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A Culture of Charity:
American Imams from Cairo to California

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

by

Shahab Uddin Malik

December 2018

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Committee Chairperson

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Egypt and finally recommended that I focus on zakat. This dissertation would not be possible without their generous support.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Culture of Charity:
American Imams from Cairo to California

by

Shahab Uddin Malik

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Anthropology
University of California, Riverside, December 2018
Dr. Susan Ossman, Chairperson

This dissertation looks at Islamic alms, or zakat, and how imams negotiate its rules as well as advise on a range of charitable practices. Zakat is generally understood as an instrument of poverty alleviation, and yet its conceptualization and practice across transnational contexts intersects with social, economic, and political forces. By taking a look at three major groups—Ikhwan, Sufi, and Southern Californian imams—the thesis unpacks the complexities and multiple trajectories that zakat takes in the post-9/11 and post-Arab Uprising period. This thesis pays special attention to the understanding, teaching, and practice of zakat at both the transnational and personal levels.

The principal argument of this dissertation is that zakat is being transformed by cultural and politico-economic forces, most significantly neoliberalism and the ethics of international humanitarianism. For example, though imams are often trained abroad in a seminary like al-Azhar in Egypt, the ubiquity of the NGO complex in Egypt and post-9/11 legal requirements in the US privilege managed practices, which the imams

consequently naturalize in their own thinking of zakat. Contemporary zakat practices also bring into relief the tensions and malleability of Islamic legal interpretation as well as provide an analytical framework to explore issues of race, class, and gender. By narrowing the scope of shari'a to zakat and looking at its discourse and transnational circuits, I argue that we can gain an understanding as to how shari'a is practiced by our imams and is articulated within the structures of the nation-state and global economy.

I follow American imams who have trained at the shari'a college at al-Azhar University in Cairo, but work in their home communities in Southern California. This multi-sited ethnography takes place over five years in Southern California and seven months in Egypt following these students and their discourses, between schools, mosques, and sites of charitable giving. Through ethnographic description, I show how imams practice zakat by integrating the influences of their socialization with their seminary training. As such, I give three main sketches of the Azhari imam and their differing modes of zakat practice— The Sufi, The Ikhwani, and The Social Worker.

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Note on Transcription

      I use simplified Arabic transliteration, common in anthropological works on Islam and the Arab world. For example, I use Shari'a, instead of Sharīʿah, as in the International Journal for Middle East Studies (IJMES) standard. I use anglicized plurals, for example Sheikhs instead of Sheyookh. For imams I may use the Arabic plural Ulema in particular contexts. In some instances, I render Arabic, or even the English phonetically as to stay true to the ethnographic voice. In the citations, however, I use transliterated words in their original.

1. Introduction

1.1. Zakat

It's in the middle of summer and towards the end of Ramadan in Southern California. The mosque is decorated with lights. Transparent round bulbs—the ones you would find at an open-air wedding on a summer evening—hang in open spaces, along with a string of green "Christmas" lights, which have now been appropriated by South Asian Muslims for everything from adorning the national flag of Pakistan to architectural elements in mosque construction, since green was the Prophet's favorite color. This mosque has a copper dome that, through time, rain and oxidation, will inevitably turn green. Most congregants will pray eight *raka'hs* of *taraweeh* prayer, which along with *isha* prayer, will take about an hour. Praying the full twenty can take as long as two hours.

The cool evening invites a light breeze, but not enough to warrant a jacket. People are out in T-shirts and jeans, some wearing their ancestral traditional dress, from either the subcontinent—India, Pakistan, Afghanistan—or the Middle East, namely Egypt, Syria, and the Gulf countries. As one of the oldest and biggest mosques in Southern California, it attracts thousands of Muslims from all ethnic backgrounds. The more performatively pious attire, now detached from any ethnic affiliation, is a long, white Middle Eastern *galabiya*, originally associated with Salafism but now the universal default Islamic dress in Southern California. Some wear them because it puts them in the right mood to stand up for hours in prayer. Hamid, a local regular, tells me it's his

"Ramadan uniform." "At work I wear a suit all day, and in a meeting I feel like a thousand bucks," he tells me, "but in front of God with my *galabiya* and *topee* (head covering), I feel humble before God. It's my Ramadan uniform." Indeed, many congregants wear this "uniform" to display their piety and encourage the right mood in their community, before God. I can't help but notice that our conversation benefits from this beautiful summer evening. People are shuffling out of the mosque after the eight *raka'hs*, the children are running around, families are sitting together in the open-air school courtyard, and men and women separately huddle together in their respective corners of the mosque grounds.

I grab some *chai*, a Pakistani variety made with strong black tea boiled with condensed milk. When I ask one of the cooks, Imran, the details of its preparation, he jokingly tells me he would have to kill me afterwards. I'm sure ethnographic observation could reveal its recipe, but it would fail to tell me if people come for the tea and stay for God, or come for God and stay for the tea. But one thing is for sure: the tea is official.

Figure 1. Ahmed Tayyib. Grand Imam of al-Azhar. Photo Foreign Office UK CC via Wikicommons.

Imam Sadiq is wearing his traditional *galabiya*, the kind worn by graduates of al-Azhar University in Cairo, which he brought back from Egypt. We walk outside the mosque after eight *ra'kah* and stand in line for tea. It's a good time to chat and catch up. On many evenings Sadiq is

wearing casual clothing, usually a pair of sweatpants and a light jacket, sometimes a button-up shirt. My guess is that it makes praying easier; it is utilitarian, but most of all humble. In a sea of SoCal youths where brand name clothing is everything, Sadiq's no-frills attitude to fashion is making a statement. During the break after an hour of prayer, Sadiq gives a quick appeal on the importance of giving *zakat*, or charity. Sadiq is not the imam of this mosque, but tonight he is here to give the guest sermon. He was brought by Islamic Relief, a charity that raises money for projects that they oversee around the world. On this particular evening, they are raising money for Syrian refugees, through a program they run in Jordan providing shelter, food, and clothing for people escaping Syria's civil war. It's a popular time to raise money, especially for charitable causes like this, since it is part of Islamic belief that money given in Ramadan is "multiplied" in blessings compared to money given in any other time of the year. During the sermon, he implores the worshippers on behalf of the "orphans and widows," preaching that money given during Ramadan "doesn't decrease your wealth, and will only increase it," and that Allah will "multiply your giving by seven or seven hundred times, in this world and in the hereafter."

In line for tea, Sadiq begins talking about zakat in general, and how he has decided to longer raise money for mosque-building projects.

> *These mosques, especially in rich communities, raise zakat money for themselves. How can you give zakat to yourself? Zakat is for the poor, and when mosques raise money and say that they are zakat eligible, that takes away money from those who need it most. Zakat is their right upon us, its purpose is to redistribute the money from the rich to the poor, not from the rich to the rich.*

Intrigued, I ask how many mosques raise money by saying that they are zakat eligible. He responds:

> *Almost all of them, and I told them it's not right. I'll be giving a seminar on this soon; zakat is for the poor and it needs to go to the poor. Now if a poor community, inner-city mosque is raising money in this way, I may have no problem with it. But not this mosque, or the mosque in South Orange County that is trying to raise eleven million dollars for a suburban community mosque, a mosque they and their kids will go to! It is charity to oneself.*

Zakat is a mandatory yearly tax on accumulated wealth, calculated individually with only God as the auditing authority. For charities of all types, becoming "zakat eligible" opens one up to a reliable stream of income. Every Muslim who does not receive zakat should be paying it. Mosques, legal rights organizations, and charity organizations of all types ask imams if they can receive zakat. When they find an imam that says they can, they advertise that they are "zakat eligible."

Sadiq has spoken to other imams about this, and there is no consensus. Sadiq mentioned that Imam Aziz, a well-respected senior imam from India, has given permission to mosques to raise money under the aegis of zakat, using the funds to pay for building projects or even ongoing expenses. "The masjid should be collecting *sadaqa*, not zakat," Sadiq continues. "Zakat is designed for the poor, money that is compulsory on the rich to the poor. Sadaqa is anything that they give up and beyond that."

When I spoke to Imam Aziz, he told me that only mosques in poor neighborhoods were eligible. It seemed like he knew what I was getting at and started to talk about how there are multiple categories of zakat eligible recipients, from the poor and the needy to *fi sabil Allah,* or "In the way of Allah," an open category that has come to mean anything

good in God's way. Mosque building, funding schools, and even legal defense funds have claimed zakat eligibility based on this criterion. I know Aziz's mosque, along with other suburban mosques in Orange County, have raised funds for a new mosque-building project in south Los Angeles, a predominantly African-American community (Masjid Farooq Chapter 5). They also use zakat funds for school funding (Chapter 6).

When I tell Sadiq what Imam Aziz said about how only poor mosques are eligible, he responds:

> *Well, it seems like he has come around. But he has opened up the gateway that all mosques are now doing, they will simply say that 'Aziz told us that we can do it.' He gave a talk years ago at a mosque fundraiser, and people have jumped on that. We have to make it more clear. You now, I was disinvited for giving a zakat talk at that mosque [laughing], for this reason. They don't want to hear me say that they can't take zakat money. Sadaqa is also beneficial for those who give it. If someone helps build a mosque in their life it is counted as sadaqa jariya. As long as the masjid stays open, the benefactor receives reward for it even after they die. Mosques need to be built using these voluntary funds, for the benefit of their own children and families.*

When I asked Majeed, another imam originally from India who condones the practice, he said, "The mosque also has funds for the poor. Our mosque has a food pantry and a zakat office where we help with people's rent and other bills." When I asked about using zakat funds for building projects, the imam replied,

> *the Quran states that those who collect the alms can use a portion, and the masjid collects the funds. Also, money that is spent 'in the way of Allah' is eligible, and supporting the masjid is money well spent in the way of Allah.—Beta,1 when we*

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1 Urdu for "son," term of endearment by elders to juniors. Juniors, in turn, use the English "uncle" in addressing their elders. Imams would be addressed by Imam or Sheikh. The Arabic for 'in the way of Allah' is *fi sabil Allah,* a term that is central to the concept of *zakat* and covered throughout this dissertation.

consider zakat for the masjid, we are able to collect money for our expenses, we are a small masjid. The issue is not collecting money for the poor, our people give money to the poor. Many give above and beyond what they are supposed to give. There are many organizations now, mashallah, that give to the poor, Islamic Relief, ICNA, and many others. The problem is collecting money for the masjid. We don't yet have a culture of giving regular money to the masjid. Back home, in our countries, the waqf [trust] or government pays the expenses of the masjid. There, people give zakat money to the poor. The people simply want to know that their money is being given for the sake of Allah and that it is counting as such on their behalf.

One morning, I sit with Imam Sameer, a social worker and Azhari, in his office in Orange County. I relate to him the conversation around zakat with Sadiq. "Zakat cannot come back to you," he echoes, "if you're benefitting from your own zakat on air conditioning or fancy chandeliers, I don't see how that's ok." I tell him about Aziz's position, that mosques are eligible for zakat. "For affluent mosques, NO!" he retorts. "I had this conversation with him [Aziz], and he seems to be coming around. He agrees that a $14 million–dollar community center in [South County] cannot be built on zakat funds."

Imam Sadiq and Sameer are part of a group of young imams who have trained at al-Azhar in Cairo, educating the community on the purpose of zakat while reproaching its abuse. In this example, we see how zakat practices are subsumed under structural conditions, in this case the lack of funding to build a mosque coming up against zakat's primary objective of relieving poverty. In this dissertation, we will see how American Azharis learn about zakat textually and go on to practice it, from Egypt to the US, as a performance of personal piety to their role as institutional consultants.

1.2.   Between USA and Egypt: Method and Approach

This dissertation follows American imams who have trained at the shari'a college at al-Azhar University in Cairo but work in their home communities in Southern California. Imams are Muslim religious leaders who work in various capacities in the United States, from imams at mosques to independent consultants for mosques, Islamic schools, and social service agencies. I focus this ethnography on imams at the intersection of zakat practice. As such, I ground the chapters with the imams around sites and institutions of charitable giving. I have followed the imams to Cairo, spending a total of seven months over five years, from 2011 to 2016, in Southern California as a participant-observer. I have established long-term relationships with over a dozen key informants, six of whom are American Azharis that I have known between five and ten years.

Zakat is one of the main topics detailed in the shari'a,[2] or Islamic law, and detailed in the many books of *fiqh* establishing who has to pay it and how much, as well as who is eligible to receive it. Most practicing Muslims come into contact with zakat either by paying it or receiving it, relying on the fatwa of an imam to guide its dispensation. By narrowing the scope of shari'a to zakat, and looking at both its *discourse* and its *practice*, I argue that we can gain an understanding of how this part of the shari'a is negotiated and localized in Southern California.

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[2] Shari'a is a contested term. My usage here is how the imams in this study use shari'a, moving between its particular localized instantiation as fiqh and discussing its totality as shari'a. The particular rules of shari'a are in the books of *fiqh* whose major topics include the rituals of prayer, fasting, the *hajj* pilgrimage, marriage and divorce, as well as financial contracts. *Fiqh* also deals with war and peace, as well as criminal matters, including theft and murder.

The research is multi-sited, taking place between Southern California and Egypt. I have used participant-observation and semi-directed interviews, bringing together imams in everyday spaces: mosques, coffee shops, bazaars, their homes and, in the case of Egypt, Sufi shrines. In Southern California, I accompanied imams to various places, including mosques, social service organizations, and their places of work. In this dissertation, I focus on the imams as they visit, discuss, or work at places of zakat giving. Moving between Egypt and the United States., the major sites I conducted my research in include a Sufi saint shrine in Upper Egypt, a poor neighborhood in Cairo, and various zakat-eligible social service agencies in the United States. I have chosen to focus on zakat instead of *salah* because the rules of charity are not only a display of piety but an undertaking that moves money differently in changing political and economic circumstances.

The fatwa is a religious opinion offered by an imam who is trained at a shari'a college.[3] I argue that the opinions Islamic leaders hold are molded in particular ways by their American upbringing, their seminary education, and the cultural environment to

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[3] In Southern California, imams come from mainly three colleges: al-Azhar in Cairo, Darul-Uloom in Karachi, and University of Medina in Saudi Arabia. In this dissertation, I focus on American imams from Southern California who have trained at al-Azhar. The Saudi graduates have a following, but it is desirable to those of a literalist Salafi orientation. The Darul-Uloom graduates are known as Deobandi's, since the school system they are part of originated in Deoband, India. The Deobandi *ulema* (pl. imam) appeal mostly to South Asians from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The fatwas in this study are informal, not a dictate by a state actor but a non-binding opinion that varies between imams. Out of all the imams in Southern California, the Azhari imams are seen by the community as the most desirable since they have the most ecumenical and culturally sensitive fatwas and thus appeal to a wider audience. The Saudis and Deobandis are more culturally and linguistically particular, appealing to a more limited audience. To better understand why the Azharis have this appeal, I followed these students, now practicing as imams in the US, to Egypt in and around al-Azhar University.

which they belong. In other words, Americans who go to al-Azhar adopt norms through their socialization, learn about Islamic law in an institution, and learn how to *be* and *practice* as Muslims in both Egypt and Southern California. The fatwa is given by a complex subject, in this case the American Azhari, who considers not only texts and training but also practices under certain economic, political, and institutional conditions. In the United States, institutional zakat practice is subject to non-profit law, as well as the urgencies of the Muslim community in a post–9/11 context. In Egypt, these imams trained at al-Azhar during the Arab Uprising, in a cultural and religious context that included various shifting ideas about the role of religion in public life. The focus on zakat allows us to bring all of these together, under three modes of practice highlighted by three case studies: "The Ikhwani" (Chapter 3), "The Sufi" (Chapter 4), and "The Social Worker" (Chapter 5). The three groups differ in their perspective, illustrated in this ethnography through the different means and methods of zakat practice including the shifting priorities of where zakat money should go.

Methodologically, I borrow from Brinkley Messick's notion of shari'a as a system that must be understood in its "textual dimensions", which include the interpretations of imams in "local usages and conventions" (Messick 2018, 28). Messick, as an anthropologist among Zaydi Muslims in Yemen, critiques scholars of Islamic law for positing an "ideal theory" that is disengaged with its lived reality, where everyday practices and local customs are placed mistakenly outside the law (Messick 2018, 13).[4] In

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[4] Messick critiques both the midcentury scholar of Islamic law Joseph Schacht and the contemporary Wael Hallaq on their position on *urf,* or custom, as not part of the ideal theory of Islamic law. Messick, on the

Yemen, Messick divides the shari'a system into two main components consisting of the "library"—primary *fiqh* (legal rulings) volumes of Zaydi jurisprudence—and the "archive*"*, or the deeds, contracts, and written fatwas of local judges (*imams*). Messick understands the shari'a system as a dialectic between the library and archive, motivated by litigants and mediated by the imams. Messick expands Talal Asad's notion of the Islamic "discursive tradition," putting in conversation the library, the archive, and the imamic community of interpreters (Messick 2018, 21).[5] The library is a "cosmopolitan text," made to move from its place of origin to outside of its written context. Famous *fiqh*

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other hand, shows that in the Yemeni example, and his differing conception of shari'a as a system, *urf* is not outside but inside the system. Take for example Timothy Daniels anthropological definition of shari'a: *Sharia (Arabic: Sharī'a) is a lexical item with multiple meanings, a core metaphor, and a conglomerate of cultural models. In a theological sense, it refers to Islamic law and ethical norms, the all-encompassing Way sent by God in the Qur'an and exemplified in the practices of the Prophet Muhammad. It also means, in a metaphorical sense, "the path to the oasis." Just as the oasis is the key to survival and success in a desert environment, sharia is the key to survival and success in this world and the world hereafter. Sharia is the domain of expert knowledge, such as that of the sharia experts on bank committees in Malaysia and the fatwa council of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Saudi Arabia. It is also the domain of diffuse socially distributed knowledge, such as that of the worshippers in the mosques in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, and the factory women of Fes, Morocco, who told Laetitia Cairoli (2011) that they tried to observe the ḥudūd or ethical limits as they passed through the streets between factory and home. Sharia also enters into much spoken and written discourse, and symbols associated with it evoke multiple meanings and emotions among Muslims and non-Muslims alike. As such, sharia is an important topic for the anthropology of Islam and the anthropology of religion in general.* Daniels, Timothy P., ed. 2017. *Sharia Dynamics: Islamic Law and Sociopolitical Processes*. Contemporary Anthropology of Religion. Cham, Switzerland: Springer : Palgrave Macmillan. Pg.1

[5] Breaking from the idea of "local" and plural "Islams" in cultural, historical, and temporal contexts (Geertz 1968; Eickelman 1981; Gilsenan 1973), Talal Asad notes the continuity of Islam in a Foucauldian "discourse", where the boundaries of orthodoxy are actively negotiated by clerics and scholars within a recognized and bounded tradition (Asad 1986). The previous anthropological focus theorized Islam as a system or language of meaning in local contexts, as can be seen in the differences between Indonesia and Morocco for example (Geertz 1968). Asad, drawing on Foucault, introduces us to Islamic subjects not as actors of cultural roles, but of agents who are engaged within a historical act of interpreting a tradition in relationship to founding texts, the Quran and Sunna. These are agents, however, who think and act within sets of power relations and their respective discursive fields (see also Tedlock 1995). Much of the contemporary work on Islam, and especially Egypt, uses this approach (see Mahmood 2005; Hirschkind 2006; Hafez 2011a; Esmeir 2012; Agrama 2012).

books, as well as the Quran and the *hadith*, are cosmopolitan texts, found in Yemen as well as the United States. The archive, however, comprises of local documents that are written in the "vernacular" with names, places, and dates (ibid., 21).

In my interviews with the imams in this study, they all have all recommended Yusuf al-Qaradawi's *Fiqh al-Zakah*, or the legal rulings of zakat in a two-volume book that was his doctoral dissertation at al-Azhar.[6] In the next chapter, I give a background on al-Qaradawi, and a reading of his *Fiqh al-Zakah*, along with verses of the Quran as part of the "library" that the American imams of al-Azhar cite as an authoritative reference. One student had both the Arabic and English in his library, offering to lend them to me for this study. As we will see in the next chapter, Qaradawi leaves plenty of room for interpretation, especially around the Quranic concept of *fi sabil Allah,* or "in God's cause." However, Qaradawi argues that the primary purpose of zakat is to provide for the poor in the cause of social welfare. Imam Sadiq, in the ethnographic example that starts this chapter, cites Qaradawi when I ask him about zakat.

I draw from Messick the method of reading books of *fiqh* with the imams: "rather than an ideal or generalized Muslim, my concern…is with the particular people of this local textual order—that is, with the individuals who taught, studied, wrote… and interpreted works of fiqh" (Messick 2018, 9). He reads analytically as a historical anthropologist, but within a social context among imams who have the authority,

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[6] Azhari as well as non-Azhari imams have referenced Qaradawi. The Deobandis of South Asia, however, rely on Mufti Taqi Usmani in regard to financial issues. Mufti Taqi is a professor at Darul Uloom Karachi and has published on Islamic economics as well as serving on the board of Islamic financial institutions.

knowledge, and historical understanding of how texts have been interpreted and placed in their communities.

In this way, I bring al-Qaradawi into conversation with the imams, asking for points of clarification on who is zakat eligible and who is not, what the purpose of zakat is, and what the proper role of the state is in zakat collection and distribution. At a certain point, the imams told me to go to the text directly, since they were not specialists. Most questions that imams deal with relate to family concerns—marriage, divorce, and intergenerational issues. Imam Sameer, The Social Worker (Chapter 5), once joked, "I don't know man, I'm not an economist. You read it and let me know when you find out."

If the library in this study is the Quran and the *fiqh* text of Qaradawi, then the archive is the fragments of zakat positions, fatwas, and opinions that are found on the websites of charitable organizations, in the fine print next to credit card transactions, in video messages asking for zakat donations, and in the internal spreadsheets audited by imams, including their year-end reports for public accountability. It is in this nexus between the library, archive, and the role of the imam in local social practice that I analyze zakat as part of a shari'a system in the United States.

Messick's ethnography, however, takes place in a single location, the town of Ibb in Yemen. Zarena Grewal has studied American imams as they search for religious knowledge and legitimacy, tracing the movements of American students from communities in the US to pedagogical sites in the Middle East, specifically Abu-Noor in

Syria, Kharabsha in Jordan, and al-Azhar in Cairo.[7] Her approach is "de-territorialized,"[8]

focusing on students as "nodes" in a pedagogical network within a "transnational moral

geography" (Grewal 2014, 42). Grewal theorizes Islamic-American communities as part

of a broader discursive community of Muslims from in and around the globe speaking a

"shared vocabulary" as a "movement of ideas and intellectuals between the Middle East

and the US through an ethnography of students and teachers in global pedagogical

networks" (Grewal 2014, 24). In order to show how zakat is being transformed by

cultural and economic forces, I follow imams as part of this transnational moral

geography, tracing the movement of students in diverse spaces from Egypt to the US. I

combine this de-territorialized approach with Messick's use of the library and archive,

bringing in Qaradawi and focusing on the discourses around zakat.

I study how zakat, a quite specific transnational discourse, takes form in a

regional context traced between Egypt and California. I focus my ethnographic inquiry

on discourse related to zakat as developed among Azhari Ulema in Southern California. I

ask whether it is possible to flatten the discursive field, as Grewal rightly does, to speak

about Global Islam without losing out on the uniqueness and difference in each place and

discursive formation. In regard to the *fiqh* of zakat, Azharis rely on Qaradawi, whereas

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[7] Ulf Hannerz's work on cosmopolitanism and globalization theorizes transnational movements. Hannerz notes that anthropologists early on understood the need to move beyond a certain fieldsite, as can be seen with Malinowski following around the Kula ring as well as migration studies in the 1970's that looked at "points of departure" and "points of arrival" (Hannerz 2003).

