American goods, arguing that it was irrational, harmful and even unpatriotic. Directly attacking the PAS/PUM boycott, Mahathir then launched his festival season call to spend. This call can signify what Friedman (1999: 11) conceptualized as a buycott. One has to distinguish between calls for buycotts and actual

buycotts, and the real challenge is to map why consumers follow or reject calls to buycott.

Mahathir's encouragement of the plan to boost national consumption in 2001 was given further impetus in the context of multicultural Malaysia with its celebration of numerous religious festivals of the three main ethnic groups. Of the Malaysian population of around 28 million in 2010, about 67 percent are indigenous Malays (virtually all Muslims) and tribal groups that together are labelled *bumiputera* (literally, sons of the soil); 25 percent are Chinese; and 7 percent are Indians (http://www.statistics.gov.my). Under the caption *Think Practically, Dr M. Advises Ulamas* in *The Star* 4 December 2001, Mahathir attacked PUM for their call to boycott American goods in the wake of the US attack on Afghanistan: 'We should not be emotional, we should think practically, things that we can do, we do, things that we cannot, we don't talk about it,' the Prime Minister told reporters after breaking fast and performing *terawih* prayers, a special prayer performed only at Ramadan.

In the same article, an anonymous representative from PUM replied that 'It's unfair to ask the government to boycott [American goods], we do it on our own, things that we don't need, we don't use.' The representative added that the call was difficult to implement and cited American-made Boeing aircrafts being used to fly Malaysian pilgrims to the Haj (the pilgrimage to Mecca, which is a principal obligation of adult Muslims) as an example.

This contestation of Islam in the context of boycott and buycott is symptomatic of broader controversies over being the true defender of Islam in Malaysia. UMNO is accusing PAS of wrong teachings while PAS blames UMNO for giving in to Western values and materialism. The state soon elaborated its criticism of boycotting further by saying that such a boycott would have either no effect or damaging effects on US-Malaysian relations. This view was outlined under the caption *Goods Boycott Will Only Hurt Us* (*New Straits Times* 8 December 2001).[1]

The global economic downturn and insecurity following 9/11 moderated consumer sentiments in Malaysia. Consequently, the state launched a campaign in the media (*The Star* 13 November 2001) aimed at boosting the consumption of, especially, domestically produced goods. Under the caption *'Tis Season for Spending, Consumers Told*, the following article encouraged patriotic shopping for the state. As a consumer you are advised not to be: 'stingy about spending for the festive season as this will not help to stimulate the economy', the Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry parliamentary secretary explained. As the country prepared to celebrate Deepavali (the Hindu Festival of Light), Hari Raya (celebrated by the Muslims (signifies the end of the fasting season of Ramadan), Christmas and Chinese New Year, 'let's not be too rigid in our expenditure, which could lead to over saving', he argued.

9/11 had become a global concern reconfiguring domestic politics in

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[1] *New Straits Times* and *The Star* (as we shall see below) are widely popular English-language newspapers.

Malaysia and consolidated the country's position as a moderate Islamic state (Shamsul 2001: 7). One of the main structuring constraints in the shaping of reactions to 9/11 was the political contestation between PAS/PUM and UMNO, who clearly understood 9/11 in quite contradictory ways. At the same time, 9/11 transformed Islam into both an agent and a product of globalization, making Islam a global phenomenon that demands an opinion about itself (Devji 2005).

Halal Resignified

The global halal trade annually amounts to $632 billion and it is rapidly growing (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2011). The Koran and the Sunna (the life, actions and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad) exhort Muslims to eat the good and lawful that God has provided for them, but there are a number of conditions and prohibitions. Muslims are expressly forbidden to consume carrion, spurting blood, pork, or foods that have been consecrated to any being other than God himself. These substances are haram and thus forbidden. Ritual slaughtering entails that the animal be killed in God's name by making a fatal incision across the throat. Another significant Islamic prohibition relates to wine and any other intoxicating drink or substance (Denny 2006: 279).

In the modern food industry a number of requirements have been made in relation to halal food, for example to avoid any substances that may be contaminated with porcine residues or alcohol such as gelatine, glycerine, emulsifiers, enzymes, flavours and flavourings (Riaz and Chaudry 2004: 22–25). Moreover, aspects of context and handling are involved in determining the halalness of a product. The interpretation of these questionable areas is left open to Islamic specialists and state institutions such as JAKIM. In the end, however, the underlying principle behind the prohibitions remains 'divine order' (Riaz and Chaudry 2004: 12).

For some Muslims, halal sensibilities necessitate that halal commodities are only produced by Muslims, and that this type of production is kept strictly separate from non-halal production. Halal commodities and markets are no longer expressions of esoteric forms of production, trade, regulation and consumption but part of a huge and expanding globalized market. Muslim dietary rules assumed new significance in the twentieth century, as some Muslims began striving to demonstrate how such rules conform to modern reason and the findings of scientific research. Another common theme in the revival and renewal of these dietary rules seems to be the search for alternatives to what are seen to be Western values, ideologies, and lifestyles. These tendencies took on special importance from 2001 onwards.

Over the past three decades, the Malaysian state has effectively certified, standardized, and bureaucratized halal production, trade and consumption. Malaysia is described as a model country in terms of complying with halal standards, and the country has strong halal activity in food processing and the export/import trade as reflected in its systematization and standardization of

halal certification. In response to the expansion of food service establishments and the opening of international restaurants in Malaysia from the 1970s onward, a thorough enactment of laws, diverse procedures and guidelines was worked out.

The article *The Halal Way to Free Trade* (*New Straits Times* May 11, 2006) asserted that in the years since Sept 11 terror attacks, the halal market has grown from a tributary concern of the devout to the mainstream of the multitudes. Politics has combined with demographics to manufacture an economic demand of global proportions while supply, still highly localised and inward looking, struggles to catch up.

However, it was far from only 9/11 that shaped to Malaysian halal sentiments. A major food scandal in Indonesia in 2001 triggered a new phase of halal proliferation on a global scale. The Majelis Ulama Indonesia or Indonesian Ulemas Council (in English), set up by the Indonesian state in 1975, accused a Japanese company of using pork products in the production of the flavour enhancer monosodium glutamate and demanded that the Indonesian government take appropriate action. It was a serious accusation: if true, the company would have violated halal rules, which forbid Muslims from eating any pork or pork-derived products.

As a consequence of the scandal, several of the company's employees were arrested, and a public apology was issued. It is most likely that the flavour enhancer did not contain any pork products; instead, the company admitted to having replaced a beef derivative with the pork derivative bactosoytone in the production process, for economic reasons. Bactosoytone was used as a medium to cultivate bacteria that produce the enzymes necessary to make monosodium glutamate. As the products of the company had previously been certified as halal by the Majelis Ulama Indonesia, the scandal seemed to undermine or question the legitimacy of these religious scholars in the eyes of millions of Muslim consumers. The scandal also made it clear that even multinational companies can come into conflict with the rising number of Muslim consumers and organizations if they overlook or disregard religiously inspired customs. To sum up, 9/11 and the food scandal in Indonesia had a marked impact on the way in which halal was produced, consumed and regulated in Malaysia.

Boycott/anti-consumption or boycott/consumption?

I place my analysis of Malay Muslim consumer activism in the interfaces between why people choose or reject a product or brand. Even if anti-consumption research focuses on reasons against consumption rather than pro-social movements, I show that the distinction between the two is not always easy to maintain in the analysis of everyday decisions of consumers (Michael et al. 2009: 145). Exiting scholarship on politically motivated brand rejection among Muslim consumers (Sandikci and Ekici 2009) explores this as an emergent form of anti-consumption behaviour. Three sets of political ideologies can lead to consumer rejection of certain brands, that is, predatory

globalization, chauvinistic nationalism and religious fundamentalism and I shall discuss how these issues are understood and practiced in the Malaysian context. In a broader perspective political consumption relies on market actions and consumer choice as political tools (Micheletti 2003; Micheletti et al. 2003) that potentially can change existing institutional or market relations.

Boycotts urge consumers to withdraw selectively from participating in the marketplace (Friedman 1999: 5). In Friedman's taxonomy of boycotts, the case of boycotting in Malaysia qualifies as a media-oriented and action-requested boycott, that is, announcing that the boycott is being called, and that appropriate action is necessary (Friedman 1999: 10). The relatively limited literature on boycotting in theory and practice falls into two broad categories. The first explores boycotting from a macro-historical, geo-political and political economy perspective with emphasis on economic behaviour as a particular form of resistance. An example of such conceptualizations of boycotting is Feiler's (1998) study of the evolution of the Arab economic boycott of Israel, the longest-lasting example of economic sanctions in the 20th century.

The second interpretation, mostly emerging within market research and cultural studies, examines boycotting from a micro-cultural perspective stressing the need to understand boycotting as an expression of distinction, taste, individuality, ideology or resistance to globalization seen as cultural imperialism. Such studies are Littler's (2005) work on the possibilities and limitations of reflexivity in contemporary anti-consumerism activist discourse, and Klein, Smith and Andrew's (2002) discussion of the mixed motivations people have about participating in boycotts. In another article (2004) these authors employ a cost-benefit approach to boycotting and list four issues (desire to make a difference; the scope for self-enhancement; counter-arguments that inhibit boycotting and the cost of the boycotter due to restrained consumption) that may determine boycott participation. Lastly, Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz (2001) conclude that the success of a boycott is determined, firstly, by consumers' preference for the boycotted product and access to substitutes, and, secondly, to what extent consumers are susceptible to normative influence.

I suggest that our understanding of boycotting theory and practice could benefit from further elaboration in a number of respects. Firstly, to my knowledge, there exists no anthropological exploration linking the two categories of boycotting discussed above. Secondly, in an era where globalization and anti-globalization have become everyday catchphrases, a study that considers local, national and global effects of boycotting seems to be long overdue. Finally, the complex relationship, or tension, between consumer culture, boycotting, politics and halal has not been systematically explored.

Malaysian Middle-class Consumption

Calls to boycott are far from new in Malaysia. In 1981, three months before

assuming high office, Mahathir had launched his own call to boycott British products in the so-called *Buy British Last Policy*. This boycott was called due to what Mahathir saw as neo-colonial British policies. This policy was sustained until 1983 (Leifer 1995: 75). Since this call to boycott in the early 1980s, Malaysian society has undergone dramatic economic and social changes that have recast the national context for the understanding and practice of boycotting.

The Malays constitute the largest and fastest growing section of the middle class in Malaysia and are the object of both commercial interests and current debates over the shape and meaning of Islam. In the 1970s, the state launched the NEP (New Economic Policy) to improve the economic and social situation of the Malays vis-à-vis the Chinese in particular. The NEP entailed a number of benefits for the Malays and other indigenous groups such as increased ownership of production and preferential quotas in the educational system. The number and proportion of Malays engaged in the modern sector of the economy rose significantly as a product of these policies. Ideologically, the overall objective was to produce an educated, entrepreneurial and shareholding Malay middle class, which the state elite views as a necessary prerequisite for economic, national and social cohesion.

Starting in the 1970s, a powerful UMNO-driven ethnic state nationalism has emerged. This type of state nationalist political culture, constantly challenged by competing Islamic discourses, tries to balance modern forms of consumption as national virtue and national vice. These tensions between religion, state nationalism and consumption are of particular significance in the growing Malay middle class.

Debates over boycotting/boycotting and proper Islamic practice are of particular significance in the Malay middle class as it is within this intermediate group that the question of what constitutes proper Islamic practice or legitimate taste (Bourdieu 1984: 60) is most imperative. In other words, Malay middle-class identities are given shape in the interfaces between revivalist Islam, consumer culture and the blurred area of everyday respectability. On the one hand, consumption has become a national virtue or project supported by the state as a practice in line with the coveted identity as a New Malay. On the other hand, consumption is being questioned from a religious and moral perspective and is associated with the 'excesses of the Malay royalty' represented by the Malaysian king and the sultans of nine peninsular states (Shamsul 1999: 105). Malay middle class groups are also driving forces behind Muslim consumer activism in Malaysia, as we shall see below.

According to Mahathir (1995: 1), the New Malay embodies an aggressive, entrepreneurial and global 'we can' mentality that abandons feudalistic values of traditionalism, excess, luxury and privilege. These official ideas of a New Malay work ethic were to set new standards for the realization of national modernity. In other words, in a developing economy such as Malaysia, the emergent middle class has become an almost mythical national signifier of mental and material development.

Economically, Malaysia has sustained rapid development within the

past three decades and the meaning of Islam has become evermore contested in that period. Even though virtually all Malays are Muslim and speak the Malay language, the contestation of Islam produces a range of diverse lifestyles. Islam, or more accurately, the social and moral meaning of what is properly Islamic, is contested and there are competing attempts to incorporate it into both state institutions and a multitude of everyday practices.

A range of competing visions of what Islam is or ought to be — for example a number of divergent *dakwah* (literally salvation) groups emerged in the wider resurgence of Islam in Malaysia starting in the 1970s. As previously discussed, Darul Arqam was an influential example of *dakwah*, but several other organizations have played significant roles in the resurgence (Ackerman and Lee, 1997; Jomo and Cheek, 1992; Nagata, 1984; Zainah, 1987). It is by no means clear how this Islamic way of life is put into practice, and *dakwah* devotion has undergone relatively unnoticed processes of individualization and domestication. *Dakwah* is both an ethnic and a political phenomenon, which has transformed Malaysia for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Islam in Malaysia has both produced and is in itself infused by a fascination with the morally proper Islamic way of life. This tendency embraces the consumption of specific (halal) goods, which may be seen to have a beneficial impact on domains such as family, community and nation. An example of this could be to prefer certain locally produced and certified halal goods, as we saw in the case of Darul Arqam. Conversely, seeking to boycott other types of goods on ideological grounds may be perceived as protective of the above domains.

Muslim Consumers Association of Malaysia: Between Islam, State and Market

I am in the SembangSembang Café[2] in the The Mall in central Kuala Lumpur. The Mall is comparable to the multitude of other shopping malls in Kuala Lumpur, but it also stands out by housing the SembangSembang Café. This café is run by Muslim Consumers Association of Malaysia (PPIM), which is an organization that protects the interests of Muslim consumers and entrepreneurs. Groups such as PPIM are to a large extent comprised of middle-class Malays. The Café provides shelf space for PPIM members' (halal) products and PPIM and its café is an essential space for Malay Muslim entrepreneurial networking. Activists in PPIM try to articulate calls to boycotts and expand halal requirements to cover more and more products and processes and lobby for the state to incorporate these requirements into halal production, trade, consumption and regulation. An important question

[2] In Bahasa Malaysia sembang-sembang means 'casual conversation' or 'chatting'.

here is how these activists work in the interface zones between new forms of Islamic revivalism, the ethnicized state and Muslim consumer culture and protection. Halal activism has a long history in Malaysia as we have already seen and it is a driving force behind the way in which halal has developed into a global assemblage, but empirically this is not well understood.

I am discussing halal with PPIMs Executive Secretary and a friend of mine, a Malay woman entrepreneur, Altaf, I have known since 2006. It is through this entrepreneur that I have come into contact with PPIM and why I am in the SembangSembang Café today. Both Altaf and the PPIM Executive Secretary are part of the halal network and the Café plays an important role in the way in which this activist and entrepreneurial networking is practiced. The networking and activities of PPIM and its members that take place in the Café do not directly involve the state, but PPIMs role is essential in order to understand the proliferation of halal in Malaysia and beyond: ways in which Malay Muslim interest groups network and protect Malay Muslim privileges through promoting Muslim products, businesses and halal in particular. In other words, groups such as PPIM and its network constantly push for increased Muslim consumer protection and privileges. In the eyes of these groups, the state is unable or reluctant to deliver enough support for these demands.

The New Economic Policy (NEP) has brought about a marked propensity of the bumiputera electorate to lean heavily towards the state for solutions to their problems (Gomez 2004: 290). In line with this, Malay Muslim consumer groups and activists constantly push for support and privileges and the proliferation of halal reinforces this tendency. Islamic consumption in Malaysia has been subjected to state and business intervention in the form of extensive market research and the political institutionalization of consumption, for example the setting up of the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs in 1990. Clearly, this is a sign of the state’s bid to protect the entitlements of Malay(sian) consumers against what the state and consumers increasingly see as confusing, globalized and excessive consumer culture. Consumers’ trust in and dependence on the state as an honest broker in consumption legitimates state intervention regarding the right ways to shop as well as guidance in terms of public debates about value. However, in multiethnic Malaysia the state cannot solely promote and protect Malay Muslim consumer interests and this is why Muslim consumer organizations such as PPIM and others play a major role in safeguarding the rights and privileges of Malays.

PPIM focuses on business development and social responsibility, but also works to assist small and medium sized Muslim enterprises that do not have the working capital required to have their products placed on shelves of supermarkets and hypermarkets. Moreover, the SembangSembang Café provides shelf space for PPIM members’ products free of charge. PPIM also consults with members on their goals and ways to actively promote products and business. The SembangSembang Café is used as a focal point ‘to encourage Muslim Consumers to support Muslim businesses as well as to actively promote products which are certified halal.’ Secondly, the café

offers 'a range of business and personal enhancement classes and lectures' on themes such as Strategic Partnerships for women in particular that provide the resources for PPIM's members to secure the finances they require to start businesses. An Event Coordinator is responsible for this training and several classes consisting of women are to graduate from this program. Thirdly, networking and business facilitation are essential for PPIM. The organization argues that many people come to the Café to meet friends, potential business partners, or 'those who can nexus business with opportunities!' (http://sembangcafeppim.blogspot.dk/p/aktiviti.html).

PPIM's Executive Secretary has been active in calling for boycotts of Coca-Cola in 2002 among other similar calls to boycott. The call to boycott Coca-Cola post 9/11 under the heading *Our program will hurt Coca-Cola* was a protest against American interference in Muslim affairs. PPIMs Executive Secretary said that 'The boycott is in response to Western interference in the internal affairs of Muslim countries in the guise of fighting terrorism' (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2542517.stm). In spite of these calls to boycott Coca-Cola and similar products, Coca-Cola is, of course, widely available in Malaysia. In Malaysia, Coca-Cola is fully halal certified by JAKIM. Coca-Cola's deals with a plethora of rumours about its products on its Malaysian website (www.coke.com.my) for example denying constant rumours that its beverages contain alcohol and 'ingredients extracted from the stomachs of pigs. … All our soft drinks are non-alcoholic and they don't contain any ingredients from mammals and poultry.' As early as 1998, PPIM pushed for a halal standard because the organization was concerned with religious principles in management practices. It was timely for such a standard to be developed, the Executive Secretary explains, as Muslims worldwide had been dependent on standards set by the West, which might not necessarily comply with Islamic teachings. When I met with PPIMs Executive Secretary in the SembangSembang Café in the The Mall in central Kuala Lumpur we discussed many of the above issues. As we have seen, the Café provides shelf space for PPIM members' (halal) products and PPIM and its café is an essential space for Malay Muslim entrepreneurial networking.

PPIM's Executive Secretary called on authorities to conduct scientific tests on the food seasoning products from the Japanese company Ajinomoto discussed above to confirm products were actually halal. The Executive Secretary said claims made by the company and JAKIM that the products did not contain pig enzymes were not enough and called on The Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry to conduct tests and make the findings public to instil confidence among consumers (*New Straits Times* 9 January 2001). A couple of days later Ajinomoto Malaysia reassured Muslim consumers that its products were halal responding to the call from PPIM (*New Straits Times* 11 January 2001). After having carried out tests on Ajinomoto flavouring powder JAKIM confirmed that it was halal (*New Straits Times* 12 April 2001). Thus, the food scandal in Indonesia in 2001 triggered a new phase of halal proliferation and regulation.

In May 2010 I discussed halal with Altaf and PPIMs Executive

Secretary in the SembangSembang Café. Altaf explained to me that even if she was not very strict about halal in her personal life, halal was extremely important in contemporary Malaysia with respect to the state and companies and also in the eyes of consumer groups such as PPIM and this was the reason we were here today. Two issues were central in ours discussions: the need for and expectations to tightened halal laws and the way in which halal is inseparable from Malay rights and privileges in Malaysia.

The Executive Secretary explains to me that he has been involved in the Muslim consumer movement for over 30 years. Similar to what we saw above in the case of boycotting, PPIM encouraged JAKIM to 'withdraw' halal logos of Coca-Cola, Starbucks, and Colgate 'because of support of the Zionist government, illegal money, oppression, but JAKIM will not do it.' This is an example of the way in which PPIM in the interface zones between Islam and regulation evokes halal to pressure the government to acknowledge that halal is also premised on global questions such as the oppression of Muslims. These points are symptomatic of the 'bigger picture' these activist groups promote against a more reluctant and pragmatic state that considers diplomatic relations and 'moderate Islam' essential.

