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SHAPING GLOBAL ISLAMIC DISCOURSES

The Role of al-Azhar, al-Medina and al-Mustafa

EDITED BY MASOODA BANO AND KEIKO SAKURAI

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi Kütüphanesi	
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CHAPTER 3

Protector of the “al-Wasatiyya” Islam: Cairo’s al-Azhar University

MASOODA BANO

03 Ağustos 2017

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
SONRA CELEN DOKÖMÜR

INTRODUCTION

It was in the tenth century that the Ismaili Shi'i Fatimid dynasty laid the foundation of the al-Azhar Mosque; its endowment, shortly afterwards, with a number of teaching positions¹ marked the birth of the centre of Islamic learning that was to become al-Azhar University. Few people, and certainly not its founding dynasty, would have envisioned that this institution would one day become the leading authority in the world of Sunni Islam.² This mixed origin, along with a range of other factors – such as Egypt's strong tradition of cultural pluralism; the geopolitical developments that led to Cairo becoming the geographical centre for convergence of Muslim scholars between the ninth and the eleventh centuries; and the controversial, but decisive, twentieth-century state-led reforms of al-Azhar – have all played important roles in the rise of al-Azhar's “al-Wasatiyya” Islam. This “middle-way” Islam is central to al-Azhar's positioning within the spectrum of Muslim institutions speaking on behalf of Islam today. The university's current leadership³ is very conscious of its international stature as a “tolerant voice of Islam”,⁴ providing Sunni Muslims across the globe, and increasingly even within Egypt, with an alternative to the exclusionary tendencies and the rigidity associated with Wahhabi-inspired Salafism, as well as the orthodoxy and armed militancy at times associated with movements representing political Islam, such as the Muslim Brotherhood.⁵

Every year, al-Azhar attracts over 30,000 students⁶ from around one hundred countries, many sponsored by their national governments. The university's fatwas draw the attention of Muslim scholars and ordinary believers alike from all over the world;⁷ it is approached by Western heads of states to galvanise



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الجامع الأزهر
تاريخه وتطوره



الصفحة

الحُصُورُ الألباني في مِصر العُثمانيَّة : الجَبَرَتِي مَصْدَرًا

محمد الأرنؤوط ٣٤٩-٣١٧

حَمَد الباسِل ودوره في السِّيَاسَة المِصرِيَّة

سليمان محمد حسين ٤٠١-٣٥١

السُّوَاثِيْدُ وَدَوْرُهُمْ فِي الحَرْبِ الإِيطَالِيَّةِ - اللِّبِيَّةِ ١٩١١ : ١٩٣٢ م

رجب علي عبد المولى أحمد العبد ٤٦١-٤٠٣

دَوْرُ سُلَيْمَانَ التَّائِلُسِيِّ فِي سِيَاسَةِ الأَزْدُودِ نَبْ عَامِي ١٩٣٣-١٩٥٧ م

نعمان عاطف عمرو، سامي محمد علقم ٤٩٧-٤٦٣

الإِدارَةُ المِصرِيَّةُ لِأَزْمَاتِ تَأْمِيْمِ سَرِكَةِ قَنَاةِ السُّوَيْسِ

محمَّد السَّيِّدِ سَليْم ٥٤٥-٤٩٩

المُرْتَبَعَاتُ المُحَصَّنَةُ الباقِيَّةُ بِمَدِيْنَةِ العَيْنِ بِدَوْلَةِ الإِمَارَاتِ العَرَبِيَّةِ المُتَّحِدَةِ
(دِرَاسَةٌ أَتْرِيَّةٌ تحْلِيْلِيَّةٌ)

تامر مصطفى محمد الحسيني النجار ٥٨٣-٥٤٧

قَطْرُ فِي مَرَحَلَةِ تَحْوُلِ المَلايِمِ الأَسَاسِيَّةِ لِعَهْدِ الشَّيْخِ حَمَدِ بنِ خَلِيْفَةَ

آل ثَاني ١٩٩٥-٢٠١٣ م

يوسف إبراهيم العبد الله ٦٠٧-٥٨٥

الخَلِيْفَةُ العَرَبِيَّةُ - الأَتْجَاهَاتُ الحَدِيْثَةُ فِي كِتَابَةِ التَّارِيخِ المُعَاَصِرِ

(دِرَاسَةٌ فِي تَطَوُّرِ المُنْهَجِ العِلْمِيِّ)

فتحي العفيفي ٦٤٢-٦٠٩

MEMORY AND FUTURE OF HISTORY

KHALED AZAB 5-23

أمين فؤاد سيّد

الجامع الأزهر أوّل جامع أُسِّس بمدينة القاهرة الفاطميّة، بناه القائد الفاطميّ
جوهر الصّقلّيّ، وبدأت أعمالُ البناءِ فيه يوم السبت ٢٨ جمادى الأولى سنة
٣٥٩هـ/ أبريل سنة ٩٧٠م، وأفتتح للصلاة يوم الجمعة السابع من رمضان سنة
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MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
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Masooda Bano