[8] This term borrows the concept from Arjun Appadurai where actors are no longer bound to local spaces in a globalized world (Appadurai 1991). Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Community" no longer suffices, being bound to national and state imaginaries. Appadurai looks at 'global cultural flows,' of "multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups" (Appadurai 1996, 33).

imams from Darul Uloom will use Mufti Taqi Usmani. Yusuf al-Qaradawi uses a mixed-*madhab*[9] approach, reviewing the literature from all madhabs, and then giving his recommendation. Taqi Usmani, on the other hand, is a South Asian Hanafi, and relies on this one particular madhab when constructing his opinion. Though there may be a large overlap between the two authorities and their *fiqh*, the reliance of different imams with different sources of authority changes the discourses surrounding these texts. In the US, we can describe both the Azhari and the Darul Uloom graduate as speaking on a common issue, in a "common religious debate" (gender relations, zakat), though their "shared vocabularies" diverge, and they come to different conclusions based on their background, culture, and training—these patterns need to be investigated further in order to be better understood.

1.3. Argument Outline

This dissertation looks at Islamic alms, or zakat, and how imams negotiate its rules as well as advise on a range of charitable practices. Zakat is being transformed from a variegated, local, and personal practice to one increasingly regulated by the nation-state. The reason for this is twofold: (i) the transformation centers on the pressures of the post-911 legal and financial regulations in the US that see zakat not only as charity but as a source of terrorist financing; and (ii) the desire of the Egyptian state to integrate zakat

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[9] The traditional madhabs, or schools of thought, include the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi, Hanbali. Some sunni's recognize the the shia Jafiri's as a school of thought. Qaradawi also includes non-canonical madhabs in his analysis, including all of the above.

into a form of taxation, helping fund state directed social services as well as curb the power of competing groups like the Muslim Brotherhood.

The main argument of this thesis is that zakat is being transformed by cultural and politico-economic forces, most significantly neoliberalism and the ethics of international humanitarianism. I demonstrate how the imams of Southern California integrate their socialization and seminary training within the legal and political context of the 21st-century United States, particularity in relation to post–9/11 surveillance and management through regulations including the 501(c)(3) and its requirements of accountability and transparency, changing the relationship between the giver and receiver. Before I delve into the details of this research, it will be useful to first outline the contents of the dissertation and how each chapter works in the service of the main thesis of this dissertation.

In Chapter 1, I lay out my method and approach, adapting Messick's notion of the shari'a as a system of practice between imams, offering an overview of the main texts on which they rely on, and how they communicate with the communities they serve. The central argument of this dissertation begins in the literature review, where I provide a general background of the practice of zakat, both historically and contemporarily, from Ottoman Turkey to modern Egypt and Indonesia. The purpose will be to provide the necessary cultural, political, and economic context to the discourses on zakat, portraying the different settings in which imams operate and the different ways they respond. This will be important in understanding how zakat operated in differing politico-economic circumstances, giving us a basis to gauge the changes of contemporary zakat practice.

Secondly, I cover the relevant anthropological literature on charity by paying attention to the relationship between the giver and receiver as theorized by to Mauss Sahlins, as well as in more recent literature that provides ethnographic illustration theorizing contemporary charity within modern neoliberal humanitarianism. This research is based on anthropological literature that considers social relationships established by acts of charity to be shaped by broader political-economic conditions and by the ways in which those acts are managed, i.e. by the state or by corporate bodies like the Ikhwan.

Chapter 2 situates the dissertation historically, first in Egypt as a post-colonial nation-state with the significant changes, both institutional and pedagogical, undergone at al-Azhar during this modernizing period. I then cover the political-economic changes that took place from the time of Abdel-Nasser up to the ouster of Mubarak, outlining the shift from the ideology of Arab Socialism to that of the Washington Consensus and neoliberal reform. I also give a brief biography of Yusuf al-Qaradawi to introduce his place as the author of *fiqh al-zakat*. Our Azhari imams are trained in Egypt under this political and economic environment, where these institutional and pedagogical changes are now part of the curriculum. I then give a brief history of Islam in America, tracing out the genealogies of two main Islamic communities, what Sherman Jackson calls Immigrant Islam and Black Islam (S. A. Jackson 2011). I conclude Chapter 2 with a textual analysis of the Quran as well as Qaradawi's *fiqh al-zakat,* using Messick's notion of these texts as the library in the Southern California shari'a system concerning zakat.

Chapters 3–5 develops 3 different sketches of the Azhari imam, the Ikhwani (Chapter 3), the Sufi (Chapter 4), and the Social Worker (Chapter 5). Through

ethnographic contrast, we can understand how and why zakat is being practiced and transformed by cultural and political-economic conditions, most significantly neoliberalism and the ethics of international humanitarianism. These chapters intersect the deeply personal with the transnational, unpacking the complexities and multiple trajectories that zakat takes in the post-9/11 and post-Arab Uprising period.

Chapter 3 takes place in Egypt around "Hamza the Ikhwani," a social-justice and activist-oriented imam sympathetic to the *Ikhwan al-Muslimeen*. Imam Hamza identifies as *Ikhwani*,[10] and a supporter of the [Muslim] Brotherhood in his politics and conservative social activism, seeing *al islam howa alhal,* meaning "Islam as the solution" to the political and economic ills of the Muslim world. I argue that Hamza's socialization around an evangelical Christian church in the US greatly influences his understanding of what religion is, including modes of charitable organizing, and notions of gender and masculinity parallel to the call of the Ikhwan. To better understand the Ikhwan and their politics, I first provide history and context to their Islamist vision, focusing on their relationship to the state. I then move ethnographically to Ibrahim, my Arabic tutor in Egypt as well as a member and activist of the Ikhwan in a suburb of Cairo, helping me understand how notions of piety, hard work, and charity serve as cornerstones of their faith. Though the organization is very efficient in delivering needed services, the strict hierarchical and bureaucratic organization signifies a practice of zakat reconfigured to fit a modern system of redistribution, changing the relationship between giver and receiver.

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[10] Hamza is not officially part of the Muslim Brotherhood, but sympathetic to its cause and the movement. In Egypt, persons of this sort are referred to as *Ikhwangi,* but I use Ikhwan for simplicity.

This mode of bureaucratic redistribution is not learned at al-Azhar or its curriculum but taken from the street activism of the Ikhwan and their visibility during the open period of the Arab Uprising. I close again with Hamza, reiterating that his understanding of shari'a lies at the intersection of socialization and contemporary political-economic conditions.

Chapter 4 also takes place in Egypt, this time featuring "Rami the Sufi," an American imam who is focused more on piety and inward spiritual experiences. Rami came to Egypt as a Sufi, influenced in the US by Sheikh Hamza as well as Sheikh Nuh Keller. Critics have argued that Sufism, with its focus on inward piety, is politically quietist, leaving politics to others and therefore making it amenable to the state and its status quo. In this chapter, I give a background on Sufism, its historical context, and the practices of zakat that are unique to it. During our trip to Upper Egypt to visit the tomb of Sheikh ash-Shadhili, it became clear that there the practice of zakat is more *ad hoc* in its practice, where individuals share food spontaneously with others as an act of personal piety and not organized officially or bureaucratically. In this context, devotees display charity openly at a common festival, place, or event, as individuals and groups act in solidarity to express their relationship to God. Contrasted with the Ikhwan, the Sufis' mode of zakat practice places all supplicants, both the giver and receiver, in a less hierarchical relationship. I close the chapter by intersecting zakat with the financial order, arguing that zakat cannot solve the problem of poverty without addressing the underlying structural causes of inequality in society.

Unlike the previous two chapters, Chapter 5, "Sameer the Social Worker: Race and Gender," takes place in the US. Imam Sameer travelled to Egypt with his wife and

two children after working as a school counselor for over ten years at the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Sameer has a Master's degree in Social Work (MSW) and has consulted as an imam at an African-American mosque in South Los Angeles, Masjid Farooq, as well as with a Muslim-women run social services agency, Connect California. I include Sameer as an example of the fact that al-Azhar and Egypt do not over-determine his subjectivity; rather, I focus on his *Americanness*, including his experience as a licensed and trained social worker. He does not identify as either Sufi or Ikhwani, or even Salafi for that matter, but rather enrolled at al-Azhar, took the good "from here and there" (his words) and returned to the US to minister to Muslim-Americans as an imam using the techniques of his social work experience and training. Sameer's work at Masjid Farooq, a black mosque in the inner-city, highlights the way in which race intersects with poverty in many Muslim-American communities, as well as the way in which zakat is being reconfigured as social entrepreneurship and discussed alongside tax reform. For Connect California, conservative gender norms, dominant in male mosque spaces, come into tension with the work and leadership of the women of Connect California, spaces which Imam Sameer must navigate. To further understand these tensions, I close chapter 5 with a discussion of Muslim masculinities, exploring the attitudes of an American-born Azhari, Imam Jibril, and placing them in a historical context.

The three sketches of our Azhari imams—the Ikhwani, the Sufi, and the Social Worker—illustrate how the imam is socially situated, and in turn help us understand the different motivations, priorities, and modes of zakat practice in which they participate.

These examples are important in understanding the principal thesis of this dissertation, illustrating how and why zakat is being practiced and transformed by cultural and political-economic conditions, most significantly neoliberalism and the ethics of international humanitarianism.

Chapter 6, "Humanitarianism," moves us away from a focus on the imams towards institutional practice in the US, looking at how humanitarian non-profit management is changing zakat practice. Chapter 6 brings together the library, the archive, and the community of interpreters together in Southern California (see 1.2). I start with Connect California, paying attention to its programs and reporting requirements. In the post–9/11 financial regulatory environment, institutions are focused on transparency and accountability to defer any accusations of mismanagement, foreign influence, and even terrorist financing. This form of governmentality is not only a dictum of the state but has also become incorporated into the values of individuals and as best practices in zakat institutions. The section continues with how Connect California incorporates these values in its institutional management as well as its zakat eligible programs. I then move to a discussion of Friendship USA, and how the value of self-sufficiency is transforming the relationship between giver and receiver, managed by institutional practices of accountability that are incorporated into programs such as job placement and financial literacy, putting into question the idea of the deserving versus undeserving. Lastly, I show how the open category of zakat-eligible persons, or *fi sabil Allah,* is used to collect zakat funds in new and innovative ways, shifting zakat practice as well as the role of the imam.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter 7, I draw out some implications of the variegated practice of our imams, returning to the fundamental purpose of zakat as a relationship between the rich and the poor in poverty alleviation. The practice of our imams take place within the structures of the nation-state and its political economy; future research would have to explore zakat in a greater economic vision, asking about its adequacy under current structural conditions.

The Ethnographer and the Imams

I myself am a second-generation immigrant whose parents came from India and Pakistan. My father is one of five people who founded the first mosque in Orange County and I spent a significant amount of my childhood in mosque spaces. I started public school in Irvine, CA, but was pulled out in first grade to attend the first Islamic school in Orange County from grades second to sixth. There, I attended school with children from all over the world, who each had different cultures, expectations, and ideas of what it meant to be Muslim. It wasn't so clear to us as children, but there were many cultural fault lines that cut through the school and created tensions, from what language would be spoken during sermons (English was finally settled upon) to what kind of food was going to be served after Friday prayers—"overly spicy" Indian or "bland" Arab food (no bias there!).

My positionality in the community allows me to enter spaces that would be off-limits for others, and I am part of conversations that "outsiders" would never hear. When I tell my informants that I am an anthropologist, suspicions arise, but when they learn my history, they let their guards down. However, my perceived status as a "native informant" reduces my identity to a certain category, not taking into account the movement between

borders, the unfamiliarity and "culture shock" of landing in Cairo, and the limits of not knowing the language or culture.[11] The difference in power and my position as an academic was viewed with suspicion by security services as well as many native Egyptians—I, as an American, that is perhaps CIA, FBI, or God knows what other conspiracy. If I am a native, I am a native of Southern California who has seen Orange County transform from strawberry fields and orange groves to the high-tech Silicon Valley of the South. I take seriously the trust the imams have put in my research and their belief that their words and views will be framed fairly. My interest is to try to get beyond what is being said, the pre-commitments of imams and their constitution of orthodoxy, through an anthropological lens that is informed by solid empirical and theoretical grounding.

Three of the imams featured in this study are second-generation Muslims from immigrant family backgrounds; one is of mixed heritage, "half Pakistani and half white," and another is a "white" convert from the Midwest. All were born in the US or Canada, and I have met with all of them in the US and followed four to Cairo. In an effort to maintain anonymity, biographies of the imams can be composite with the details of identity mixed around. I believe I have stayed true to their voice and backgrounds. I let the biographical details come through in the context of the ethnography. Imam Aziz is an established elder imam well respected in his community, who immigrated to the US from India in the mid-1970s and received his PhD in Religion from Notre Dame. I use him and

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[11] Narayan discusses the problematics of the native ethnographer, see also Ulysse. (Narayan Kirin 1993; Ulysse 2007).

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other imams who have not studied at al-Azhar as a comparison to the imams from al-Azhar (pl. Azharis).

In addition to these key informants, I have met many in Cairo who were from the East Coast, Texas, and even the U.K., and Canada. English-speaking students in Cairo have a way of finding each other, and they tend to form a "cohort" of foreign students from various backgrounds and sectarian persuasions. The informants I have selected spend considerable time in Southern California and are part of a larger network of imams who get together to discuss issues of importance in their communities.

They are all part of an Azhari alumni network in Southern California, and more are broadly participants in the "transnational moral geography" of Islamic pedagogical networks that include al-Azhar, Medina, and Karachi—anyone who has done the *rihla* (travel for religious education) overseas (Grewal 2014, 42). As such, mosque participants see imams as bearers of the tradition, and the imams see each other as peers who are *the* actors in shaping Islamic practice for their communities. These imams and students, based out of a dozen mosques in Southern California, regularly converse over email, phone, and text. They also get together once a year during Ramadan to discuss important issues that have come up during the last year.

1.4. Literature Review

The principal argument of this dissertation is that zakat is being transformed by cultural and politico-economic forces, most significantly neoliberalism and the ethics of

international humanitarianism. As such, I argue that the opinions Islamic leaders hold are affected by their socialization, their seminary education, and the cultural environment to which it belongs. Americans who go to al-Azhar University assume norms from an Egyptian context, learning about Islamic law in an Egyptian institution and how to practice as Muslims in both Egypt and Southern California. In this section, I first cover the main themes regarding zakat practice historically, paying attention to its changing institutional role as being primarily an obligation of individual actors to one of corporate bodies like the *waqf* and Sufi *tariqahs*, which focus mainly on Ottoman practices as well as the observations of the medieval explorer Ibn Batuta. I then move to the relevant anthropological literature on charity in the context of global humanitarianism, focusing on zakat in the Middle East and Indonesia.[12] I close the section with an application of anthropological theory to my subject, working from Mauss and the discourse on charity as a form of social solidarity in different cultural systems and the problem of reproducing class hierarchies in contemporary neoliberal states. It is here that I explore the varying roles between the giver and receiver as they arise in differing historical and geographic circumstances.

History of Islamic Charity

In this section, we will look at the social history of zakat in Islamic societies, from India to the Ottoman Empire, examining how an ethic of charity embeds itself in daily socio-economic practices. The historian Amy Singer decries the current politicized framing of

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[12] Indonesia has a long history of imams being trained at al-Azhar.

Islamic charity as "superficial and focused on the misuse of charitable funds" and instead

traces Islamic charity historically as a "culture of charity" that makes up a "fundamental

aspect of Islam"(Singer 2013, 341).

In her sweeping work *Charity in Islamic Societies,* Singer details a socio-

economic system of redistribution based on communal solidarity as part of the *ummah,* or

community of believers. From the huge mosque complex of the Suleymaniye in Ottoman

Turkey, replete with a school, public kitchen, hospital and medical school, and public

park, to a Sufi *zawiya* organized charity hosting road weary travelers, Singer covers the

practice of charity in Islam from the time of the Prophet to the contemporary era.

Singer references the historian Michael Bonner's study of the transition between

pre-Islamic values of charity where "values of generosity became institutionalized in

zakat and sadaqa" (Singer 2008, 35). The wealthy would demonstrate their status and

gain followers by enacting generous and at times extravagant slaughter of camels,

holding feasts and distributing the meat to gain the loyalty of subjects. Surplus wealth

"was thus not sold or traded, but spent or given away in pursuit of power" (Singer 2008,

35). The transition from this pre-Islamic custom is generalized by the right of all Muslims

to take in zakat and *sadaqa*, not simply for exercising power in social relations but by an

individualized religious obligation of the wealthy to God, and the right of the poor, by

God, to receive zakat.

As a specialist in the Ottoman period, Singer's greatest contribution to the

literature is her detailed analysis of Ottoman charitable society based on the *waqf*, a

system of endowment that institutionalizes *sadaqa jariya,* or charity that continues in

perpetuity, rewarding the donor as long as meals are served, water is drawn, and prayers are performed from the endowment. Ottoman society was replete with Mosque complexes like the Suleymaniye, many of which were sponsored by women of rank. The Atik Valide or "Old Mother Queen" Mosque was built by the mother of Sultan Murad III, Nurbanu Sultan, completed in 1583, with a

> *mosque in the center and a madrasah parallel to the mosque sharing the same courtyard, a dervish lodge that is on the left side of the mosque on the same street, a primary school, an imaret (soup kitchen), a caravansary, printing house, a school for Quran reciters, a Turkish Bath and a Daruşşifa, which was designed as a full-scale hospital. The treatment and needs of the patients admitted to the darüşşifa were funded by revenues from the land properties donated by Nurbanu Sultan (Kayahan 2015).*

Halil Inalcik refers to the Ottoman State as a "welfare state," in which the fundamental role of the Sultan is to promote public welfare, or *maslaha* (İnalcık and Quataert 1997). However, the Ottomans never institutionalized zakat, relying on commercial taxes while leaving zakat for individual collection and distribution. The Sultan is first and foremost responsible for ensuring the efficiency of urban markets, and secondly for being an example of Islamic charity by routine giving, including after Friday prayers, Eid festivals, and around circumcision ceremonies (İnalcık and Quataert 1997). Sultan Barquq freed debtors and paid their debts during Ramadan, and in a "demonstration of imperial Ottoman beneficence" Sultan Murad III (1576-95) released debtors who were brought before him in chains during the circumcision ceremony of his son, Prince Mehmed, an event which is memorialized in the adorned pictorial album *Surname-i Humayun,* or *"*Imperial Festival Book" (Singer 2008, 53). This practice provided a model for the behavior of other nobles, where acts of charity frequently

accompanied festivals, weddings, circumcisions and other ceremonies. These examples

suggest that there was a historical precedent for Qaradawi's interpretation of zakat as an

act that has moved from one performed by the individual to one performed by the state –

though the central role of the state in the administration of its collection and distribution

is undeniably modern. Though the Ottoman case exemplifies a noble ethic regarding

human welfare, Inalcik notes that the Ottoman system could not sustain itself due to

unsustainable medieval economic practices that became undermined by burgeoning

mercantilists from Europe and the creation of a capitalist class. Whereas Ottoman society

controlled land under a policy of fiscalism that ensured tax revenues, in Europe market

expansion became the goal of national economies (İnalcık and Quataert 1997). Combined

with an ethic of charity, Ottoman mores posited surplus revenue be redistributed instead

reinvested, contributing to the establishment of social welfare systems for the poor and

the peasantry, but also contributing to an overall declining economy in the face of

European market capitulations.

Ibn Battuta recounts his journey through the Muslim world as an educated Maliki

scholar. He eventually received a judgeship in Delhi after travelling overland from

Morocco. In his role, he oversaw the building of the mausoleum of Sultan Qutb al-Din

(1316-20) that contained a daily kitchen. During a drought he oversaw weekly food

rations for 500 people (Ibn Batuta and Gibb 1957, 760-61). Ibn Battuta, on his return to

Morocco, was patronized by Abu 'Inan and commissioned his famous travelogue,

catapulting Ibn Battuta to fame in his time and immortalizing him as one of the greatest

adventurers that ever lived. Much of what we know today about the daily life of Muslims

of the 14th century, united by *dar al-Islam,* is the direct result of Ibn-Battuta's colorful

descriptions. Along with his recollections of the charitable projects he oversaw, Ibn

Battuta also describes the countless acts of generosity by people willing to help a traveler,

recounting how people gave him food, helped him find a place to sleep, and provided him

with clothing during a rainstorm.

The parables of Islamic piety place Sufis as monks devoted only to God, but

instead of withdrawing from the world as hermits, they withdraw materially and choose

to live a life of modesty in the service of charity. In Ottoman Islamic cosmology, Sufis

were perceived to be God's deputies on Earth, embodying the virtue of the last prophet.

Sultans would patronize powerful Sufi lodges, or *zawiyas,* seeking blessings that

legitimated a temporal order as long as it reflected the cosmic one (*Yilmaz*).

Ibn Battuta relates the hospitality he received from the Sufi *zawiyas* all throughout

the Muslim world, especially as a learned scholar. In Isfahan he stayed at the Rifa'I

zawiya, "a Sufi center of abundant proportions, possessing not only a mosque, kitchen,

and rooms for disciples and travelers, but also a fine marble-paved *hammam*, or bath"

(Dunn 2004, 94). Poets recount the majesty of Sufi pietists, memorializing great acts of

charity that elevate their status as givers. Singer notes that charity is no doubt an

important act in all major monotheistic religions, but that only the Quran urges believers

to encourage others to give. This ethic posits giving as a central ritual of society, to the

point where panegyrics note the generosity of patrons in raising their status. Ibn Battuta

recounts one to his patron Abu 'Inan, and it is worth quoting in full to get a sense of the

form and moral economy of the society in which it is found:

*Our master, God strengthen him, has devised practices in benevolence and almsgiving of which no one has thought and which the Sultans had not attained. Among them are the constant distribution of alms to the poor in every place in his realms; the designation of abundant alms for prisoners in all his realms; the stipulation that those alms should be in the form of baked bread that is easy to use; clothing for the poor, the sick, old women, old men, and those serving in mosques throughout his realms; the allocation of sacrificial animals for these classes of people for the Feast of Sacrifice; the giving in alms of the tolls exacted at the gates in his realms on the twenty-seventh day of Ramadan in honour of that noble day and in support of its sanctity; feeding the people of the whole country on the night of the noble birth [*mawlid al-nabi*] *and assembling them for its ceremonies; the circumcision, feeding and clothing orphan boys on the day of 'Ashura; his help to the chronically sick and infirm in providing them with partners to work their land and so ease their burdens; his giving to the poor in his capital soft rugs and wraps of good quality for them to spread out and sleep on, an unparalleled kindness; building hospitals in every town of his realms providing ample endowments for feeding the sick and appointing doctors to cure them and take charge of their treatment, as well as other kinds of beneficence and varieties of noble acts which he has been the first to do. May God repay the favours he has bestowed and recompense his benefactions. (Gibb, Ibn Battuta vol. IV, 930-33 quotes in Singer 12).*

In Chapter 4 we look at contemporary Sufi practices at the intersection of charity and the state through the experience of Rami, an Azhari, as we travel outside of Cairo to the mausoleum of Sheikh Ash-Shadhili. Institutional practices of zakat in the US have a long history. Though the "culture of charity" no longer exists through the *waqf* system, institutions of charitable giving continue under modern norms of international humanitarianism, as we will look at in Chapter 5.

Global Zakat Practices

"If done right, zakat could solve the problem of poverty," says Imam Aziz, an elder imam in Southern California. I have heard the same sentiment echoed by other imams as well as volunteers in the various mosques and charity organizations, in the US and in Egypt. I am not the only one to notice this.

In a recent article in *The Guardian* titled "Zakat requires Muslims to donate 2.5% of their wealth: could this end poverty?" The author, Zainulbahar Noor, deputy director of BAZNAS Indonesia (the official state sponsored zakat program) is hopeful but more modest in his claims:

> *As the fourth-most populous and the largest Muslim-majority country in the world, there is enormous potential in Indonesia for zakat to reduce poverty and inequality, and contribute to sustainable development. Some 28 million Indonesians live in poverty — 11% of the population — and a further 40% are vulnerable to falling into poverty, with incomes hovering just above the poverty line (Noor and Pickup 2017).*

In 2015, Zakat was estimated globally to worth between $200 billion and $1 trillion, the figure uncertain because most of it is in the "informal" economy of "cash transfers" (Stirk 2015). In a report by *Global Humanitarian Assistance,* zakat is now seen as a key part of assistance and a potential source of for increased funding for "sustainable development" as well as managed "international humanitarian response system" (Stirk 2015).