The Executive Secretary argues that the reason to form PPIM in the first place was to establish a platform for addressing 'unfair treatment' of Muslims and their culture. PPIM has supported a 'clear direction' in Malaysian halal for many years both with the government and with 'Muslim consumers uncritically feeding the system'. An important PPIM critique of the state in Malaysia is that this is not sufficiently involved in acknowledging and supporting Muslim consumption and halal. Hence, because of lack of state support, Muslims are still 'backward' in terms of entrepreneurial possibilities – in the eyes of PPIM it is unsatisfactory that so little of halal production, trade and regulation on a global scale and in Malaysia is in 'Muslim hands' and PPIMs work aims at addressing exactly this aspect. However, the last 500 years of Western and colonial oppression has instilled a kind of inferiority in many Muslims and this is not easily changed.

The main objective is no longer to provide proper halal food to Muslims, this objective has to a large extent been met in Malaysia, but to make Muslims see that halal is an 'asset' similar to kosher that should be on Muslim hands. PPIM works 'actively and proactively' towards these aims, for instance by setting up the SembangSembang Café in which all products and activities contribute towards this aim. Ideally, 90 per cent of employees in the halal industry should be Muslim. Right now, big companies operating in Malaysia often would not even let their Muslim employees go to Friday prayer.

The SembangSembang Café is not directly financially supported by the Malaysian state, but through Muslim companies and individual members' support. Conversely, the products displayed support Muslims and Muslim interests in Malaysia, the Executive Secretary explained. I have shown halal activists or organizations promote boycotting of certain products while encouraging buycotting halal on a big scale in the interface zones between new forms of Islamic revivalism, the ethnicized state, and Muslim consumer

culture and protection. Halal activism in Malaysia can be seen as a continuation of *dakwah* engagement, but with a particular focus on proper Islamic consumption and halal and not so much Islamic theology.

Consumption and anti-consumption as purism

I suggest that the constitution of distinctions between two Malay middle-class groups is a highly uneven process full of ambiguities and contradictions. What is appearing, then, are two Malay registers of modern lifestyles. Firstly, one group performs boycotting/buycotting and halal consumption as a localized form of purism. Secondly, another group of middle-class Malays are more orientated towards a pragmatic approach to these contested questions. A couple of informants in each of these groups is now selected to represent diverse understandings and practices of the boycott/buycott and halal consumption. In other words, these informants are exemplars of a scale of strategies involved in proper Muslim consumption.

Yasir is a 37-year-old man working with IT development and a leading member of a local Islamic organization. He lives with his wife and young son in a condominium bordering on Sungai Pencala and the Darul Arqam commune. The family moved into their flat in 1995. When laying out his arguments for supporting the boycott, he elaborates on the Jewish-US conspiracy theory mentioned above. Regarding the war in Afghanistan, he argues that PUM's and PAS's motivation to boycott was incited due to American companies' support of their government, which 'uses money to buy ammunition to fight the Afghans. Most of the top profitable companies in America are Jewish owned. US companies are using profits to fight Muslims.' The logic here is that through buying American products, Muslim consumers are unwittingly funding the war in Afghanistan.

Another reason for boycotting, Yasir explains, is the use of child labour in India and Indonesia by US companies such as Nike. A boycott would ideally bend this dark side of US-dominated capitalism and globalization signified by commodities. This type of critique is by no means limited to Islamic activism. Naomi Klein (1999: 365) believes that boycotts are the most effective force for corporate reform ever seen. In Islamic as well as anti-globalization discourse, boycotting a specific product or brand promises to confront much larger geo-political conflicts and ethical dilemmas.

Yasir is surprisingly positive about the question of state encouragement to spend: 'Islam says if you can afford it, by all means spend, but moderation is best.' Again, as in the case of other informants in this register, the question of balance and moderation is the primary ideological logic behind this statement. In spite of Yasir's idealization of moderation and balance, he seems to endorse Mahathir's boycott policy in principle. This is a mental strategy that tries to create a moral distinction between personal and pious religious standards and what he sees as the pragmatics of the powerful state nationalist insistence on patriotic consumption in a globalized world.

Among these Malays, performing public morality is inseparable from

the desire to control and purify the body in terms of appropriate attire such as the *kopiah* (skullcap) and a *janggut* (beard) for men and *tudung* (headscarf) for women. The particular understanding and practice of Islam within this group provide these Malays with a rather detailed and shared material blueprint for performing a particular lifestyle. Interestingly, the interior of these homes did not reflect any uniquely Islamic taste or style. In this respect, the homes of this group of middle-class Malays are comparable to the homes of the more pragmatic group discussed below.

Yasir most strongly embodied the power and purism of halalization involved in consumer preferences in everyday life. He minutely divided Malays into segments according to their adherence to extremely elaborate ideas about what was considered Islamically acceptable and what was not. These distinctions produced and maintained a polarity between purity and impurity and, in the end, legitimate Islamic taste. Once, while in Australia, he accidentally ate food that was not halal certified and instantly stopped eating it. He explained that while his family was very cautious, many Muslims were quite indifferent to these requirements. Yasir drew attention to the different groups of Malays and their dedication to halal requirements, which he saw as quite incomplete and unacceptable. Yasir‘s ideas about the kind of particularity involved in Malay halal food preferences were elaborate, and simultaneously worked as one of the clearest examples of ethnic and religious distinctions and social boundaries. He identified three main Malay segments in relation to halal:

> “My friends go for halal food. They will only eat if they see the halal logo certified by the government and that the cook is Muslim. Top of the pyramid. Very concerned. And down the pyramid you have people who as long as they see halal, certified by government, it doesn‘t matter if they don‘t see the cook whether he is Chinese or not, they still go and eat. Then the lower part of the pyramid. They don‘t care whether it‘s halal certified or not. As long as there‘s a word in Romanized halal, they go and eat even though they see that there are no Malays, it‘s not a Malay business”.

He maintained that his favourite shop was the small Malay-owned Azlinah right next to the condominium where he lives. Going to this local shop was also in accordance with his principle of buying a minimum of ten per cent of the family‘s goods in bumiputera shops. He also shopped at Pasar Raya, a local mini market in TTDI owned by Malays, because they had a good range of things at a fair price, and to support Muslim businesses. Nevertheless, the family would regularly go to Jaya Jusco in the One Utama mall to buy fresh food that they could not buy in the small shop even though a Chinese company presumably owned this store.

More puristic Malays attribute their concern about halal (and the lack of it in others) to the relatively strict Shafi’i school of jurisprudence within the Sunni division of Islam dominant in Malaysia. A young woman in her twenties, Maslina, who studies international marketing explained to me that

'I would always say that Malaysian Muslims are stricter. It is just the way that we were taught, I think. We are Shafi'i school of thought, we are the strictest.'

In sum, puristic middle-class Malays are acutely aware of their ethical responsibility to boycott. But in practice, the ideals of boycotting are blurred by a number of social and pragmatic concerns. Purist Malays work hard to stretch food halalization to involve proper preferences, taste, handling, presentation and context. The halalness of a product is not directly verifiable through smell or appearance so it is mainly a question of trust in its certification. For the most dedicated among the purists, halal requirements are by no means fixed or stable, but instead elastic and expansive. For these Malays, halal products must also be produced by (Malay) Muslims in order to be Islamically acceptable in the wave of halalization. The above discussion shows that boycotting/buycotting and halal are expressions of everyday negotiations between consumption and anti-consumption.

Consumption and anti-consumption as pragmatism

The more pragmatically inclined Malays often feel intimidated by what they see as an unbearable moralism among more puristically orientated Malays. This section explores 'ordinary Malays', that is, Malays who are not in the forefront of contemporary religious or political developments and who are somewhat ambivalent about these (Peletz 1997: 231).

Siti is in her 40s, married with one adult son, who is studying in Australia, and she has lived in this condominium flat since 1992. Her husband holds a senior position in a bank. She is educated as a teacher. The fact that Malaysia is dependent on US industries and investment makes boycotting hazardous. In much the same way, this type of pragmatics is reflected in the way she articulates why she cannot follow the encouragement to shop: 'I simply don't have the money to follow that. Some people may.' This type of statement would not have cropped up among the first group of informants as it supports unconditional shopping for the state without any articulation of Islamic moderation or qualification.

Siti felt that the whole idea about Islam in consumption, for example Islamic banking, was insufficiently argued and altogether unconvincing. Islam as an everyday guide to consumption was to her a question of partaking of halal food and donning clothes that would cover the body in an acceptable yet fashionable manner. In the eyes of more pragmatically inclined informants the question of halal preferences was presupposed but not carefully elaborated to the extent that will become evident shortly.

Other pragmatic middle-class Malays explained that the call to boycott increased their awareness of, and motivation to, boycott: boycotting was the only existing 'weapon' to fight America. Turning to the question of encouragement to spend, many of these informants were positive towards the idea, whereas the family unit presents itself as the limitation to excessive spending, that is, a wish to have a 'limit' for families to avoid US

materialism that undermines social and moral values of families. This is the dark side of development Islam can help avoid. At the same time, informants would explain that the buycott invites and legitimises excessive consumption. Most of the pragmatic informants would agree that boycotting is one way of expressing dislike towards the 'regime'. They felt that the primary drive behind boycotting was the impact of American consumer culture in Malaysia: yuppies in Malaysia that had received their education in the US or the West and brought back this culture, which is then exploited by entrepreneurial business people. While this type of critique of global capitalism can be said to be pervasive in the majority of economically developed urban settings, it seems to take on specific significance as groups of Muslims post-9/11 try to purify and balance what they see as material enjoyment that constructs superficial and hedonic identities.

Pragmatic Malays either reluctantly accept the imposition of halalization or simply reject it as a material and thus shallow display of belief – as Islamic materialism or excess. An expression of this type of resistance is Siti's phrase that 'Islamic belief alone should be fine.' Malays who are less concerned with the religious morality of public excess, often feel personally victimized by (state) materialism, consumer culture and brands when accused of un-Islamic consumption by puristic Malays. In this battle for purity as legitimate taste, pragmatic Malays play the part of a 'supporting cast' in the performance of individualised consumption. Against what is seen as a purist taste hegemony, pragmatic Malays evoke authenticity as that which is inseparable from individual and sovereign choices and preferences. In the end, these choices are seen to produce Malay middle-class identities that are effects of these individualized choices.

Conclusion

My discussion illustrates how actual practices, puritan ideals as well as political and religious discourses all infuse the debate over the calls to boycott/buycott as a wide range of pragmatics, predicaments, contradictions and dilemmas work themselves out in the individual cases. State nationalism has effectively resignified boycotting from being a political weapon of the weak to becoming a subversive and extremist Islamist bid, while festivals of consumption are staged as 'religious' in order to legitimate consumption that could otherwise be deemed 'excessive' by the Islamic opposition.

In political struggles over the values of public consumption, the rising Malay middle class is split between working out what is proper Islamic practice in everyday life and at the same time performing patriotic consumption. The two Malay groups each manifest one side of the religious and pragmatic dilemmas that arise from everyday performances of consumption. At the same time, both groups of middle-class Malays are well aware that the debates between UMNO and PAS/PUM/PPIM in contemporary Malaysia is merely the discursive staging of pragmatic power games rather than deeper theological or ideological differences. Although

political parties and religious groups claim authority to support what they see as their ideal models of proper moral action, middle-class Malays often regard these claims and stagings as merely pragmatic, strategic and unconvincing rhetoric. The unintended consequence of this battle for the moral and religious high ground of public consumption may thus very well be to accelerate the process of contestation, domestication and individualization that Islam is currently undergoing in Malaysia.

I have shown that Malay activists or organizations promote halal on a big scale in the interface zones between new forms of Islamic revivalism, the ethnicized state and Muslim consumer culture and protection. Even if the state in Malaysia has preempted earlier and competing forms of *dakwah* organizations such as PPIM play important roles in pushing and protecting halal in Malaysia, that is, halal activists constantly call on the ethnicized state to tighten halal regulation and call for boycotting products that are associated with unwanted foreign influences.

Even though the more puristically orientated Malays are concerned about excessive and un-Islamic consumption, they tend to articulate a cautious recognition of the necessity of the state nationalist buycott in the post-9/11 context. In order to overcome this ambiguity, puristic Malays try to distinguish between national pragmatic concerns and patriotic shopping for the state on the one hand and their personal puritan ideals on the other hand. Thus, in the interface between the calls to boycott/buycott both patriotic and religious identities are constantly cast and recast.

This type of performed purism, however, sits uneasily with another range of everyday concerns over how to translate the Islamic opposition's call to boycott into actual family practices. Hence, puritan ideals are challenged, confused and tempered by the quest for material status, by the moral obligation to share within families, by media exhortation to consume, by nationalist reverence for the Malaysian state as well as by geo-political considerations. Consequently, these purist middle-class Malays straddle the moral territory between pious and puritan ideals and a national patriotism linked to shopping for the state. Paradoxically, my analysis shows that the more consumers are exposed to extensive calls to boycott, the more they are confronted with the problem of how to translate intentionality into actual practice.

Informants reflected a general adherence to halal principles in terms of food. All informants conveyed that this was the single most significant principle. Purity in the form of halalization is not a fixed symbol or a complete process, but rather something lived and dynamic in the everyday lives of puristic Malays in particular. Consequently, the realm of halalization must constantly be expanded and elaborated by consumers, capitalists and the state in order to retain its impetus and it is these tendencies more pragmatic Malays quietly challenge.

Author biography

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The impact of character branding through media: A case study of TV al-Hijrah's Ustaz celebrity programme

Rosli Bin Mohammed

Abstract

This study was conducted to see how character branding of religious individual whose known as Ustaz Celebrity relates to the programs aired on TVAlhijrah, in accordance with its concept as an Islamic station which broadcast one hundred percent Islamic-oriented content. This study was conducted based on qualitative findings involving in-depth "face to face" interview and also through telephone conversations, used as a research instrument. The researcher also conducted a survey in which the questionnaires are distributed to tor TVAlhijrah's viewers. Respondents are divided into several categories such as age, gender and education level. Data from respondents, used to measure the characteristics of an ustaz which suits the title of ustaz celebrity and how their celebrities characteristic be able to used helping TVAlhijrah broadcasting their Islamic content. Transcripts, coding and data analysis was conducted using qualitative analysis. The results of this study can be used in helping TV Alhijrah to find more people to become Ustaz Celebrity in the future. It can also be used as a guideline for all TV station to choose Ustaz Celebrity to be anchoring their programmes. Character branding strategy through Ustaz Celebrity will attract more viewers to tune into TV stations as an alternative electronic medium that is capable of providing Islamic content in accordance with the requirements of syariah (Syariah Compliance)

In recent trend of Television Content, Islamic Programme has been well-accepted by viewers. It is understood there are many forms of communication and electronic media such television has been switching their roles to become a source, medium and platform of the new era of expressing and delivering good deeds messages. Through verbal communication which refers to any forms of speaking terms, khutbah, tazkirah or any speech delivery we can watch many programme as what has been aired everyday in TV station such as TVAlHijrah, Astro Oasis, TV3 and TV9. The emergence of TV AlHijrah as the only Islamic TV in Malaysia has given viewers an alternative to opt for Islamic content. According to Sheikh Ali Mahfuz, good deeds commuicators can generate people's mind to be

nearer to their Creator and practice good deeds in seeking prosperous life here and in the hereafter - Dr. Wan Hussein Azmi (1984:2).

In today's trend of television content, audience seeks a new trend and format of programme. Ustaz celebrity is a not a product placement. He is a product by himself. From a previous literature review, research has proven that product is more effective than the traditional TV commercial or campaign (Balasubramaniam, Karrh, & Patwardhan, 2006, Brennan, 2001; Hosea, 2007; Jin & Villegas, 2007; Patterson, 2006; Stratton, 1992). In studying how viewers or consumers respond to celebrity endorsement, McCraken (1989) felt the earlier theories of source attractiveness (McGuire, 1985) and source credibility (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) did not completely capture the factors by which endorsers are evaluated by human psyche. He argues that celebrity influence is "richer and more complicated than just attractive or credible individuals" (p.313). Celebrities have distinct personality and their own lifestyle, characteristic attached to them, all which affect how viewers are persuaded.

In determining on whether or not character branding of Ustaz Celebrity can help TV AlHijrah attract more viewers, there is always a question of individual characteristic of the ustaz. In The Source Attractiveness Model (McGuire, 1985) comes from social psychology research but has high relevance in communication and advertising applications as well. In fact, McGuire originally devised the model for it to be used in the study of personal communication (McCracken, 1989), and other researchers have recently discovered its value in the study of endorsement in advertising (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000).

McGuire's theory says that the persuasive effectiveness of a message depends heavily on the attractiveness of the source. His research found that viewers perceive characteristic and cultural differences among sources of information. These differences led to profound variations in how appealing and therefore persuasive the sources were (McGuire, 1985).

There are three constructs used to measure the degree of attractiveness. They are "likability," "familiarity," and "similarity." Likability is defined as the affection for the source based on the source's physical appearance and behavior. Familiarity is the level of knowledge about the source as a result of past exposure. Similarity is the perceived resemblance between the source of the message and the viewer or receiver. The source attractive model states that the more a source is liked by, known by, and/or similar to the viewer, the more attractive and, as a result, persuasive the source will be to that particular viewer (McCracken, 1989; McGuire, 1985). Conversely, if a source has low attractiveness or is deemed unattractive, the level of persuasion is very low or even nonexistent. The independent variables are the three construct: likability, familiarity, and similarity;

the dependent variables in this theory are the degree of attitude change and persuasion. This research will measure how the characteristic factor will effect viewer's attitude towards these ustaz and made them as an icon which entitled them to be known as Ustaz Celebrity. Through in-depth interview and questionnaires, it help researcher to identify certain characteristic which contributes to the development of character branding of Ustaz Celebrities. Thus, it is important for TV Alhijrah in capturing viewer choice of content and programme selection.

TVAlhijrah

TVAlhijrah takes pride in being the innovator and pioneer in shaping the broadcasting of Islamic content by maintaining high standard of quality shows produced of its audience and also by utilizing the latest technology available in the broadcasting industry today. Brodcasting a fully Digital Ready Station, TV Al Hijrah is able to handle needs and demands of local Broadcasting Industry.

On 7th December 2010 : (First day of Islamic New Year 1432 Hijrah) TV Alhijrah makes it mark in the national historic books when it was officially broadcasted and launched by Malaysian Prime Minister Y.A.B. Dato Sri Najib Tun Abdul Razak. Setting the world alive through wisdom and edutainment with Tag line "SEGALANYA BERMULA DISINI"(EVERYTHING START HERE) During the speech he was quoted "We have to introduce he truth of Islam to the world, Islam has taken step way ahead from anybody else in the effort of fighting for world peace and harmony. This is an important effort, as many opposing groups used our religion as a propaganda to critics Islam, to relate Islam with terrorism until they succeed to influence certain group and creates *Islamophobia*."

"The situation becomes worst when all effort taken by Islamic society to deny this bad image and propaganda was ineffective and one of the reasons is our disability as a Muslim to empower the media."

Prime Minister has urged Islam society in this country to empower the media in order to deny the negative perception towards Islam instead introducing Islam as the right and beautiful way of life. He hopes that the emergence of TVAlhijrah will help government effort as an Islamic country to change world's perception of Islam

Managed by Al Hijrah Media Corporation, the late Chief Executive Officer Dato Bukahri Che Muda, during a Fiqh Penyiaran Seminar, justified, that TV Alhijrah was formed, due to the higher percentage of Malay community (muslim) in Malaysia, 63 percent or 12.237 million, as compared to Chinese (27%) and Indian (10%). Viewer's percentage of TV Alhijrah has been rapidly increased by an average of 30% a year. Top rating programs has definitely set a new

look and branding of TVAlhijrah as the only Islamic TV Station in Malaysia.

How *Ustaz Celebrity* helps Branding programme in TV Alhijrah

From the increasing numbers of viewers in each programme in TV Alhijrah it definitely reflects the acceptance of Islamic concept in programming and how *Ustaz Celebrity* place a new era of branding in TV Alhijrah.