AT THE TIPPING POINT? AL-AZHAR'S GROWING CRISIS OF MORAL AUTHORITY

Abstract

Routinely required to lend religious legitimacy to contentious state policies, al-Azhar's moral authority has been under pressure since its nationalization in 1961. This article outlines how Shaykh al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyib's recent alliance with President 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi has, however, exposed al-Azhar's moral authority to unprecedented risks. This is for three reasons. First, the tactics used by al-Sisi's government to quell the Muslim Brotherhood have been more extreme than those used by previous regimes. Second, the al-Azhari establishment's defence of these violent tactics has been more unqualified than in the past. Third, current state-led reforms of al-Azhar's curriculum are more controversial than prior efforts along these lines. As I show, these recent developments are not a complete break from the past; rather, they are a natural outcome of incremental shifts that have been occurring within al-Azhar since its nationalization over fifty years ago.

Keywords: 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi; Arab Spring; al-Azhar; Islamic authority; Muslim Brotherhood

Founded in 970 CE in Cairo, al-Azhar Mosque is the oldest continuously active center of Islamic learning, and one of the few to preserve the classical Islamic tradition of teaching all four Sunni *madhāhib* (Islamic legal schools of thought). Globally recognized as an influential voice of *wasatiyya* (moderate) Islam, its fatwas are sought by socially progressive Muslims as well as by heads of state, and it attracts aspiring young Muslim scholars from the West and the Muslim world alike.¹ A combination of historical factors led to al-Azhar's evolution into the leading voice of moderate Islam. However, its historic ability to strike a balance in favor of *wasatiyya* Islam right now is arguably under higher pressure than at any other time in the recent past.

This article will illustrate how al-Azhar's alliance with General 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi's government in the post-Arab Spring context has seriously compromised its moral authority. Shaykh al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyib, who had demanded the protection of basic political freedoms from the Muslim Brotherhood government led by Muhammad Mursi, of whom he was openly critical,² has lent unqualified support to the al-Sisi government, despite its discernible disregard of those very freedoms.³ The decision by al-Azhar's leadership to cooperate with the Egyptian military regime, and its reservations about the Muslim Brotherhood, do not represent a break from the past. Since the Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir regime stripped al-Azhar of its independence by placing it under the authority

Masooda Bano is a Professor of Development Studies in the Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK; e-mail: masooda.bano@qeh.ox.ac.uk

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MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

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CHAPITRE 2

AUTORITÉ RELIGIEUSE ET RÔLE PUBLIC
D'UN OULÉMA D'AL-AZHAR AU XVIII^e SIÈCLE
Vie et carrière du cheikh Ahmad al-Dardîr (1715-1786)

Rachida Chih

0-3 Mart 2019

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C'est à l'époque ottomane qu'al-Azhar, fondée en 969 par la dynastie des Fatimides, devient le lieu le plus prestigieux pour l'enseignement musulman en Égypte, avec la disparition des madrasas médiévales et le déclin des autres centres d'enseignement qu'étaient les principales mosquées cairotés. Les provinciaux du Delta et, chose nouvelle, de Haute-Égypte affluent. À la fin du XVIII^e siècle, l'université accueille environ 3 000 étudiants (dont à peu près un tiers d'étrangers)¹.

Les oulémas d'al-Azhar ne forment pas un corps homogène. La diversité des profils est liée à celle, aussi diverse, de leurs conditions économiques. Les oulémas qui réussissent ont accès à d'importants revenus générés par le système des *waqf*. Leur réussite repose sur leur réputation religieuse, leur place à al-Azhar en tant qu'enseignants, le cercle de leurs étudiants. Ces grands oulémas forment une minorité. Afaf Lutfi Marsot, qui a étudié l'essor économique et politique de ce groupe au XVIII^e siècle, décrit un monde fermé réduit à quelques familles qui se transmettent héréditairement postes et fortunes². Le rôle d'intermédiaires et de médiateurs de ces oulémas, unis traditionnellement au pouvoir politique dans le désir de se prémunir de la discorde sociale, a été longuement analysé par les historiens. Pour l'Égypte, l'influence des oulémas dans la vie publique aurait atteint son sommet au XVIII^e siècle, considéré comme un âge d'or que ces derniers ne retrouveront jamais par la suite³. À partir des sources d'époque ottomane, chroniques, dictionnaires biographiques et archives des

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¹ André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIII^e siècle*, Damas, IFEAD, 1973-1974, t. 2, p. 419.

² Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, « The Political and Economic Functions of the 'Ulamâ' in the 18th Century », *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 16, 1973, p. 130-154.

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