Jonathan Benthall was one of the first anthropologists to focus specifically on zakat, starting with ethnographic research in Jordan and the West Bank and more recently shifting his attention to the role of NGOs, Islamic charities, and political organizations in the "Age of Terror." In this context, zakat is not only a mechanism of redistribution from the rich to the poor, but a territory of competing claims and interests. From the priorities of western NGOs and state-based development projects, to Islamic politico-charity organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood, everyone wants a piece of the proverbial

zakat pie. For instance, Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan would like to create an international zakat system, standardizing zakat eligibility and payment requirements, redistributing wealth from not only richer people to poorer ones, but from richer nations to poorer ones (Benthall 2016). Benthall also gives an example he finds "impressive": a committee-run program for Palestinian refugees in Nablus, funded largely by Saudi Arabia but run by local Jordanian and Palestinians. The program is able to generate employment and revenue by owning land, a dairy farm, pasteurization facilities, a sheep farm, and one of the best medical clinics in the region. The program is able to support 3500 families with income, as well as provide educational grants for university students and meals during Ramadan. Programs like this have been highly successful, with many locals as well as Western NGOs contributing to the projects. However, when the organizations providing services also have a political aim, as in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood providing gas and clothing subsidies or Hamas providing meals in Ramadan, zakat funding risks being labelled as terrorist financing by foreign bodies.

The Holy Land Foundation (HLF) operated in the US since 1989 collecting zakat and sending it to refugee programs in Palestine, including Nablus. Soon after 9/11, the offices of HLF were raided by the FBI, bank accounts frozen, assets seized, and five senior staff arrested and indicted for providing material support for Hamas.[13] Through the Patriot Act, US authorities have expanded their legal powers to monitor and regulate international banking in an effort to thwart terrorist financing. Though not tied to 9/11,

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[13] http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeraworld/2016/10/holy-land-foundation-hamas-161004083025906.html

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but a thorn in Israel's national security, Hamas and many other organizations have been labeled as terrorist organizations. No mosque, imam, or donor that I interviewed wants their funds tied to any group listed as a terrorist organization by the US government, fearing asset seizure at best and arrests at worst. It is important to note that the Holy Land Foundation as well as those arrested deny any involvement with Hamas. There was a mistrial in 2007 because of a lack of evidence but the trial reached a conviction in 2009 under evidence that was "untested, untestable, hearsay, and prejudicial" according to the defense attorneys. These attorneys have argued that out of the 8,000 documents used as evidence during the trial, none were from American sources, but were rather sourced from foreign newspaper clippings, often featuring distorted translations mired in the political context of the War on Terror.

The HLF saga resulted in greater scrutiny over the use of zakat funds from federal authorities to mosque administrations and imams. Islamic Relief USA (IRUSA), for example, is a charity that has professionalized over the years through transparent accounts and audits by Charity Navigator, such that it now forms disaster relief partnerships with The International Committee of the Red Cross. In Palestine, IRUSA partners with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and administers its own programs, taking great pains to make sure its zakat money is being spent in a transparent manner. This professionalization and transparency allows them to operate zakat collections at mosques where congregants can feel secure that their money will be used properly and that the government will not prosecute them. In the context of post-911 surveillance, journalists and politicians have politicized zakat practice, slipping between

charity and terrorist financing. Benthall notes how ethnographic research can and does give us a more nuanced understanding of current zakat practices.

In Egypt, Amira Mittermaier discusses a *khidma* at the residence of Nura in the City of the Dead in Cairo. With over a half-million people living in this cemetery-city of the poor, the *khidma* is open to anyone who needs a warm meal (Mittermaier 2014b, 54). The *khidma* literally means service, and is common around Sufi shrines throughout Egypt where one can find some food and tea. In contrast to a market logic of sustenance linked to productivity, the *khidma* reflects an "ethics of immediacy," a "giving, sharing and hospitality that are fundamentally oriented toward the present." Similar to Bornstein's concept of relational-empathy, the *khidma* privileges "alternative modes of togetherness" in opposition to "neoliberal celebration of individual responsibility" (Mittermaier 2014a, 55–56). As such, zakat as practiced under *khidma* works against the implicit hierarchy established in charity, where charitable giving is motivated by individual benevolence instead of duty. In Mittermaier's interviews, subjects perceive zakat as a right given to them by God, not as subjects who need the compassion of strangers (Mittermaier 2014a).

Sherine Hafez discusses a poverty alleviation program in Egypt led by a group of religious women whose "desires mirror the imbrications of religion and secularism" in a mode of modernization and development that is both secular and religious (Hafez 2011b). The more affluent and literate women of Al Hilal use religion as a motivation for their projects of development in more rural areas, but as Hafez shows, there is a concomitance of Islamism with the secular ideology of modernization. In Chapter 3, I argue that the Ikhwan is one of these modern Islamist organizations, disciplining its members as well as

those they serve in a form of development that is both secular and religious. In Chapter 6, I apply this argument to terms of American Muslims who operate in a modern secular non-profit sector, using its techniques of management and ethics, all the while remaining motivated by religion to do so. In both cases the relationship between giver and receiver is different than, say, the relationship established under *khidma*.

Soumhya Venkatesan in her study of Muslims of Tamil Nadu places zakat practices alongside *dān*, in a context of South Asian charitable giving. She argues that "Tamil ideas of what constitutes a good and dignified life for a householder" are common for Hindu's and Muslims, "notwithstanding key differences… about such gifts [*dān* and zakat]… while remaining sensitive to the different religious ideologies and practices" (Venkatesan 2016, 37). Her ethnography shows the mutability of zakat in cultural context, an Islamization of Tamil values that seeks validation and reproduction through zakat. Tamil cultural values of "generosity (*vallanmai*), trustworthiness (*nambikaiyaanavan*), prudence and intelligence (*buddhisalithanam*), [and] having dignity and honor (*maanam*)" therefore recast zakat in the context of *dowry* practices, which strictly speaking are not Islamic, though a dowry is typically expected in order to signify that the householder can provide for his daughters. Interestingly, Tamils arrange for funding, through zakat and other charitable efforts, to travel to the relatively wealthy diasporic Tamil community in Singapore for zakat collection, dressed in the "devout Muslim uniform of white shirt, white sarong, white cap, and white shoulder cloth, …[offering] blessings (*dua*) and perform other ritual services for those from whom they seek help" (Venkatesan 2016, 44). This performance of piety distances the seeker from his act, and

instead maintains dignity and honor (*maanam*) alleviating the sense of humiliation attendant to an act of begging. For both Hindus and Muslims in Tamil Nadu, receiving gifts of esteem (gifts) rather than altruism (charity) is preferable since being needy "implies the lack of attributes discussed above" (Venkatesan 2016: 37). Zakat practice, in this instance, is both transnational in its sociability and solidarity, recognizable to global Islam, while at the same time remaining local.

One of the most interesting examples of zakat practice—exceptional for its dynamic and innovative approach—comes from Indonesia, which has a long tradition of sending imam's to train at al-Azhar. Additionally, some of the most progressive thinkers in Indonesia are Azhari. I look at Indonesia for these reasons, and as a counterpoint to what is possible as transnational discourses move from one place and situate in another. Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country, but not part of the Arab world; it has a language, culture and colonial history that distinguishes it from many other Muslim-majority countries. The Indonesian example illustrates how important cultural context is by demonstrating how Indonesians can travel to al-Azhar yet maintain a distinctly Indonesian quality about them showing us the different possibilities of Islamic practice. The Muhammadijah, a major zakat organization, is heavily influenced by Indonesian Azharis that was first studied by the famed anthropologist Clifford Geertz.

In *The Religion of Java*, Geertz analyzes the charitable practices of the Muhammadijah in the context of a *Pantjasila,* "President Sukarno's famous 'five points' (Monotheism, Nationalism, Humanism, Social Justice, and Democracy)" of a postcolonial state with syncretic practices that combine local "traditional Javanese

religious patterns" with "Moslem Moralism" and that "connect up to traditional peasant

values such as *rukun* ("cooperation" in house building, irrigation, etc.) with Marxist

ethics on the other." The Muhammadijah, formed in 1912 "in what the Javanese call 'the

time of the organizations,'" is emblematic of this modernization process. The founder,

Ahmad Dahlan, an Indonesian from a family of Muslim scholars, spent a total of three

years in Mecca and the *hijaz*, being exposed to the ideas of the Egyptian Muhammad

Abduh, a precursor to Qaradawi[14] and the first Azhari to develop the mixed-*madhab*

approach along with the notion that the purpose of zakat is social justice and welfare as

understood in the modern sense. The Muhammadijah uses "modern organizational

techniques in the service of Islamic goals" (Pohl 2012, 241). Its pride and joy is above all

the school system it has created, which has succeeded in implementing modern

educational techniques like a standard curriculum of both Islamic and secular subjects, a

system of diplomas, a modern teaching staff, and the use of classrooms fully equipped

with desks and chairs. Additionally, the organization has built hospitals and regularly

redistributes zakat money to the needy. As part of the new civil society in Indonesia, its

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[14] Though they may be poles apart politically, Qaradawi's mixed-madhab approach and use of reason link him genealogically to Abduh. Khaled Abou El Fadl credits Rashid Rida and Muhammad Abduh as reformers, but this reform has resulted in a schism between two schools- Moderate Islam verses Extremist, with the Wahhabi movement being the most extreme. Abou El Fadl considers the Brotherhood as being in-between, starting off as moderate reformers but because of political repression having a tendency to become extreme, but connects them genealogically to Abduh. Consider Muhammad Ghazali, a contemporary of Qaradawi's and the carrier of Abduh's position and method, and Qaradawi who is more conservative. See Abou El Fadl, Khaled. 2005. *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco. 93-96.

members characterize the Muhammadijah as a social welfare organization, articulating its goals within the modern Indonesian polity and civil society practices (Pohl 2012).

Zakat is institutionalized based on a local village practice of collecting rice sacks and distributing the foodstuffs, as stipulated by the traditional *Shafi fiqh*. However, the Muhammadijah has transformed zakat in Indonesia into a modern organized form of collection and redistribution wherever the need may arise. As one of the largest civil society movements in the country, the organization was a vital player in the wake of the 2006 earthquake that killed 6000 people and left tens of thousands more homeless and injured. Volunteers came in from all over the country to help in the relief efforts, bringing emergency supplies, food and baby formula, including trained healthcare staff (Pohl 2012, 241). The Muhammadijah have helped transition Indonesia from traditional forms of local syncretic religious practices, including the pre-modern practice of giving zakat individually and locally, to a new set of transnational practices made possible by modern communication, transportation, and bureaucratic practices.

Amien Rais, the leader of the Muhammadiyah (1995-2000), who spent a brief time at al-Azhar in Egypt in 1969 and wrote his doctoral thesis on the Muslim Brotherhood at the University of Chicago, has called for major zakat reform. He has advocated for a zakat system based on taxing wage earnings along with progressive taxation as a form of redistribution more in line with the *maqasid* (objectives) of zakat as "securing peoples welfare" within Islam as a "religion of social justice" (Retsikas 2014: 345). Traditionally, zakat is not charged on income, but on accumulated wealth at 2.5% and agricultural harvests at 10%-- a structure devised in the pre-modern mercantilist world of peasants in

agrarian economies, unsuitable for modern market-based economies dominated by wage earning, few savings, and consumption. Rais' focus on modern *ijtihad* and his use of *maqasid* is directly connected to the methodology of al-Azhar and the progressive Egyptian reformer Muhammad Abduh. By the 1990s, Rais was calling for radical reform, taking *maqasid* and its socio-economic context to its logical end. Konstantinos Retsikas perceptively notes, that the "spread of modernist or neo-modernist discourses… brought about a definite reconceptualization of zakat from a simple ritual of worship to a fundamental instrument of achieving socio-economic justice" (Retsikas 2014, 339). When we compare this example to the politics of the Muslim Brotherhood, or even the perspectives of American imams, we can more clearly see the importance of history, language, and culture in shaping how imams imagine what the purpose of zakat is, what its priorities are, and how it is to be practiced.

The sociologist Thierry Kochuyt's study of Islamic charity focuses on the relationship between the giver and receiver, relying primarily on a textual analysis of the Quran and Sunna. Kochuyt remarks that international zakat practice "shows that the community of the faithful is indeed a transnational body in the making." The *ummah* is an imagined community, where zakat practices link the rich to the poor in community and solidarity. However, Kochuyt argues that zakat is not a truly altruistic practice, but a "bridging and binding" between rich and poor where God "reaffirms the rules of reciprocity…in a divine recompense that can be expected in this world and the hereafter"(Kochuyt 2009,

107-108). Kochuyt argues that though zakat is constitutive of the *ummah,* at the same time it is not meant to level social hierarchies or strive for "levelling of incomes" at 2.5% of accumulated wealth. Additionally, Kochuyt critiques the Quran in "doing nothing to raise them [the poor] in esteem, and that the "Prophet confirms their inferior status by saying that 'the upper hand [the one who gives] is better than the lower hand [the receiver]'… [where] the poor are and remain in an inferior position towards the donor as well as towards Allah." Contrast this with the Bible, Kochuyt explains, where "Christianity presents the deprived person as a model for the faithful" (Kochuyt 2009: 107).

Needless to say, this polemic not only confers Kochuyt's Christian bias, but also completely misreads "the upper hand is better than the lower hand," where the Prophet acknowledges a power differential and the consequent meekness of poverty that reduces agency. First of all, the entire *hadith* is worth mentioning:

> *The upper hand is better than the lower hand (i.e. he who gives in charity is better than him who takes it). One should start giving first to his dependents. And the best object of charity is that which is given by a wealthy person (from the money which is left after his expenses). And whoever abstains from asking others for some financial help, Allah will give him and save him from asking others, Allah will make him self-sufficient (Bukhari).*

There are two features to glean here: the grace of those who have the power and wealth to give, and the grace of the poor who are told to be self-sufficient, maintaining the dignity of both giver and receiver. Begging is looked down upon because of the humiliation it entails. In a *hadith,* the Prophet says,

Some people from the Ansar asked Allah's Apostle (to give them something) and he gave to every one of them, who asked him, until all that he had was finished. When everything was finished and he had spent all that was in his hand, he said to them, '"(Know) that if I have any wealth, I will not withhold it from you (to keep for somebody else); And (know) that he who refrains from begging others (or doing prohibited deeds), Allah will make him contented and not in need of others; and he who remains patient, Allah will bestow patience upon him, and he who is satisfied with what he has, Allah will make him self-sufficient. And there is no gift better and vast (you may be given) than patience" (Bukhari, 76:477).

There is a responsibility of the rich to give, to the point where the Prophet died with only a few possessions, giving freely and not fearing poverty. Again, there is an example here for both the rich and the poor. The rich are to give without fearing loss, and the poor to rely on God alone, with patience and self-sufficiency not to be debased as a client of the rich: "The poor person is not the one who asks a morsel or two (of meals) from the others, but the poor is the one who has nothing and is ashamed to beg from others" (Bukhari 24:554).

Ultimately, Kochuyt misses the complementary relationship between rich and poor, characterized by the preservation of salvation and dignity for both. In the *hadiths* of the Prophet, there is a dialectic of valorization; though the "upper is better than the lower," "those who are rich in this world would have little reward in the Hereafter except those who spend their money (in Allah's Cause), but they are few in number" (Bukhari 41:573). Likewise, the Prophet said to his wife, "O A'isha, love the poor and let them come to you and Allah will draw you near to Himself" (Bukhari). In another case, he said, *"O Allah, keep me poor in my life and at my death and raise me at resurrection among those who are poor"* (Nasai). Kochuyt's sociology lacks an ethnographic mode of analysis. Although he claims to rely on qualitative analysis and interview data on

Moroccan wedding practices in Belgium (Kochuyt 2012), he lacks the long-term fieldwork necessary to develop an adequate historical anthropology of zakat. Anthropologists in Egypt (Mittermaier 2014b; Hafez 2011a; Mahmood 2005) or in India (Bornstein 2009; Venkatesan 2016) among Muslim communities witness zakat on a daily basis, when texts are not disembodied from their local context. As a corrective, I use Messick's approach to understand shari'a as part of a system between text and context, ethnographically studying how social relationships are lived, how the giver and receiver are treated, how language is used, and lastly, how communities themselves invoke and receive prescriptive religious texts.

Global zakat practices are part of the constitution of the *ummah,* working to link the rich with a concern for the poor, whereby the rich are rewarded by God for giving and the poor receive zakat, not as charity but as a right bestowed by God to maintain the dignity of the poor. I argue that this relationship is altered when zakat practice takes the norms of international humanitarianism. In addition to covering the different practices of zakat from Jordan and Palestine, I also give the example of Amien Rias, an Indonesia Azhari, to demonstrate how different cultural contexts shape Islamic-legal thinking. These examples clearly show that it is not only seminary education that determines what the shari'a is, but also the perspectives and priorities provided by history, language and culture in a particular political-economic arrangement.

Most zakat practices are still part of an "informal economy" of cash transfers, but there is increasing pressure by nation-states and the NGO complex to regulate and manage zakat in compliance with the practices of international humanitarianism. I argue

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in Chapter 6 that these practices are changing the relationship between the giver and receiver by ethnographically illustrating the role of American based non-profits and the imams who consult with them. Though imams are often trained abroad in a seminary like al-Azhar in Egypt, the ubiquity of the NGO complex and post-9/11 legal requirements in the US privilege managed practices, which the imams consequently naturalize in their own thinking of zakat.

Anthropologists on Charity

Evans-Pritchard, in the preface of the 1966 edition of *The Gift,* states that Marcel Mauss was trained both as a historian of religions and as a sociologist. As a result, his "main interest throughout his life was in Comparative Religion or the Sociology of Religion." Mauss treated alms as developing out of a "moral idea about gifts and wealth" connected to "sacrifice" and "justice" in the Semitic religions. In Arabic, the practice of mandatory alms is called zakat, but optional charity is *sadaqa* related to the Hebrew *zedeka* (almsgiving). Etymologically, although the Hebrew *zedeka* originally meant justice and evolved to mean charity, the connotation of "justice" still exists in the Arabic meaning. Mauss contends that the "old gift morality raised to the position of a principle of justice" moved around the world with the Spread of Christianity and Islam (Mauss and Evans-Pritchard 1967, 15). Though Mauss' primary study concerns the gift as a material object that connects people within a community, creating obligations of reciprocity and even patronage in hierarchical societies, it is clear that Mauss is also concerned with the possibilities of social solidarity without these encumbrances. In his conclusion, Mauss meditates on labor and wages, work and productivity, drawing from his ethnographic

examples the possibility that modern society may be shifting from a *homo economicus* rationality that reduces societal obligations to "the calculation of individual needs," to thinking about our common interest in a society of shared prosperity. With this psychological shift in mind, he describes a passage from the Quran (Surah 64) as a lesson "both sociological and practical":

> *15. Your possessions and your* children *are only a trial and Allah it is with whom is a great reward.*

> *16. Therefore be careful [of your duty to] Allah as much as you can, and hear and obey and spend (sadaqa), it is better for your souls; and whoever is saved from the greediness of his soul, these it is that are the successful.*

> *17. If you set apart from Allah a goodly portion, He will double it for you and forgive you; and Allah is the multiplier of rewards, forbearing.*

> *18. The knower of the unseen and the seen, the mighty, the wise.*

Echoing Durkheim, for whom religious symbolism is a stand-in for society, Mauss asks us to "replace the name Allah by that of the society," and "replace the concept of alms by that of co-operation, of a prestation altruistically made," giving a sense of the shared prosperity and mutual solidarity that Mauss deems possible.[15]

Marshall Sahlins' study of hierarchy and economy in Polynesia bears the Maussian imprint, evincing his understanding of the connection between material goods

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[15] Mauss is writing right after World War 1 and the founding of the Communist Party in France which comes into coalition with other leftist parties and in power through the National Front a decade later. Not only is social welfare a major concern in post war Europe, but France is a colonial power in Algeria with romantic and orientalist notions of Muslim Bedouin hospitality. The 'threat' of a Muslim invasion doesn't come into the French imagination until the end of World War 2 and the rebuilding of Europe by former colonial subjects. See Djiat 33

and social solidarity in a theory of economy that focuses on culture and is critical of the universalist claims of capitalist economic rationality (Sahlins 2013, 169). According to Sahlins, small-scale societies often value "generalized reciprocity," a form of exchange not reliant on immediate and direct reciprocity, but rather one in which each gives according to one's position and receives according to one's need. Zakat extends this relation among all members of the *ummah,* where donors do not seek anything in return from the recipients other than God's grace. Anthropologists have expanded the notion of economy from a science of rational resource maximization to the cultural means that humans utilize material resources in "a particular historical way of meeting human requirements" (Sahlins 1988). Economic practices, in this regard, are connected to the cosmology, ritual, and hierarchy in cultural practices. Capitalism has its own cosmology, made up of ideals including efficient production, material and labor utilization, and technological innovation, which projects onto the indigenous a "backwardness," a lack of rationality, even barbarity for their perplexing behavior that privileges non-economic-maximizing but culturally embedded means of reciprocity, such as extended kin relations and the accumulation of prestige, honor, and reputation (Sahlins 1988, Sahlins 2013).

Hanson, through a Marxist class analysis of contemporary charitable practices, shows how the elite maintain and reproduce power through participation in and management of modern philanthropy. According to this view, rather than serving as a means for the widespread redistribution of wealth through social welfare programs, philanthropy is considered to be part of elite wealth management, obfuscating systemic wealth inequality through "ritualized charitable culture…celebrated in endless galas and

banquets," legitimating the upper class position while advertising an ideology in "a highly visible social circuit providing social sanctification of their privileges"(Hanson 2015, 502). Hanson's analysis echoes the critiques of the NGO charitable complex as a continuation of colonization, a mode of giving that is neither altruistic nor leveling, but rather interested in its own existence, power, and reproduction in order to maintain the system of exploitation it is built upon.

In *The Moral Neoliberal,* Muehlebach's ethnography is an interesting study of the rise of volunteerism in Italy right after the rapid neoliberal reform of formally industrial areas around Milan and Lombardy. She successfully illustrates the co-construction of the "ethical citizen," an ethical subjectivity crucial to neoliberal subject formation. Instead of examining "social solidarity" or the obfuscation of social responsibility in modern neoliberal humanitarian projects, she traces modern formulations of volunteerism and charity as part of capitalist formation.

Muehlebach looks at the capacity of workers, women, and the unemployed that use their "citizen capacity" in the performance of charity for the social good. Where the state has withdrawn from welfare, the ethical citizen, as an individual agent, steps in to work for the social good. What is interesting here is that the Catholic Church as well as the state are both invested in this notion of the ethical citizen. As a part of capitalist development, both the state and the Church help mold subjects by organizing, promoting, and subsidizing, both institutionally and legally, a spirit of voluntarism within the neoliberal framework.

Erica Bornstein problematizes what she calls the "liberal-altruism" model of humanitarianism that is becoming globalized through various international charitable organizations in contrast to "relational empathy" sets of duties and obligations outside of the "individualized" legal and rights regimes of the West. Far from being universalistic, the liberal-altruism model masks inequalities and hierarchy through a formal equality before the law (Bornstein 2012, 146-148). Enforced redistribution and the regulation of charity through NGOs bring the impulse of charity under rational control, and in turn "obliterate[s] its freedom" (Bornstein 2009, 643). This is echoed in Qaradawi, who argues that it is better to give freely out of one's own moral obligation and relationship to God rather than to be coerced by the state. In her ethnographic research in India, Bornstein looks at the Hindu social obligation of *dān* (donation), conceptualizing its merits as "a free gift" that creates no social obligation for reciprocity. *Gupta-dan*, is one that is given in secret, and "Giving in secret avoids the immediate reward of an increase in the donor's public status, and people say that because of this the unseen reward which comes as merit or good *karma* will be greater"(Laidlaw 1995, 297 quoted in Bornstein 2009, 626). In the institutional zakat practices in the US, I argue that acts of charity face increasing pressure to conform to the norms of the global humanitarian complex, a development most clearly evident in Chapter 6.