Table 2.1 : Programme list of Ustaz Celebrity (as at October 2014)

Programme Title	**Ustaz Celebrity**
1. Fiqh Akidah & Falsafah (Fiqh and Philosophy	Ustaz Badli Shah Alaudin
2.Tasawuf Harian (Daily Tasawuf)	Ustaz Dr. Zulkifli Al- Bakri
3. Fiqh Syariah	Ustaz Harryanto Rizal Rukman
4. 30 Minit Bersama Ustaz Don (30 Minute with Ustaz Don)	Ustaz Don Daniyal
5. Reflections	Imam Shuaib Webb

TV ALHijrah has started it's transmission in 1st December 2010, in 5 respective district including Klang Valley, Terengganu, Mersing, Sabah and Sarawak, with the young generation (GEN X) as the main target audience (age between 18-39). Since then, TV Alhijrah has set a target of airing 60% of local content, 30% inhouse programme and another 10% international content. Based on this, a team of Ustaz Celebrity is needed to fill in hundreds of hours of local content in various programme title, to meet viewers demand of Islamic content. This has been the scenario.

There are 2 main Television stations, name as Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) owned by the government of Malaysia, and private own stations, Media Prima Group that ménage TV3, TV7, TV8 and TV9, while a satellite TV, known as ASTRO, both are privately owned. Analysis of content on all TV stations as illustrate in figure 2.3:-

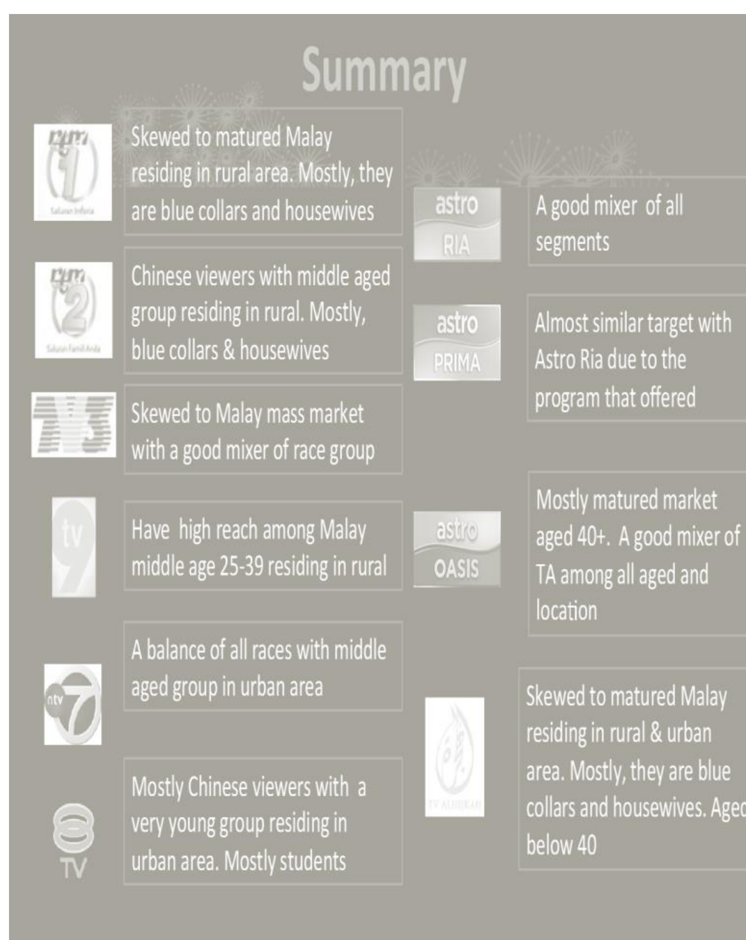

Figure 2.3: Overall TV stations and viewers in Malaysia – designated channels (source: ACNielsen)

TV Alhijrah has come out with one programme after another featuring various name of *Ustaz Celebrity* until they succeeded in creating their own branding. Ultimately, this has also helps TV Alhijrah, in a way, to build up their branding as what has been pinned by Ustaz Don through his programme, 30 minit bersama Ustaz Don, which has been the highest rating programme since. Followed by few branding programmes in many different categories including Talk Show, Magazine, Documentary, Drama, Zon Aulad and Islamic Entertainment.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Four primary research questions derived from the problem statement are:

i. The idea of featuring *Ustaz Celebrity* in TVAlHijrah
ii. What are the criteria of *Ustaz Celebrity*

iii. Which characteristic regards as the strong character of an ustaz

iv. How individual character of *Ustaz Celebrity* helps individual ustaz and TV AlHijrah in terms of branding.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research aims to identify and analyze individual characteristic in building Character Branding of Ustaz Celebrity in TV Alhijrah. For the purpose of this research, researcher will apply the construct characteristic of likability, familiarity, and attractiveness of ustaz celebrity only in TV Alhijrah programmes.

The following aims are expected to be achieved for this research:

i- To identify characteristic of ustaz in which they are credible to be in the group of Ustaz Celebrity

ii- To discover what are main individual character of Ustaz Celebrity chosen by viewers of TV AlHijrah

iii- To identify branding values of Ustaz Celebrity that can be used by TVAlHijrah in selling their programme to advertisers

iv- To suggest individual characteristic (preferences) of an ustaz as a guide to TV Alhijrah in recruiting new and fresh ustaz in the future

Literature reviews

As stated earlier, this research is to find how individual character of *Ustaz Celebrity* helps develop personal branding as well as corporate branding for TV Alhijrah. It is agreed that as an Islamic station, TVAlhijrah has made a solid platform for numbers of personalities and celebrities to grow and develop their skills and talent of becoming better in their respective field. In doing so, they need to have strong characteristic to be regarded as an *Ustaz Celebrity* where audience can put their trust, their believe and be attracted to his personality, his appearances, his delivery and communication skills. Through their individual characteristic like highly knowledgeable, vast experience in dakwah, approachable and easy to be with, these ustaz will be building their own character branding which in a way as a contribution to TVAlhijrah in their branding development as well.

People in the world of dakwah, or best known as ustaz, also has been defined as celebrities. They appear in public, present in big events, their lifestyle has been highlighted in magazines and tabloid, they become columnist, an ambassador and appear in almost every

TV station in Malaysia. To add to their celebrity title, these ustaz become popular and trending in every social media platform.

Expertise is defined as the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be source of valid assertions, Erdogan (2001). Expertise also been termed as authoritativeness, McCroskey (1966), competence, Whitehead (1968), expertness, Applbaum and Anatol (1972) or qualification, Berlo (1969). When a celebrity posseses a high level of expertise, he become more persuasive. An increase level of persuasion enables him to have greater ability to positively alter the audience attitude, Speck,Schuman and Thompson (1988). A number of researchers have used models in which Source Credibility, typically viewed as a function of trustworthiness and expertise; is the primary factor determining how influential the endoser will be (Lafferty and Goldsmith, 1999; Lafferty *et al*., 2001; Ohanion, 1991). Specifically, audience perceptions of the celebrity's expertise makes the celebrity messages more powerful and meaningful. Again, highly knowledgeable characteristic as refers to expertise will determine audience degree of trust and respect of their favorite *Ustaz Celebrity*. Media influence the way in which celebrity is produced. Barry (2008) argued that many characteristics of the current British celebrity phenomenon began in 18th century. Turner (2004) coined the term "demotic turn" to describe the increasing mass production of ordinary celebrity through reality TV, websites and radio. Celebrities are most effective when their images closely match with TV station's requirements.

Theories of Celebrities Endorsement

Celebrity endorsement give a brand a touch of glamour and the hope that a famous face will provide added appeal and name recognition in a crowded market (Belch & Belch, 1995). In the battle for the mind, you get the customer excited by showing him a known face, and an effective demand is created. In short, it helps increase the recall value of the brand. According to Source Credibility Theory, acceptance of the message depends on "Expertness" and "Trustworthiness" of the source. Expertness is defined as the perceived ability of the source to make valid assertions.

Trustworthiness is defined as the perceived willingness of the source to make valid assertions. Audience acceptance increases with the expertness of the source and the ability of the audience to evaluate the product.

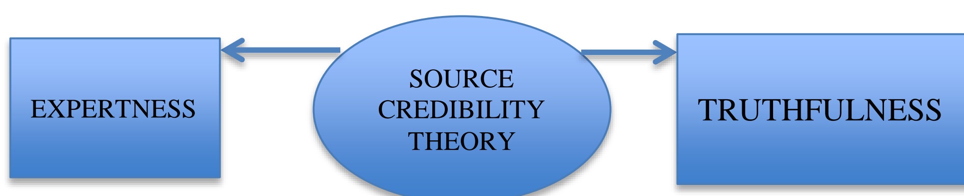

FIGURE 5.1: Source Credibility Theory

According to Source Credibility Theory, which is based on social psychological research, the acceptance of the message depends on familiarity, likeability and similarity. Familiarity is the audience's knowledge of the source through exposure; likeablity is the affection for the source's physical appearance and behavior while similarity is the resemblance between source and receiver. This theory explains the message acceptance in two ways: Identification and Conditioning. Identification is when the receiver or the target audience of the communication begins to identify with the source attractiveness, and hence tends to accept his opinion, beliefs, habits attitudes, etc. Conditioning is when the attractiveness of the source is supposed to pass on to the brand after regular association of the source with the brand.

METHODOLOGY

This study involve a case study analysis to identify and understand how Ustaz Celebrity build their character branding in TV Alhijrah and evaluate how TV Alhijrah build up their own branding by allowing numbers of *Ustaz Celebrity* appears in their programme. For this purpose, an indepth face-to-face interview with Ustaz Wan Alias bin Che Wan Abdullah, Chief Operating Officer of TV AlHijrah, Encik Salehhuddin Jurimi, Manager of Sales and Marketing TV Alhijrah and Cik Izyan Liyana Khairul Anuar, TV AlHijrah Branding Executive has been conducted based on a set of interview protocols.

Their statement of what is the elaboration of Islamic TV station, how they define the status of *Ustaz Celebrity*, the purpose of using *Ustaz Celebrity* in TVAlhijrah programmes, and the relationships between character branding and TV Programmes and their observation of viewers feedback will be recorded and analyzed in this study. Meanwhile, media statement, social media pages and you tube videos of Ustaz Badlishah, Ustaz Harryanto Rizal and Ustaz Don Daniyal will also be used as primary references to strengthen this case study. To make this study more convincing a set of questionaires will be distributed to a random of women's viewers which represent the biggest group of viewers and followers of *Ustaz Celebrity* that appears in TVAlhijrah.

Population and Sample

Using survey, a number of 50 women respondents which will be selected randomly among TVAlhijrah's viewers will be used as references to this study. The idea of choosing viewers as a respondent

to this case study is to best help the researcher to understand further as their ideas, reaction and perspective are appropriate to be measured in this study.

The hardcopy survey was distributed among women in few category of ages, different type of working environment and a group of housewives as they represent the biggest percent of TVAlhijrah viewers who had impact in determining the character branding of *Ustaz Celebrity* in their own preferences. Respondent is asked to identify the main characteristic of 5 selected ustaz in which enable them to be given a celebrity status and attract more viewers to tune into TVAlhijrah's programmes.

Research Instrument

In depth interview will be another primary instrument for this case study. In depth interview is defined as a research technique that involves individual face-to-face interviews. A set of questions at will be distributed. It contains of personal data of respondent such age, profession and educational background. Respondent will also be given 5 listed names of ustaz celebrity in TVAlhijrah as their reference. Based on the name given, respondent will be asked to identify and evaluate main characteristic of *Ustaz Celebrity* in which helps their branding as well as TVAlhijrah's Branding. Among the selected characteristic of *Ustaz Celebrity* are knowledge, creativity, communication competency, personal character and dakwah experience.

Findings

Choice of Characteristic

From the questionnaire, respondent has come out with their own definition and choice of characteristic that should be incorporated with their favorite *Ustaz Celebrity*. Based on Table 4.11, Interesting Character has collected the highest percentage. Respondent, which is among the TV Alhijrah's viewers, has chosen *Ustaz Celebrity* interesting character as their favourite with 39%. This individual character branding of *Ustaz Celebrity* has gained trust and create an attractive phenomena as compared to other criteria such as, highly knowledgeable with 23%, communication skills 18%, delivery skills 15%, physical attraction 3%, and dakwah experience at 2%

Table 7.1
Characteristic Percentage Of Ustaz Celebrity

Characteristic	***Percentage***
1. Interesting Character	39
2. Highly Knowledgeable	23
3. Communication Skills	18
4. Delivery skills	15
5. Physical attraction	3
6. Dakwah Experience	2

Viewer's choice by Popularity

In the questionnaires, respondent were given 5 names to be chosen and categorized by popularity. List of 5 *Ustaz Celebrity*, includes; Ustaz Don Denial, sutras Badly Shah Aladdin, Ustaz Dry Sulkily Al-Bari, Ustaz Roslyn Mohammad and Ustaz Harryanto Rizal Rokman.

Table 4.2

Overall Popularity Percentage

Category %	Ustaz Don Daniyal	Ustaz Badli Shah	Ustaz Dr. Zulkifli	Ustaz Roslan Mohammad	Ustaz Harryanto
Most Popular	76%	68%	24%	6%	28%
Popular	16%	20%	18%	14%	32%
Less Popular	8%	12%	58%	80%	40%

Based on Table 4.4, highest percentage for Ustaz Don Daniyal is at the Most popular category. Ustaz Don has collected a total of 76% of the respondent's choice in the popularity category. Highest percentage for Ustaz Badli Shah Alaudin also in the Most Popular category with a total of 68%. Highest percentage for Ustaz Dr. Zulkifli is in Less Popular category with a total of 58%. Highest percentage for Ustaz Roslan Mohamad is also in Less Popular category with a total of 80%. Highest percentage for Ustaz Harryanto Rizal Rukman also falls in the Less Popular category with a total of 40%

Overall Characteristic Preferences of Ustaz Celebrity

From the literature review, attractiveness, expertness and trustworthiness are important factor in building individual character which will establish popularity and to attract audience. Based on respondent preferences characteristic of an ustaz, highest individual

preferences character are: interesting character, good communication skills, delivery skills, personality appeal, easy to understand, good deed campaign, sharing knowledge, approachable/friendly, including knowledgeable. The 8 most important preferences character are the most acceptance individual character of any ustaz inside or outside TV programme to be accepted, trusted and be admired by viewers, audience and the mass.

Encik Sallehuddin, Human Resource Manager, stated that TVAlhijrah target audience is people between 15 to 39 of age. When it comes to branding an ustaz, the selected ustaz must be young and able to deliver the basic fundamental of Islam. "*The look and feel of the programme which is conducted by these ustaz also play an important role in branding. It has to be contemporary, young and can fit with this generation likes and dislikes*," Encik Salehhuddin quoted. *That's why TVAlhijrah is using young ustaz as they represent the younger generation in which can attract youngsters easily as they are our primarily target audience. TVAlhijrah also have some ustaz which also can fit into a very urban oriented Muslim audience for example, businessman, professionals and young executive through our anchor ustaz like Ustaz Don through 30 minit bersama Ustaz Don programme and Imam Shuhaib Webb through the programme called Reflections*.

Another characteristic which also agreeable to be among the important character are high confident level, like to advice and dakwah experience. There are among the positives characteristic which also contribute to the likeness, acceptiveness and trustworthiness of viewers and audiences.

Today, it is not impossible when *Ustaz Celebrity* involves in a programme, giving a public talk, appear in any majlis ilmu, attending special ceramah and officiate event, there will be a big amount of people who will come, gather, watching and listening to their favorite ustaz. Instead, Ustaz Wan, Chief Executive Officer, also make a point, that TVAlhijrah also has an obligation in preventing these *Ustaz Celebrity* from becoming an icon who is excessively worshipped by their fans. So does these ustaz since they already know the limitations. During these 4 years, Ustaz Wan Alias stated that their rating at one point had reached 5.7 million in July 2014. At present, average viewers of TV Alhijrah is 2.2 million. When TVAlhijrah first started, they can only attract approximately 10 thousand viewers and it slowly increased to 50 thousand, to 100 hundred thousand and in 2012 it increased to 300%. In 2014, total viewers has increased to more than 60%.

The increasing data also can be studied through TVAlhijrah official Facebook page with the target group between the age of 18 to 24 years old. The page now has more than 879 thousand likes as compared to TV9 which only has 264 thousand likes and Astro Oasis about 34 thousand likes.

Conclusion

Individual character branding is important for every ustaz to become *Ustaz Celebrity*. It is the ongoing process of an individual to establish their own name and brand to get recognition and impression from other people mostly station viewers. They must be strong in character, good attitude, good appearance, creative, impressive, likeable, able to gain viewers trust, knowledgeable and approachable. Data from 50 respondent shows that certain criteria are important in determining the individual branding of *Ustaz Celebrity*. *Ustaz Celebrity* gain trust when he uses his knowledge and communication skills in the right time and place. Viewers are attracted to *Ustaz Celebrity* based on their interesting character, positive attitude, creative in delivering message, good communications skills and approachable.

This criteria is important for them to build their own branding. As for TV Alhijrah, the station play an important role in giving these ustaz a proper platform and the right channel to share their religious knowledge and be able to be famous, become an icon and ultimately put themselves is their best position of becoming an *Ustaz Celebrity*. In other hand, credit will also go to TVAlhijrah as the only Islamic station which have numbers of *Ustaz Celebrity*, and with the increasing numbers and percentage of their viewers, *Ustaz Celebrity* does help the station in terms of branding and popularity.

Being regarded as a celebrity, an ustaz or religious figure are now become a brand to themselves. Similar as what is regard to celebrity endorsement, *Ustaz Celebrity* is endorsing themselves to become a popular and well known self-branding image. Most top ranking celebrities in the world like Oprah Winfrey, Donald Trump, Tiger Woods uses their personal/individual characteristic for brand endorsement. One of the main reasons for using celebrity endorsement is to create a better image for the product by transferring the symbolic meaning from the celebrity to the product McCracken, 1989). Research has shown that the use of celebrities in advertisements and finally on purchase intentions (Menon, 2001; Pornpitakpan, 2003; Pringle and Binet, 2005; Roy, 2006)

Celebrity branding can takes several different forms, from a celebrity attending corporate functions or PR events, make special appearance in movie or shows, creating his own line of product or services or using his own name as a brand. In this study, *Ustaz Celebrity* is using their own name with the help of their individual characteristic and TV Alhijrah as the media platform to create their own personal branding.

Individual Characteristic for Ustaz Celebrities

There were given questionnaires to identify which characteristics that help the individual branding of Ustaz Celebrities who appear only in TV Alhijrah. From the data collection, they responded well to the 5 Ustaz Celebrities individual characteristic, which has been identified and regarded as the most important characteristic by respondent, viewers and TVAlhijrah.

Interesting Character

Interesting character as per describe by many viewers of TVAlhijrah and fans of *Ustaz Celebrity* including good image, good attitude, portraying akhlak of real Muslim, good voice, clear words, friendly face, full of honesty, able to create appropriate jokes, easy to be with, humble and approachable. It creates attractiveness and trustworthiness which also relates to likeability, familiarity and credibility. Within the context of celebrity, trustworthiness is defined as honesty, integrity and believability of an endorser as perceived by target audience. It's their degree of confidence in, and level of acceptance of.

These characteristic leads to the research that shows, personal character branding is very important. No matter what we might like to believe, people do not 'buy' things for rational reasons. They do so for emotional reasons. Even if they go out and make preferences, they will still refine this down to a few possibilities and make their decision emotionally, in which comes to the conclusion that the character branding that an individual portrays will creates emotional connection, and create trust among them. They want reassurance of trustworthiness from these ustaz.

Highly Knowledgeable

The second characteristics is highly knowledgeable. Today, viewers are more intelligent, they seek informative contemporary TV programmes with good values and can easily be associated with everyday's life. Highly knowledgeable as what respondent find most in Ustaz Dr. Zulkifli Al-Bakti and Ustaz Roslan Mohamed, relates to their expertise in every religious aspect, their level of knowledge, educational background, their academics qualification and involvement, research and career they are involve in. A celebrity selected in a self-endorsement must have an acceptable level of expertise to make an effective endorsement.

Communication and Delivery Skills

A celebrity endoser could lead to higher believability, a more favorable evaluation of the product advantage and a significant higher intention to purchase (Friedman and Friedman, 1979). A famous person can shape the perception of the brand by virtue of the inferences that consumers make based on the knowledge they have about the famous person (Assael, 1984; Atkins and Block, 1983; Kamins, 1990). Thus communication and delivery skills is another important characteristics of an ustaz to build their personal branding of becoming a celebrity. Their ability to communicate well with audience inside and outside TV programme is an important factor in the process of delivering speech and dakwah.