Our imams in this study, from America to Egypt, are subjects who are familiar not only with the professionalization of charity as practiced by non-profit corporations in the US, including mosques and social service organizations, but also with the more grassroots notions of charity in Egypt. As Hafez notes, it is not productive to think of

contemporary subjects as either modern or religious, Muslim or otherwise, over-determining one aspect of subjectivization over another. As persons who are constructed within secular norms as well as religious sensibilities, within "the historical and temporal dynamics of colonialism, modernization, secularization and nation-building," our imams are imbricated "with…complexity and seamlessness of …desires" and draw on the processes of both "Islamism and secular modernity" (Hafez 2011b, 70). The legal opinions of imams, or fatwas, are informed by these processes, often prioritizing zakat. Its mode and practice are therefore constantly in the backdrop of the imams social and religious thinking. The texts of the library, the Quran and the *fiqh* of zakat are interpreted above a subtext of complex desires, motivating subjects to particular ends in a socially constructed cauldron of history. Boundaries fail, whether between the secular and religious, culture and text, or even the rational and empirical. American imams, with their various backgrounds, have perspectives constructed in time and place, seeing the world from a particular positionality that includes their American upbringing, their education at al-Azhar, and the political and economic circumstances around them. The Ikhwani, the Sufi, and the Social Worker of Chapters 3, 4, and 5, respectively, are sketches and not hard categories: positionalities in motion, not rigid typologies. Our imams are people with perspectives, temporal and spatial subjects reading texts, the Quran and the law, putting into practice what they think is the right thing to do.

2. Egypt and America

Chapter 2 situates this dissertation historically, considering Egypt as a nation-state first in a colonial and then in a post-colonial context. This is followed by a discussion of the subsequent changes, both institutional and pedagogical, at al-Azhar University during the period of the country's modernization. I then cover the politico-economic changes from the time of Abdel-Nasser up to the ouster of Mubarak, focusing specifically on the shift from Arab Socialism to the Washington Consensus and broader neoliberal reforms. Our Azhari imams are trained in Egypt in this political and economic environment, where institutional and pedagogical changes are now a naturalized part of the curriculum. I also give a brief biography of Yusuf al-Qaradawi, since most of the American Azhari imams rely on Qaradawi's treatise, *Fiqh al-Zakat,* covering its intellectual history while still advocating for the role of the modern hegemonic nation-state in its regulation. This historical background is important to consider in order to explain the politico-economic context of our imams' education at al-Azhar, and to outline why Qaradawi is situated in the library concerning zakat.

I then offer a brief overview of Islam in America, first considering Muslims as active participants in the age of exploration and colonization, and second tracing two parallel histories of the Muslim-American experience—one being the forced migration of Muslim African slaves, and the other of the immigrant pursuing the "American Dream." The genealogy of these two communities helps situate Islam in America and the divide between Black Islam and what Sherman Jackson calls "Immigrant Islam" (S. A. Jackson

2011). The different histories of the indigenous and the immigrant are reflected

geographically in their different mosques as well as in their daily practices of the Islamic

faith, illustrating the influence of history, race, and class in differing interpretations. I

conclude Chapter 2 with a textual analysis of the Quran as well as Qaradawi's *fiqh al-*

zakat, using Messick's notion of these texts as the library in the Southern California

shari'a system. The reading covers the various ways in which the verses of the Quran

were understood by different scholars across time, where social conditions drive priorities

in reading, responding, and re-articulating the rules of *zakat*. I read Qaradawi in this way,

focusing on how he understands *zakat* in a modern context, in an economy of wage-labor

and within a hegemonic state. It is here that Qaradawi uses the Quranic verse *fi sabil*

Allah ("in the cause of God") as an open category of zakat-eligible activities. However,

because the category is open, it has resulted in varying zakat practices, from mosque

building to the establishment of a legal defense fund. In Chapter 6, I cover

ethnographically the various ways *fi sabil Allah* has been understood by imams and

practiced by institutions.

2.1. Modern Egypt: Background

al-Azhar

Out of all the Islamic seminaries in the world, al-Azhar University in Cairo has captured

the Islamic world's imagination as the most prestigious. Founded in 972CE, it is

considered to be one of the world's first universities, after the Qarawiyin in Fez, Morocco

(Nasr 1990; Green 1988). "From its inception, it was established on the idea of offering a comprehensive education based in theology, covering subjects including astronomy, philosophy, Arabic language, and logic." (Alatas 2006, 123; Goddard 2000, 99). By the Ottoman period, Istanbul had displaced al-Azhar and Cairo as the center of Islamic learning, though al-Azhar did retain its independence. In the 17th century, the Ulema would choose their own head, and from 1825 to1870 the Sheikh al-Azhar were dominated by Shafis, suggesting "considerable autonomy"

Figure 2. The author in the courtyard of al-Azhar, Cairo.

under Istanbul's Hanafi rule (Malcolm 2014). Since the medieval Mamluk period, al-Azhar has been a major center of Islamic learning thanks to its location in cosmopolitan Cairo, a center of trade and travel that draws students from all over the Muslim world (Berkey 1992). By the turn of the 19th century, the university had established its first centers for foreign students, called *riwags*, which today boast a total population of over 15,000 students (DarulIftah 2014).

Before the reforms that established a modern curriculum and diploma (alongside al-Azhar's eventual incorporation into the state in 1962), student credentialing centered around a personal authorization called the *ijaza*. al-Azhar was a meeting place of great Ulema, from the various madhabs who have attained their authorization from countless

other Sheikhs. A Sheikhs status depended upon these *ijazas*, who they were taken from, and from what classical books they covered. Once basic *ijazas* were taken, a person could choose to specialize in either hadith, Quran, or Islamic Law in one of the madhab-based schools. Students would be drawn to certain teachers who had sat with other great teachers, amass a following, and begin to give *ijazas* to those around him. There were no formal degrees, student enrollment, or syllabi; rather the university functioned on a "complex social system" that relied on a "highly personal process" of oral transmission that served to intermediate texts in the transmission of knowledge (Berkey 1992). Today, the American students who travel to Cairo seek to read classical texts with famous scholars. al-Azhar offers a standardized diploma on certain subjects, but in order to really get into an old classical text on a commentary on *Bukhari,* the students must seek out a study circle.

In the early 20th century, orientalists derided the Ulema as slow to change and fixated on a tradition that was unresponsive to modernity and in need of change (Goldziher 1968; Schacht 1982). Recent scholarship has challenged this notion of unilineal progress and instead looks at how the Ulema responded to colonialism, modernity, and its impositions on their culture, religion, and society. The Ulema not only wanted to challenge modernity and the social ills that they perceived were destroying their culture, but were also responding to the states' imposition of limits to their freedom and autonomy through its growing bureaucratization and formal enrollment. In other words, though modernization meant an increase in efficiency, it also meant a change in role of the Ulema, how they were formed, and their independence from the state.

The *ijaza* was also Islam, a time-honored tradition that ensured the proper and authenticated transmission of tradition from one generation to the next (Zeghal 1999). The *ijaza* privileged the sheiks over the institution, since it recognized a lineage of teachers, not institutions. It was based on the idea of knowledge being acquired through oral transmission, mediated between the teacher and student with the text being *taught*, not read. What was important was that the student learned not only the text, but also how to think about it, interpret it, bound it, and in turn teach it to the next generation. Reading on one's own was seen as being prone to error and even illegitimate. Instead, true literacy was considered to be based on a continuing dialectic between the oral and written, between sheikh and student, where "the operative verb stress[es] the personal and oral nature of study and instruction" (Berkey 1992).

Dress also became an indicator of reform, seen in those choosing modern, Western-inspired dress over the old robe and turban. In 1926, a group of students at al-Azhar created an uproar by coming to class wearing a suit and tarbush, the modern dress of the "new *effendiya*." Covered by the news media, the Mufti of Egypt issued a fatwa citing Western dress as 'un-Islamic.' However, the students had their own fatwa from Shaikh Muhammad Shakir, who had been deputy rector (*wakil*) of al-Azhar: "Islam is for the hearts and souls," noting the various styles of dress common in Muslim lands. "Why should Western dress be any different?" Shakir's fatwa, as well as the normative dress practices of contemporary al-Azhar, illustrate the mutability of the institution of the fatwa, but also the changes in notions of masculinity and effects of modernization within only a generation. Today, at al-Azhar, students as well as the teachers wear a variety of

clothing, shirts, and slacks, often with their heads uncovered—a marked change from the past. As soon as students from the shari'a college file out after class, they blend in with the rest of Cairo.

Notwithstanding the pushback from the Ulema, especially the conservative one, al-Azhar brought a series of "state sponsored reforms...[that] were only able to transform the institution through the rationalization of its administration," introducing for the first time the concept of standardized degrees, the enrollment of students, and the establishment of formal exams, all of which "reduc[ed] the informality and flexibility of the system of transmission of religious knowledge," in turn "weaken[ing] [the Ulema] through the diminishing of their political and socioeconomic privileges" (Zeghal in Hefner and Zaman 2007, 117).

By 1962 the transformation was complete. al-Azhar was nationalized and the Sheikh of al-Azhar was now appointed by the President of the Republic. Today, teachers receive a salary according to a scale, there are different departments and colleges of religious and secular education (including engineering and medicine), and the Sheikh of al-Azhar reports directly to the President and receives a salary commensurate with a minister (Hefner and Zaman 2007).

Gamal Abdel-Nasser's leadership within the non-aligned movement and especially within pan-Arabism used al-Azhar as a source of legitimacy. Instead of abolishing al-Azhar and completely displacing the Ulema, Abdel-Nasser sought to bring the Ulema under his control. Abdel-Nasser enlarged al-Azhar by modernizing the academic departments and rationalizing its bureaucracy, adding a medical college and

programs such as engineering and economics. The small village schools (*kutaab)* that taught Quran memorization and basic Islamic sciences were also brought under al-Azhar's control, adding math and science into the state's project of basic education for all (Zeghal 1999, 374). By coopting the educational system of al-Azhar in this way, Abdel-Nasser could subvert the "political influence of the Muslim Brothers and counterbalance the weight of the Islamic Saudi regime in the Muslim world (Zeghal 1999, 374).

Many Islamists, fundamentalists, and even secularists see this appropriation of al-Azhar by the state as delegitimizing. It is no coincidence that the Sheikh of al-Azhar has always spoken out against violence against the state, supported authoritarianism under the guise of stability, and, as recently as July 2013, legitimated the military takeover of the government against the Muslim Brotherhood. During the Arab Socialism of Gamal Abdel-Nasser, al-Azhar came out in support of nationalization and socialist policies, whereas under Anwar Sadat they had done just the opposite by legitimating capitalism against the left (Zeghal 1999, 381). It is because of this type of backtracking and state support that fundamentalists reject the interpretive authority of al-Azhar today, and even the *madhabs* to which they ascribe, and turning instead to the popular Salafi teachers who teach in private gatherings or whose material can be found online. Though most Salafis eschew violence, especially of the Saudi variety which has come under the temperance of the state, the Salafist theological ability to circumvent the *madhabs* and their authority in favor of direct interpretation of the texts allows radical personal interpretations simply based on the preacher's power of persuasion and rhetoric by directly appealing to the primacy of the Quran and Sunna. For al-Azhar and the Azharis, this kind of

circumvention of traditional interpretive methodology is seen as ignorance at best, and reckless rebellion at worst.

For the more traditionally minded, the *ijaza* system can still be found within and outside of al-Azhar. Tradition here refers to how pedagogical authority was passed down before being institutionalized in the form of diplomas, back when it instead rested in the hands of particular Sheikhs. For many, the *ijaza* is still more valued than the degree from al-Azhar, and sheikhs will hold private gatherings in mosques or even homes where the traditional methods of transmitting knowledge still occur. Many students have commented to me that they find these gatherings to be more beneficial than the standardized curriculum given at al-Azhar approved by the Sheikh of al-Azhar. These other sheikhs include teachers from al-Azhar, but those also from outside the university who have remained independent or are tied to smaller institutions.

That being said, recent scholarship suggests that the state's appropriation and control of al-Azhar for its own purposes of legitimization has not always worked out as intended. Malika Zeghal documents the rise and influence of the "peripheral Ulema," who hold opinions contrary to the official position, and at times even directly criticize the state's interference within al-Azhar. For instance, in the 1970's, the Ulema of al-Azhar "demanded" that the legal system be transformed under Islamic law and not continue down its reformist path that included further liberalization. It was the passage of "Jihane's Law," named after the wife of President Sadat who was progressive on family matters, which brought open critique from some conservative Ulema, prompting open discussion in the media on al-Azhar's role in the law and the application of the shari'a in Egypt

(Zeghal 1999: 397). In terms of its authority, the Sheikh of al-Azhar resigned in protest when the state tried to put him under the Ministry of Waqf, and instead asked to be put directly under the President as Abdel-Nasser had done in 1962 (Zeghal 1999, 383). During the Arab Spring and just before the fall of Mubarak, al-Azhar officially supported Mubarak and the stability of the regime. However, many students and peripheral Ulema defied the university's stance and instead came out in support of the protests, encouraging others to join in the name of Islam and freedom. Though the Sheikh of al-Azhar backed the subsequent military overthrow of the popularly elected Muslim Brotherhood government in 2013 (which subsequently lost popularity a year later), there are many peripheral Ulema, as well as students, who have been protesting the military's intervention ever since (Fieldnotes 2014).

The state's modernization project has brought al-Azhar into the world of modern bureaucratic reform, but it is far from being completely controlled by it. In many ways, it has helped solidify the university's place in Egypt by extending its reach and authority into the countryside, while also increasing its role in transnational debates. By virtue of their association with the state, al-Azhar Ulema are featured on television, their opinions are widely circulated, and family law courts are populated by them. Even non-Muslim political authorities have drawn on opinions from al-Azhar, as France did with the Hijab ban. The Sheikh of al-Azhar gave a legal opinion (*fatwa*) stating that non-Muslim countries who ban the hijab have the right to do so since they are non-Muslim, and that Muslim women who are coerced by this law will not be punished for following the law. He later retracted this opinion under pressure from other al-Azhar Ulema, saying it was

only a "personal" opinion and not that of the institution. The proliferation of opinions and state support, together with al-Azhar's millennium-long history as the center of Islamic education, give it a place in the imagination of people all over the world, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

Yusuf Al-Qaradawi

Yusuf al-Qaradawi is "arguably the most visible of the Ulama in the contemporary Muslim world," graduating from al-Azhar in 1953 and receiving his doctorate in 1973 (Hefner and Zaman 2007, 259). According to the imams featured in this dissertation, he is widely seen as sincere since does not serve as a state functionary like the Sheikh of al-Azhar, but has rather lived in exile in Qatar since the 1960s, after being repeatedly jailed under the rule of Gamal Abdel-Nasser. Many of the US-based imams from al-Azhar frequently cite Qaradawi, particularly on financial matters

Figure 3. Yusuf al-Qaradawi cc Assabil.

since his doctoral thesis focused on zakat. In the last section of this chapter, I look at the legal rulings (*fiqh*) of zakat, including the Quran and Qaradawi's treatment of its texts, as it intersects with the discourse of the imams and the charities studied here.

Qaradawi was influenced early on by Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose sermons inspired Qaradawi to develop a "life-long association" (Zaman 2012, 19). It was his association with the Brotherhood that landed him in jail, first in 1947 for two years in the midst of widespread crackdowns by Abdel-Nasser. It was in prison with other political prisoners, including an economist, that Qaradawi

developed an appreciation for a diversity of opinions and for conversing with other intellectuals, which he considers preferable "as opposed to cultural isolation, which only produces stagnation and abstruseness (Qaradawi quoted in Zaman 2012, 20).

Qaradawi's popularity and appeal stem from his ability to bridge the disconnect between the texts of classical Islam and modern realities. Classical books on *fiqh* are products of their time and place, which in this case was mostly in a context of agrarian economies. Today, Egypt is a nation among other nation-states. Its currency is regulated by a central bank, it takes loans from the International Monetary Fund, and it takes part in a stock market that is dependent on price stability and a growing economy. In reflecting on his studies in classical *fiqh* in his youth, al-Qaradawi details this disconnect:

> *The shortcoming of this book, and of other texts of the Hanafi and other schools, is that it was written for an age that has passed. It was not written for our age, or for treating our difficulties, or for answering our questions. The shortcoming is not that of the authors of these books, for they did, indeed, strive the best they could . . . to treat their problems in the language of their age (bi-lughat 'asrihim). The shortcoming is ours, for we study a body of substantive law, from A to Z . . . , that is entirely theoretical, one that lives in books but not in the realities of actual life. We study books on [the legal topics of] sales and on transactions, but we know nothing about contemporary forms of commercial transaction; we don't know what happens in the banks and what is permissible or forbidden about them; we know nothing about insurance companies and the [Islamic] rules governing them. Even in matters of ritual, we know nothing about the [obligatory] zakat tax on companies, on factories, on residential buildings, or on other contemporary forms of capital growth (Qaradawi quoted in Hefner and Zaman 2007, 260).*

Qaradawi is not associated with the Muslim Brotherhood in any official capacity, choosing instead to speak from a less restricted vantage point in Qatar, where the Emir of Qatar—having taking a liking to him after hearing his sermons in Doha—patronizes him. The Qatar of the 1960s is very different from the Qatar today. It has transformed itself

from a poor British colony into a desert oasis rich in oil. In 1996, the government

endowed Al-Jazeera, an Arabic language satellite station that covered issues no one else

dared to, including by giving Qaradawi his own show, "Shariah and Life," in which he

deals with guests and gives fatwas. With some 60 million viewers, he tackles modern

questions of sexuality, homosexuality, zakat, and banking. The German publication *Der

Spiegel* has called him "Islam's spiritual 'dear Abby'" (Smoltczyk 2011). Qaradawi's

media personality has cemented his role as the most influential Azhari today, with a

"global audience through the internet… as well as through translations (Eickelman and

Anderson 2003, xii).

During the uprisings of 2011, Qaradawi was one of the few established Ulema

who advocated for the overthrow of Mubarak. As soon as the dictator was removed,

Qaradawi returned to Egypt to give a sermon in Tahrir Square (Zaman 2012, 23). At the

time of this writing, his daughter and son in-law have been imprisoned by the Egyptian

authorities, though there is no link between them and the Brotherhood (Harb 2018). After

the consolidation of power by the Saudi crown prince Mohammad bin Salman and the

blockade against Qatar, Yusuf al-Qaradawi has been placed on a Gulf-Egyptian "terror-

list," which includes the Muslim Brotherhood. It should also be noted that the Muslim

Brotherhood is not on the list of designated terror organizations by the United States, and

Qaradawi's family have been fully "vetted" by US immigration authorities (Harb 2018).

Qaradawi has published over 100 books, one of the first being *The Lawful and the

Unlawful in Islam* (1960), which modernized *fiqh* discourse and "enlarge[d] the scope of

the 'permissible'" remaining as a "best seller among competing Islamic primers" (Zaman

2012, 23). In section 2.3, I look at his dissertation-turned-book, the two-volume *Fiqh al-Zakah,* which has since become an authoritative source on zakat for most imams in Southern California.

The Military and Neoliberal Economy

Modernity came to Egypt abruptly, when in 1798 Napoleon invaded Alexandria and eventually made his way to the capture of Cairo. In this period, the superiority of the Napoleonic forces, their modern arms and techniques, and their retinue of administrators, scientists, and engineers greatly impressed the Egyptians, forcing them to confront their own shortcomings. Muhammad Ali, the *khedive* of Egypt and its *de facto* ruler after 1805, began to institute wide reforms to modernize the state and industrialize the country. From introducing cotton and steam engines for industrial textile production to nationalizing the properties of the landed Ottoman aristocracy and *waqfs,* Muhammad Ali ushered the country into a newfound status as a modern state. The Ulema, who once supported Ali in response to both French imperialism and Ottoman domination, were systematically marginalized as he disbanded the system of *shura* and instead subordinated al-Azhar under the arm of the state (Farah 2009, 99).

Both the Ottomans as well as the Egyptians began instituting wide-ranging military and bureaucratic reforms in order to secure the state from any further European incursion. One important aspect of these reforms can be found in the country's legal system. The Egyptian state under the Tanzimat reforms in Istanbul, along with Muhammad Ali's various legal reform measures, succeeding in codifying the law and

systematizing its use throughout the state, centralizing legal authority in a system that had previously favored local judges and local communal norms.

The contemporary period of Egypt began with Gamal Abdel-Nasser, the military leader who modernized Egypt with the birth of Arab Socialism during the Cold War. Abdel-Nasser was a chief figure in the Non-Aligned Movement, which is today understood as an anti-imperial movement prevalent in the Third World and demanding a shift away from the domination of the Unites States and the Soviet Union. That being said, though remaining independent, Abdel-Nasser relied on the Soviet Union as an anti-imperialist force against British colonial claims to the Suez Canal, American diplomatic pressure, and Israeli incursions into the Middle East. Arguably, his success would not have been possible without his single-mindedness and authoritarian methods, crushing all opposition to his rule. The Ikhwan were an opposition party that had rivaled Abdel-Nasser's taking of power and objected to many of his projects, which they considered to be playing into British hands (Kandil 2012, Wickham 2015). A splinter guerilla group within the Ikhwan decided to try to assassinate Abdel-Nasser in October 1954 for this "treason," precipitating a brutal government crackdown that resulted in the outlawing of the group and ultimately helped to consolidate Abdel-Nasser's power (R. P. Mitchell 1993, 150–51). Abdel-Nasser can be credited for Egypt's modern military and security entrenchment within the political structures of Egypt. According to Hazem Kandil, there are three main power centers in Egypt: the civilian, the military, and the police (security) apparatus. Abdel-Nasser's military coup entrenched the military and subsumed the other two power centers in what he calls the "triangle of power," setting off the contemporary

military's central role in Egyptian politics. Abdel-Nasser implemented radical structural change, all organized under his reign: the nationalization of the Suez Canal, massive land reforms that transferred property to the peasants, and the building of large national projects like the Abdel-Nasser Dam in Aswan. Kandil credits Abdel-Nasser for replacing the previous power centers and establishing the place of the contemporary three—the civilian, military, and police. During this time, the Ikhwan moved underground and swore to use "strategic" pacifism so as not to be completely eradicated by the military. Thenceforth, the Ikhwan focused their energies almost exclusively on developing social services, keeping close to the ground to stimulate recruitment and develop needed services (Kandil 2012; Wickham 2015, 23–25).

Anwar Sadat succeeded Abdel-Nasser upon his death, and though his rule was cut short after his assassination by an extremist army officer, he reversed many of Abdel-Nasser's policies—perhaps most importantly through his decision to turn Egypt away from the USSR and towards the United States. To establish his rule, he openly courted the Ikhwan by releasing members from jail and taking them off the list of banned parties. Unlike Abdel-Nasser, Sadat could be seen going in and out of mosques, openly praying and fasting during the month of Ramadan, and filling his speeches with allusions to Islam's glorious past and its place in Egypt's future. He courted imams and called on al-Azhar University's role in strengthening the Islamic base of family law practice in Egypt (Wickham 2015, 29–31). His *infitah* policy (or "openness") opened up the economy to privatization and moved it away from the socialist policies of Abdel-Nasser, which had promoted progressive taxation, the establishment of social services like health and

education for the poor, and the nationalization of land and industry. His efforts to reorient the country towards the U.S. became part of the global spread of the Washington Consensus, otherwise known as neoliberalism. So complete was his alliance with the U.S. that he signed a peace deal with Israel, giving up full sovereignty over the Sinai in exchange for military and economic aid—factors that would ultimately set in place the necessary conditions for structural change within Egypt. The liberalization of the economy and the rise of the Ikhwan during this period set the stage for the rise of Ikhwan officials later on, many of whom would go on to benefit greatly from these new neoliberal policies. In the end, the same Ikhwan that were suppressed under Abdel-Nasser's socialism were courted during Sadat's liberalism.

There are interesting parallels to be drawn between this co-opting of religious groups in Egypt under Sadat, and similar appeals to the Catholic Church in Italy during the mid-20th century. Muehlebach discusses the role of the Catholic Church in Italy during the Fascist regime, when the Church was tied to notions of charity and the government to the control of the economy. This "unprecedented collusion" allowed for the expansion of the Church's power within the state and society, where philanthropic activity moved within the sphere of the Vatican, mandatory Catholic education was mandated in the schools, and clergy were allowed to participate in politics (Muehlebach 2012, 83). Sadat opened up the same kind of space for the Ikhwan in Egypt, allowing Ikhwan members to reach prominent positions within the Ministry of Education and increasing the role of al-Azhar in policymaking processes. After the events of the 2011 revolution, Samir Amin argued that the military courted a similar relationship with the

Ikhwan—in other words, the military protects its economic interests while handing over limited control of the country to the Ikhwan by allowing them to legislate education, social services, and the policing of public piety.

This weakening of the military in the second half of the 20th century infuriated some in the army so much that it led to Sadat's assassination in 1980. Timothy Mitchell notes the neoliberal policies he pursued structured the economy in favor of debt repayment above all else, for example by exporting agricultural products at the expense of feeding the local population. The USAID-led Agricultural Mechanization Project not only encouraged this exportation of agriculture, but was also specifically designed to finance the purchase of American machinery. The prevailing ideology as perpetuated by the Washington Consensus falls within a broader neoliberal developmental paradigm. Echoing modernization theory and Rostow's thesis, policymakers posited that certain structural conditions needed to be set in place for the economy to "take off," most importantly privatization and the opening of markets to allow the free flow of commodities and currency. These two actions integrate the nation into the global commodities and trading establishment of Wall Street and the London Stock Exchange. Marxists critics criticize the historical obfuscation of this ideology as simply masking the interests of the monied elite. According to them, American corporate and market interests claim "take off," but in reality what we see on the ground is surplus value expropriated, a creation of a bourgeoisie in Cairo, and the exacerbation of poverty among the lower classes. Unfortunately, the result for the poor has been not an improvement but a deterioration of their living conditions, all while Egyptian commodities are sold on the

open market to foreign buyers. Wallerstein's world-systems analysis places Egypt within the semi-periphery of the world capitalist system, where surplus value moves to the core. The Egyptian countryside is peripheral, Cairo falls in the semi-peripheral, and most surplus value moves to the core, including the markets in New York and London. It is these basic economic structures that inform Egypt's current situation and creates the conditions for revolution.

After Sadat's assassination in 1981, Hosni Mubarak took over as Egypt's president. Mubarak did not need to court the Ikhwan as Sadat had, instead consolidating his power under the emergency laws that were put in place after the assassination of Sadat. The Ikhwan were again made illegal, though tolerated for their provision of social services and non-political activity. Mubarak perpetuated neoliberal policies apace throughout the Reagan-Thatcher era. Cairo saw an urbanization boom, with a rising upper class and growing aspirations of a middle class looking for new opportunities in the big city. As the industrialists and landowners in Cairo were benefiting from privatization by building international hotels and U.S. franchises like McDonald's and KFC, the export of agricultural commodities and the import of industrial and luxury goods continued to grow, ultimately resulting in the concentration of wealth in the hands of an elite few. Mubarak's neoliberal style and structural authoritarianism allowed him to position himself and his cronies as lead negotiators in foreign investment deals. By taking a small percentage of many large deals and involving themselves as "partners" in private projects, the Mubarak family is said to accumulated over $60 billion, hidden in banks and sovereign funds all over the world (Kandil 2012). Though Mubarak's cronyism was the

very definition of corruption, it did not interfere with the neoliberal development of Egypt, as more broadly the underlying neoliberal structure undercut local manufacturing, created large disparities of wealth, and ensured capital flowed from the bottom upward. In other words, the economy "trickled up" rather than "down." By forcing himself in the middle, Mubarak was able to accumulate wealth at the expense of the poor, who were already structurally disadvantaged regardless of Mubarak's skimming. According to Global Financial Integrity, illicit dealings by multinational corporations cost developing countries over $900 billion per year through tax evasion and other illicit practices (Hickel 2014)—and this does not even account for the taking of surplus value through licit means. Nevertheless, the neoliberal-dominated World Bank places the blame on "third world corruption" by arguing that theft and bribery cost the global economy between $20bn to $40bn per year, or 3% of illicit transfers. Even in this scheme, it is not clear who suffers from these "illicit" transfers: the countries in question or the corporations. Jason Hickel of the London School of Economics notes that the neoliberal structure itself calls for no taxation, with the result that "corruption" is merely a way of taxing corporations when the law is unable to do it. In a recent Al-Jazeera piece, he explains: "The biggest cause of poverty in developing countries is not localized bribery and theft, but the corruption that is endemic to the global governance system, the tax haven network, and the banking sectors of New York and London" (Hickel 2014). By focusing on Mubarak's corruption and cronyism, he turns our attention away from the real economic problems facing Egypt.

No one knows how much of the economy the Egyptian military owns. As a percent of GDP, conservative estimates range from 25% all the way up to 60% (Amin 2012). Not only is the military involved in the trade of ammunition and weapons, but it also owns agricultural lands, controls the security around the Suez Canal, is involved in major infrastructure projects, and even makes pasta noodles. Since the military controls the nodes of power, the military is not under civilian authority and therefore lacks transparency and civilian budgetary control. The military conducts its affairs independently from the rest of the state, perpetuating and safeguarding its economic interests and power. In this way, it operates as a state within a state. Funds are procured not only from the state, but through its own industrial and economic output. Soldiers are conscripted and employed as laborers, and retired generals are essentially made owners of industrial fiefdoms—off-the-book outputs that line the pockets of lifetime loyal public servants. Under neoliberal reforms, many industries were privatized, including the military. Hazem Kandil argues that though many assets of the military were sold off as Mubarak was consolidating his power and trying to perpetuate growth under the Washington Consensus, he had to leave some sectors alone to appease wary generals, colonels, and anyone who might establish a coup. From the time of the Urabi Revolt in the 19th century to the reign of Abdel-Nasser and the Free Officers Movement, the military has enjoyed a prestigious place in the Egyptian psyche unmatched by any other institution. For many, especially among rural conscripts, the very idea of the nation is bound up with the Egyptian military. As Jacob Wilson shows in his study of Egyptian

masculinity during the colonial period, the very subjectivity of Egyptian personhood is tied intimately with the military and its role under colonialism (Jacob 2011).

2.2. Islam in America

Muslims make up about 1.1% of the U.S. population, or about 3.45 million people, according to the most recent Pew Research Center survey of *Muslims in America and Around the World*. Out of these 3.45 million Muslims, 2.15 million are adults, with 58% being immigrants (Lipka 2017). Although American Muslims are as likely to earn a graduate degree and make over $100k per year as the general population, they are also more likely to make less than $30k and have higher unemployment rates. As a heterogeneous group in the post–9/11 context, the diversity among Muslim communities has been the primary focus of the burgeoning ethnographic study of American Muslims. The documenting of different ethnic, regional, and sectarian communities among U.S. Muslims and examinations of their lived experiences extends beyond pre–9/11 research on specific ethnicities (Mohammad-Arif 2002; Moghissi and Ghorashi 2012; Gabriel and Haddad 2004; Abdo 2006; Shryock 2002). Rather, recent research shows that the experience of American Muslims intersects class and racial lines. Nevertheless, scholars continue to distinguish sharp boundaries between "diasporic" communities, dislodged from places of national origin, and "indigenous" communities of African-American Muslims, who have inhabited the Americas since the time of the Atlantic slave trade (see GhaneaBassiri 2010; Curtis 2014; McCloud 1994). Two recent ethnographies, one of a

Pakistani Muslim community in Houston, and the other in the south side of Chicago,

make the distinction between these two types of communities abundantly clear.

Ahmed Afzal's *Lone Star Muslims: Transnational Lives and the South Asian Experience in Texas* revolves around a Muslim community made up of a Pakistani diaspora, theorized in a post–9/11 context of Islam based on first-generation immigrant experiences and the notion of a diasporic community that is situated in a place not of its origin.[16] By contrast, Su'ad Abdul Khabeer's *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States* focuses on the Black Muslim experience as polycultural and authentically and uniquely American, conceptualizing race in relation to whiteness but also to "interminority relationships" with Arabs and South Asians whose Islam is "an ethnoreligious hegemony grounded in cultural capital" (Khabeer 2016, 13). In her remarkable ethnography, drawing on music, performance ethnography, history and race, Khabeer conceptualizes coolness as the hallmark of blackness, performed as resistance to hegemonic norms of racial hierarchies. In this dissertation, Imam Sameer, an Azhari of Indian-Pakistani background, consults with a black mosque (Chapter 5) where these differences arise and are explored.

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[16] Robin Cohen in his seminal volume *Global Diasporas* typologized diasporic communities with certain key features that were originally conceived in regard to Jewish communities but have been extended to others. A "strong ethnic group consciousness," troubled relationship with host societies, "dispersal" from a homeland either traumatically or for work and trade, and a strong attachment to countries of origin as an "idealized" ancestral home (Cohen 1997). This typology has been followed by many studies of Muslim communities in the US to be framed in terms of "immigrants" from South Asia, "Refugees" from Iraq or Somalia, or those seeking "political asylum" from places such as Iran or Syria with their unique cultural articulations of Islam in places such as Dearborn, Michigan or the Suburbs of Chicago (ibid).

Indigenous African-American communities have also been studied as part of a broader trend of research on what Gayraud Wilmore calls "Black Religion," whose key features include resistance to white supremacy, the reconstruction of a valorized black history, and action-oriented steps towards an ongoing black liberation (Wilmore 1998). In contrast to the revolutionary fire of Black Religion, the Black Church dominated by middle-class African Americans valorized deliverance through forbearance and devotion to a God "of our weary years," of "our silent tears" (S. A. Jackson 2011, 31–32). In terms of Islam, the anthropologist Zarena Grewal notes the political resistance of black liberationists like Malcolm X, who inverted notions of Black Religion by connecting African American history to a global Islamic history—including by linking the African American struggle to African and Middle East movements and discourses of decolonization and liberation, and focusing on a salvific God of worldly justice with deliverance through resistance and subversion to power (Grewal 2014,102–105).

Muslims have a long history in the Americas, firstly as part of the transatlantic trade in slaves, resources, and markets alongside Europeans and Native Americans (GhaneaBassiri 2010, 10). Robert Bayles, president of the Market and Fulton National Bank of New York City in the late 19th century, discovered a copy of the Quran and a bronze pan among his family heirlooms. It probably came from his ancestor Anthony Jansen van Salee, known as Anthony "the Turk," van Salee, who came from Salé, Morocco. Around 1630, Anthony came to New Amsterdam (now New York City) as a colonist for the Dutch West India Company, dealing in real estate and settling down as a

farmer—the first recorded Muslim to settle what was to become the United States (GhaneaBassiri 2010, 9).

In the conquest of the New World, the Spanish expeditions brought Muslims as slaves and retainers a century before van Salee. In the same year of the conquest of southern Spain (Andalusia) in 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella funded the voyage of Christopher Columbus from the subsequent financial windfall from conquest and the inquisition. It is possible that some of the sailors who travelled with Columbus were Muslim, since Muslims of Andalusia were known to be experienced navigators trading in the Mediterranean and the African coast—though the evidence of this is contested.[17] The first documented case of Muslim immigrants to the Americas is the famed Cabeza de Vaca, who related his expedition with Estevanico de Dorantes, "a black Arab originally from Azamor," who left Spain with his master Andrés Dorantes in 1527. Wandering the Gulf Coast for eight years, they made contact with the natives who variously kept them as captives or treated them as "medicine men." Cabeza de Vaca asserts that the natives they encounted were "convinced we were from heaven." In his famed *Relacion* ("Accounts") de Vaca relates:

> *We walked all day without eating until nighttime, and even then we ate so little to their astonishment. We never sat down to rest having been so inured by hard work that we didn't feel tired. We had a lot of authority and clout with them, and in*

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[17] The assertion of Muslims sailing with Columbus seems to be driven by mutually exclusive claims between those who would like to establish Muslim presence within the founding myth of the conquest of the New World, against those who would like to exclude it, cementing the myth as a white, Christian, and exclusively Western undertaking. For example, see the white nationalist Spencer, Robert. 2004. "Christopher Columbus, Multicultural | National Review," September 15, 2004. https://www.nationalreview.com/2004/09/christopher-columbus-multicultural-robert-spencer/.

order to preserve this we seldom spoke to them. The Negro [Estevanico] always spoke to them and informed us of the paths to travel, the towns in the area, and other matters that we wanted to know (GhaneaBassiri 2010).

Finally making it to a Spanish outpost in Mexico, Estevanico was purchased by the Spanish Viceroy and appointed as a scout and guide for the Northern Frontier. He was eventually killed in 1539 when he reached the Pueblo of Háwikuh in New Mexico (GhaneaBassiri 2010, 12). In the colonization of the New World, GhaneaBassiri places "Moors" (Muslims) along with Native Americans and black Africans not simply as "involuntary laborers or conquered peoples but also as independent actors, working within their means to survive in a rapidly globalizing world" (GhaneaBassiri 2010, 13).

In between the imperial projects of land, labor, and resource acquisition, different groups of people settled, intermarried, and mixed before the concretization of racial categories under modern nationalist projects. In the United States, two parallel histories of Muslim Americans emerge: one of the labor migrant from the Middle East and North Africa who either assimilated as white Americans or built communities based on the Protestant model, and the other of the Islam of African slaves.

In antebellum America, between 10–30% of the slaves coming off the ships were Muslim (E. E. Curtis 2009, 119). Stripped of their clothes during the Middle Passage, African Muslims of the Sokoto Caliphate, along with the Fulbe Muslims of Futa Toro, were stripped of their previous identities and became simply "negros." Sold to plantation owners in the South, the Muslims who knew multiple languages and could read and write in Arabic stood out. Most records of Muslims in early America are of a biographical nature, since only "extraordinary backgrounds were sufficiently prominent to be

memorialized in white America"(GhaneaBassiri 2010, 16). One of the most famous accounts of these cases is of Ayuba Suleiman Diallo (Job Ben Solomon), the son of an imam who was enslaved in Bundu, in what is now Senegal. Edward Curtis, scholar of religion and the African diaspora relates his story (E. E. Curtis 2009, 1–4). Job, an educated son of a religious scholar who had memorized the Quran and other religious texts, wrote a letter to his father in the hopes that he could ransom him. Herding cattle on his masters' plantation, he would maintain his daily prayers, eventually gaining the attention of his master, who set aside a place for him to pray. The founder of the state of Georgia and a British parliamentarian, James Oglethorpe, received the letter, had it translated, and was so impressed by Job's story that he purchased his bond and took him to Britain. The Maryland Judge and Reverend Thomas Bluett wrote a biography of Job that became a bestseller, where in Britain he was received by the Royal Family as "a high priest of Boonda in Africa" (E. E. Curtis 2009, 2).

Abolitionists seized on the reports of literate and noble Africans who were kept in bondage, citing these as evidence of the immorality of slavery and contesting the narratives of the 'savage African'. Abd al-Rahman Ibrahima, now immortalized in the book *A Prince Among Slaves* and a PBS documentary by the same name, was a Fulbe elite educated in Timbuktu and enslaved in the Americas by 1790. Nicknamed "the Prince" by his master on his plantation, he served until John Coates Cox recognized him in the marketplace as the son of the ruler of Timbo who hosted Cox and provided him guides along the Gambia. It took another twenty years to free him with the help of President John Quincy Adams and the donations of local Mississippians. Abd al-Rahman

then set off on a tour, dressed in Royal Moorish garb, to raise money to secure the freedom of his wife and eight children.

> *With Secretary of State Henry Clay's endorsement, important merchants, politicians, and philanthropists opened their homes, their assembly halls, and their pocketbooks to him. As he traveled along the eastern seaboard of the United States, he met Francis Scott Key, the author of "The Star-Spangled Banner"; Charles and Arthur Tappan, wealthy Christian reformers who later funded the movement to abolish slavery; Edward Everett, a Massachusetts representative in the US Congress; and Thomas Gallaudet, the founder of America's first important school for the deaf. He was also feted by prominent African American civic groups such as the Black Masons of Boston, whose second marshal, David Walker, would soon write his manifesto of black liberation called the Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World (1829) (E. E. Curtis 2009, 8).*

These events are lost in the memory of most Americans, but during their time were highly influential within the Abolitionist movement, and lived in the memory of Black Muslim groups who build on these narratives from the turn of the 20th century. The exotification of the Moors was a move of "de-negrofication" of the Muslim American slave, taking advantage of Orientalist tropes to distance themselves from the category of the Negro into the more acceptable category of Moor (E. E. Curtis 2009; GhaneaBassiri 2010; S. A. Jackson 2011).

The Moorish Science Temple, established in 1925 by Noble Drew Ali, taught that African Americans were actually natives of Morocco, of an "Asiatic" race, and by nature Muslims. Ali became the new world prophet, and the movement survives in various forms to this day. The Nation of Islam, founded in 1930 in a similar vein, claimed that Black Muslims were the first people of the earth, reversing the hierarchy between white and black. It was Malcolm X, a minister of the Nation of Islam working under Elijah Muhammad, who brought rapid growth and international attention to the movement.

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However, Malcolm X, in his pilgrimage to Mecca, eventually renounced his affiliation with the Nation, converting to orthodox Sunni Islam after eating side by side with those who would be considered white in America. In the 1970s, Warith Dean, the son of Elijah Muhammad and the inheritor of the movement, brought the Nation of Islam in line with orthodox Sunni Islam. Most Black-American mosques have this genealogical tie to the Nation of Islam (S. A. Jackson 2011, 47–49; E. E. Curtis 2009, 76–79).

By the 1920s, up to 60,000 Middle Eastern and Eastern European Muslims had immigrated to the United States. Among these were Syrians, Albanians, and Egyptians, many of whom settled into ethnic enclaves based on national and linguistic affiliation through claims of "whiteness, Christianity, and progress" (GhaneaBassiri 2010, 163). Syrian Christians worked alongside Syrian Muslims, who built mosques along the model of Protestant churches, in a fashion akin to what the sociologist Robert Bellah termed 'Civil Religion' and what the Jewish theologian Will Herberg simply called the 'American Way of Life' (Bellah 2005; Cristi 2001, 48). This Civil Religion, included Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism in a "tripartite American melting pot" that privileged the religion of whites to the exclusion of the Oriental and especially the African. Whether Christian or Muslim, black churches and mosques were always defined in contrast to this white American Civil Religion, instead labelled as revolutionary and prophetic (GhaneaBassiri 2010, 238). The immigrant- and Black-Muslim divide is rooted in the experience of history and the modes in which the different communities make claims of inclusion in America.

Edward Curtis cites the Islamic Center of Toledo, Ohio, as exemplary in the phenomena of racial and religious integration. He argues that crafting

> *an Islam that celebrated American patriotism and cultural integration… [the mosque] encouraged its members to be active US citizens and proud Muslim practitioners. Operating like many American churches and synagogues, this mosque offered its congregants opportunities to develop business ties within the community, socialize with one another, and organize cultural events (E. E. Curtis 2009, 57).*

In a process of "Americanization" (E. E. Curtis 2009, 57), the community of middle-class merchants organized into "a civil religion in which values democracy, freedom, and equality were not just political values but spiritual values organic to the experiences of the American body politic" (GhaneaBassiri 2010, 238). Evelyn Shakir notes of the early institutional practices of Arab American communities where

> *The very impulse to build a mosque was a response to persistent queries from American-born children who wanted to know why they alone, among their friends, didn't have a 'church' to go to. In that case, the mosque was a step toward acculturation, the American thing to do…American mosques inevitably borrowed heavily from American churches, using them as models…Soon the mosque became the scene of weddings and funerals, of cakes and dinners. Sunday Schools were established and the habit of community prayer on Sunday tool hold (Shakir 1997, 115).*

In Detroit and its suburb of Dearborn, Michigan, working class immigrant communities established themselves as laborers at the Ford Motor Company. Plenty of jobs were available for new immigrants from "Europe and the Near East…because racist hiring policies tended to exclude African Americans." By 1916, there were 555 Arabic-speaking workers Soon afterwards, the community acquired Muslim burial plots and built its first mosques (Rignall 2000, 52). This mode of integration seemed to work until a

wave anti-colonial struggles altered the perception of Islam in the postwar period. As the Cold War intensified, the struggle for Middle Eastern oil pitted regional actors on the side of either the United States or the Soviet Union. However, nothing had as large of an impact on perceptions of Islam as the creation of the state of Israel and its victory in the Six Day War of 1967.

In 1967, a group of university students founded the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG). Its early members included Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (the father of anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod) and Edward Said (GhaneaBassiri 2010, 303). The Arab-Israeli conflict challenged the ideals of justice and impartiality on which Arab immigrants had staked their claims, recasting them as backwards Middle Easterners. Edward Said became painfully aware of this fact, critically examining how Western liberals identified with Israel instead of the anti-colonial cause of Palestinians, with the media, political actors, and academic discourse reproducing "the simple-minded dichotomy of freedom-loving, democratic Israel and evil, totalitarian, and terroristic Arabs" (Said 2003, 27).

Located at the nexus of knowledge-power, a rational West is constructed against a barbaric East, in a hegemonic discourse that is not an "empirical reality but… a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections" that is still known today as Orientalism (Said 2003, 8). Talal Asad, in his *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter,* examines the implications of anthropologists in colonial contexts. With the power differential between anthropologists and those they study, colonialism makes the work of the anthropologist safe and its knowledge useful in the domestication of indigenous and

rebel groups.[18] Though *Orientalism* is almost 40 years old, its critique of modern

conceptions of "the other" remain poignant today: As of this writing John Bolton,

chairman of the Gatestone Institute that warns of a "jihadist takeover" of Europe leading

to a "Great White Death," is now in the White House as National Security Advisor of the

United States (Przybyla 2018).

Muslim immigration and institution building increased after the Civil Rights era,

when immigration laws were no longer based on racial, religious, or national quotas.

Though Muslims faced discrimination, legal impediments to immigration were removed,

as were formal barriers to citizenship and property ownership (GhaneaBassiri 2010, 303).

In 1982, members of the Muslim Students Association (MSA) created the Islamic Society

of North America (ISNA), an umbrella organization of mosques and Islamic societies

that is currently the largest Muslim organization in America (Fenton 1988).

In Southern California, the first mosques were started by founding members of

the ISNA and its precursor, the MSA. Dr. Ahmad Sakr, a chemist from Lebanon who

received his PhD from the University of Illinios, helped found the national Muslim

Students Association, settled in Los Angeles in the 1980's, and started a small school and

mosque at the Islamic Education Center in Walnut, California. Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, an

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[18] More recently, David Price shows how more than half of US anthropologists worked for American military interests during World War II. Though *Orientalism* shifted academic discourse and self-reflexivity makes the politics and social position of the ethnographer more visible, power still governs truth. Said names Bernard Lewis as the archetypical contemporary Orientalist, almost 25 years after the seminal publication of *Orientalism*, Lewis published *What Went Wrong* (2002), in which he describes the Islamic world and, in an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal (*Time for Toppling),* calls for regime change. This "doyen of Middle East Studies" went on to become one of the chief advisors to vice-president Dick Cheney on the Iraq war (Lewis 2002a, 2002b).

early member of the MSA, President of the ISNA (1997–2001), settled in Orange County in 1982 as imam of the largest mosque in Southern California, The Islamic Society of Orange County (Fieldnotes).

This period is marked by the Afghan-Soviet conflict and the end of the Cold War as communism fell in Eastern Europe with the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1993, Samuel Huntington wrote his "Clash of Civilizations" thesis, insisting that the next phase of geopolitical conflict would inevitably be between "cultures," and specifically, between the West on one hand and a "Confucian-Islamic" amalgamation on the other. This bizarre reductionist unification notwithstanding, the article reduces oil, land, and material conflict to ideology. According to Huntington, the clash is an implacable and inescapable reality, reifying "Islam" and the "West" with no other policy proposal other than to "require the West to maintain the economic and military power necessary to protect its interests in relation to these civilizations" (Huntington 1993).

With the arrival of the First Gulf War in August 1990 and into February 1991 and the continued Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation, Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis provided the ideological justification needed by military hawks and establishment conservative think tanks like the Heritage Foundation. Media images of Arabs and Muslims as terrorists solidified the alterity of Islam from a troubled religion into a veritable international and domestic threat. In 1994, the Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR) was formed to handle cases of civil rights violations and report discrimination along the model of the ACLU. CAIR continues to focus on advocating on behalf of American Muslims in the courts and on representing Muslims in policy debates.