Through communication, they must know what to say, what to deliver, how to construct sentences, how to make people's believe in, which accent to use, what jokes is appropriate to be able to wins audience heart especially in an icebreaking sessions. Communication skills include verbal and non verbal. Instead of being a good and entertaining speaker, *Ustaz Celebrity* must also be able to use body gestures to get audience attention and create good ambience. Delivery skills relates closely on how good your communication skill is. These two skills, helps an ustaz to master his public speaking talents, he can also develop critical thinking and presentation skills that will serve him well in almost any situation. This skills will sharpen their ability to be engaged in broader and higher stage locally and internationally, thus gain more confident from audience.

Physical Attraction

Physical attraction can be defined as physical attractiveness, appeal and image. Scholars associates celebrities must have constancy and lasting appeal, they should have sustainability and the knack to maintain their image and career accordingly. People don't like individuals who try to project themselves as 'squeeky' clean. They like people who are 'real'. People who are able to risk being human in front of their domain are liked more for it. According to Montoya, there are four characteristic to being human: being related to, being fallible, being positive and being authentic. To create a strong impression, you need to express yourself in ways that are different from others in the same domain. Personal brands have to be seen-consistently and repeatedly. Until your personal brand is known, visibility is more than your ability.

Audience see those criteria in the *Ustaz Celebrity*. Ustaz Don for instance, become popular because he brings new dimension in his appearance. His physical attraction become more visible when audience start to admire his physical attraction. The way he dress up,

suitable attire for certain occasion, shades he wear, shoes he puts on, books he read and music he listen too, are all taken into consideration as a value added criteria as an icon and *Ustaz Celebrity.*

Dakwah Experience

Another factor of individual character branding of an *Ustaz Celebrity* is the experience. Experience will give them additional ability and credibility. Viewers will definitely honour those *Ustaz Celebrity* who has vast experience in performing speech or ceramah. Using their experience to answer Syariah matters, stating fact with only the truth, able to easily refers to a certain hadith, Quran Verses and Fatwa is the criteria in which people will put their trust on.

How ustaz celebrity title helps TVAlhijrah branding

Viewers or audience often aspire to live like and look like popular celebrities. They listen more to them especially to those who have strong characteristic and has ability to inspire. Celebrity serve as reference group and they are able to influence audience, therefore, a station, like TV Alhijrah should select a celebrity that not only gains the attention of their target audience, but also someone who viewers closely relates to and has a strong desire to emulate.

In doing so, TV Alhijrah has certain criteria in determining an ustaz to be featured in their programme. Their intention as mentioned earlier, is not to make them an *Ustaz Celebrity*, instead, individual character branding of the ustaz makes them popular, become a well known public figure and honoured by mass by giving them a celebrity title.

As a station who has these ustaz appear in most of their top rating programmes, like 30 minute bersama Ustaz Don, Cinta Ilmu and Madrasah Al Hijrah, TVAlhijrah has definitely, has benefitted in terms of popularity and station's branding as well, regards as a win-win situation

This case study research is to find how individual character of *Ustaz Celebrity* helps develop personal branding as well as corporate branding for TV Alhijrah. It is agreed that as an Islamic station, TVAlhijrah has made a solid platform for numbers of ustaz to build and develop their skills and talent of becoming better in their respective field. In doing so, they need to have strong characteristic to be regarded as an *Ustaz Celebrity* with the elements of trustworthiness, expertness and likeness. Audience can put their trust, their believe and be attracted to his knowledge, credibility, personality, appearances, communication and delivery skills.

By building their own individual character branding, *Ustaz Celebrity* will definitely helps to contribution to TVAlhijrah corporate

branding, building and development the station as the only Islamic Free To Air station in this country. TV Alhijrah has been very committed in shaping their image, creating good personality, showing a good character and appearance until they gain respect form audience and viewers. People started looking high at these ustaz, they put these ustaz in a high rank and become an icon, a celebrity who they really want to be closed with.

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Muḥajababes -meet the new fashionable, attractive and extrovert Muslim woman. A study of the ḥijāb-practice among individualized young Muslim women in Denmark.

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Abstract

This paper examines how individualization changes young Muslims women's interpretation of the headscarf as a religious tradition in their everyday life. Based on observation and in-depth interviews this paper studies the reflections and considerations that underlie the women's choice to wear the headscarf (ḥijāb), the message they want to send about themselves as a fashionable and attractive headscarf-wearing woman living in Denmark, and last but not least how their interpretations of the headscarf as a religious tradition differ from the theological ones. This study concludes that the individualization changes young Muslim women's interpretation of the ḥijāb by that their choice of wearing a ḥijāb arises not only from their willingness to commit to Islam, but to a greater degree from a desire to express beauty, maturity and individuality as a woman. The hijab gives them the ability to express their beauty as Muslim women, giving them the ability to signal openness, which, according to their beliefs, provides them with easier access to the majority society. Last but not least the ḥijāb becomes a matter of interpretation, not based on the traditional Islamic understandings of the ḥijāb, but on individual reflections and considerations that are largely influenced by contextual conditions characterized among other things by choice, personal autonomy, and authenticity.

Over the past decade, an interesting transformation in the way young Muslim women in Europe approach the headscarf is to be noticed. Recent anthropological and ethnographical studies conclude that a diversity of interpretations of Muslim dress is visible in Europe, and Muslim women do not wear religious dress solely out of devotion. Further, studies demonstrate that young Muslim women wearing a headscarf in Europe are undergoing major transformations, shaped not only by local and global, social, religious and political forces, but also by issues of personal aesthetics, ethics, fashion, identity and faith (Tarlo 2010, Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2004, Christiansen 2011, Mossière 2012 and others). Young Muslim women born and/or raised

in Europe make it possible to be both *muḥajabah*[1] and look fashionable, without necessarily wearing clothes designed specifically for Muslim women and in accordance with covering restrictions based on interpretations of Islamic texts and/or without buying clothes designed and marketed specifically as 'Islamic fashion' (see Tarlo 2007, 2010, Mossière 2012). The practice of the headscarf does not seem to be an obstacle for how these women choose to express or behave, quite the contrary. Nor does the headscarf, whose purpose is to cover their beauty or make distance to the opposite sex seem to (only) be a religious symbol to these young women. While wearing a headscarf, young Muslim women wear mainstream fashion, tight clothes, high heels and makeup in order to achieve a beautiful, feminine, extrovert and sometimes even sexy appearance (Tarlo 2010). Those are the ones who can be called the *Muhajababes*[2]; the new fashionable, attractive, extrovert Muslim women with headscarves.

The constantly new and different styles of tying and knotting the headscarf, along with their overall extrovert and attractive appearances, indicate that Muslim women are breaking with traditional interpretations and giving rise to new individualized interpretations of the headscarf practice as a religious tradition (Moors 2011). Individualization is defined as a social process in which individuals become detached from traditional bonds and increasingly stand alone in the formation of identity. Individualization means that the individual also realizes itself through his/her needs and desires (Sørensen & Christiansen 2012). The intention of this study is to explore this creative approach to the hijab by invistegating how the individualization changes young Muslim women's interpretation of the headscarf as a religious tradition.

In the following section, the theoretical underpinning of this study will be explained by means of the concept of individualization in the current research on Islam and Muslims in the West. After that, the methodological approach will be clarified. The findings will be

[1] Headscarf-wearing woman

[2] *Muhajababes* is the title of a journey book written by a journalist named Allegra Stratton and is an account of encounters with youth under the age of 25, who hold university degrees but no jobs and face quarter-life crisis. Stratton comes across the living embodiment of the region's contradictions: the 'muhajababe', a type of devout, ḥijāb-wearing woman who wears tight clothes, loves pop music, and yet follows religious practices. The noteworthy in Stratton's book is that she emphasizes that young Muslim women are having their own revolution; they smoke, wear tight clothes, drive too fast and talk about sex, while maintaining the appearance of being "good" Muslims by wearing the headscarf (Stratton 2006). Stratton manages to bring a new and growing phenomenon into focus, where young Muslims women have a desire to join the modern world and cope with modernity, but with a religious twist. Even though it is not immediately obvious that this phenomenon can be transmitted to Europe, I argue that a quite similar tendency is to be observed in Denmark and Europe; therefore, this phenomenon might not be entirely alien.

presented in three ‘issues’: the reflections and considerations that underlie the women's choice to wear the headscarf, the message that the women want to send about themselves as a fashionable and attractive headscarf-wearing woman living in Denmark, and last but not least how their interpretations of the headscarf as a religious practice differ from the theological ones. I will try continuously to place my findings in existing research on the issues and literature will be integrated as a further source of data.

Individualization in the current research

In recent years, a significant number of important studies (Jacobsen 2011, Fadil 2005, Jeldtoft 2012, Pedziwiatr 2011, Peter 2006, Schmidt 2004) have identified individualization of religious beliefs as the major development in Europe’s Muslim communities. Briefly, the term individualization has been mainly conceptualized in two ways: new practices and reformed ones. The first argues that Muslims make use of the freedom they are given in the West to reinterpret the religious texts and replace old practices with controversial *liberal* ones that can help them integrate in a modern and secular Europe (Cesari 2007). The second view considers these reinterpretations to be reformed practices that are still prober to Islam and do not need to cause questioning of the religious dogma (Roy 2006). The majority of the fieldwork studies made in the course of the last decade to investigate individualization of Muslim beliefs and practices describe the difference between the traditional Islam of the parents and the *new* and *pure* Islam of youths and argue that secularization has an individualistic effect on the Muslim youths (Cesari 2005). The conclusion seems to be that young Muslims are contributing to the creation of a ‘*new Islam’* by interpreting, debating and transmitting Islamic knowledge in their social contexts (Jacobsen 2011, Johansen 2002, Pedziwiatr 2011, Roy 2007, Jouili & Amir-Moazami 2006).

However, there seems to be a lack of theoretical and empirical clarity of individualization that makes it questionable to understand whether the resulting practices are grounded within Islam and fall within the what are considered acceptable bounds of the tradition or whether individualization leads to new forms of traditional practices informed by the Muslims own rationality and subjectivity. I argue that the individualization process is in need of a definition, rather than being treated as a concept that everyone discusses as an evident truth. This may be true in the sense that new forms of Islam are taking place, Yet, arriving at conclusions based on the nature of these forms is the problematic part, as the attempt to understand the nature of these new forms and explain how they are shaped according to the subjectivities of individuals practicing them and the regulative structures surrounding them is still in the making

The intention should therefore be to fill the literature gap that avoids explaining how individualization occurs and what shapes it, and to learn about the everyday changes in the religious practices by studying how the individualization changes young Muslim women's interpretation of the headscarf as a religious tradition.

Metheodology

The empirical approach in this study is based on observation of the everyday practice of the headscarf among five young Muslim women born and/or raised in Denmark combined with in-depth interviews. The interviews in qualitiative research are useful starting point to study the various aspects of sense-making through behavior and reflecting on behavior.

The informants selected in this paper are born and/or raised in Denmark. They were all selected and contacted through Facebook, as they all had open profiles with access to photos of themselves posing while wearing their colored headscarves, fashionable clothes, high-heeled shoes and sometimes heavy makeup. Another significant factor in the selection was the informants' age. They are between 18-23 years old. In the one hand I did not want them to be too young[3] and thus possibly incapable of reflecting on their choices. On the other hand, I did not want them to be too old and unable to remember why and how they chose the ḥijāb. Pseudonyms are used to protect the privacy of the women concerned.

One of the limitations of this study is the small group of five informants, so no afirm conclusions can be drawn. However, for an explorative study, it can be considered as acceptable, all the more so because this study will be the start of a larger research.

The ḥijāb- a reflexive choice

All the choices we make are in one way or another influenced by the context in which we live. The choice to wear the ḥijāb is likely just as much of a free choice like/as so many other choices we make about food, clothing, education and work, etc. The intention is not to discuss whether the ḥijāb is a free choice or not for the informants in this paper, as such a discussion is a little futile, since we could ask; what exactly is a free choice? The intention is rather to examine what underlies their choice to wear the ḥijāb; what considerations and

[3] The term "young" is used in this article to refer to those women who have been born or who have grown up in Denmark/Europe. This does not mean that the style of dress and hijab worn by elder generations has remained the same.

reflections do these women have in regard to the ḥijāb? Is the choice entirely based on the women's wish to commit to Islam?
Mariam started wearing the ḥijāb at the age of 12 when she was in the seventh grade in a public school with other Muslim girls. Mariam is born in Denmark. Today, Mariam is 20 years old and wants to study Public Health at the University. For Mariam, wearing the ḥijāb started for fun:

> "Back then, we weren't as mature as now, we were children, we put the ḥijāb on for fun, and one day, we decided to wear it at school. All the girls in my class thought that wearing the ḥijāb was beautiful, and to us, the ḥijāb represented maturity…" (Mariam)

For Amal, the situation is not so different. Amal is a 23-year-old Muslim and came to Denmark at the age of three. She is a trained dental assistant, but has never worked as one. According to Amal, it is very difficult for a muḥajabah to get a job within her profession. Today, Amal works in a hardware store. She started wearing the ḥijāb when she was 13 years old:

> "Well, I decided to wear the ḥijāb along with my best friend. Our mothers are best friends as well, and they always bought these beautiful, colored headscarves. We thought that it would be fun to try it on; we really wanted to look like our mothers…" (Amal)

Anorther informant, namely Nour started wearing the ḥijāb at the age of 13 fascinated by how her sisters manage to combine the ḥijāb and fashion. Nour is an 18-year-old high-school student who like Mariam, wants to attend the University, but to study psychology.
The fact that wearing the ḥijāb makes Mariam, Amal and Nour link the ḥijāb with being beautiful and mature is not a new concept as this link is also been acknowledged in other studies. In a study of how Muslim women and teenage girls construct their appearance in the Finnish cultural context, and how they feel about individuality and communality in dress, Ritva Koskennurmi-Sivonen (2004) argues that all women and teenagers consider the *ḥijāb* to be an adult woman's garment. The informants in Koskennurmi-Sivonen's study generally agreed that when they started wearing the ḥijāb, it was not so much about religion as it was about attaining the status of an older girl (i.a. Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2004). Regardless of the fact that Koskennurmi-Sivonen's study was conducted almost a decade ago, this link between the ḥijāb and maturity still seems to dominate young Muslim women's way of thinking today.

Religiosity and the current discurse

Though, I initially did not ask about the religious aspect of the ḥijāb, the informants mentioned the topic themselves, but only to emphasize that they were not religious and that the religious aspect of the ḥijāb was not a crucial element in their decision to wear it.
Nour for instance is aware of the fact that she is inconsistent in her prayers and feels somewhat guilty about it. However, she finds comfort in comparing herself to other Muslims who do not practice Islam at all. Yet, she hopes that the ḥijāb makes her a better Muslim.

> "My parents aren't strict when it comes to Islam. They listen to music and attend parties. They rarely use the word harām (she laughs)… However, they pray and fast and they are considering going to Mecca to do the pilgrimage this year. I, on the other hand, am inconsistent with my prayers, and I am not proud of that, but I fast the entire Ramadan month every single year. I know many Muslims who can't even fast a couple of hours." (Nour).

Amal prays occasionally, and fasts when she feels like it. Her parents pray five times a day; they fast and have already done the pilgrimage. However, in Amal's opinion, being a good Muslim is not just about living up to the five pillars of Islam, but also about many other things that Muslims in Denmark are unable to do, simply because Islam is not a given.

> "Being a good Muslim is very hard these days, especially because you are forced to do things that aren't in accordance with Islam. My parents, for example, had to take a loan in order to buy their car. Loans are haram, but you cannot live in a European country without taking a loan to buy a car, a house or even to complete your studies. I know many Muslims who procured a fatwa that permits taking a loan. Another thing is having male friends. Islam is very strict about a girl having any kind of relationship with a guy who isn't a relative, but this, too, is quite difficult to conform to in the Danish society, especially if you don't want to be stigmatized as anti-social." (Amal)

Clearly, as Muslims living in Denmark, the informants feel that they have to make compromises. Taking a loan and making male-friendships is considered not permitted in Islam, yet they justifie it by claiming that these things are necessary in order to function in the Danish society. On the other hand, they are not ready to compromise when it comes to the ḥijāb, even though it is literally preventing them from getting a job within her profession.

Despite the fact that some women choose to wear the ḥijāb for fun, we cannot ignore the implications that this choice may have on their lives. By choosing the ḥijāb, Muslim women are somehow compelled to commit to Islam, even if they do not consider themselves religious. Thus, their attraction to the aesthetic aspect of the ḥijāb does not negate the fact that they commit to Islam by acknowledging the ḥijāb as an obligation and by practicing it. What enhances this commitment to Islam is the fact that the ḥijāb makes them like better Muslims by wearing the ḥijāb.

Mariam, Amal and Nour believe that being a good Muslim is not a matter of individual choice, because Islam, according to them, is not a 'whenever you feel like it' thing. Yet they admit bieng inconsistent with their prayers and fasting, since they find it difficult to live up to a Muslim ideal in the Danish society in which they live. This might explain why the informants distance themselves from being 'the religious type' and instead feel that they sometimes have to compromise with their religion. In this regard, *believing* in something is one thing and living in accordance with this belief is another thing.

Perhaps it is not about making compromises, but instead about creating their own life on their own terms. According to sociologist Ulrick Beck, this is exactly what characterizes the individual in reflexive modernity. The individual stands as a social unit that has greater freedom to choose who he or she wants to be (Beck, 1992). Apparently, religion is a matter of (*compelled*) choice for these informants, as they choose to practice some elements of Islam while ignoring some other practices. In this way, the informants create their own personal version of Islam in their everyday lives. This version is based on the informant's own individual understanding and interpretation of what, why, when and how to practice a certain element in Islam in her everyday life.

The informants own statements suggest, the decision to wear the ḥijāb can, but does not necessarily have to, be based on the Muslim woman's desire to commit to Islam and become a better Muslim. Common to the informants is that the decision to wear the ḥijāb was not solely about becoming better Muslims; in fact, their decision had more to do with them being able to express their individuality, outer beauty and maturity. This contradicts with argument stating that the decision to wear the ḥijāb has to be *entirely* based on the woman's commitment to Islam or her wish to comply with Islamic obligations (Johansen 2002). I therefore argue, in contrast to such statements, that the decision to wear the ḥijāb can include both the woman's desire to become a 'better' Muslim and her ability to make her own personal decisions about her religion.

Even though the intention was not to investigate whether the ḥijāb is a free-choice or not, the informants raised the topic by themselves, asserting that the ḥijāb was a self-chosen decision made on the basis of individual stance and reflection.

I think that this assertion on individual choice reflects the women's awareness of the discourse that emphasizes individuality and the individual construction of the self as quite central values of the free and modern person, but also of the liberated woman with a free choice of clothing - as opposed to the oppressed veiled woman (Jeldtoft 2012, Johansen 2002). By emphasizing that the ḥijāb is a free choice, they simultaneously affirm sociologist Meyda Yeğenoğlu's claim that the wearing of the ḥijāb actually has liberating aspects (in Andreassen 2011). In contrast to Yeğenoğlu, B. Koyuncu Lorasdağ believes that the headscarf is a multifaceted and complicated issue that cannot be reduced to Muslim women's oppression or emancipation. Lorasdağ argues that not all Muslim women wear the ḥijāb just because it is their own choice, because this free choice is not always entirely formed by the young woman's own rationality and independency. Usually, religious education and family socialization are determining factors upon which this 'own free choice' is formed (Lorasdağı 2009). Claiming that the ḥijāb is self-chosen is perhaps the informants' way to claim the status as individuals responsible for their own lives and actions. This may be interpreted as a form of resistance to the dominant construction of Muslim women that sees them as lacking autonomy. By choosing the ḥijāb, the Muslim women use the ḥijāb as a strategy to say; I am grown and mature, therefore I am able to make my own choices and decisions. The informants explain openly that for them, wearing the ḥijāb is not just about committing to Islam, but it is also about becoming who you want to be, namely a beautiful and mature woman; an individual informed by modern narratives of individual choice, personal autonomy, and becoming their true and authentic selve. In this way, young Muslim women who choose the ḥijāb in a modern society engage in a reflexive process of becoming self-reflective and self-determining individuals from an early age.

The ḥijāb is about looking good

Finding out *why* the young Muslim woman wears the ḥijāb can say much about her. However, to look at *how* she chooses to wear the ḥijāb is, from my point of view, more significant, as it may say a lot about her as a Muslim woman living in a non-Muslim society. This section sheds some light on how these young women make use of their individuality in the way they practice the ḥijāb in their everyday lives, by focusing on their sartorial biographies. A sartorial biography can be seen as an exploration of the self, creating new meanings and interpretations of life through fashion. This exploration of the self is not necessarily born out of an overriding preoccupation with fashion as such, nor out of a desire to promote particular cultural, religious or political views, but rather out of experiences formed by different

aspects that can influence the identity and the image of the self, such as religion, politics, fashion, environmental concerns, aesthetics, and a sense of global awareness (Tarlo 2007, 2).