Southern California imams and mosques routinely appeal to CAIR to help mediate discussions between the Muslim community and government. Muslims, starting in the 1990s, began to publish against the "clash of civilization" thesis, re-staking their claims to Americanness though the ideals of religious freedom, justice, and equal citizenship (E. E. Curtis 2009, 79; GhaneaBassiri 2010, 341–42).

For the neocons, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 only validated Huntington's thesis, and with the neoconservatives in power during the Bush administration, terrorism and security reconfigured Western liberal democracies in ways we are still coming to terms with. The Gulf War targeted a nation with borders and a military, but the War on Terror targets an amorphous movement of people and money globally. The Holy Land Foundation, an organization collecting money for Palestinian refugees in the US, including zakat, was raided by the FBI right after 9/11, resulting in the conviction of six members under charges of funding terrorism. Churches and human rights groups cite the trial as politically biased conflating terrorism with support for Palestinians in the new securitized context (Al-Arian 2012). The Treasury Department seized "terrorist assets" globally, with 22 organizations immediately targeted, including Holy Land Foundation and Global Relief Foundation, both organizations that collect zakat for refugees in Palestine.

The current context of Islam in America is characterized by 9/11 and the subsequent frenzy of securitization, as evidenced through the mobilization of the police, military forces, and the media in a panoptic surveillance apparatus of contemporary governmentality. Around 2008, in a Southern California mosque, Craig Monteilh was

banned for "being too extreme," and reported by CAIR to the FBI. In my 2014 interview

with the director of CAIR's branch in Southern California, Hussam Ayloush told me

about his conversation with the area director of the FBI. "When I told him about

Monteilh, he didn't seem alarmed, just saying 'ah, ok,' and telling me he 'will look into

it'. It was a few months later when we find out this convicted felon was being sent to our

mosques as an FBI informant." After this episode, CAIR cut off all ties with the FBI (see

Harris 2012).

The imams and charity organizations in this study are all familiar with the

Monteilh scandal, changing the way they do business. Though Muslims in Southern

California understood that the government was watching them, mosques and CAIR used

their relationships with the government in good faith to help counteract terrorism.

Though the FBI denied sending any informants and claimed they stood by and trusted the

American Muslim community, Craig Monteilh made friends with Muslims, trying to

entrap them, meeting the leaders, and even sleeping with Muslim women. Monteilh told

The Guardian that the FBI encouraged him, "if it would enhance the intelligence, go

ahead and have sex. So I did" (Harris 2012). Later on, Monteilh sued the FBI saying they

had misled him, accusing the FBI of unethical practices and claiming his entire ordeal of

looking for terrorists was a fraud. "There is no real hunt. It's fixed" (Harris 2012).

Imams report that the current climate in 2018 is one of fear and hostility,

especially after the 2016 presidential election. Muslims are not only stigmatized, but an

executive policy of a "Muslim ban" racially targets certain countries as ineligible for

immigration (see Liptak 2018; "Timeline of the Muslim Ban" 2017). Mosque attendance

has decreased and there are less donors, many of whom no longer want any connection to Muslim causes for fear of both political and professional repercussions. Many lament the current atmosphere as Islamophobic, one in which mosques, organizations, and individuals are looked at with suspicion because they are Muslim, considered to be irredeemably violent, misogynistic, and un-American. In the U.S., Khaled Beydoun argues that Islamophobia is institutionalized "on the part of government institutions and actors [as] *structural* Islamophobia …manifested and enforced through the enactment and advancement of laws, policy and programming." (Beydoun 2018, 36, emphasis mine). CAIR has bought the domain name *islamophobia.org*, which lists hate crimes and incidents of discrimination under that banner.

Mosques, CAIR and Muslim charity NGO's have doubled down on efforts to distance themselves from extremism. All charities in this study are registered as non-profits and must make their IRS form 990 publicly available, listing total contributions, expenses, and assets. As of 2006, CAIR prepares annual financial reports made available online. When it comes to finances, including zakat, these organizations emphasize transparency, accountability, and the practices of audit to ensure compliance with the law and help defer any accusations of connections to terrorism. Individual Muslim donors also adhere to this practice in an attempt to protect themselves, their families, and businesses from prosecution as terrorist financiers.

The purpose of the following section is to outline how the current political-economic context shapes the practices of zakat differently when intersecting with two histories, one being Black Islam and the other immigrant Islam. Early immigrant groups

created affiliations and non-profits based on claims of "whiteness, Christianity, and progress," wholeheartedly in pursuit of the ideal of the "American Dream." Today, CAIR, ISNA and other organizations follow the model of American political and religious organizing within the tapestry of a multicultural America. Black Islam, on the other hand, is organized around the Black experience and a "resistance to white supremacy, reconstructing a valorized black history, and action-oriented towards an ongoing black liberation" (Wilmore 1998). These histories, however, are now converging, especially after the election of Donald Trump in 2016. Immigrant Muslim claims to the American Dream are being challenged by ethno-nationalist groups, and many are finding a way forward by not only incorporating Black critique but privileging Black Islam as indigenous Islam, an Islam more coherent in the American context than the various ethnic strands.

In Chapter 5, I follow Imam Sameer, a social worker at a black mosque in Los Angeles, illustrating the contours and priorities of Majid Farooq, their community and their imams. Though from an immigrant family, Imam Sameer's role as a social worker at the Los Angeles Unified School District has brought him into conversation with the inner-city urban experience, including his services at a black mosque in LA. His ministerial practice is greatly shaped by this experience, drawing on his expertise as a social worker as well as his knowledge of Islamic law contextualized for this space.

I situate my research in this history, distinguishing between two different Muslim histories in America—one indigenous and black, the other immigrant and typically either South Asian or Arab. The security context after 9/11 has put increased pressure on

Muslim Americans, both immigrant and indigenous, where charitable contributions are increasingly suspect and placed under government surveillance and control. Zakat organizations have responded by professionalizing their structures and making sure governments are aware of their activities through measures of transparency, accountability, and audit. Additionally, legal defense groups cite security as an existential threat, asking for zakat in this context. Both these issues are explored ethnographically in Chapter 6.

In the next section, I show how primary texts are read in context, and how interpretations of zakat are driven by a particular political-economic situation.

2.3. The Library: Quran and Qaradawi

And maintain the prayer and give zakat, and bow down with those who bow [in prayer] (Quran 2:43).

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness—to believe in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and the Messengers; to spend of your substance out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans for the needy, for the wayfarer for those who ask and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering) and adversity and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth the Allah-fearing (Quran 2:177).

In this section, I will start by reviewing what the Quran says about zakat before proceeding to Yusuf al-Qaradawi's exhaustive madhab-based *Fiqh al-zakat*. Anthropologists have

studied how Quranic verses or hadiths are used in context and how particular verses are

invoked in certain situations (Benthall 2016, 1999; Bowen 1993; Antoun 2014). I draw

from Messick's notion of shari'a as a system that must be understood in its "textual

dimensions" which includes the interpretations of imams in "local usages and

conventions." As such, shari'a is understood as the discourse and practice of the

community of interpreters, with source texts called the "library" and its local opinion and

vernacular usage called the "archive." In this way, I initiate a discussion about the

relationship between al-Qaradawi and the Quran with the imams, asking for points of

clarification on who is zakat eligible and who is not, what the purpose of zakat is, and what

the proper role of the state is in the collection and distribution of zakat. In the following

chapters we will more clearly see this nexus between the library, archive, and the role of

the imam in local social practice. But first, I will look at the texts of the library, the Quran,

and Qaradawi's *fiqh al-zakat*, in their textual dimensions.

The discussions of zakat amongst imams in Southern California offers insight into

the particular social context in which they operate. I limit the discussion of the concept's

intellectual history to how imams draw on the mixed *madhab* approach as taught at al-

Azhar. Azhari imams frequently cite the contemporary scholar, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, who

wrote his dissertation on zakat using the mixed madhab method at al-Azhar, which can

now be found in a two-volume book available in Arabic, and in an English translation. I

will rely heavily on his treatment of zakat as indicative of the Azhari method and

pedagogy.

Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam, along with faith, prayer, fasting during Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Zakat literally means "purification." As prayer purifies one's heart, so paying zakat purifies one's livelihood. In the Quran, zakat is mentioned next to prayer no less than 30 times, to the point that Sunni jurists have categorized zakat as part of prayer itself (Qaradawi 2000a; Benthall 1999). Just as prayer is for God, so too is zakat—a kind of "financial worship" that is not done for the benefit of the poor, but for that of the donor.

Chapter 9 Verse 60, of the Quran details who should receive zakat:

> *Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to Truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of Allah; and for the wayfarer: (thus is it) ordained by Allah, and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom (Quran 9:60).*

Jurists have placed the recipients of zakat into eight categories based on the above verse, carefully defining the boundaries of each. These are the (1) poor or *al-fuqara'*, (2) the needy or *al-Masakin*, (3) administration costs, (4) those whose hearts are recently reconciled, (5) those in bondage, (6) those in debt, (7) actions taken in the name of God, and (8) the wayfarer or traveler. Each of the Sunni schools analyze this verse in-depth when constructing the categories of eligibility for zakat distribution. Azharis, true to their mixed-madhab approach, do not stick to one school but rather look at a range of opinions from all five Sunni schools, at times even looking to non-canonical approaches taken by the Shi'a schools and famous jurists of the past. They complement this with an analysis of current issues using modern theoretical approaches.

When it comes to zakat, Yusuf al-Qaradawi's 1973 dissertation on zakat, now published as the two-volume book *Fiqh al-zakah*, is the most widely cited work on the subject by Azhari imams in the US. The breadth of Qaradawi's analysis covers 1400 years of Islamic intellectual history, including recollections of the madhabs conversations with one another, offering ways to understand and reconcile past opinions. Before Qaradawi's work, most madhab-based scholars had simply given an opinion on the matter rooted in what had been said by the madhabs of the past, or in the most authoritative established texts, a method criticized as *taqlid* or "blind imitation" by Azharis, Salafis, and even Orientalists who decried the "closing of the gates of ijtihad" by the 10th century.[19] Qaradawi's work cements his status as one of the most erudite traditional scholars in his field by mastering the use of the mixed-madhab approach and by avoiding a reliance on *taqlid*, instead comparing the ideas of madhabs across time and space. Perhaps the work's most novel achievement is its ability to bring tradition in conversation with modern realities.

For example, the first volume of *Fiqh al-zakah* covers the question of which assets are "zakatable," moving from assets such as agricultural goods and gold, to modern sources of income including wage labor and mechanized agriculture that require a rethinking of the classical categories. Volume Two covers all eight categories of who is eligible to receive zakat, in great detail, offering an overview of the opinions of all past madhabs as well as majority and minority opinions, bringing the concept into the 20th

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[19] Intisar Rabb. "Ijtihād [Islamic Legal Reasoning]" Oxford *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* (2007)

century by discussing its place within   modern, state-based zakat collection and their use toward social welfare programs. Unlike most other fatwas, Qaradawi states his opinion while also addressing the criticisms of detractors and leaving room for disagreement.

Qaradawi's move from established opinion to modern realities requires him to look for patterns in the past law and to derive principles to generate his opinions. Qaradawi cites the medieval Andalusian scholar Al-Shatibi's (d. 1388) *Al-Muwafaqaat fi Usool al-Sharia* or "The Reconciliation of the Fundamentals of Islamic Law," when looking for the "higher objectives" of the shari'a behind the letter of the law. For Shatibi, as well as for Qaradawi, there is a distinction to be drawn between *ibadaat,* or worship, and *muamalaat,* or transactions. While *ibadaat* must be "accept[ed] and obey[ed]" without "seeking exploration" since these are rituals prescribed by revelation and thus are universal and eternal, *muamalaat* are social in nature and contingent on changing circumstances—here, the jurist must look for "meaning and rationale" behind the law (Qaradawi 2000b, 51). For most jurists, including Qaradawi, the purpose of zakat is two-fold: to purify the rich through the performance of this rite, and to serve as the "right of the poor… an ingredient of the social and economic system of society" (Qaradawi 2000a, xxxii).

Based on the original prescriptions for zakat eligibility, Qaradawi has elucidated the explanations for each category. The first category ("the poor") are those too modest to ask for help; by contrast, the second ("the needy") are those in abject poverty and humble themselves by asking or outright begging. The fourth category—"administrative costs"— refers to payments to zakat collectors and other costs in administering the program. The

fifth category ("those whose hearts are recently reconciled") refers to gifts the prophet gave to former enemies, typically gifts of land or livestock to cement relations between formally feuding groups. Jurists have debated if this still applies in a contemporary context or if this is restricted to the prophetic era and the prophet's own discretion. For many early jurists, when the Islamic empire under the Umayyads or later Abbasids there did not seem to be any need to "reconcile hearts" of those who could cause the polity any harm; Islam at this point was well established and its political power strong. Qaradawi, in his typical fashion, goes through the opinions of the prophet's companions, moving then to the madhabs and famous jurists, and finally recommends that there is no Quranic evidence for annulment, pointing out along the way that the former strength of empire no longer exists since "Muslims are weak... [and] if weakness is a reason for distribution towards reconciling hearts, it exists today." Therefore, "decisions regarding reconciling hearts [is] the duty of the Islamic State," in Qaradawi's case this would include the state of Egypt, as a "responsibility as part of the state's executive affairs" (Qaradawi 2000a, 39).

For the fifth category of zakat eligibility—"those in bondage"—Qaradawi surmises that slaves can be freed using zakat, but since slavery has since been abolished by all nations, Qaradawi expands this to mean paying ransom for Muslim prisoners of war and also supporting the fight against colonialism. He justifies this explanation by quoting the famous turn-of-the-century reformer Rashid Rida: "liberating has its modern equivalent in liberating people from the humiliation and oppression of colonial power, which is mass liberation as compared to freeing individual slaves" (quoted in Qaradawi

2000a, 46). The sixth category—debtors, especially those who have faced calamities such as natural disasters, fires, and forced displacement—are zakat-eligible insofar as it helps them pay their debt. Qaradawi's thoughts on the final category of zakat eligibility—"in the cause of God"—merit further attention, since they have been a source of contention for jurists, some of whom have used it to justify building mosques or funding legal defenses. Imam Aziz cited this very category when I asked him why he thought mosques are eligible. Zakat "in the cause of God" is very broad, since anything good could be thought of as part of God's cause. For that reason, the following two sections examine the category in greater detail.

Fi Sabil Allah, or In God's Cause

Initially, during the prophetic period, *fi sabil Allah,* or "in the cause of God" meant *jihad* ("struggle") or, more completely, *jihad fi sabil Allah*. During the time of the prophet *jihad* did in fact refer to armed struggle—though its meaning extended far beyond that as well. *Jihad* is commonly mistranslated as "Holy War," a Christian concept stemming from the Crusades and used to by the Pope to mobilize Catholic Europe to capture the biblical holy lands, namely the city of Jerusalem. Muslims and their prophet Muhammad were demonized as followers of Satan, opening the way to indiscriminate violence and the forced conversion of Muslims, Byzantine Christians, and Jews. Holy War continues to carry the associations of this history, a genealogy being projected onto *jihad*. *Jihad*, however, has its own history, language, and culture. Quran (22:40) is cited as the verse that prescribes fighting, though the word *jihad* isn't used:

who were expelled from their habitations without right, except that they say, 'Our Lord is God.' Had God not driven back the people, some by the means of others, there had been destroyed cloisters and churches, oratories and mosques, wherein God's Name is much mentioned. Assuredly God will help him who helps Him— surely God is All-strong, All-mighty.

In returning from a battle, the Prophet Muhammad said to his people: "We have come back from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad." His people asked, "Is there any greater jihad than jihad against the enemies?" Muhammad responded, "Yes, *jihad al-nafs* ["jihad against the self"] (*Ta'rikh Baghdad)*." This is a famous hadith that gained prominence in the 9th century when Sufism coalesced into a defined spiritual movement with its own texts and institutions (Cook 2005, 35). Though this hadith is not *sahih* and some remain skeptical of its authenticity, it is mentioned early on in Islamic history by Tirmidhi, and reported by Bayhaqi. Moreover, both Ibn-Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim note it in their discussion of the struggle (against) one's baser desires, including lust and ego as mortal sins, which they consider "prime" and "most obligatory" to rectify and control in one's life (G. F. Haddad 2005).

Classical scholars, after the initial expansion of Islam, developed a just-war theory that permitted fighting under the authority of proper leadership, excluded women, children and non-combatants, and prohibited the defiling of agricultural fields and water supplies. In his book on jihad, David Cook summarizes the classical jurist's regulations on jihad that "include formal announcement of the jihad and its causes; terms for its resolution prior to the commencement of hostilities; careful regard for noncombatants and their property; respect for the enemy dead; and restrictions on the type of warfare allowed" (Cook 2005, 3). In the chapter on good conduct of the hadith collection of

Ahmed, it is reported as *sahih,* arguing that "The best jihad is speaking words of justice in front of an unjust ruler" (Aḥmad Ibn-Ḥanbal and ʿAbd-aš-Šāfī 1993). Courage, strength, and bravery seem to be the values of jihad, evoking the image of a warrior spirit constructed in an ethic of Islamic chivalry, perverted by and Islamophobes as wanton violence.

In order to explain the meaning and intention of *fi sabil Allah*, Qaradawi interrogates the opinions of various Sunni schools, mentioning first of all what most schools linguistically and literally understand "in the cause of God" to mean, then its meaning "individually and collectively," such as the early practice of outfitting poor fighters with horses and other materials for battle if they could not afford to outfit themselves. Since anything good "in God's cause" is too broad, the early Sunni jurists restricted this category to using zakat money to outfit poor soldiers, but also students studying shari'a based on the prophetic practice of leaving behind and protecting students and scholars of the religion. The early Shia school, however, allowed zakat to be permissible for anything good, as long as it fell under the discretion and authority of the divinely guided imam (Qaradawi 2000b, 57).

This period of Sunni jurists and the early Shia school under Imam Jafir take place in the eighth century, after the great early territorial expansion of the seventh century that took place after the death of the Prophet. Both Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Jafir were critical of Umayyad and later Abbasid excesses, since both dynasties were trying to use shari'a for their own imperial ends. The Abbasid Caliph Al-Mansur had Abu Hanifa imprisoned when the latter refused the position of Chief Judge, a move seen to

appropriate the famous jurist and to add authority to his dynastic claim. Al-Mansur also

had Imam Jafir poisoned, since the Shia imam directly contested Abbasid political

authority as belonging to the family of the Prophet—a claim that goes back to the

beginning of the Shia-Sunni split and the very reason for the schism. The Jafiri school

seems to be the first to allow for a wide interpretation of *fi sabil Allah* that includes

"everything that benefits Muslims," such as "public interests such as irrigation, mosques,

pilgrimage, and all good deeds" (Qaradawi 2000b, 62). The Hanafis later included those

who are performing pilgrimage and who have run out of funds while in Mecca, as well

as, most interestingly, full-time students, taking precedent from the Prophet's financial

support of the companions known as *ahl Suffah,* or those who studied full-time and

camped out in front of the mosque in an area called the *Suffah*. When going to battle and

in fear of existential defeat, the Prophet ordered some students to stay back to allow for

the continuity of the community in case scholars were killed in battle. In this example, *fi

sabil Allah* is more than just armed struggle, but rather included the support of those who

struggle and sacrifice for the continuity of God's last message. Can the claim made by

Imam Aziz in Chapter 1, in which he argues that building a mosque is necessary for the

continuity of God's message, especially as minorities in the US, then be justified?

It is clear that *fi sabil Allah* has an open linguistic meaning, but the opinions of

the early madhabs in the 7th and 8th centuries restricted this meaning to *jihad*. By the 9th

century, within a well-established Islamic empire that stretched from India in the East to

Morocco and Spain in the West, a burgeoning asceticism began to privilege the "inner

jihad," and the "jihad of the pen" over the overtly armed jihad (Cook 2005). The

entrenched madhabs did the same, especially the Hanafis, who opened the category of *fi sabil Allah* to students, while the Jabaris opened it to everything good. By the 11th century, Al-Ghazali opined that in his time *fi sabil Allah* and slavery were only found in a few places in an empire that controlled a vast territory and professional soldiers, and where funds were available from other tax revenue (Singer 2008, 55).

Qaradawi even quotes the Quran commentary of the 10th-century polymath and physician, Al Razi, which states that *fi sabil Allah* is not restricted to fighters since this is in no way apparent in the text. Qaradawi then proceeds to a discussion of the modern Egyptian reformers on the subject, from Rashid Rida to Jamal al Din al Qasimi to Mahmud Shaltut—all of whom rely on Al Razi—to open the category of *fi sabil Allah* to include everything good.

It is important to keep in mind that Qaradawi is writing in a postcolonial Egyptian context, where the state is interested in the development and modernization of a mostly rural population. The lengthy pre-modern treatment of agriculture is very relevant to a population that lives along the fertile Nile River, growing everything from mangos to cotton, but making less than two dollars a day. Qaradawi's treatment of the text and his method of analysis undoubtedly cement him as a classical scholar, before moving forward in rethinking Islam in modernity.

Reconfiguring Fi Sabil Allah

Wael Hallaq notes that modernization in Egypt destroyed a decentralized system of power that had previously empowered the madhabs, replacing it with a centralized state system that legislated and operated above the law (Hallaq 2004, 256–257). In this

context, shari'a quickly becomes what is expedient for the state. Just recently, in an interview broadcast *ON Live Channel*, the mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Shawki Allam, stated that the state can use zakat funds on the army and police since they are fighting terrorism. The state at this time declared the Muslim Brotherhood illegal, and the police was deployed to arrest, detain, and even torture dissidents. Shawki says, "the old scholars interpreted 'money for God' as spending zakat money on weapons and soldiers fighting enemies, and this is a security struggle, along with the intellectual confrontation of extremism," (MEMO 2017). In short, the state utilizes Qaradawi's explanation of *fi sabil Allah* to legitimize its own aggrandizement and to undermine the Muslim Brotherhood— an ironic turn of events, considering Qaradawi informally has allied himself with the latter organization.

Shawki's use of *fi sabil Allah* is creative. It begins by advocating for the giving of weapons individually for armed struggle, then moves by the 10th century to focus on a linguistic interpretation of the concept that includes anything good, before making a full circle in 2017 and ending up as a tool to justify the military dictatorship's use of zakat funds to fight extremism. For critics of the current military dictator who usurped power and is now arresting those who are running against him in the presidential elections, Shawki's fatwa sure looks to afford the kind of expediency criticized by Hallaq. To the credit of Egyptians, many have taken to social media to mock the edict (MEMO, 2017).

In terms of the role of the state, both the early Umayyads and Abbasids taxed zakat only. They were also charged with its collection and distribution, but criticized for mishandling the funds and corruption (Fauzia 2013, 49). As is the case with Abu Hanafi

and Imam Jafir, the other founders of the schools were also punished for resisting the incursions of the state in the domain of the shari'a. Imam Malik opined that zakat was a religious and personal obligation which can be paid to the state, but that state coercion was unlawful. In terms of what to pay, he argued that the decision should be left to individuals. Imam Shafi'i added that individuals can pay one part to the state and distribute one part of it individually (Fauzia 2013, 49). During the era of the Ottoman Empire, zakat was left to individuals to distribute, with no official zakat office (Singer 2008, 49). In Egypt in the 1980's, Hosni Mubarak tried to collect zakat in state operated mosques, but the population resisted and instead donated to small local mosques with local zakat committees for the distribution (May 2013, 157). In 2014, El-Sisi created Egypt's voluntary "Zakat" charity fund to help with social service and charity programs, but just as Shawki's fatwa illustrated, fi *sabil Allah* quickly becomes equated with "anything good for the state."