The aesthetics of the ḥijāb is apparently of great importance for the informants. Not being able to dress in a modern and fashionable way like every other woman their age seemed to be one of the main concerns that the informants had when they made the decision to wear the ḥijāb. They were concerned that the ḥijāb would limit their attire options or prevent them from wearing modern clothes. However, it turned out that these concerns were unfounded, as the strategies that the informants choose in their everyday life are based on aesthetic reflections; they wear the clothes they wear not only because they like them, but also to manage their expression. Some prefer clothes that are simple or not overly decorated, while others want bright colors with glitter and light, transparent fabrics.

To Mariam, looking beautiful and presentable is about being able to wear fashionable clothes that attract attention. According to her, a muḥajabah does not need to dress in Islamic clothes in order to be decent:

> "…It is important to me to look good and presentable without having to wear Islamic clothing. I have always been interested in fashion and new-style, as well as matching clothes ever since I was a little girl". (Mariam)

Mariam is aware of the fact that modern and fashionable clothes are not especially designed for women who wear the ḥijāb; however, she makes her own strategies to make fashionable clothes fit her as muḥajabah. As muḥajabah, Mariam does not mind wearing tight clothes that show her body shape and her grace as a woman. Mariam is an extrovert and beautiful woman, who seem to spend a lot of time and money on her appearance. She, like the other informants, has an accessible profile on facebook, so everyone has access to her pictures on the internet. The way Mariam poses in her pictures shows that she is conscious about her feminine body. Although Mariam does not show skin (besides hands, feet and face) in her pictures, she has no objection to dressing in tight clothes that clearly show her proportions as a woman. Aside from the criticizing comments that she receives, Mariam claims that she also receives nice and positive compliments about the way she dresses. For example, she is often told that she is modern and sophisticated, but she also receives comments that contain the words 'babe' or 'sexy', therefore she has become familiar with such words. When asked about how she feels about being called such things:

> " ... I don't like being called sexy, especially not by guys. I think the word sexy is a disrespectful word in itself, especially if you are muḥajabah. But of course I cannot know whether the person who calls me that means it in a bad way or in a good way."

Mariam's response shows her awareness of the fact that she emits signals that might be misinterpreted by some people. She alludes to that she somehow deviates from the norms associated with the ḥijāb. Yet, in order to justify her attire and attitude, she asserts that her dress habits are more *subdued* compared to other veiled women she knows. She chooses instead to enjoy the positive comments that make her feel better about herself.

Looking beautiful is not just about dressing the way they like, but it is also about being able to express themselves like every other woman around the same age. They go in mainstream boutiques and buy mainstream fashion so they then can be part of the youth culture that they consider themselves a part of. Although the Muslim women can have the same taste and buy the same clothes as other young unveiled women of the same age there is often a difference in the way they put together their attire. Apparently, this has something to do with the fact that women who wear the ḥijāb have to somehow invent different strategies in their clothing habits that meets with their personal perception of how a muḥajabah should behave and look. The strategies that the Muslim woman develops require constant creativity in the choice of clothes. Being creative in choosing clothes and putting it together differs between women in terms of taste and personal perception of covering up and the principle of proper attire.

Many would assume that the fact that Muslim ḥijāb-wearing women have to be creative with fashionable mainstream clothes is a challenge, chiefly because mainstream fashion is not designed specifically for this group of women. And the fact that Muslim women have to meet certain requirements, such as not to show skin, I imagine, could make this challenge even more difficult. Yet this is not how the informants feel, because, as they puts it, do not have difficulties finding clothes that fall within their taste in the boutiques. Hanin, who came to Denmark at the age of two and is today 21 years old student, does not seem having difficulties finding clothes and being creative:

> "…For example, if we buy a short strapless dress, they wear it as it is, i.e., with bare legs and shoulders, while I will have to adjust the dress to my ḥijāb by putting on a blouse and leggings. So yes, we fall for the same things, but I manage to combine them and adapt them to my ḥijāb. Some find my style inspiring, while others don't".

In order to meet the requirement of not showing skin, the informants emphasize that their attire often consists of several layers of clothing. For example, when they wear a dress, they usually combine it with a blouse and trousers. And if they wear a transparent item, they wear something underneath it as well. Apparently, they have become experts on how clothes should be combined in order to look modern, sophisticated and presentable, but also in order to comply with their personal perception of how a ḥijāb-wearing woman should dress.
Beauty work and a good look require not only creativity and ability to choose and combine, but it also requires the right body shape. Some of the informants are incredibly conscious about their bodies and about keeping it in shape by working out daily. As Amal stresses, in order for the clothes to fit properly, the body must be in shape:

> "It is important to me to be in good shape, not super thin, but in shape. I usually buy my clothes in a smaller size. I have become used to do that. I think my body looks best in a smaller size, and when the clothes cling very tightly to the body. I do it because I'm not particularly tall, so imagine that I wear great clothes." (Amal)

I believe that it is safe to say that 'to fit properly' is an expression the informants use to say that they want to visibly express their femininity. This indicates that young ḥijāb-wearing women today are aware of their sexuality. Female sexuality is not a topic that Muslims openly talk about, as sexuality is often associated with the non-Muslim West. Combining the ḥijāb with aesthetics associated with the West and sexuality is seen as fundamentally contradicting the purpose of the ḥijāb. Wearing the ḥijāb is associated with certain norms of how a ḥijāb-wearing woman should dress and behave. Apparently, the informants are, to some extent, breaking these norms (Jacobsen 2011, 200). Some of them do not mind wearing tight clothing from head to toe that reveals their grace and femininity as women, while others have some reservations in that regard, like Mirvat for instance. Mirvat is 19 years old newly qualified social and health care assistant, who attends courses about Islam, loves wearing tight jeans and trousers; however, it crosses her boundaries to wear a tight top.

My observations of the informants' appearances show that, just like other young women of the same generation, young Muslim women who wear the ḥijāb can be seen wearing the latest jeans, tops, dresses, skirts, jackets, high heels and sometimes heavy makeup to signal their easy familiarity with the latest fashion trends. Often, the only feature of young Muslim women's clothing that clearly identifies them as Muslim is the ḥijāb, but here, too, one finds much diversity. In fact, the ḥijāb is often the most self-consciously elaborated element of an outfit; carefully selected to match or complement other details of a woman's appearance. Choosing the fabric, patterns and colors of the

headscarves that go with the overall style is not everything. Tying and knotting the ḥijāb is perhaps the part that takes the longest time. Tying the ḥijāb differs amongst women, and so is the case with the informants. They are used to dressing fashionably, and therefore it has become an important part of their everyday lives. These young Danish Muslim women manage to combine the clothes that fit their personal understanding of how a muḥajabah should look and what she must wear in order to look beautiful. In her study of sartorial biographies of Muslim women, Emma Tarlo argues that the majority of Muslim women who wear headscarves (*ḥijāb*s) and are born in Britain do not see a tension between "fashion" and "ḥijāb" when it comes to looking modern (Tarlo 2007, 144), nor do the informants in this paper. But some scholars argue that:

> "Since veiling is a practice that does not belong to the 'Western' space and since fashion…historically belongs to the West, the veil cannot be fashion" (in Sandikci & Ger 2005, 78).

Fashion is seen as a cultural mode of modernity and is therefore linked to the emergence of the modern individual; progress and breaking with tradition (Lewis 2007, 423). In the West, Islam is often presented as resistant of modernity, and therefore the general perception is that Islam and modernity can never meet. This probably explains why the ḥijāb, as Reina Lewis puts it; "*are seen by those who are outside veiling communities, and sometimes by those inside, as a contraction to fashion*" (ibid, 424f).

Since the aesthetics of the ḥijāb are very important to the informants, perhaps sometimes even more important than its religious dimension, it complicates the notion that modernity (fashion) and Islam can never meet. I believe that the fusion between Islam and modernity, manifested in the Muslim women's practice of the ḥijāb, not only complicates the notion of Islam and modernity being incompatible, but also instead suggests that this notion does not hold.

In their everyday practice of the ḥijāb, the informants in this study make efforts in terms of time and money, which makes the aesthetics of the ḥijāb at least as important as its religious and political dimensions. It is thus interesting and somehow funny that a ḥijāb, which is meant to cover the beauty of the hair, instead replaces this beauty by becoming the woman's new hair; her personal art.

The ḥijāb is about being open

During the interviews with the informants, I noticed that the fact that they belong to a minority group influences the way they conceive their lives as ḥijāb-wearing women in Denmark. The informants are pretty aware of the negative discourse regarding the ḥijāb in Denmark,

as they are exposed to it in their everyday lives. Although they are ambitious about being acknowledged as part of the Danish society on equal terms with everyone else and refuse to be stigmatized as different, their statements show that they are still concerned about their image and the way they are perceived in the Danish society. They feel that being Muslim in a non-Muslim context is about making compromises and due to their situation as a minority living in Denmark, they have a hard time complying with all the religious duties of Islam. Taking into account that the ḥijāb is one of the most debated and controversial topics that have aroused much attention and division in the European public spaces, the informants' worries make sense. Not surprisingly, the media has also played an important, if not crucial, role in the debate about the headscarf. Media researcher Rikke Andreassen has, in her investigation of this representation analyzed Danish news media in particular. According to Andreassen, the news media does not recognize the diversity of the headscarf. The diversity is reduced to only being referred to as 'headscarf'. When Danish media talks about the headscarf, is refers to *the* headscarf, as if there only is one kind of headscarf. For example, the headscarf is worn and tied differently depending on the specific woman's taste, style, fashion, etc. However, the news media tends to reduce the diversity among the ḥijāb-wearing women by selecting only one designated 'headscarf' or 'the Islamic headscarf' (Andreassen 2007, 92). Andreassen observes that the ḥijāb has been an integral part of the media coverage of ethnic minorities since the 1970s and, like the Danish, other Western media's representation of the ḥijāb is primarily associated with negative keywords such as oppression and violence. Muslim women themselves often have very little to say in the debate, as they are often talked *about* rather than *with* (ibid).

Despite the challenges they are faced with and the compromises they feel they have to make, the informants agree that the ḥijāb is *the* visible manifestation of the fact that they are Muslims. They somehow feel a responsibility to show the ḥijāb in a good way, even if this is not always in accordance with the regulations in the Qurān or other Islamic prescriptions. The informants believe that, together with the overall appearance, the ḥijāb functions as some kind of medium between them and the outside society:

> "For my part, the ḥijāb should not be boring and unattractive. It must be eye-catching, so that others who have prejudices about it can see that we are anything but oppressed. They are allowed to say; Wow, look how beautiful her scarf is. They are welcome to think that our ḥijāb is a part of who we are; we can be beautiful, we wear colors and whatever we want, we are attractive, and most importantly, we are free." (Nour)

The ḥijāb makes one's religious identity more 'visible' to others placing a certain responsibility on the Muḥajabah as a representative of Islam and the Muslim community. According to Christine Jacobsen the ḥijāb is associated with (contested) norms of how a proper muḥajabah should dress and behave; "*being visible they have to be 'exemplary models' both for other Muslims and for non-Muslims*." (Jacobsen 2011, 200). Even though Jacobsen emphasizes the fact that dressing islamically correct is a contested issue among Muslim theologians, she still seems to equate an 'exemplary model' with dressing and behaving Islamically correct. I find this equation insufficient, as I ask; what does it mean to be an exemplary model and who decides when one is 'correctly Muslim? Based on the informants' answers, being an exemplary model and representative of Islam seems to be a matter of an individual interpretation. The informants' understanding of how to be representatives of Islam is not directly based on any 'correct Islamic way,' instead it is based on the discourse in which they are part of.

By focusing on the sartorial biographies and the narratives of the informants, it can be concluded that the informants share almost the same interpretations of how 'to look beautiful', in which fashion is a common key element. They buy mainstream fashion and share a love for tight fitting clothes; makeup as well as accessories and high heels that make them look attractive and beautiful. Even though they differ in terms of tying their headscarves and in terms of taste, colors and patterns, they are pretty much alike when it comes to the time and money spent on their appearances. In this way, the Islamic headscarf becomes subject to the logic of fashion and consumerism (Lewis 2007). The beauty work connected to the ḥijāb establishes the self as a modern subject with free choice and gives the subject a sense of being a self-made person, who can take control of her own body. The actual practice of the ḥijāb indicates the individualized nature of it. Thus, individualization and bodywork together create a sense of modern agency that is free to choose and shape (Amireaux 2007, 139). This indicates that the Islamic headscarf can be an expression of modernity.

As modern, self-managing subjects, ḥijāb-wearing women act in accordance with what they feel is ethical, in this case how to be a good Muslim and a part of the minority community. Nevertheless, they also act as subjects who want to a part of the 'normality', as defined by the dominant youth culture in their surroundings (Jacobsen 2011, 202). Through their engagement in fashion and creative dress biographies, young ḥijāb-wearing women feel that they break with the perception of ḥijāb-wearing women as a homogenous withdrawn group. As Tarlo rightly puts it, women who wear a ḥijāb are often blamed for their supposed lack of integration into Western societies (Tarlo 2010, 99). Yet the dress biographies of the informants seem to tell a very different story. Their wardrobes and outfits could, as Tarlo

articulates it, be read as material manifestos of integration in the sense of expanding the frame to include new possibilities. As we hear, the informants stress that they do not want to be rejected by the majority as enclosed and different. When they say they do not want to look different, I interpret it as an expression of an expectation that the majority will stereotype them further if they do not dress the way they do. Almost all of them wear makeup, which further emphasizes their femininity and lives up to the modern construction of what it means to be female. This could be the young ḥijāb-wearing Muslim women's way of trying to combine a religious practice with a social practice that is recognized in the community. In this way, the dress practice of young ḥijāb-wearing women functions as a socializing tool that can help decreasing the already existing rift between Muslims and non-Muslims in modern societies (Jacobsen 2011, 201).

In one of her studies, Connie Carøe Christiansen investigates the sartorial practices of eight well-educated Muslim women, who have attracted attention in different forms of Danish media. Christiansen argues that the consumption of styled clothing is viewed as a communicative practice and that the Muslim women interviewed in her study are aware of this communicative capacity (Christiansen 2011, 341). The women in this paper express that they, through their styled clothing, hope to communicate out a message about their conviction as Muslim women, who are not oppressed or isolated, but socialized just like any other non-Muslim women of the same generation.

The sartorial biographies of Muslim women indicate an emergence of new forms of Islamic cosmopolitanism, which suggests something akin to openness toward otherness (Tarlo 2007, 144). Cosmopolitization is definitely a dominant term in Ulric Beck's analysis of society in reflexive modernity. Beck sees cosmopolitization and individualization as both are different forms of de-traditionalization (Beck 2010, 82). Central to Beck's theory of religious cosmopolitization is the acknowledgment of the otherness of the others. To Beck, the cosmopolitan is a person of double belonging. This is certainly what the young Muslim women express, as they feel like they belong to both a Muslim minority and a Danish majority. They practice a religious symbol that has been contested in Europe for decades, still they consider themselves integrated in the Danish society, given that they have non-Muslim friends and are educated or/and work.

One could say that these young Muslim women are individualized in terms of choosing the way they look, herein their clothes and headscarves. At the same time, they are also cosmopolitanized, because they use their appearance as a tool to express their openness towards others. In other words, young ḥijāb-wearing woman believe that the ḥijāb together with their overall fashionable and stylish look allow them easier access to the majority society.

De-traditionalizing the ḥijāb

The individualized and cosmopolitanism behavior of the young women in this study suggest, that a detraditionalization of the headscarf as a religious tradition is taking place, as these women have their own interpretations and understandings of the ḥijāb. Detraditionalization means a detachment from traditional constraints where the individual stand out and make individual choices about one certain tradition (Beck 2010, 82). How these interpretations differ from the traditional interpretation of the ḥijāb and proper dress, is what this final section investigates.

The Qurān on the ḥijāb and modesty

To summarize shortly, the Qurān only has few verses that refer to the issue of clothing. But these verses are much debated among Muslim theologians and intellectuals, which has given rise to different interpretations. This lack of consensus on what is 'modest' and 'not sexually attractive' seems to provide freedom to the Muslim woman to express her own interpretation. However, disregarding the fact that proper and modest dress rules are open to a wide range of interpretations, there is a consensus among Muslim scholars and intellectuals that the muḥajabah is instructed not to wear anything that makes her appear attractive, sexy and seductive. Furthermore, theologians stress that the practice of the ḥijāb is an extensive one that not only tells the woman how she should dress, but it also instructs her in how to behave (see Sandikci & Ger 2005, Mossiére 2011, Siraj 2011 and Tarlo 2010).

The ḥijāb- a new understanding

Only two of the informants, namely Hanin and Mirvat, are directly familiar with the specific Qurānic verses, as they both attend courses about Islam and have heard and discussed the issue of modest dress several times before. They are comfortable with the way they dress, because they think that they are much more decent compared to other women wearing ḥijāb these days.

I asked them to tell me about the women whom they refer to, and explain what it is that makes them *less decent* than them. They emphasized that it is not about the dress, but that it is the behavior which differs. Apparently, the ḥijāb is not the only thing that makes the Muslim woman modest and decent, but that a correct Islamic behavior is also required. According to the informants, having a boyfriend or going out late at night is not how a Muslim woman should behave. This suggests that the ḥijāb is not solely a rule-based practice, but also a disciplining practice as well. If the practice of the

ḥijāb encompasses modest dress and modest behavior, then the ḥijāb can be compared to a package that contains everything a Muslim woman must possess.

The two informants stress that, at some point, they will change their clothing practices, so that they are more in keeping with the religious principles. This indicates that they acknowledge these passages in the Qurān. Yet, I find that they somehow try to dissociate themselves from any literary reading of these passages, as they seem to be aware of the fact that modest and decent attire in Islam is actually a controversial topic. According to Anne Sofie Roald, there is a consensus regarding female covering among Islamic scholars, but there is no consensus regarding the actual form of the covering (Boulanouar 2006, 140). This may explain why the informants allow themselves to make their own interpretation of the proper dress. They emphasize that they are currently more concerned with their beautiful appearance, where the modern twist seems to trump the religious aspect. Once again, this suggests that it is the predominant discourse on femininity that influences their understanding of dress.

The other three informants are not familiar with the specific Qurānic verses that mention the dress code of the Muslim woman, simply because they do not read Arabic or attend courses on Islam. But similarly to Hanin and Mirvat, they make their own personal interpretations of how to be modest and decent. Common to the informants' interpretations is that modesty does not preclude a beautiful appearance:

> "To me, the word modesty doesn't mean that, as a Muslim woman, I have to be completely covered or fully enclosed in my attire. I believe that you should dress according to how you feel inside. If you feel beautiful, then you show it by dressing beautifully. I think that I have a decent style, which certainly could be better…But you have to take it step by step. I wear the ḥijāb and I don't show skin." (Mariam)

Mariam feels that she has taken a huge step by choosing to wear the ḥijāb. She believes that the fact that she does not show skin is enough evidence of her modesty. Similar to Hanin and Mirvat, Mariam also associates a 'better' dress with the future in her response, but she believes that modesty, decency and beauty, as she understand them, are not mutually exclusive.
Nour believes that the definition of modesty and decency is greatly influenced by, or perhaps even originates from, tradition and so is the case with Amal.

> "It's funny, because people actually have different opinions on the issue of dress. Some of them quote Qurānic verses to justify their opinions, while others refer to some Muslim scholar who

> said something about this. What I can tell you now is that everyone has their own interpretation of modest and decent dress." (Amal)

Amal and Nour seem to have found a compelling argument with which they justify their clothing style. Actually, this assertion is not entirely off track. In fact, Islam permits the Muslim to be well groomed and neat, be careful about his/her appearance, and enjoy what God has created for the purpose of clothing and adornment, yet forbids arrogance and vanity (Bonner 2013, Hsu 2013).

Dressing modestly and decently, maintaining your dignity, having a pleasant appearance, avoiding waste in clothing and other consumption are sometimes conflicting requirements that, according to some scholars (see Sandikci & Ger 2005, Mossiére 2011, Siraj 2011 and Tarlo 2010), lead to different interpretations of proper dress. It also makes the head covering, along with the proper dress, far from a monolithic practice.

So far, there is a consensus among the informants that everyone has their own interpretation of what it means to dress modestly. In her ethnographic fieldwork conducted with female converts to Islam in France and in Quebec, Géraldine Mossière argues that for these women, being Muslim does not necessarily mean to give in to the consensus among Islamic scholars in regards to female covering.

> "By and large, the women with whom I met try to navigate the extensive body of writing and the various Islamic schools of thought by appropriating a dress code that suits their own understanding of its aims." (Mossière 2012, 120).

Mossière states that the attires of the women whom she met express their personal interpretation of Islam. Mossière concludes that the outcome of this personal interpretation is that these women develop innovative, creative and personalized dress styles, leading individuals to constantly negotiate between modernity and tradition. Mossière further stresses that converts are interpreting Islam in a context where Muslims are a religious minority group. Therefore, they are constructing "*alternative religious and social representations of Muslim identity that accord with their feminist interpretation of the Qurān while incorporating the Western background within which they were socialized.*"(ibid. 115). I argue that Mossière's assertion does not necessarily have to be reserved for converts, but could include ethnic Muslims as well. Ethnic Muslim women and converts have the fact that they live in societies where Muslims are a minority group in common.

Since the informants of this study were born and raised in Denmark, it is logical to assert that their ties to the society in which they were socialized are stronger than those to the country of their

parents. They went to Danish schools, have Danish friends, and some of them are employed by Danes. Maybe it would not be all that incorrect to claim that they even share the western background with ethnic Danes. This assertion is supported by Nilfüer Göle who argues, that young migrant girls are closer to their host society in terms of youth culture, fashion consciousness and language, than they are to the culture of their parents.

> "…These new European Muslims have a double belonging, a double cultural capital. On the one hand they define themselves through their religiosity, on the other they have learned techniques of self-representation in public spaces and gained universal, secular knowledge. Because they have a double cultural capital they can circulate between different activities and spaces such as home, class, youth associations and urban leisure space." (Göle 2004, 112).

Disregarding the fact that modesty rules are open to a wide range of interpretations, we cannot ignore the fact that there is a consensus among Muslim scholars, intellectuals and even feminists that the Muslim woman is instructed to not appear attractive, sexy and seductive while wearing the ḥijāb (Siraj 2011). Yet, none of the informants live up to these requirements, as they all due to their attractive and sexy appearances, can be called muhajababes. All of them have posing-pictures on Facebook and their style is far from low-key.

Mariam is aware of the fact that she primarily attracts men's attention. She is often called a *babe* and *sexy*, but she does not mind. As we saw in the previous chapter, there is no doubt that the informants are fully aware of the fact that they look attractive. In fact, it is of on purpose. But as they emphasize, they are ambitious about changing the majority of society's negative perception of the ḥijāb through their style, even if this requires doing exactly the opposite of what Islam demands:

> "Looking beautiful and attractive is a need I have, but I don't mind if I attract people's attention in this way. Because this attention is good, as it contradicts prejudice about the muhajabāt being isolated and enclosed." (Mariam)

As mentioned earlier, the ḥijāb encourages the muḥajabah to make distance and not interact with foreign men. In other words, according to the majority of Muslims, the ḥijāb is meant as a protection and as a screen. Many, both Muslims and non-Muslims, who do not see the ḥijāb as a religious obligation, would probably assume that the ḥijāb actually encourages women to closedness and segregation from the rest of the society. However, the informants emphasize that they want

to be open and integrated in the Danish society. Integrated in the sense of being able to dress however they want, getting an education and work, and making friendships with non-Muslims. Through their creative appearances and good looks, they also want to show *others* that they are open-minded and that the ḥijāb does not prevent them from being so. Even though the informants acknowledge the fact that the ḥijāb already is a difference-marker, they believe that by dressing like every other young woman, who does not wear a ḥijāb; they can reduce the already existing difference. What we are dealing with here is the informants reinterpreting the ḥijāb. Instead of choosing to dress in clothes that mark her dissimilarity, the muḥajabah should signal openness and have an accommodating look; especially in a society that generally tends to stigmatize the ḥijāb.

The lack of consensus on what is 'modest' and 'not sexually attractive' among Muslim theologians and intellectuals, seems to provide freedom to the Muslim woman to express her own interpretation. However, disregarding this fact, there is a consensus among Muslim scholars and intellectuals that the muḥajabah is instructed not to wear anything that makes her appear attractive, sexy and seductive (Boulanouar 2006, 143). Furthermore, theologians stress that the practice of the ḥijāb is an extensive one that not only tells the woman how she should dress, but it also instructs her in how to behave.

The informants wear tight-fitting clothes that highlight their proportions and make them appear attractive and sometimes sexy. Some of them acknowledge the fact that they do not live up to all the requirements of modest dress mentioned in the Qurān, but in general they all seem to agree that, in these days, everyone shapes their own expression of modesty and proper dress. In this way, the informants are re-appropriating the practice of the ḥijāb by putting their autonomous selves at the center of what it means to be Muḥajabah. They then present Muslim identifications that are informed by modern narratives of individual choice and become their one's true and authentic self. One could say that the practice of the ḥijāb has become a choice for the informants; a choice that is based on personal judgment, rather than on what the Muslim theologians say about it. If we think of the ḥijāb as a package, the informants seem to pick and leave out the elements from this package that, according to their understanding, do not prevent them from becoming their own 'true selves'. However, since this 'true self' is influenced by social dynamics, one might question the authenticity of it (Beck 2010, 16). The ḥijāb, as a religious practice in the informants' everyday lives, is also detraditionalized one. However, detraditionalization does not necessarily that tradition no longer plays any role – often, the opposite is the case (Beck 2001, 25). The result is an emergence of eclectic forms of individualized religiosity where the individual becomes his own God. What Beck means with a 'God of one's own' is a God one

can choose, a personal God. This personalized God can mean that everyone has their own composition of the religious elements, but also as that each has their own personalized relationship to God in a society with others who share the same or other religious convictions (Mythen 2013, 5).

There is no doubt that the ḥijāb as an Islamic tradition plays an important role in the women's lives, however they all agree that everyone shapes their own understanding of proper and modest dress. In other words, they believe that it should be up to the individual muḥajabah to determine which elements or aspects of the ḥijāb-package (from the tradition) she wants to weigh the most. The choices that the informants make are based on their subjective needs which, according to them, bring them closer to, and not in conflict with, the surrounding others, who do not necessarily share the same religious beliefs. This puts them in the position of being their own God(s), as they choose to weigh their own individual subjective interpretation higher than the collective traditional Islamic interpretation.

Conclusion

This study invitigated how individualization changes young Muslim women's interpretation and approach to the ḥijāb by introducing the new fashionable, attractive and extrovert young ḥijāb wearing Muslim women who live in Denmark and who can be called the muḥajababes. By focusing on this specific group of visible Muslims, who are neither active nor organized, this study should be read as a contribution to filling the gap that exists in the current research on the individualization of Muslims in the West. The individualization changes the five young women's interpretation of the ḥijāb firstly by the fact that their choice of wearing a ḥijāb arises not only from their willingness to commit to Islam, but to a greater degree from a desire to express beauty, maturity and individuality as a woman. Secondly, to these women, the ḥijāb becomes a matter of the ability to express themselves as beautiful and attractive Muslim women, giving them the ability to signal openness, which, according to their beliefs, provides them with easier access to the majority society. Thirdly, the ḥijāb becomes a matter of interpretation, not based on the traditional Islamic understandings of the ḥijāb, but on individual reflections and considerations that are largely influenced by contextual conditions characterized among other things by choice, personal autonomy, and authenticity.

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Islams komplethed (šumuliyyat al-Islam), kontinuitet eller brud?

Ahmed Abou El Zalaf

Abstract
Foreliggende artikel hævder, at Hasan al-Banna (d. 1949) formulerede en politisk-islamisk ideologi, der blev anvendt som ramme for Det Muslimske Broderskabs mobilisering og udbredelse i det egyptiske samfund. Bevægelsen fortolkede islam som et komplet system og en livsfilosofi (šumuliyyat al-islam), der ifølge bevægelsens strategi skulle udgøre fundamentet for reform i Egypten såvel som i resten af den islamiske verden. Denne artikel vil diskutere, hvorvidt šumuliyyat al-islam (islams komplethed) repræsenterede et brud med det traditionelle islam, eller om denne ideologi i grunden udgjorde en fortsættelse af en lang tradition, hvor islam har været anskuet som et holistisk system. Dertil vil artiklen undersøge, hvordan ovenstående ideologi, blev italesat i en moderne kontekst. I den forbindelse vil artiklen demonstrere, hvilke koncepter Det Muslimske Broderskab adopterede fra de vestlige ideologier, og hvordan disse koncepter blev italesat som traditionelle islamiske koncepter for at fremhjælpe Broderskabets mobilisering i samfundet.

> ”i vores forståelse udgør islam et komplet system (šumuliyyat al-islam), som organiserer alle livets aspekter og prædiker i alle sammenhænge og grundlægger et præcist styresystem (for det islamiske samfund). [...] nogle mennesker tror ved en fejl, at islam er begrænset til tilbedelse og spirituelle aspekter af livet. [...] Vi (det Muslimske Broderskab, red.) forstår dog islam som et system, der organiserer både dette liv og det næste[1]. Denne opfattelse stammer fra Koranen og den islamiske tradition”[2] – Hasan al-Banna[3].

Siden 1940’erne har det Muslimske Broderskab udgjort den mest dominerende og magtfulde politisk-islamiske socialbevægelse i Egypten såvel som i store dele af Mellemøsten. Bevægelsen blev grundlagt i 1928 som en lokal reformbevægelse begrænset til

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[1] Med det næste hentyder al-Banna til de religiøse aspekter af samfundets forhold. Derved gøres det gældende, at det Muslimske Broderskabs diskurs berører verdslige forhold som statens opbygning såvel som sakrale forhold i samfundet.
[2] Citatet er oversat fra Arabisk af undertegnede
[3] Al-Banna, 2004, side 18.

kanalzonebyen al-Isma'iliyya. I løbet af 1930'erne og især efter 1936 formåede det Muslimske Broderskab at udføre en radikal ekspansion, og gennem en exceptionel mobiliseringsevne overgik bevægelsen alle andre politiske aktører i det egyptiske samfund. Størstedelen af undersøgelserne omhandlende det Muslimske Broderskab har fokuseret på bevægelsens politiske ageren i forbindelse med forskningen i "*Islamic Resurgence*"[4]. Der synes dog at være en ganske bestemt side af det Muslimske Broderskabs udvikling og diskurs, der indtil videre er blevet fejlfortolket i dele af den foreliggende vestlige forskning. Der forekommer i den eksisterende forskning en antagelse af, at det Muslimske Broderskabs politisk-islamiske ideologi udelukkende repræsenterede et brud med det traditionelle islam. Vestlige forskere har gennem flere perioder diskuteret konceptet "islams komplethed" (*šumuliyyat al-islam*), som udgjorde kernepunktet hos Broderskabet. Flere af disse værker har, som vi skal se, anskuet dette koncept som et innovativt fænomen udarbejdet af moderne islamistiske bevægelser, hvor det var gavnligt for deres agendaer. Nærværende artikel ønsker at redegøre for indholdet af Hasan al-Bannas (d.1949)[5] koncept šumuliyyat al-islam(islams komplethed) for derved at diskutere, hvorvidt hele dette koncept repræsenterede et brud med den traditionelle islam, eller om Hasan al-Banna udarbejdede en syntese mellem en traditionel islamisk ideologi og moderne vestlige koncepter. Artiklen vil dertil diskutere denne ideologis betydning for det Muslimske Broderskabs mobilisering i perioden 1928-1941.

Et intellektuelt brud

Det Muslimske Broderskab opstod i en periode, hvor der forekom en udbredt identitetskrise i det egyptiske samfund. Egypten stødte i forbindelse med Napoleons felttog (1798-1801) på vestlige kulturelle og politiske idéer, som hidtil havde været fremmede for de islamiske samfund[6]. Mødet med, og overdragelsen af, vestlige idéer opstod i forbindelse med Mohammad Alis kontakt til den vestlige verden og steg derefter i takt med udbredelsen af den vestlige kolonialisme i regionen. Den britiske kolonisering af Egypten i 1882 medvirkede i vid udstrækning til dannelsen af en identitetskrise, som især prægede den intellektuelle klasse i samfundet. Denne krise kom i overvejende grad til udtryk gennem et intellektuelt brud og en polemik omkring, hvordan Egypten kunne imødekomme modernitetens udfordringer.

[4] Guirguis, Max 2012, side 187.
[5] Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) født i Buhayra-provinsen i byen Mahmudiyya, omkring 145 km nordvest for Cairo. Al-Banna var uddannet skolelærer, men var samtidig lærd indenfor de religiøse traditioner. Al-Banna grundlagde gennem sin ungdom flere reform bevægelser inden han i 1928 grundlagde det Muslimske Broderskab i kanalzonebyen al-Isma'iliyya.
[6] W. Said, Edward, 2015, side 152.

Den egyptiske forsker Ibrahim al-Bayyumi Ghanem gør i denne forbindelse gældende, at kulturmødet med Vesten kom i en periode, hvor de muslimske samfund stod svagt vis-a-vis de vestlige magter, og derfor fik Vestens idéer og begreber overhånd især blandt den intellektuelle litterære befolkningsgruppe[7]. Den svage tilstand, som de islamiske områder var præget af, gav anledning til fremkomsten af forskellige reformidéer som italesatte divergerende bud på, hvordan den islamiske verden kunne gennemgå en renæssance og overkomme svagheden og tilbageståenheden, som prægede deres samfund.

Det var i denne forbindelse, at den islamiske reformbevægelse "*Salafiyyabevægelsen*" opstod og formulerede forskellige koncepter til afhjælpningen af de islamiske samfunds svækkelse. Tænkere som Muhammad Abduh (d.1905) og Muhammad Rašid Rida (d.1935) udarbejdede forskellige islamiske såvel som sociale reformkoncepter til afhjælpningen af ovenstående forhold. Disse idéer er vigtige, idet de sidenhen har opnået dominerende indflydelse på den islamiske reformtænkning og især Det Muslimske Broderskabs begrebsverden. Blandt de koncepter, som fik størst indflydelse på de moderne islamistiske bevægelser, var koncepterne panarabisme, panislamisme samt antiimperialisme[8]. Koncepterne panislamisme og panarabisme, som går igen blandt flere af reformtænkerne i slutningen af det 19.århundede og igennem det 20.århundede, bliver i høj grad, i forskningen, sporet tilbage til reformtænkeren Jamal al-Din al-Afghani(d.1897). Afghani italesatte dette koncept som reaktion på den vestlige kolonisering af store dele af den islamiske verden[9].

Influeret af disse idéer, anførte Hasan al-Banna, gennem Broderskabets organer, at reformen i den islamiske verden skulle baseres på panislamisk og panarabisk solidaritet. Broderskabet var af den anskuelse, at konfronteringen af den vestlige dominans i regionen, kun kunne udføres gennem de ovenstående koncepter. Broderskabet og salafiyya-tænkerne var ligeledes enige om, at udviklingen i den islamiske verden kun kunne opnås, såfremt muslimerne vendte tilbage til "islams rene kilder"[10]. Denne anskuelse var baseret på forestillingen om, at svagheden i de islamiske samfund et langt stykke hen ad vejen beroede på muslimernes afvigelse fra den oprindelige islam.

Der forekom imidlertid i samme periode en divergerende fløj, som anså indtoget af vestlige idéer i regionen radikalt anderledes. Den sekulære egyptiske elite gjorde i modsætning til den islamiske lejr gældende, at løsningen på de islamiske samfunds forfald i vid

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[7] Al-Bayyumi Ghanem, Ibrahim, 2013, side 66.

[8] R. Keddie, Nikki, 2008, side 19.

[9] R. Keddie, Nikk, 2008, side 19.

[10] Med Islams rene kilder menes Koranen og Profeten Muhammads Sunna (sædvane). Ifølge disse tænkere skulle man adskille mellem samtidens islam og det oprindelige islam, som repræsenterede det sande islam fra Profetens og hans øjeblikkelige efterfølgeres tid. Se fx Rahmena, Ali, 2008, side xli.

udstrækning bestod af, at man imiterede Vesten for derved at opnå samme grad af udvikling, som var kendt fra Vesten. Denne opfattelse demonstrerer et klart brud med den førnævnte islamiske diskurs [11], som ikke undervurderede modernismen i den vestlige verden, men anskuede, at muslimerne ville opnå samme grad af modernisering, hvis de vendte tilbage til de tidlige islamiske koncepter[12]. Den sekulære, vestligt orienterede lejr, hævdede dertil, at renæssancen i de islamiske samfund kun kunne virkeliggøres, såfremt det egyptiske samfund imiterede vestens moderne institutioner samt indarbejdede vestlige kulturelle, sociale og politiske begreber i Egyptens statssystem.[13]. Salama Musa (1887-1958)[14] hævdede i 1928, at Egypten skulle ”*instituere en fuldstændig tæt forbindelse til Europa… vi* (egypterne eller den egyptiske elite, red.) *skal forstå verden på samme måde, som Europa gør det*”, Salama postulerede dertil, at ” *italesættelsen af en affinitet med Østen* (den arabiske og islamiske verden, red.) *er tåbelig, idet der ikke findes ligheder mellem Egypten og Østen”*[15]. Den egyptiske forfatter Taha Hussein skrev i sit værk ” *The Future of Culture in Egypt*”, at det egyptiske samfund i stigende grad rykkede tættere på Europa kulturelt og var i gang med at opstå som en central del af Europa[16].

Dette intellektuelle og diskursive brud, som prægede den egyptiske offentlighed i perioden efter den britiske kolonisering af landet, resulterede i en identitetskrise og medvirkede til dannelsen af Det Muslimske Broderskab i 1928. Artiklen vil nedenfor illustrere Hasan al-Bannas idémæssige respons til den udbredte vestliggørelse og sociale krise, som prægede samfundet, for derved at fremhæve, hvordan idéen om islams komplethed blev italesat gennem moderne begreber og aktiviteter.

Islams komplethed (Šumuliyyat al-Islam)

Det Muslimske Broderskabs opståen

Som nævnt ovenfor dannede det intellektuelle brud bevæggrund for grundlæggelsen af Det Muslimske Broderskab. Mellemøstforskeren Khalil al-Anani påpeger, at Broderskabets tilblivelse udgjorde en reaktion

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[11] Al-Bayyumi, side 68.
[12] Haddad, Yvonne, 2008, side 43.
[13] al-Anani, Khalil ” *The Power of the Jama‘A: The Role of Hasan Al-Banna in Constructing the Muslim Brotherhood’s Collective Identity*” fra “Sociology of Islam. S, 41-63. Side 44.
[14] Salama Musa var en betydningsfuld egyptisk journalist og reformator, med en sekulær vestlig tilgang. Han rejste til Europa i 1908, hvor han studerede filosofi, litteratur, samfundsvidenskab og naturvidenskab. Han var stærkt kritisk overfor sine konservative modstandere.
[15] Al-Bayyumi, side 91.
[16] J. Donohue, John & L. Esposito, John, 2007, side 57.

på identitetskrisen og bruddet, som kendetegnede det egyptiske samfund. Ifølge al-Anani var det essentielt for Hasan al-Banna at etablere en identitetsbevægelse, som kunne rumme islamiske værdier og idealer i hverdagslivet, for derved at modarbejde udbredelsen af vestlige idéer og normer i det egyptiske samfund[17]. Denne fremstilling stemmer overens med Hasan al-Bannas beretning, idet han tilkendegav, at han i sin tid i Kairo[18] stødte på:

> ”En bølge af opløsning, som underminerede alle faste overbevisninger samt opslugte Egypten under påskud af den ”intellektuelle frigørelse”. Denne tendens angreb moral, gode gerninger og dyder under påskud af personlig frihed. Intet kunne stå imod denne kraftfulde og tyranniske strøm af vantro og eftergivenhed, der fejede over vores land, hjulpet frem af begivenhederne og omstændighederne”[19].

Hasan al-Banna gjorde ligeledes gældende, at bølgen af vestlige idéer og principper, som i denne periode udbredte sig i det egyptiske samfund, appellerede til ”*de intellektuelle unge[...]”*[20]. Af denne grund anslog al-Banna, at det var nødvendigt at etablere en islamisk respons til denne:

> ”Vestlige invasion, som er bevæbnet med destruktive våben i form af penge, velstand, prestige, opvisning og styrke samt midlerne til propaganda”[21].