For Qaradawi, the state can regulate the collection and distribution of zakat, where "*zakat* is a relationship between the state, the wealthy, and the poor," and where "zakah is… a social welfare institution supervised by the state, and an organized tax administered by an autonomous public organization" (Qaradawi 2000b, 113). In this regard, the state can collect zakat, along with other taxes, but restrict the zakat portion for social welfare programs including but not limited to the direct distribution of "tools, machinery, and capital" for job-creation programs, and to social security programs to "guarantee a minimum standard of living" for the elderly, "sickness, handicap, or inability to find jobs" (Qaradawi 2000b, 186). What is notable in Qaradawi's work is the

seamless leap from an exhaustive treatment of the tradition, madhabs, classical positions, and authors, to questions of the modern nation-state, as well as its authority, at the intersection of political economy. Qaradawi was also sympathetic to the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood before Sisi took over, and now lives in exile in Qatar. Islamists of various types have tried to Islamize the modern nation state by instituting various pietistic reforms, with zakat collection being one of them. In my fieldwork in Cairo among the Ikhwan, it is clear that piety is equated with good governance: corruption of leaders is rooted in the impiety of the rulers and the ruled alike. But just as Islamic history shows, state appropriation of institutions based on local control has been met with resistance everywhere from Egypt to Pakistan to Malaysia to Jordan (Singer 2008, 205).

Regardless, *fi sabil Allah*, or in the cause of God, linguistically and even in the interpretations of pre-modern scholars, allows for flexibility in administering zakat to those who deserve it. As I argue in the main thesis of this dissertation, zakat is being transformed by cultural and politico-economic forces, where the opinions that imams hold are the result of their socialization as well as their training at al-Azhar. The next three chapters examine the pattern of these opinions by the lives and thinking of imams in greater detail. As dissimilar participants in a community of interpreters, imams can invoke the library texts of the Quran and Qaradawi's *fiqh al-zakah* to justify the opinions of both imam Aziz in using zakat to build mosques, and of Imam Sadiq to restrict zakat only for the poor. In Chapter 6, I cover these tensions as they come up ethnographically in Southern California, discussing the various ways that imams understand zakat and how

institutions practice them and bringing together the community of interpreters and the library.

To better understand the various perspectives of imams, we need to move from text to context, understanding how socialization and experience influence their interpretations and influence their religious opinions. In service of the thesis of this dissertation, I shall next develop sketches of three Azhari imams: the Sufi (Chapter 4), the Social Worker (Chapter 5), and the Ikhwani, Hamza, who is the subject of our next chapter.

3. Hamza The Ikhwani

I start this chapter with an American Azhari named Hamza. Though not a member of the Ikhwan, Hamza is sympathetic to the organization's call to social justice through charitable works on the ground and its commitment to Islam as a total way of life. Growing up around Saddleback Church in a middle-class neighborhood, Hamza played basketball with the church's youth group and was exposed to its charity programs and sermons. I argue that Hamza's socialization, as an American, opens him up to the Ikhwan's social activism, naturalizing as well as Islamizing modern modes of organization, economy, and even notions of masculinity. This will be important in helping to substantiate my principal thesis of this dissertation, which illustrates how and why zakat is being transformed by cultural and politico-economic forces, most significantly neoliberalism and the ethics of international humanitarianism.

To better understand the Ikhwan as a modern organization, I provide a brief history of the organization, paying special attention to its relationship with the state. This approach also helps illustrate how history shapes a human subject—in this case a man incorporated into the political structure of the Ikhwan. I then move to Ibrahim, an interlocutor in Egypt as well as a member of the Ikhwan in a suburb of Cairo. In my ethnographic research, I show how the hierarchy and bureaucratic organization of the Ikhwan is efficient in delivering necessary services, whether it be medical help, food, or clothing to poor people in the outskirts of Cairo—but that ultimately its services are a form of zakat incorporated in a modern system of redistribution, and not enough to

alleviate the wider structural poverty in Egypt. I conclude this chapter by returning to

Hamza, reiterating that his understanding of shari'a lies at the intersection between

socialization and contemporary political-economic conditions.

3.1. Modern Islamic Activism

I arrived in Cairo in July 2011, during a period of joy and openness in the city after the

overthrow of the dictator Hosni Mubarak and with the general elections only a few

months away. Multiple parties held public demonstrations and rallied support among the

population: secularists, socialists, communists, Islamists—all vied for public support for

their candidates, each group holding rallies in Tahrir Square and across Cairo and Egypt.

The spirit of freedom and optimism penetrated al-Azhar, where students and teachers

alike supported different political paths: from the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and

Justice Party to the Salafi-leaning Al-Nour Party, to the military-state coopted Sufism

that reigned under the former dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak.

The American imams who were in Cairo at that time joined in the discussions,

opining on the future role of Islam in the state, on public regulation of morality, on

freedom of speech, on democracy, and on economic policy. Most thought that Islam

should have a leading role in how the government should be run, but varied in their

opinions on economic policy and how a leader should be chosen. Some supported the

Ikhwan al-Muslimeen, or the Muslim Brotherhood, because they spoke the language of

Islam and many saw their sincerity marked by their well-known social service programs

throughout Egypt. Others were restrained in their critique of the Ikhwan, but saw the Salafi party as more authentically "Islamic," as noted by their strict adherence to the literalism of the Quran signified by long beards and the wearing of traditional "thobes," which were considered to be the most strict adherence to the Prophet Muhammad's way.

Hamza's parents are from Egypt but he grew up in Southern California. He decided not to attend college, unlike most westerners who decide to come to al-Azhar after pursuing a college education in the United States. Young and idealistic, he supported the Muslim Brotherhood because of their call to social justice. At this time, Morsi had not yet decided to run as president, nor was it clear that the Ikhwan would choose to run a presidential candidate. It was too early, and the Ikhwan's newly formed "Freedom and Justice" party was still in its embryonic stages. "I think we need to give them a chance," said Hamza. "They are the only ones who can cut out the corruption."

Hamza went to high school in Mission Viejo, an upper-middle class suburban community in Orange County. Hamza's parents immigrated to the U.S. from Egypt in the 1980s, eventually settling in Mission Viejo because "the schools are good and the community safe." Hamza excelled in sports, going to school and spending the afternoons playing football or basketball, depending on the season. Mission Viejo is also home to Saddleback Church, one of the largest evangelical churches in the United States. Rick Warren is the pastor and founder of the church, and the author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, a national bestseller which preaches that a life with purpose lived in Jesus' name is one of fulfillment and salvation. When Barrack Obama was first elected President, Rick

Warren was invited to give the inaugural invocation, which was watched by millions in a spirit of ecumenicalism.

Many of the kids who went to school with Hamza, or play afterschool basketball, were members of Saddleback Church. Sometimes, Hamza would pick up games at Saddleback, which boasted a basketball court, a gymnasium, and even a baseball diamond. "They are very friendly, also have good moral values, family values. But I couldn't take the *dawah* [missionizing]," Hamza says:

> *They advertise some of these sport activities without mentioning it's at the Church! The first time I went I thought it was just some neighborhood park, it was only after the game when they all started doing a group prayer and then went inside for refreshments did I realize we were at a Church.*

After going a few times, he started to feel uncomfortable with the subtle proselytizing, "I kept coming back for the basketball, and sure it was nice to have snacks afterwards. But every time they asked a little more, kept taking about Jesus. I just felt like if I didn't convert, I would never really be welcome." Eventually, Hamza turned to his local mosque. Though they didn't have a basketball court, he was able to join the Muslim Basketball Association (MBA) that rents out basketball courts and organizes games among Muslim Youth.

"MBA," says Hamza as he describes his full-fledged entry into the Muslim community, "that's where I first met other Muslims and learned [from them] about the summer and winter youth camps." There are a few camps that local mosques organize, and there are camps organized by national Muslim umbrella groups, like the Muslim American Society (MAS), whose main focus is *tarbiyya* ("moral-educational"). Sports

and physical fitness are encouraged to develop *futuwwa,* or proper manliness, as well as family-centered values—similar to what Hamza learned at Saddleback: a man is strong, upright, courageous, and able to take care of his family.

Hamza threw himself headlong in his new environment, going to the MAS camps and their national conventions that some years would draw thousands of participants by featuring popular preachers like Suhaib Webb, a white convert who could weave his American experience into his sermons using street language along with tales of al-Azhar and Cairo. The Muslim American Society (MAS) was founded in 1993, during a time when Muslims were re-staking their claims to Americanness through the ideals of religious freedom, justice, and equal citizenship (see 2.2 for background). The society considers their vision to be "To move people to strive for God consciousness, liberty, and justice, and to convey Islam with utmost clarity." Here the Protestant and Islamic become interchangeable—replace "Islam" with "Christianity" and you could be talking about Saddleback Church instead of MAS.

Hamza volunteered locally with Islamic Relief when the organization would sponsor events to feed the homeless or organize a free health clinic around Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles. During their annual fundraising dinners, Hamza could be seen ushering zakat envelopes from donor tables to the front where it would be counted. Sometimes Hamza would compare his experience at Saddleback with his own Islamic activism. In reference to an orphan-sponsorship project that Islamic Relief runs all throughout the world, including Sudan and Bangladesh, Hamza commented: "The community needs to send Muslim youth to these places, you know, Saddleback sends

their kids to volunteer and help first hand, it would help us to really help and get to know the situation, ultimately being able to collect more money." Another occasion, complaining about the lack of funds, Hamza wondered: "How is it that Christians can build Saddleback Church with an entire youth program, its separate building, and gym, but we cannot even fund a youth camp properly?" Most surprisingly, Hamza referenced a sermon by the pastor Rick Warren, evoking his admiration of Saddleback Church's message, its power, and its performance.

> *Rick Warren was talking about the poverty alleviation program they have in Africa, and he made so much sense! One of the biggest problems in the world was abject poverty, where people do not have the hope to even climb out of. Before we can talk about education and the rest, we have to address abject poverty. The other thing he said was 'greed,' that abject poverty has to be addressed by solving greed—and greed is a spiritual problem, a problem that can only be solved by bringing the love of Jesus Christ into your heart.*

"Why are you listening to Rick Warren speeches?" I asked, genuinely surprised, and Hamza responded without missing a beat: "To become a better *khatib* [preacher]." Amused and curious, I prodded him a little further: "To be a better *khatib?*" "Yes," he responds:

> *Rick Warren's sermons are great, he makes religion relevant for the people, and he really makes you feel like he's talking to you directly. Most of what he says is good as Muslims, just forget the 'Jesus is God and died for your sins' part! [slight pause] The problem today is greed and poverty, and it's a spiritual problem. I listen to his speeches online to learn how to be a better speaker.*

Hamza's fascination with Saddleback Church is a result of his experience, to which he continually returns as a comparison with his own work. He sees the church as a model for what is possible for the Muslim community, creating a welcoming space for

youth with plenty of activities. In terms of charity, he sees Rick Warren as someone who is pointing out the problem of poverty and its solution as a wider spiritual issue. For Hamza, however, the spiritual solution is Islam. During his last year of high-school, MAS started a scholarship program for American students to study at al-Azhar, moving their mission of *tarbiyya* forward in an American context. Hamza decided to apply, and here we are a year later in Cairo.

3.2. Historical Background

Many scholars have placed the Ikhwan, along with other modern Muslim reform movements, within the broader theoretical context of bourgeoning nation-states and modernity, rather than in notions of traditional Islam.[20] Olivier Roy in *Globalized Islam* states that "re-Islamization" is an effort at establishing identity, and that instead of seeing these movements as a backlash against Westernization, they should be seen as one of its consequences (Roy 2006, 19). Its appeal is to members of the middle to upper-middle classes, whose top leaders are business elites (Wickham 2015; Kandil 2012). In this section, I provide a brief history of the Ikhwan, situating them historically as a reaction to colonialism, first paying attention to their relationship to the state. In Chapter 2, "The Military and Neoliberal Economy," I provide a brief history of the politico-economic consequences of opening up the economy under the Washington Consensus, from the time of Abdel-Nasser until the overthrow of Mubarak during the Arab Uprising. I focus here on the Ikhwan in the context of this history, and then pick up after Mubarak when

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[20] See the works of Olivier Roy and Giles Kepel

the Ikhwan came to power under Morsi. I argue that their social and charitable work, valorization of a neoliberal political economy, and even its construction of masculinity are modes of a modern social and political organization, drawing parallels with the religious right in the United States.

The Ikhwan formed during the colonial era in 1928 as a response to colonialism, modernization, and what the Ikhwan's founder Hassan al-Banna saw as decadence of a Western-controlled society and a public deterioration of the Islamic language, culture, and identity (Wickham 2015, 20–22). For the Ikhwan, Islam was seen as a culturally rooted alternative and mode of resistance to colonial hegemony. The implementation of shari'a and the performance of public piety contained within itself not only the seeds of revolution, but also an expression that predated enlightenment-era notions of universal rights and freedom. An Ikhwani newspaper of the era states: "If the French Revolution decreed the rights of man and declared for freedom, equality and brotherhood, and if the Russian Revolution brought closer the classes and social justice for people, the great Islamic revolution decreed all that 1,300 years before" (quoted in Wickham 2015, 23).

Al-Banna was writing at a time when modernity was facing a crisis, with rising dictatorships, the emergence of communism and fascism, the First and Second World Wars, not to mention the hypocrisy of colonialism that exploited the Third World to the benefit of its imperial masters. Wickham details al-Banna's proselytization in street cafes' in urban Cairo. Though she doesn't concentrate on the class differences, it is obvious that

al-Banna is preaching to the middle and upper-middle classes, not the peasantry or working class. During this era, Cairo was an urban capital city that contained the colonial administration, local handlers, and a local bourgeoisie that helped rule Egypt on behalf of the colonial masters.

The local bourgeoisie's relationship to the peasantry is colonial in nature, seeing peasants as the colonialists see them, "being mired in inertia and sterility" (Fanon 2007, 65). This divide isn't the pre-modern divide between urban and rural, but one of an urban bourgeoisie of young, colonial-educated, nationalist elite that now seeks its independence. However, Fanon points to the inadequacy of this nationalist bourgeoisie who has benefited and risen as a class from colonial contact, but not without the same adventuresome and risk-taking disposition as the colonists. He describes them as an "underdeveloped bourgeoisie," without much economic understanding, without the know-how of "industrialists or financiers," since the economy was developed and controlled by the colonial regime (Fanon 2007, 98–99).

In the bourgeoning nation-state of Egypt, a *petit bourgeois* class of native anti-colonial nationalists collectively termed "the new *effendiya*" "struggled to escape…paternalistic colonial politics…[and the] sexualization, feminization, and temporalization of the East as Other" (Jacob 2011, 3). Mustafa Kamil, an early nationalist and social reformer recounts his dismay at the colonial exhibits of the world exhibitions held in Belgium and France. Embarrassed at the depictions of lazy and feminized Egyptians as "hashish-smoking donkey cart drivers" and of exotic belly dancers, "he felt it presented visitors with a picture of Egyptians as content in their backwardness" (3).

Most of his ire, however, "was directed at the representation of the East as a feminized and sexualized body," quoting Kamil, "as if the East was famous only for dancing" (3).

The *effendi* (pl. *effendiya*) is a mark of title in nobility in the Ottoman Empire, designated to clerics and government bureaucrats of rank. In Egypt at the turn of the century, the "new *effendi*" "designated groups of men who approximated a cultural bourgeoisie" (4), rearticulating what it means to be an Egyptian free from colonialism from the embarrassingly "backward" elements of their own society.

It is in this context of rapid social change that al-Banna founded the Ikhwan, directing his proselytization to what he thought were the wayward ways of urbane Cairenes who were losing their culture, identity, and independence. Wickham details the proselytization done in the coffee shops, among "schoolmates," "office workers" until the movement "encompassed society as a whole" (Wickham 2015, 23). Most of the countryside still spoke colloquial Egyptian, wore local clothes, and lived in extended kin communities, with an esoteric Sufi Islam as their central identity. According to al-Banna, it was the rich urbanites that enjoyed Western music, "decadent" Western films, and "aping" western ways with "the free mixing of men and women" at political parties (Wickham 2015, 22). The Ikhwan organized to mitigate against what they saw as impious Western decadence, and to organize under Islam rather than either communism or capitalism.

The movement spurred Egyptians to root themselves in an Islamic identity and history which opened up new possibilities for Egypt away from the two hegemonic systems of the day—capitalism and communism, both systems being perpetuated by

imperial powers. As Timothy Mitchell observes, Egypt as a nascent nation-state had to formulate an identity rooted in a past while also closing off other possibilities, whether they be Ottoman, French, or British, by "recasting... local history as the history of an Egyptian nation, so the wider... past and the alternative histories it contained, were forgotten or overwritten by the newer identities..." (T. Mitchell 2002, 13). As the Ikhwan drew on an Islamic identity, the Free Officers in Egypt drew on nationalist Pan-Arab ethnic and linguistic identity, bringing together Muslims as well as the minority Coptic Egyptian population (10%) in the new state. Mitchell cites Colonel Gamal Abdel-Nasser as one of the main leaders who "recast" this new Egyptian history—galvanizing a Pan-Arabism that not only included local and Christian histories, but to the dismay of Islamists, expressly played down the Islamic in order to distance Egypt from its Ottoman past.

As Colonel Gamal Abdel-Nasser consolidated power, extremist Islamists reacted violently, upset with the failure for their bid for power while using a language of universal Islam, as though other Egyptians who disagreed with their platform were not Muslims. They accused Abdel-Nasser of treason, and a splinter group within the Ikhwan tried to assassinate him. Abdel-Nasser made the Ikhwan an illegal organization, disbanding the group under severe repression. Since then, the military has stayed in power while the Ikhwan has been politically sidelined.

When Sadat came to power, his "openness" policy allowed for dialogue, with the Ikhwan on one end of the table and Washington on the other. During the Mubarak regime, the Ikhwan were allowed to organize their social services programs, providing

much-needed services. Neoliberalism had opened up the economy to foreign investment, but in turn it handed the economy over to international banking and corporations. Land owners and those who could take advantage as intermediaries of foreign capital made huge profits, but in the process created huge wealth disparities and broke the power of unions and labor.

The uprising on January 25th 2011 that led to the eventual ouster of Mubarak must be seen in this political-economic context. It was not only about freedom, dignity, and democracy, or the curtailing of corruption that puts personal interest at the expense of the national. The "Day of Rage" was a groundswell reaction to long-standing structural reform with associated social rights including an increase of the minimum wage, broader labor rights, rights to organize, and mass redistribution. Labor groups have been organizing in Egypt since the time of Abdel-Nasser but beaten down under neoliberalism. The noted Egyptian Marxist Samir Amin estimates that around 4 to 5 million people of the working class are currently organized into trade unions, "with precise demands in regards to wages, conditions of labor, pensions.... there is [also] the movement of small peasants who are resisting the process of dispossession to the benefit of the rich peasants, accelerated by the neoliberal policies" (Amin, 2012).

The frontlines of the "Day of Rage" were organized by the April 6th Movement, a group that mobilized around the right to strike of textile workers in 2006. In 2006, Mubarak sent in the police to crush strikers, killing three in the city and injuring dozens more in response to workers' demands for increased profit sharing and better retirement benefits. The social media backlash against Mubarak brought the strike into the national

consciousness, setting the stage for his eventual overthrow. As Susan Ossman notes in her work on the Arab Spring, social media didn't start the revolution; rather, on-the-ground networks were already in place and ready to use these newly-available online tools to mobilize protestors (Ossman, personal correspondence).

After Mubarak

The military took control after Mubarak's ouster, and it soon became clear that the only organized political opposition was the Muslim Brotherhood. The April 6th movement along with many of the secular opposition groups called for delayed elections so that civil society could establish itself, knowing that an immediate election would benefit established parties—and the Brotherhood in particular. The leading opposition candidate, Mohammed Baradei, removed himself as a presidential candidate when elections were being rushed through before the formation of a constitution or the time needed to establish political parties and their associated platforms. Ideally, for real democratic change, the leftists demanded a new constitution and protracted elections so they could organize; only then could there be free and fair elections. None of this happened. Instead, elections were called quickly. Morsi and the Brotherhood took over the parliament and then the presidency, and the group consolidated power as soon as they had the chance.

It is worth noting that there was an early split within the Brotherhood on this issue. While the Old Guard demanded the right to take complete power, the New Guard fought for the right to build national coalitions, maintain an inclusive power structure, and operate in a more generally democratic manner than the party's older conservative faction. The New Guard is perhaps best represented by Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh,

who broke off and started the "Strong Party" in Egypt. It is important to remember that far from being a monolithic entity, Islamist politics have multiple configurations in Egypt; the Brotherhood and Morsi represents just one politico-economic-religious configuration.

Morsi's rhetoric during this period placated the military and police forces by touting them as defenders of the state, trying to appease these power centers who had the capability to overthrow him while trying to appropriate these arms of the state for the Brotherhood's own power. Particularly in the case of the police, instead of trying those who were responsible for torture and killing during the revolution (as many of the protesters wanted), he buried the complaints and used the security apparatus now at his disposal to go after the Brotherhood's opponents. All of this backfired almost a year later when the Brotherhood was overthrown.

Economically, neoliberal policies not only continued under Morsi, but were in fact expanded, with an increased zeal and urgency that helped placate business interests in Cairo as well as the United States. For instance, the deputy chairman of the Brotherhood at the time, Khairat el-Shater, a multimillionaire businessman, promoted an Islamized idea of free-market capitalism with a Weberian-Protestant work ethic. Another Brotherhood financier, Hassan Malek, was quoted in an interview with Reuters as saying that the Brotherhood "want to attract as much foreign investment as possible... and this needs a big role for the private sector" (Fayed 2011). Malek was even quoted praising Mubarak's finance minister, who "knew how to attract foreign investment" and who enacted policies one could learn from. This minister was known for reducing taxes,

curtailing the power of unions, and following the normative developmental economic model coming out of Washington.

The uprising was built on economic demands made by labor forces, but instead of securing a sovereign future that focused on labor rights and redistribution, as the protestors were demanding, the Brotherhood tried to co-opt the state for its own power to bring in an imagined utopic future (Kandil 2012, 255).

Though the Ikhwan won the recent elections, ultimately the structural basis of the Egyptian state did not change. The three centers of power—the military, police, and civilian—stayed the same. Though superficially it seemed that the civilian government was in control, the military had stayed firmly in power. The Brotherhood took over civilian power with an alliance of the military, but it was their continuation of Mubarak's economic policy which led to the mass movement against them.

When working within a secular authoritarian state, the Ikhwan could conveniently lay blame on the government for the nation's failures, locating it in the dual nemesis of corruption and God's displeasure. They sought to overcome this by working hard, educating themselves and running successful businesses in the global market while promoting redistribution as pious humanitarianism—even though it became painfully obvious that these actions would not be enough to solve Egypt's structural crisis. Zakat, at 2.5% of one's wealth, could not outpace Egypt's rising inflation rates, which had climbed to about 10% per year. Nor could it replace the need for a stable and functioning government to either raise taxes or borrow money in order to curb the national deficit.

The Brotherhood's combination of religious rhetoric, neoliberal economic policies, and vision of the role of the state is eerily similar to the religious right in the United States. It is telling that Senator John McCain and then-Senator John Kerry opened the Egyptian stock exchange on their visit to the country in June 2011. It is also telling that after the overthrow of Morsi, both John McCain and Republican Senator Lindsey Graham travelled to Egypt and rebuked the military for the coup, asking the government to reinstate Morsi as the legitimate, civilian, democratically-elected leader. Since September 11, 2001, Christian conservatives and Zionists have railed against Brotherhood "conspiracies," the organization's putative association with Al-Qaida, and its plot not only to destroy Israel but to take over the world. These critics expected the Brotherhood to take power and rail against the United States by forging alliances with the radical left. Instead, the Ikhwan ingratiated themselves with the neoliberal right.

Mohammad Morsi, the overthrown Muslim Brotherhood president of Egypt, rose in the organization on a platform of "Islam is the solution," which included zakat and its on-the-ground charitable practices. Morsi was praised for his piety, his intelligence as an engineer, his efforts to show up to *fajr* prayers at sunrise in the mosque, and for establishing trust that he would root out corruption and cure Egypt of its ills. The Ikhwan also saw al-Azhar as corrupted by the state, misusing and manipulating the shari'a. However, as soon as the Brotherhood took power, they began to make the same capitulations the state had over the last thirty years—neoliberal reform in favor of a stable currency, a growing market, and foreign investment. With inflation on the rise after the overthrow of Mubarak, Morsi's team in September 2012 "overcame its initial objections

to accepting an interest-bearing loan from the International Monetary Fund" of $4.8bn in a bid to stabilize the currency (Daragahi 2012). On June 9th, 2013, during growing protests over proposed cuts to food and gas subsidies, the *Financial Times* wrote about how close Morsi was to closing the IMF deal. About a month later, Morsi was overthrown by a military coup, in precisely the same way and for precisely the same reason as Mubarak: unchecked power and economic failure.