Egypten vidnede dertil igennem 1930’erne fremkomsten af den økonomiske verdenskrise, som påvirkede en bred sektor af den egyptiske befolkning[22]. I forlængelse af krisen blev de sekulære liberale kræfter diskrediteret i samfundet, ikke mindst fordi disse kræfter mislykkedes i at udarbejde konkrete reformidéer som modsvar til krisen[23]. Det lykkedes imidlertid Hasan al-Banna på vegne af Det Muslimske Broderskab at italesætte klare reformidéer (*islah*) til hæren, uddannelsessektoren, industrien og økonomien, der alle skulle gennemføres gennem et skift fra det *”korrupte system, man har imiteret fra Vesten, til et islamisk system baseret på Guds lov i alle samfundets sfærer”*[24]. Al-Banna fastholdt i sine tekster og taler, at renæssancen (*nahda*) og reformen (*islah*) i det egyptiske samfund alene kunne opnås, hvis hele samfundet efterlevede retningslinjerne fra Koranen og profetens sædvane (*sunna*)[25]. Al-Banna fremhævede

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[17] Al-Anani, side 46.
[18] Al-Banna studerede i Kairo i perioden 1923-1927.
[19] Al-Banna ”Mudhakirat al-Da’wa…” side 65.
[20] Ibid., Side 67.
[21] Ibid., Side 67.
[22] Geroshni Israel, & P. Jankowski James, 2002, side 2.
[23] Abd al-Halim, Mahmoud, 1994, side 134.
[24] Al-Bayyumi, side 313.
[25] Al-Banna 2004, side 93.

bl.a. i et åbent brev” *Mellem i dag og i Går (bayna al-yawm wal-ams)”,* at Koranen og profetens traditioner omfatter de nødvendige reformidéer til den islamiske verden[26]. Han gjorde i samme brev gældende, at muslimernes afvigelse fra islam, som et dogme (*ʿaqida*) og praktiske handlinger (’*amal*) førte til muslimernes dekadence og svaghed og som følge af dette ”*kalifatets fald i 1924*”[27]. Al-Banna tydeliggjorde, at den ”*islamiske reform*” blandt andet skulle omfatte loven og den økonomiske sfærer. Han fastholdt, at loven skulle reformeres, så den opnåede den fornødne islamiske karakter. Vigtigst ifølge al-Banna var, at disse reformidéer skulle udarbejdes som substantielle reformaktiviteter i samfundet. Han understregede, at taler og seminarer ikke alene kunne virkeliggøre den intenderede reform[28]. Som det vil fremgå af denne artikel, forekommer der en utilstrækkelighed i al-Bannas skildring af bevægelsens ideologi, som udelukkende islamisk. Ideologien hos Det Muslimske Broderskab byggede i høj grad på islamiske koncepter, som fx bevægelsens agitation for at udarbejde en islamisk reform i samfundet, det fremgår imidlertid, at bevægelsen ligeledes inkorporerede moderne koncepter som nationalisme socialisme i deres ideologi. Disse koncepter blev dog italesat som traditionelle islamiske koncepter, formentlig i et forsøg, fra bevægelsens side, på at opretholde en islamisk diskurs som skulle karakterisere alle bevægelsens aspekter.

Det Muslimske Broderskab grundlagde i forlængelse af den ovennævnte socioøkonomiske krise et komplekst netværk af sociale og økonomiske institutioner, som fremhjalp bevægelsens evne til at eksekvere reformen i samfundet. Kamal al-Helbawy anfører, at Broderskabet i den formative periode[29] etablerede omkring 2000 velgørende sociale institutioner[30]. Al-Banna bekendtgjorde i et åbent brev fra 1934 ” *Er vi praktiske folk? (Hal nahnu qawmun ’Amaliyyun?)”*, at Det Muslimske Broderskab havde spredt sig til 50 egyptiske byer, og i alle byerne havde bevægelsen etableret ”*gavnlige*” institutioner[31]. Al-Banna specificerede, at man i disse byer havde etableret moskeer, sociale klubber og uddannelsesinstitutioner. Bevægelsen stiftede endvidere økonomiske virksomheder, som skabte arbejdspladser for de dårligt stillede i lokalsamfundene[32]. Disse etablissementer repræsenterede et vigtigt aktiv for Broderskabet, idet bevægelsen gennem sådanne institutioner

[26] Al-Banna, 2004, side 93-95.
[27] Ibid., side 96-97.
[28] Ibid., side 106-108.
[29] Det Muslimske Broderskabs formative periode strakte sig i perioden 1928-1941, i den periode formulerede bevægelsen en stor del af sine koncepter og idéer. Det var endvidere i den periode, at bevægelsen opbyggede sin organisatoriske struktur.
[30] Helbawy, Kamal, 2010, side 74.
[31] Al-Banna ” Brevsamlingen (Majmu’at al-Rasail..)”, side 64.
[32] Ibid., Side 64.

evnede at omdanne deres reformidéer til praktiske og substantielle aktiviteter blandt masserne.

Broderskabets islamiske diskurs

Der forekommer i tekster skrevet af ledere fra Det Muslimske Broderskab en omfattende beskrivelse af bevægelsens forståelse af islam. Bevægelsens ideologer har i vid udstrækning understreget, at deres anskuelse af islam som et omfattende system, er i overensstemmelse med den sande islamiske tradition, som står skrevet i de normative tekster (Koranen og profetens traditioner ”Hadith”). Hasan al-Banna karakteriserede Broderskabets forståelse af islam som følgende:

> ”i vores forståelse udgør islam et komplet system (Šumuliyyat al-islam), som organiserer alle livets aspekter og prædiker i alle sammenhænge og grundlægger et præcist styresystem (for det islamiske samfund). [...] nogle mennesker tror ved en fejl, at islam er begrænset til tilbedelse og spirituelle aspekter af livet. [...] Vi (Det Muslimske Broderskab, red.) forstår dog islam som et system, der organiserer både dette liv og det næste[33]. Denne opfattelse stammer fra Koranen og den islamiske tradition” [34].

Islam repræsenterede ifølge al-Banna en social såvel som en religiøs og politisk ideologi, der ikke måtte degraderes til blot at omhandle tilbedelse og religiøse aspekter[35]. Al-Banna tilføjede dertil, at islam i sit sande format består af:

> ”tro og tilbedelse, nation og nationalitet, moral og materialisme, nåde og styrke og kultur og lov, tro og stat, regering og samfund, Koran og sværd […] ”[36].

Sa’id Hawwa, en prominent ideolog fra Det Muslimske Broderskab, har i sit værk ”*Al-madkhal ila da’wat al-ikhwan al-muslimiin (indgangen til Det Muslimske Broderskabs mission)”* beskrevet den sociale og kulturelle kontekst, hvori Broderskabet opstod. Hawwa skrev bl.a., at muslimerne i perioden frem til grundlæggelsen af Det Muslimske Broderskab i 1928 havde glemt idéen om, at islam udgjorde et omfattende system for hele eksistensen. Han tilføjede endvidere, at islam var blevet degraderet som følge af det voldsomme

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[33] Med det næste hentyder al-Banna til de religiøse aspekter af samfundets forhold. Derved gøres det gældende, at det Muslimske Broderskabs diskurs berører verdslige forhold som statens opbygning såvel som sakrale forhold i samfundet.
[34] Al-Banna ” Brevsamlingen (Majmu’at al-Rasail..)”side 18.
[35] Al-Banna ” Brevsamlingen (Majmu’at al-Rasail..)” side 152.
[36] Al-Banna ” Brevsamlingen (Majmu’at al-Rasail..)”side 202.

angreb, den var udsat for. Ifølge Sa'id Hawwa lykkedes det Hasan al-Banna at gen-italesætte forståelsen af islam som et komplet system, der definerer alle livets aspekter[37]. Sa'id Hawwa opfattede konceptet, islams komplethed som et traditionelt aspekt repræsenterende en central del af den islamiske tradition. Han skrev blandt andet i denne forbindelse, at "*islam blev åbenbaret som en religiøs platform* (minhaj)*, og gennem denne platform blev livets aspekter systematiseret*"[38].

Som det vil fremgå af det nedenstående afsnit, opfattede dele af den vestlige forskning syntesen mellem religion og politik som en innovativ opfindelse, udarbejdet af de moderne islamistiske bevægelser, i forsøget på at gavne bevægelsernes interesser. Dette er relevant, idet der følgelig forekommer en klar divergens mellem på den ene side dele af den vestlige opfattelse og på den anden de islamistiske bevægelsers selvopfattelse. Det er imidlertid væsentligt, at understrege i denne forbindelse, at der i den vestlige forskning eksisterer en anden forskningsfløj, som ikke lider af samme bias. Den ovenstående anskuelse af šumuliyyat al-islam, som et innovativt fænomen, karakteriserede særligt forskningen i perioden 1950-1980. Denne tendens i forskningen beroede i høj grad på modernitetsteorien, som karakteriserede islamforskningen i den førnævnte periode. Der forekommer dog i den vestlige forskning en divergerende fløj, der skildrer šumuliyyat al-islam, som et traditionelt og velkendt koncept, der går tilbage til profetens tid i det syvende århundrede. J. Donohue og L. Esposito gjorde fx gældende, at den muslimske selvforståelse er baseret på Koranen og den tidlige glorværdige islamiske periode, hvor islam blev opfattet som et holistisk system, der sammenflettede religion med politik, lov og samfund[39]. Peter Mansfield var af samme overbevisning. Han gør således gældende, at islam, efter profetens migration til Medina i 622, begyndte at udvikle sig til et "*politisk organiseret samfund, såvel som en religion*"[40].

Politisk Islam, innovation kontra tradition.

Den vestlige opfattelse

Dele af den vestlige forskning har fortolket syntesen mellem politik og islam[41] som et innovativt fænomen, der blev sat sammen af moderne islamistiske bevægelser for at tjene bevægelsernes politiske interesser. Forskerne har dertil anskuet denne syntese som et tegn på

[37] Hawwa, Sa'id, 1984, side 35.
[38] Ibid., side 68.
[39] J. Donohue & L. Esposito, 2007, side 2
[40] Mansfield, 1992, side 23.
[41] Islam og politik udgjorde de to fundamenter i det Muslimske Broderskabs ideologi. Ifølge Hasan al-Banna var disse to sider uadskillelige.

de islamistiske bevægelsers fejlslagne forsøg på at italesætte en ideologi i overensstemmelse med den moderne tid. Forskeren Nadav Safran opfattede Det Muslimske Broderskabs islamiske diskurs som en indikation på, at bevægelsen ikke havde været i stand til at udarbejde en moderne ideologi. Modsat de sekulære bevægelser magtede Broderskabet kun at italesatte et "*dogme*" baseret på tro frem for systematisk tænkning[42]. I forlængelse af det ovennævnte anskuede han Broderskabets religiøse diskurs samt mangel på et moderne politisk program som et tegn på bevægelsens messianske tendens[43]. Christina Phelps Harris karakteriserede i 1964 Broderskabets anvendelse af et religiøst program, særligt i bevægelsens mest politiske fase[44], som et forsøg på at "*helliggøre deres politiske ekstremisme*"[45]. Manfred Halpern gjorde i sit værk fra 1963 gældende, at "*neo-islamisk totalitarisme*" udnytter traditionen ved at konvertere islam, i krisetider, "*into an apocalyptic vision of spiritual and political redemption*". Han gjorde dertil gældende, at disse bevægelser "*[...] are essentially fascist movements. They concentrate on mobilizing passion and violence to enlarge the power of their charismatic leader and the solidarity of the movement*"[46]. Halpern tilføjede endvidere, at Hasan al-Banna frem til sin død i 1949 personificerede de principielle elementer, som formgav "*neo-islamiske totalitære bevægelser*"[47]. Broderskabet italesatte, som han anså det, en ideologi, der var baseret på en øjeblikkelig accept af den fjerne fortid og den fjerne fremtid, men ikke af samtiden. Denne form for ideologi appellerer ifølge Halpern til "befolkningsoverskuddet"[48]. Han tydeliggjorde, at befolkningsoverskuddet, som Broderskabet evnede at appellere til, var bønder uden jord, arbejdere som var udsatte for arbejdsløshed, studerende uden jobs, religiøst lærde og religiøse embedsfolk, hvis status og muligheder var udsatte pga. sekulariseringen[49]. Idéerne, som blev italesat af Det Muslimske Broderskab, afveg ifølge Halpern fra det traditionelle islam. Han påpegede, at neo-islamiske totalitære bevægelser udelukkende overtog de aspekter fra den islamiske tradition, der tjente bevægelsernes formål[50]. Han tilføjede, at Broderskabets kontakt med den moderne verden gjorde det nødvendigt for bevægelsen at etablere et program. Dette program bestod ifølge Halpern af " *a program of repression and death for the insider, aggression and death for the outsider*"[51].

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[42] Safran, Nadav, 1961, side 231.
[43] Safran, Nadav, 1961, side 239-242.
[44] Det Muslimske Broderskab intensiverede deres politiske ageren i løbet af slut 1930erne og gennem 1940erne. Inden denne periode havde bevægelsen ikke indgået i de politiske processer i Egypten.
[45] P. Harris, Christina, 1964, side 150.
[46] Halpern, Manfred, 1963, side 136.
[47] Halpern, 1963, side 137.
[48] Ibid., side 138.
[49] Ibid., side 138.
[50] Ibid., side 146.
[51] Ibid., side 143.

Nyere forskere har ligeledes karakteriseret Det Muslimske Broderskabs politisk-islamiske doktrin som et innovativt koncept. Islamforskeren Jeffrey T. Kenney gjorde gældende, at de islamistiske såvel som sekulære nationalistiske bevægelser i Egypten ”*blandede politiske og religiøse former og indhold, i deres stræben efter at forene befolkningen i en kollektivistisk indsats for at skabe et ideelt samfund, som behandlede nationens materielle og kulturelle behov”*[52]. De vestlige forskere Ana Belén Soage og Jorge Fuentelsaz Franganillo opfattede Hasan al-Bannas ”*islams komplethed (šumuliyyat al-Islam/nizam šamil)*” som et koncept, der var inspireret af de totalitære ideologier kendt fra Tysklands og Italiens ledere i begyndelsen af det 20. århunderede[53].

Nedenstående afsnit vil diskutere divergensen, som forekommer mellem den vestlige forskning og de islamistiske bevægelsers egen fremstilling af deres diskurser. Artiklen vil gennem den historiske kontekst kort tydeliggøre forholdet mellem islam og politik i den islamiske verden.

Innovation kontra tradition

Ovenstående fremstillinger demonstrerer en klar divergens mellem Det Muslimske Broderskabs selvopfattelse og de vestlige forskeres anskuelse af forholdet mellem islam og politik. Der figurerer især i dele af den vestlige forskning en tendens til at anskue religiøse aktører og idéer som grundlæggende konservative. Forestillingen af religionen som konservativ har rødder i sekulariseringstesen, som i vid udstrækning har domineret den vestlige forskning[54]. De vestlige forskere, der igennem 1950’erne, 60’erne og en del af 70’erne studerede Det Muslimske Broderskab, var inspirerede af modernitetsteorien. Mange indflydelsesrige forskere vurderede qua modernitetsteorien, at religion, som udgjorde et centralt karaktertræk hos Det Muslimske Broderskab, ville eroderes, og derved ville Broderskabet miste sit eksistensgrundlag i samfundet[55]. Disse forskere vurderede, at et moderne samfund behøvede en moderne og derved sekulær ideologi i modsætning til fx Broderskabets islamisk baserede ideologi. Dette kommer blandt andet til udtryk i Halperns anskuelse af Det Muslimske Broderskabs ideologi som en ideologi, der var baseret på øjeblikkelig accept af den fjerne fortid og den fjerne fremtid, men ikke af samtiden. Denne form for ideologi appellerer ifølge Halpern til befolkningsoverskuddet[56]. Halperns udtalelse tydeliggør hans opfattelse af religionen som uløseligt knyttet til anti-modernitet. Det

[52] T. Kenney, Jeffrey, 2012, side 427.
[53] Belén Soage, Ana & Fuentelsaz Franganillo, Jorge, 2010, side 39-40.
[54] Smith, Christian, 1996, side 2.
[55] Smith, Cristian, 1996, side 2.
[56] Halpern, side 138.

kan imidlertid formodes, at denne antagelse er repræsentativ for dele af den vestlige forskning i sidste halvdel af den 20.århundrede, som i vid udstrækning delte Halperns opfattelse af religion. Forskernes sekulære begrebsverden har således resulteret i den ovennævnte sekulære forståelse af islam. Det vil altså sige, at den sekulære tendens hos de vestlige forskere et langt stykke hen ad vejen har præget deres forståelse af islam som en religiøs doktrin, der altid har været adskilt fra den verdslige sfære. Edward W. Said gør i denne forbindelse gældende, at "orientalisterne" førte "Østen" ind i den moderne tidsalder, hvor verdslighed udgjorde et centralt kendetegn[57]. Ovenstående afsnit har påvist, at flere vestlige forskeres forståelse af islams komplethed har været præget af forskernes sekulære begrebsverden. Nedenstående afsnit vil diskutere dette koncepts ophav og undersøge, hvorvidt konceptet kan spores til islams tidlige historie. Afsnittet vil dertil omfatte en kritisk diskussion af Hasan al-Bannas opfattelse af šumuliyyat al-Islam, og hvilke koncepter der blev indarbejdet i denne islamiske ideologi.

Islams Komplethed ud fra en historisk kontekst

Den herskende forestilling, blandt flere vestlige forskere, om, at islam udgør et koncept adskilt fra de sociale, kulturelle og politiske sfærer i samfundet stemmer helt ikke overens med islams historiske udvikling. Siden det 17. århundrede har der eksisteret en lang proces af vestlig indblanding i de islamiske områder, som igennem det 18. og især det 19.århundrede kom til udtryk ved den vestlige kolonisering af de islamiske områder[58]. Et vigtigt resultat af den vestlige intervention i regionen gjorde sig gældende gennem etableringen af en vestlig sekulær diskurs i regionen. Ifølge forskeren Wael B. Hallaq blev der af de vestlige magter udarbejdet en væsentlig strategi som havde til formål at "erobre sindene" for derved at diskreditere den islamiske lovs position i samfundene i forsøget på at erstatte den med kodificeret lov[59]. Derved kan det siges, at der eksisterer en klar sammenhæng mellem den vestlige kolonisering af regionen og privatiseringen af islam[60]. Hasan al-Banna bestred gennem sine breve og taler den vestlige og til tider arabisk/islamiske[61] fremstilling af islam som et koncept adskilt fra det verdslige. Han understregede blandt andet i det åbne brev

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[57] W. Said, Edward, 2015, side 152.
[58] J. Donohue, John & L. Esposito, John, 2007, side 3.
[59] B. Hallaq, Wael, 2009, side 435.
[60] Med privatiseringen af islam menes at religionen med tiden er blevet fremstillet som et koncept, der udelukkende omhandler den private sfære uden at tage stilling til politiske og sociale udviklinger.
[61] Nogle af de sekulærorienterede forfattere i den arabiske verden adopterede ligeledes denne forestilling.

> ” Bayn al-ams wa-l yawm (Mellem i går og i dag)”, at ” islams modstandere har formået at narre de intellektuelle muslimer og at afskærme andres syn, ved at fremstille islam som værende begrænset til dogmer, tilbedelse og moral samt forskellige overtroiske ritualer[…] Dette har nu stået på så længe, at det er blevet en svær opgave at forklare, at islam udgør et omfattende socialt system, som varetager alle livets anliggender”[62].

Hasan al-Banna understregede endvidere, at det Muslimske Broderskab ikke er begrænset til at være velfærdsorganisation eller et politisk parti, imidlertid er den en bevægelse, der forkynder

> ”… det islam som blev bibragt af profeten Muhammad, og her udgør regeringen en central del[...]”[63].

Al-Banna argumenterede således for, at Broderskabets opgave bestod af at etablere en islamisk stat[64].
Den socialpolitiske forståelse af islam, som Hasan al-Banna gav udtryk for, stemmer et langt stykke hen ad vejen overens med den traditionelle islamiske skildring. Den islamiske tradition blev igennem det meste af historien ikke opfattet som en passiv idé. Der eksisterede derimod en holistisk opfattelse af islam, hvor religion var nøje affilieret med politik såvel som lov. Muslimerne har gennem historien argumenteret for, at den socialpolitiske forståelse af islam stammede fra de normative tekster (Koranen og Sunnah)[65]. Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) argumenterede i det 14.århundrede imod adskillelsen mellem politisk magt (*siyasa*) og lov (*šari'a*). Han gjorde i den forbindelse gældende, at adskillelsen mellem disse domæner ville skade herskeren såvel som folket ” If the Sultan is isolated from the religion or the religion from the sultan, then the state of the people is corrupted[…]”[66].

Ifølge Ibn Taymiyya var det nødvendigt at etablere et samarbejde (*ta'awun*) mellem herskeren og de lærde. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), Ibn Taymiyyas elev, forklarede, at Ibn Taymiyya var fortaler for en genforening af de ovenstående domæner, så de kunne stemme overens med eksemplet fra de tidligste muslimer[67].

Den historiske kontekst demonstrerer ligeledes, at det muslimske samfund efter profetens migration til Yathrib, en by beliggende omkring 480 km nordøst for Mekka i 622, udviklede sig til et politisk såvel som religiøst organiseret samfund. I denne forbindelse fik

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[62] Al-Banna, 2004, side 105-106-
[63] Al-Banna, 2004, side 110.
[64] Al-Banna, 2004, side 106.
[65] J. Donohue, John & L. Esposito, John, 2007, side 3.
[66] E. Vogel,Frank, 2000, side 202.
[67] E. Vogel,Frank, 2000, side 204.

profeten Muhammad rollen som politisk og militærleder[68]. Derved fremgår det, at islam meget tidligt efter dens opståen i det 7.århundrede repræsenterede og blev opfattet som en holistisk tradition.

Det fremgår altså, at den islamiske verden frem til frembruddet af de moderne nationalstater i 1800-tallet var karakteriseret af en klar sammenhæng mellem religion og politik. Til trods for den til tider tekniske adskillelse mellem de religiøse og politiske institutioner, så eksisterede der til stadighed en klar forståelse af islam som den legitimerende faktor for statsoverhovedet. Denne virkelighed blev dog radikalt ændret i takt med, at de moderne nationalstater tog form i regionen. I forbindelse med den stigende vestlige tilstedeværelse i regionen i form af militær besættelse samt spredningen af vestlige, sekulære idéer opstod en moderne islamisk reaktion. Det var i denne forbindelse, at Det Muslimske Broderskab udarbejdede, det de kaldte en islamisk mission (da'wa) som skulle modarbejde vanskelighederne og udfordringerne frembragt af den moderne stat. Modsat de ovennævnte vestlige fortolkninger af denne ideologi, som en udelukkende innovativ og traditionsløs ideologi, hævder denne artikel, at Broderskabets ideologi byggede på en velkendt islamisk diskurs, som dog blev kombineret med moderne begreber. Det er i den anledning signifikant at undersøge, hvordan Hasan al-Banna og Det Muslimske Broderskab kombinerede den førnævnte islamiske diskurs med moderne begreber, for derved at kunne anvende denne diskurs i den moderne kontekst, som prægede det egyptiske samfund.

Hasan al-Banna var af den anskuelse, at muslimernes svaghed i høj grad beroede på deres afvigelse fra den "sande islam". Han anslog i den forbindelse, at muslimerne skulle forstå og eksekvere islam i overensstemmelse de normative tekster i islam (Koran og Hadith) samt efterleve eksemplerne fra de tidlige muslimske generationer "*al-salaf*" for at kunne udarbejde en korrekt islamisk reform[69]. Al-Banna gjorde endvidere gældende, at løsningen på Egyptens socioøkonomiske og kulturelle problemer afhang af at virkeliggøre islam som et altomfattende system, der definerede alle livets aspekter. Hasan al-Banna forklarede, at en tilbagevenden til det islamiske system (*al-nizam al-islami*), hvori islam dannede grundlag for religion og stat (*din wa dawla*), ville beskytte Egypten mod de sociale trusler og genetablere roen i samfundet. Dette islamiske system var ifølge al-Banna ikke et innovativt system, men et velkendt og traditionelt system, som havde eksisteret siden det syvende århundrede[70]. Vigtigst af Hasan al-Bannas idéer var forestillingen om, at loven i de islamiske samfund skulle være i overensstemmelse med de normative tekster i Islam. Han baserede denne anskuelse på forskellige koranvers, som eksplicitterede forpligtelsen til at herske og lovgive i henhold til Guds

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[68] Mansfield, Peter, 1992, side 23.
[69] Al-Banna, 2004, side 120.
[70] Al-Banna, 2004, side 302-303.

åbenbarede love, og han citerede fx koranverset; "… *And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the defiantly disobedient."* [5:47][71]. Denne fortolkning repræsenterede en fortsættelse af en traditionel islamisk opfattelse, som ligeledes blev italesat af store islamiske lærde. Det fremgår blandt andet, at Abu Hanifa[72] allerede i det 8. århundrede påpegede, at et islamisk område skulle underlægges islamisk lov[73].

Det gør sig imidlertid gældende, at den islamiske diskurs, som Hasan al-Banna udarbejdede, udover at indeholde karakteristika fra en lang islamisk tradition, som kan spores tilbage til profetens tid, også bestod af moderne koncepter som ikke havde rødder i den islamiske overlevering. Al-Bannas forståelse af forholdet mellem politik og islam byggede til en vis grad på traditionelle idéer, som var blevet italesat af lærde som Ibn Taymiyya og Abu Hanifa. Ibn Taymiyya fremførte i sit værk "The Religious Law (Al-Siyasa al-šhar'iyya)" fra 1311-1315, at islamisk lov skulle appliceres i regeringsprocessen[74]. Det var Ibn Taymiyyas hensigt at opnå et " retskaffent styre" ved at skabe en syntese mellem de religiøse og politiske sfærer. Det skal dog fremhæves i denne forbindelse, at Ibn Taymiyya skrev i en kontekst, som differerede stærkt fra den kontekst, Hasan al-Banna var præget af. Ifølge Ibn Taymiyya kunne religionen ikke praktiseres uden en statsmagt. De religiøse pligter, som at påbyde det gode og forbyde det onde (*al-amr bel ma'ruf wal-nahi 'an al-munkar*), samt udførelsen af krig, etableringen af retfærdighed, pilgrimsfærden, juridiske straffe osv. kunne ifølge Ibn Taymiyya ikke gennemføres "*except through the power and authority of a leader (imam)*"[75]. Det gjordes således gældende af Ibn Taymiyya, at lederskab og šari'a skulle indgå i en tæt syntese, for derved at opnå et retskaffent styre.

Den islamiske verden gennemgik, i forbindelse med det osmanniske kalifats afskaffelse i 1924, en radikal udvikling. Kalifatets fald afstedkom et magt-tomrum, som blandt andet resulterede i grundlæggelsen af en gennemgribende ny virkelighed i regionen. På baggrund af denne udvikling opstod nye nationalstater grundlagt af sekulære politiske eliter. I denne periode italesatte disse arabiske ledere idéer som antiimperialisme, nationalisme og socialisme. I forlængelse af de sekulære eliters overtagelse af magten i fx Syrien, Egypten og Irak, blev islam i stigende grad isoleret fra de politiske sfærer. Hasan al-Banna ønskede gennem Broderskabet at italesætte og sprede budskabet om det islamiske system (*al-nizam al-islami*) som et modsvar til den sekulære diskurs, som var i højsæde i denne periode[76]. Al-Banna var af den anskuelse, at det islamiske system, som han

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[71] Al-Banna, 2004, side 139-140.
[72] Abu Hanifa al-Nu'man (d. 767), teolog og jurist, var grundlægger af Hanafi- rets skolen en af de fire rets skoler inden for Sunni-islam.
[73] Michot, Yahya, 2006, side 109.
[74] Black, Antony, 2001, side 155.
[75] Black, 2001, side 155.
[76] Black, 2001, side 319.

propagerede, skulle fremskynde en tilbagevenden til islam som et altomfattende system, hvor de politiske, sociale og økonomiske aspekter skulle udgøre en helhed. Det er imidlertid interessant, at Hasan al-Banna i denne forbindelse, og i et forsøg på at italesætte en ideologi som propageres i en moderne kontekst, inkorporerede forskellige begreber, som fx nationalisme, patriotisme og social reform i sin islamiske diskurs.

Det fremgår bl.a., at flere af de koncepter, som Hasan al-Banna italesatte som islamiske traditioner i forsøget på at skabe den tilønskede islamiske reform, var inspireret af moderne vestlige koncepter. Wael Hallaq påpeger i denne forbindelse, at Det Muslimske Broderskab aldrig forklarede, hvilken form for šari'a der skulle appliceres ifølge deres begrebsverden[77]. Denne abstrakthed, som prægede al-Bannas šaria-koncepter, i modsætning til Ibn Taymiyyas konkrete forståelse af samme koncept skyldtes i høj grad den intellektuelle baggrund for de to mænd. Al-Banna var en moderne læreruddannet, uden en traditionel islamisk uddannelse. Han opnåede sin religiøse viden gennem faderens indflydelse samt indflydelsen fra forskellige lokale religiøse mænd[78]. Ibn Taymiyya var derimod uddannet i Hanbali-traditionen og var en anerkendt lærd gennem sin levetid[79]. Al-Bannas mangel på en traditionel islamisk uddannelse kan derved forklare Det Muslimske Broderskabs abstrakte forståelse af šarialov, som Hallaq påpeger i sit værk.

Det islamiske system (al-nizam al-Islami)

Reformarbejdet og ideologien, som det muslimske broderskab udarbejdede, omfattede sociale, økonomiske, videnskabelige, politiske og militære aktiviteter, og kendetegnende for disse aktiviteter var, at de alle blev tildelt og italesat gennem islamiske termer og begreber[80]. Hasan al-Banna skrev blandt andet i det åbne brev "*Ila al-Šabab (til de unge)*", at Broderskabets reformidéer udelukkende var baseret på islams velkendte traditioner[81]. Han tilføjede endvidere, at Broderskabet ikke anerkender andre systemer end det islamiske og heller ikke efterkommer andre love end islams love[82]. Det anskueliggøres af denne udtalelse, at al-Banna italesatte Broderskabets opfattelse af islam som en livsfilosofi frem for et sæt religiøse og spirituelle ritualer.
Et eksempel på Hasan al-Bannas inkorporering af moderne vestlige koncepter til den islamiske diskurs, fremstår af hans italesættelse af

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[77] Hallaq, 2009, side 478.
[78] Belén, Soage & Fuentelsaz, Franganillo, 2010,side 39.
[79] Hanbali, er en af de 4 anerkendte rets skoler inden for Sunniislam.
[80] Husaini, Musa, 1956, side 45.
[81] Al-Banna, 2004, side 179.
[82] Al-Banna, 2004, side 175.

nationalisme som et islamisk koncept. Al-Banna var af den anskuelse, at nationalisme repræsenterede en central del af den islamiske doktrin[83]. Indarbejdelsen af nationalisme i Det Muslimske Broderskabs islamiske ideologi skyldtes den politiske kontekst, der prægede det egyptiske samfund i den periode. Egypten var, siden 1919 revolutionen[84], præget af en stærk nationalistisk ånd, som var fremherskende i størstedelen af det egyptiske samfund. I forlængelse af dette, italesatte Hasan al-Banna en syntese mellem islam og en nationalistisk diskurs, i forsøget på at appellere til de islamiske såvel som nationalistiske følelser i samfundet. Italesættelsen af nationalisme som en traditionel del af islam, repræsenterede imidlertid en innovation som fx stod i klar kontrast til Ibn Taymiyyas opfattelse af Islam.

Det fremgår dertil, at Hasan al-Banna fremsatte Broderskabets reformsystem som et traditionelt islamisk system[85]. Al-Banna udarbejdede forskellige sociale aktiviteter, som gjorde bevægelsen i stand til at mobilisere græsrødderne i det egyptiske samfund. Reformidéerne som bevægelsen italesatte besad uden tvivl islamiske træk, som fx tarbiyya-konceptet[86] samt udbredelsen af islamiske principper i samfundet. Det fremstår dog ligeledes, at de sociale aktiviteter, som bevægelsen udarbejdede i denne periode, bar præg af national socialisme i deres indhold såvel som fremgangsmåde[87].

Denne affinitet mellem vestlige og islamiske idéer illustrerer, at Hasan al-Bannas islamiske diskurs overordnet repræsenterede en fortsættelse af Ibn Taymiyyas islamiske begrebsverden, men samtidig indbefattede diskursen klare brud med den traditionelle islamiske ideologi. Det kan dertil anføres, at Hasan al-Banna anvendte moderne metoder til at propagere sin ideologi i det egyptiske samfund. Baron Beth gør blandt andet gældende, at Broderskabet i forbindelse med propagandaaktiviteterne adopterede flere af de metoder, som blev anvendt af kristne missionærer i Egypten. Beth anfører, at ”*The Brotherhood consciously learned from them and adapted their tools to fight them, in the process transforming these tools and techniques*”[88]. Det skal derved påpeges, at bevægelsen udover at italesætte en syntese mellem en islamisk og moderne ideologi, også udarbejdede en moderne organisatorisk struktur, som ikke havde eksisteret i de tidligere islamiske bevægelser. Hasan al-Banna udarbejdede i modsætning til tidligere reformister som Abduh og Rida, en social bevægelse som ikke var kendt fra den islamiske historie, men som

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[83] Al-Banna, 2004, side 19.
[84] I 1919 udbrød en folkelig nationalistisk revolution i Egypten, som gjorde krav på egyptisk selvstændighed.
[85] Al-Banna, 2004, side 152.
[86] Tarbiyya betyder uddannelse. Det Muslimske Broderskab udarbejdede et system for uddannelsen af deres medlemmer i religiøse videnskaber og traditioner.
[87] Husaini, Musa, side 57.
[88] Beth, Baron, 2014, side 134.

skaffede bevægelsen en stærk mobiliseringsevne på den egyptiske scene i den moderne kontekst.

Konklusion

Hasan al-Banna udarbejdede, som reaktion på den stigende vestlige dominans i Egypten, en ideologi, der blev italesat som en del af den traditionelle islamiske opfattelse. Ifølge Hasan al-Bannas begrebsverden, kunne behovet for socioøkonomisk og politisk reform i samfundene kun imødekommes, såfremt disse samfund vendte tilbage til det " oprindelige islam". I forlængelse af dette, grundlagde Hasan al-Banna en "islamisk" bevægelse, som i løbet af perioden 1928-1941, evnede at opbygge en bred folkelig base i Egypten.
Flere vestlige forskere har diskuteret indholdet af Broderskabets ideologi, i forsøget på at nå til en forståelse af bevægelsens mobiliseringsevne i samfundet. Nogle forskere gjorde gældende, at denne ideologi byggede på innovative idéer, som et langt stykke hen ad vejen afveg fra det traditionelle islam. Andre forskere anslog, at denne anskuelse var forkert, idet politisk islam kan spores tilbage til profetens tid.

Det fremgår imidlertid, at Hasan al-Banna udarbejdede en moderne ideologi, som byggede på en traditionel opfattelse af islam, som et politisk, socialt og religiøst system. Det kan siges, at denne traditionelle opfattelse dannede ramme for en moderne ideologi, som var inspireret af islamiske såvel som moderne vestlige koncepter. Denne affinitet, mellem det traditionelle og det moderne, må siges at have været en pragmatisk løsning, som dog afstedkom, at Det Muslimske Broderskab, i en periode præget af krise og intellektuelle brud, evnede at mobilisere blandt flere sociale og politiske lag i det egyptiske samfund.

Forfatterpræsentation

Ahmed Abou el-Zalaf har opnået Kandidatgraden i historie fra Københavns Universitet. El-Zalaf har, gennem sine studier, arbejdet tæt og dybt med flere aspekter af udviklingen i Mellemøstens moderne historie. Han har arbejdet tæt med udviklingen af den politisk-islamiske ideologi, og studeret hvordan denne ideologi har præget samfundene i førnævnte region. El-Zalaf skrev speciale om Det Muslimske Broderskabs mobilisering i perioden 1928-41. Specialet fokuserede i høj grad på, hvilken betydning ideologien havde for Broderskabets mobilisering og appel i samfundet.

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The Islamic state in the Post-Modern World, the Political Experience of Pakistan by Louis D. Hayes. Publisher Ashgate, England. 2014, ISBN 978-1-4724-1262-1

The study can roughly be divided into three parts. First part may be called introductory and historical.

The first chapter which may be called introductory and historical begins with clarification of few terminologies concerning state and its functions. Chapter 2 continues to describe the state in historical perspective with a comment that Modern state existed only in Western Europe transplanted in North America and in Japan. The modern state further progressed into post-modern states, which are characterized as decentralized i.e., with a trend to of; devolution, deregulation, privatization, democratization and globalization. Author further classifies three development patters as concerning state.

Chapter 3 is on Islamic models of the state. Writer has emphasized four distinctive phases through which Islamic state has evolved. The first phase was the time of Prophet Muhammad, which he calls “primitives’ utopia”. Second phase was Caliphate in which the issue of legitimate succession to the prophet gave rise to the division between Sunni and Shia. With a period caliphate lost its spiritual dimension becoming largely a military and imperial institution. Another type of Islamic state that he calls Proto-states and provides Turkey as an example of it. The fourth model of Islamic state he has presented is “modern Islamic” state and an example of this is Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. In this connection he presents a theory of consociational democracy which entails a spirit of accommodation.

Chapter 4, 5 and 6 are historical background to the colonial rule and dismemberment of Muslim empires by the British in India. He identifies three element which in combination created Pakistan i.e. Mughal legacy, the institutional legacy of the British period and the idea of an Islamic state (p62). The writer claims that Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s idea of Islamic state had more to do with national or community identity than with theology (p63).

The fifth chapter is about the constitutional dilemmas in Pakistan, its constitutional history and move towards an Islamic state. Writer takes us to a political journey where reference to Islam in creation of Islamic state is continuously there starting from the Constitutions of Pakistan 1956, 1962, 1972, secession of East Pakistan, Bhutto’s execution, military dominated semi-theocracy, mosque-military alliance of Zia ul Haq, Long period of Islamization; death of Zia in a

plane crash; Poorly prepared political parties takeover of Benazir Bhutto, dismissal of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, military takeovers, Benazir Bhutto's assassination, dominance of military bureaucracy and military culture. He claims Pakistan to be a classic example of a praetorian state (chapter 7 devoted to this concept).

The writer has provided long history of four time takeover of military since 1958 Martial law rule. He provides detail account of how military has struggled against the politicians and judiciary. Such description of events are in fact commonly described in many books on the political system of Pakistan.

In answer to an important question why military in Pakistan is strong, author provides an analysis which seems to be too simple that military was much disappointed from the civilian authorities who were unable to take diplomacy path to resolve the issue of Kashmir. This been the legitimacy for military getting involved in the politics of Pakistan may be too superficial and over simplified.

He illustrates instability of the state of Pakistan where political parties are ineffective because of personal agendas of the politicians; this shows why so many politicians and party leaders are wealthy. They are totally dependent on the support of the army and bureaucracy. He goes on to describe the stories of assassinations of political leaders and corruption.

Moreover, legislative and judicial branches are marginalized – constant interference of the executive and unresolved issues of relationship between the secular and Islamic laws and to cope with legal plural realities in the country.

It's the same problems Pakistan has been facing since its creation i.e. Centre-province tensions – plagued by increasing sectarian conflicts among the Muslim sects and major differences over the fundamental principles.

Islam has been used throughout in political process in Pakistan as Islam is the only common unifying ideology. Therefore the ultimate goal of the political system was patterned somehow or the other along Islamic lines it is a political strategy which seems to them to be consistent with tradition and capable of dealing with contemporary realities – dilemma is that there is no agreement on the outline of an Islamic state. He claims "Since its creation was based on an appeal to Islam and an alternative justification for its existence has not been forthcoming, Pakistan is wedded to the idea of an Islamic state" (page 9).

Thus the author states that whether Islam can be the vehicle for providing a cohesive political ideology this remains to be seen.

He asserts that in the post-modern world the sovereign states are slowly being transformed because of globalization, international organization, the new global

norms, loss of control of the states over the international communication and from below by rising regionalism, ethnicity, criminal organisations and breakdown of state control and authority at local level. As Pakistan have not yet attained the level of a mature modern state therefore have become the easy prey to this situation.

Situations are cloudy, complicated and there is a security crisis in the country.

Third part of his book starts with Chapter 8 about the Pakistan's international relations. Conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In his analysis he tries to find links between Kashmir, terrorism and US drones strikes.

My concluding remarks are it may be a good descriptive-summary of the political events book but causes of the instability of Pakistan are yet to be analyzed in more depth. Chapters are too short and do not justify the issues taken up which need in-depth study. Analysis provided are too short and sometime just in one sentence that gives an impression of been superficial.

By Dr. Rubya Mehdi