3.3. Ibrahim The Ikhwani

The summer of 2011 was a time of exuberance and openness in Egypt, with freedom of speech and political organization at their height. The future seemed bright and open. After the ouster of Mubarak a few months earlier, the Ikhwan began organizing politically as the Freedom and Justice Party. Rallies were held at Tahrir Square by liberals, secularists, Copts, communists, Nasserists, and the Islamists. The Islamists were also splintering into three main factions: the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists, and the moderate Strong Party of Monem Aboul Fotouh, a former Ikhwan member who broke off to form a more liberal Islamist party. I went to Tahrir one evening and saw all of these different organizations setting up stages and audio rigs, complete with party platforms, slogans, and fliers. Street vendors were out selling everything from water to steamed corn, roasted nuts, and even cotton candy. Families were out with their children, circling around Tahrir in this carnival of ideas.

I enrolled in an Arabic-language institute in Cairo and it took about two weeks for Ibrahim, my tutor, to "come out." But this was the new Egypt, where the Ikhwan were open and preaching directly to the people: there was no need to hide one's political affiliations. In fact, I soon found out that the whole language institute was Ikhwani, though there was nothing obvious or any signage that indicated their affiliation. The men were dressed in slacks and dress shirts, typical of the outfits worn by any Egyptian professional. There were women working in the office, all in hijab and clothes that covered everything except the face, hands, and maybe feet. Some of the young girls were also in hijab but wearing form-fitting jeans and tops common among the youth in Cairo.

By this time, my tutor trusted me and I showed interest in his role and the organization. He explained that every Friday after prayers, he volunteered in his neighborhood—something would be going on that needed organizing, either a food or clothing drive, gas canister program, or health clinic. In Egypt, Friday and Saturday is the weekend, Friday being the day of congregation and rest for Muslims. Mosques are filled during the noon prayer for the weekly sermon, and soon enough I was invited to Friday prayer in Ibrahim's neighborhood, to observe his voluntarism, and then to join his family for dinner. This arrangement carried on and off for almost six weeks.

The first Friday that I came, the Ikhwan had organized a used-clothing market on the top floor of a mosque in the afternoon. Ibrahim explained to me the good relationship the Ikhwan had with this mosque, which was filled with members who "were good people and enjoyed serving the poor, but were not Ikhwan." I met Ibrahim after prayers and made my way to the market on the third floor. As I saw the extremely cheap prices, 1

or 2, sometimes 5, ginah for an item, I asked why they don't just give it away if they are serving the poor, and he responded: "To maintain their dignity. When they pay, even if it is a little, they are not taking charity but buying something." I later learned that most of their programs are set up this way—the gas canister program, the vegetable market, and today's used clothing market.

Volunteers were gathering, both men and women, and it is here that I first met Ibrahim's wife, who was wearing a traditional *galabiya* with a hijab and a green Ikhwan sash around her shoulders. The Ikhwan have a notion of gender norms surrounding the family, where men are responsible for being breadwinners and women for managing the home and taking care of the children. In public, men and women can interact in professional settings, as long as each sex maintains proper decorum, limiting interaction to professional contexts and what is deemed necessary (*durura*). Customers at the used clothing market were men and women, and so were the volunteers; they could talk about prices as well as conduct sales, interacting as a necessary means of transaction. Though this is what they claim, in reality their behavior and practice is much more flexible. At the Arabic school, a young girl behind the counter, though wearing hijab, was dressed in fashionable jeans and a top, always smiling, and very talkative. She would talk to me every time I went to the institute, and no one would blink an eye. At the used clothing market of the Sisters Division, one particular woman, also an Arabic tutor, spent time showing me around as well as asking how my studies were going. Necessity, or *durura*, is relative and contextual, moving the boundaries of gender interaction in response to changing work conditions.

All the female volunteers were wearing this sash, along with a few of the men. Ibrahim explained that this division of the Ikhwan were actually the "Sisters" division of the Muslim Brotherhood, or the "Muslim Sisters." Until then, I never even heard of such a division, but I was impressed by their level of organization and professionalism. I learned later on that Ibrahim and his wife were in charge of the Sister's division in this particular neighborhood, and that his wife had a more important role than he did.

Ibrahim invited me to dinner one evening. Usually his wife prepares the meals and sits down to eat with him and their three children, whose ages range from 2 to 12. On this occasion, however, though his wife had prepared the meal, she was downtown for a regional Muslim Sisters meeting. He was home with the kids. "We are not like the Salafis," he tells me, "who say women have to stay at home…they are 'hypocrites' since their wives work too—in Egypt, everyone has to work." He took great pride in the education of his children, recounting all the accomplishments of his daughter from her Quran memorizations to her achievements at school in reading, math, and especially art. On my next visit two years later, I was sure to bring her a drawing set including large format watercolor paper and colored pens.

The mosque was located next to what can be described as a small shanty town in this particular suburb. The dwellings were semi-permanent structures built with what looked like scrap material and mud filling. Ibrahim explained that this settlement was illegal and will soon be razed since it is built on a major gas line running through the neighborhood. Nevertheless, it was the poorest of the poor who lived there and Ibrahim not only decried their situation but was outraged at the luxury development right across

Figure 4. View of shanty town built illegally over a major gas line. View from Mosque with Cairo's commuter railway visible. Hizbt Nakhl. Photo by the author.

the railroad tracks. In this neighborhood, basic infrastructure was hastily built, shoddy, or

nonexistent. Roads would end in mud streets, open gutters, and tracks of multi-story

buildings whose facades had not been completed but people had moved in. There may

have been running water, but there were no gas lines coming in. Some sewers were left

open. Ibrahim blamed all of these issues on the government and its level of corruption. I

could only think rapid urbanization and a regulatory regime that could not keep up

demand. What became clear after the election of Morsi and the rule of the Ikhwan one

year later is that a semi-peripheral state with a neoliberal economy will inevitably have

high levels of inequality. Most people in Egypt make less than two dollars a day, which

strongly determines the conditions in which they live. Ibrahim, a highly educated

graduate of Cairo University in Arabic grammar, teaches at a private school during the year and at this Arabic institute during the summer making $1 per hour. Can conditions change through a lack of corruption and increased piety? Can inequality be dealt with through on-the-ground "humanitarian interventions"? It was clear that while these on-the-ground interventions help make people's lives better, and improve neighborly relations and sociability, they are no substitute for better jobs, increased pay, and major infrastructural projects. This would not be possible without major politico-economic infrastructural change.

On another particular Friday, the Ikhwan had organized a free medical clinic after prayers. A local clinic generously donated this particular afternoon to free care with volunteer doctors, nurses and pharmacists. The Ikhwan brought bags of donated medicines, set up a sign-in desk, and began taking patients. I asked why they were people signing their names and phone numbers someone explained that later on in the week they would call the patients and ask "if there is anything else that they needed." Ibrahim told me that during the week they take food parcels to the elderly and follow up with people regarding anything else they needed. From medicines, clothes, food, and even school supplies, they would follow up with those they helped and make sure they were okay, bringing people together in neighborliness and community around a shared sense of Islamic identity and action through piety. After about an hour and half into the free clinic program, Ibrahim picked up a microphone and began preaching in the waiting room. He asked God to heal the sick and grant patience to the families, a prayer that was well received by women in the room. As Hirchkind notes, the very soundscape of Cairo is

filled with the cadences of these kinds of prayers, injunctions to do good, alongside the rhythm of the Quran (2006). An impromptu sermon is not only appropriate, but fits into the affective rhythm of life in Cairo.

Figure 5. Ibrahim preaching from the waiting room of the hospital.

In an interesting work in Indonesia, Rudnyckyj explores the intersection of national neoliberal development with religious discipline and the training of steel workers (Rudnyckyj 2014). The "Emotional and Spiritual Quotient" program combines an inculcation of Islamic piety, popular psychology, and "best practices" management training. In a global steel market that challenges the mill's competitiveness, ESQ internalizes these threats to employees that can manage them through increased piety and discipline. Further research is necessary to examine the practices of Ikhwan-led industrial projects more comprehensively in order to explain how they incorporate neoliberal sensibilities and Islamic piety in such settings. Mona Atia is one who has looked at the

sermons of Egyptian televangelists and the incorporation of such sensibilities in development work. For one such organization, zakat funds have been moved over from the simple redistribution of funds to the poor to broader institutional development programs. Scholars at al-Azhar have given fatwas stating that funds can be used for such purposes, including "self-sufficiency" programs and "job creation," where charity administrators now talk of making poor "active and entrepreneurial" instead of "lazy and dependent" (Atia 2012, 18–19). Echoing Fassin, Atia notes that, along with this discourse, neoliberal hierarchies are created with the "deserving" versus "undeserving" poor along with a "declining empathy" for the poor (Atia 2012, 19). This is a radical departure from the traditional view of zakat as a simple redistributive mechanism between the rich and the poor at a nominal rate of 2.5%. This "financial worship" was seen as a part of religious practice, whereas in contemporary times it has been seen as a "liberalization" of its definition, changing the relationship between rich and poor (Benthall 1999, 11–12). Additionally, in this neoliberal economic situation, it is clear that zakat cannot solve the economic woes of ordinary Egyptians without also addressing the structural problems that create the conditions in the first place.

I saw many of the same people volunteering in the medical clinic that I also saw at the used clothing market. Everyone I was introduced to was some kind of professional: lawyers, doctors, teachers, and even professors. Most knew some English, a few were conversational. One particular person, a young, energetic and jovial person named Mustafa, seemed to know everyone. Ibrahim and Mustafa were close associates, exchanging glances and succinct instructions as people who have worked together for a

long time normally do. It was obvious that Mustafa was also a leader and organizer, at least in this part of Cairo. After the day at the clinic, Mustafa pulled up in his car with his wife and Ibrahim's wife and kids. Ibrahim had loaded the car with left-over supplies and an Ikhwan banner that read "Free Doctors' Visit," and underneath in a smaller typeface:

Figure 6. Used Clothing Market. Photo by the author.

"brought to you by the Muslim Brotherhood." Mustafa was a local businessman and financier of the Ikhwan. Having a car signifies upper-middle class status. Ibrahim didn't have one—almost no one living in that neighborhood did. People would take the train, walk, or take a three-wheel "took-took." Ibrahim asked me one day if I had one car or two (Americans are known to have two cars). I told him both my wife and I work, and we have two cars; he just looked down and nodded his head. He didn't ask what kind of car,

make or model. The people I met in Egypt never talk about such things. The make, model, or age of the vehicle didn't signify status—simply having a car skyrocketed you to a status that someone making a dollar an hour could never dream of achieving.

It wasn't clear to me that the Ikhwan were an organization that perpetuated neoliberal development at this time. However, it was very clear that they respected educated professionals and business leaders: the hierarchy was clear. He would introduce me as his student, "a professor from America." I tried to correct him the first few times until I figured out what was going on. Professionals were disciplined and knew how to organize; business leaders were counted on as financiers. What struck me was the level of hard work and dedication mixed with sobriety that bore a remarkable resemblance to Weber's description of the Protestant ethic.

Ibrahim was a tireless worker, answering his phone multiple times a day for "no other reward than from Allah" (with the side benefit of social capital). Some days he would come into class exhausted, telling me of emergency visits to break up a domestic dispute or a visit with a patient in the hospital into the early morning. He would teach me a few of their mantras, the most eloquent being *Man jadda wa jad* (he who strives must succeed), writing the phrase in beautiful Arabic calligraphy in my notebook. On another occasion, he reiterated this phrase this among a group of Ikhwan volunteers, who all nodded their heads in recognition. As Elyachar explains in her work on NGOs and the development of craft workshops in Cairo, the idea of the markets and hard work isn't necessarily a western one (Elyachar 2012, 15). The very distinction between the "West" and the "Orient" relies on tropes of laziness, backwardness, and inefficiency that serve

more to create a distinct Western identity than to describe anything about the Orient itself.

Masculinity and the Nation

During our language tutoring sessions, Ibrahim would casually tell me about his weekend plans with his kids, show me a picture of his young son in a soccer uniform, or of his daughter doing an art project—all activities organized by the Ikhwan. From his work as a language instructor, to his social work in his neighborhood, to the activities of his children, it was as though his whole life revolved around this network of friends and colleagues. As someone in charge of the Sisters division, he invited me to one of their midweek afternoon activities. I accompanied a group of girls with Ibrahim, making us the *de facto* chaperones at a local park. The girls played in various ways, from a game of soccer to a leisurely stroll. During breaks, they received religious instruction on the importance of exercise and good health.

On another occasion, Ibrahim took his son to a local sports complex where the boys were preparing for a weekend travelling to Port Said for a national Ikhwan soccer tournament. The sports complex featured a gym with weights and also an open soccer field where a few hundred boys gathered to practice. Kids, anywhere between ages seven and sixteen, were being bused in from other areas of Cairo. Complete with uniforms, referees' and coaches, it looked like any other youth soccer league. Some of the older boys looked like they were ready to go professional. The enthusiasm of soccer in Cairo cannot be underestimated. One evening, since the political situation was still precarious, someone in my apartment informed me of a riot in downtown that had just occurred. A

few people had been shot dead. Since I didn't have a television (nor did many people in Cairo) we rushed to the main street to a café we knew had a television. A large crowd had already gathered looking inside at the screen. At one point I could hear the crowd screaming. (*It must be bad*, I thought: *Is the military sending in the tanks?*) As I approached, however, I soon realized that the crowd consisted of fanatical "ultras"[21] watching a soccer match between cross-town rivals Ahly verses Zamalek.

Jacob recounts how the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, in 1939, writes about the importance of Scouting and a shift in Islamist "political and cultural discourse from a secular territorial nationalism toward pan-Arabism and pan Islamism" (Jacob 2011, 108). Scouting was made popular by the British, and the colonial regime which supported the establishment of sports complexes, gymnasiums, and swimming pools, constitutive of not only the colonial subject but also reflecting the self-image of the colonizer. In a process of indigenization, Pan-Arabists and Islamists recast Scouting as a philosophy rooted in ancient Arab culture, arguing that "historically the Arabs completely embodied the ideals of Scouting and also trained their children in its ways" (109).

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[21] Ultras are ultra fanatical sports fans, being associated with a particular club. In Egypt, Ultra's constitute a political force second to the Muslim Brotherhood. See el Deeb Sarah, "Egypt: 38 Soccer Fans Charged with Violence," *USA TODAY*, March 14, 2013

In 1939, Hassan al-Banna wrote "Scouting and Islam," an article published in the

monthly *al-Muntakhab* about the virtues of scouting and its embodiment in Prophetic

practice. "Isn't this why Islam came?" extols Banna, to "develop the individual on

physical, emotional, moral, rational, and social planes?" (cited in Jacob 2011, 109).

Banna also reinterprets a *hadith,* "you have a duty to your body," which he argues has

been "resignified within a modern discourse of *riyada.*" Banna continues: "He…was

indeed a model of the perfect creation: a sturdy build, strong muscles, powerful energy,

and a mighty will constituted his noble body." Jacob calls the prophet in Banna's

recasting the "Uber Scout," who "exceled at horse riding, archery, and wrestling. He was

also generous, compassionate and wise." Quoting Banna again, "anyone who has read the

rules of scouting…and also knows the principles, commandments, and spirit of Islam,

knows how Scouting fits within Islam" (109).

Though the Ikhwan is seen as a conservative organization, its political project and

subjectivizing mode is rooted in modernity. The Pan-Islamist project and Banna's notion

of Scouting is "recognizable by others as one shaped by the struggle between the colonial

state and nationalists" (109). Banna's notion of a proper Islamic masculinity is made

explicit in a 1934 article, quoting in full from Jacob:

> *You saw in the previous article that the Society of Muslim Brothers was at the forefront of productive societies with regard to public works and benevolent foundations: from mosques, schools and committees of charity and piety, to lessons, lectures, speeches, sermons, and clubs dedicated to both word and deed. However the nations in struggle [al-umam al-mujahida] who face a new renaissance and are passing through a serious period of transition and who desire to build their future lives on a solid foundation that would guarantee to the ensuing generation comfort and happiness and who demand the restitution of denied rights and pillaged [maghsub] honor are in need of a different structure*

than these. [These nations] are in utmost need of self-formation [bana' al-nufus], construction of character [tashiid al-akhlaq] and the impression of their sons with a proper masculine disposition [taba' abna'ha 'ala khuluq al-rujula al-sahiha] in order for them to persist when an obstacle stands in their way and overcome the difficulties that confront them. Man is the secret of the life of nations and the source of their renaissances. The history of all nations is a history made by men who are the most outstanding in strength of self [al-aqwiya' al-nufus] and will power. The strength or weakness of nations is measured by their capacity [khusubatiha] to produce men who possess within themselves the conditions of proper masculinity. I believe—and history supports me—that it is in the power of one man to build a nation if his masculinity is in order [in sahat rujulatuhu]. It is also in his power to destroy a nation if this masculinity was heading in the direction of destruction rather than construction. (109–110).

The connection between the nation and a strong masculine character is clear. Jacob argues that this idea of masculinity is constitutive of the modern Egyptian nation-state, combining pre-modern Arab ideas of manliness, or *futuwwa,* with more rigid British colonial ones. Notions of masculinity, discussed and shared first through newspapers and later through radio, became normative and shared across anti-colonialists, pan-Arabists, and pan-Islamists.

Jacob historicizes what it means to be a man in Egypt at the turn of the of 19th century, anchoring it as a change of gender norms that "emerged at the intersection of colonial modernity and nationalism as effendi masculinity… located in a new constellation of practices and discourses around the desirable, modern body" (Jacob 2011, 231). *Futuwwa,* translated as "youthful masculinity," has its pre-modern notions in Arabo-Islamic culture, as a "legacy of an authentic Egyptian heroism… [with] the luster of [the] "big man" of the hara (neighborhood)" (230–31). Though less common in women, *futuwwa* could "be a form of masculinity inhabited by or inhabiting a man or woman."

Pre-modern notions of *futuwwa* include "chivalry, honor, generosity, and brotherhood," and in "classical Islam came to signify a path of self-cultivation, a mode of personhood, and a form of collective organization with varying religious, social, political, and economic consequences" (234). In the Abbasid Caliphate, a "courtly form of futuwwa was inaugurated" and "passed on to Mamluk Egypt... surviving in weak rituals and bestowal of the "garment of the futuwwa" (235). Orientalists have studied *futuwwa,* relying on various sources, but in ambiguous social circumstances "contingent on the location of the author historically and geographically" (235).

Jacob analyzes masculinity through a Foucauldian genealogical method of subject formation and weds it to a Marxist analysis of the ideology of the colonial state apparatus. As such, masculinity is constructed along four "moving planes": (1) a late nineteenth-century British discourse on masculinity and empire; (2) an "explicitly nationalist discourse on Egyptian masculinity"; (3) the performance of such masculinity from "scouting and competitive sports to sex talk and fashion; and (4) the pre-modern notion of *al-futuwwa* that "struggles to maintain intelligibility as a subject within or over and against the biopower of colonial modernity and British or effendi nationalist iterations of sovereignty" (6). The multiplicity, variations, and local articulations of *futuwwa* slip into discourses of thuggery (the *beltagi)* and explicitly get sidelined under a nation-building strategy that relegates violence to its own power structures, under "a strategy of 'constitutive exclusion' essential to the historical process of working out modern Egypt" (229).

Jacob raises the previously undertheorized issue of an emergent masculinity of the 20th century that is rooted in colonial and nationalist discourses that make their way into secular as well as religious anti-colonial movements—including Hassan al-Banna and the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Banna is famous for his preaching in the *sheesha* cafes of Cairo, an unlikely place for sermonizing but fitting for the modern Muslim activist. Gathering up wayward youth, Al-Banna instilled discipline combined with preaching in creating this Islamic yet modern subject.

Men and women, volunteering and working in a modern nation, have reconfigured notions of gender, including masculinity, which is different from the more flexible forms of *futuwwa* before the colonial contact. Ibrahim the Ikhwani embodies the ethic of the hardworking breadwinner, a type of man that the Ikhwan emphasizes: He doesn't smoke *sheesha* or waste his time away in cafes, but rather sees himself as working hard for a better future for his family, his community, and his nation.

Ibrahim's charitable practices in a poor suburb of Cairo is mediated through the bureaucracy and organization of this modern Islamist movement. Givers and receivers are reconfigured, where deserving subjects are disciplined through the ethics of the organization and its priorities. As a modern bureaucratic body, its interest in the welfare of the people clashes with the maintenance and reproduction of the organization. This was most clearly illustrated when the Ikhwan were part of the state during the time of Morsi, using the state apparatus to justify repression and to crush dissent against its rule

during a time of economic decline. The Ikhwan provide a good example of how politico-economic context drives certain priorities and also conditions the reading of Islamic texts—in this case within their objective of Islamizing society (along their vision) and capturing the state.

3.4. Hamza and the Caliphate

Most of our imams seemed to like Morsi since he was democratically elected, Muslim, and sincere, but acknowledged that the interest-bearing economic loan was troubling. I returned to Cairo in April 2014, during the Spring semester at al-Azhar. One evening, I met with Hamza, Rami—the Sufi imam featured in Chapter 4—and some of the other students after class at Abu-Layla, the fresh juice spot in Mokattam.

Figure 7. Abu Layla, the fresh juice spot in Mokattam.

Rami began to tell us about the protests at al-Azhar between September 2013 and December 2013. The westerners all avoided the protests or getting involved in politics. It was difficult even talking about it since the Ikhwan had been declared illegal and any sign of political activity was cracked down upon. Rami and Hamza had one goal: to finish their studies and get out! Nevertheless, Rami described his classroom as he came in for an examination one day. "The glass was still broken, with bricks and rocks in the room with shattered glass. A protest had happened a day before, and no one cared to clean it up!" Rami was referring to the chaotic situation after the overthrow of Morsi, where protests began flaring up all around Egypt, to no avail. The military began to crackdown. There was no more room for agitation. At al-Azhar, over 4,000 students protested and over 40 were arrested (Ahram 2013).

Hamza brought up the issue of an "Islamic state"—not the ISIS of Iraqi infamy, but the idea of having a proper Islamic government. It would be a few months later that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria would hold headlines, and a few months more before it became a household name.

"I haven't given up on the Caliphate," says Hamza. "A leader to unite the *ummah*."

"What is a Caliph?" I ask Hamza.

"The leader of the Muslim world," responds Hamza. The others are now listening in, not sure where this is going.

"Who would be the Caliph?" I ask, "Which person will unite the Muslim world? Sheikh al-Azhar? The Mufti of Egypt? The Nour (Salafi) Party had a candidate, what about him?"

Another student, Furhan, spoke up. He was a British student who came to al-Azhar from Syria after the civil war broke out. He also holds a politics degree from Cambridge University.

"The Caliph is the Muslim dictator," he says craftily. "Muslims think they can have this dictator and everything will be fine. But what Egypt needs is a growth of civil society before they can ever have a democratically elected leader."

Furhan picked up on the problem of figuring out how a leader will be chosen, while at the same time responding with Mohamed ElBaradei's exact critique of the Egyptian situation: when you have a military dictatorship for 50 years, with only the Ikhwan as an organized civil society group, you need to give time for other organizations to develop, to create platforms and a strategy, and to build membership by organizing.

Furhan and I were advocating for some kind of democratic oversight. I, as a Western "academic," was seen as naturally biased, but I asked certain questions that Hamza could not answer: How does one choose a certain party over the other? Isn't the fact that we are having this conversation good? I also pointed to particular problems that Morsi was having to illustrate my point. What gives the stamp of religious authority or divine plan to an electrification project in Egypt? How is an economy planned with limited resources and limited tax revenue? Is it the job of the state to collect zakat and redistribute it, or should it be left to the people? Isn't it best to have all parties come to a

table and decide these things without having to give divine legitimacy to one over the other?

Furhan chimed in and said that the method to resolving such questions in Islam is called *shura*, or group consultation. He then went on to make an "Islamic" case for a democratically elected leader and parliament. Most of the other students at this point just listened, not sure what to make of it. Everyone could agree, however, that the freedom to discuss such matters and the very idea of an election were good things.

I closed the conversation echoing Furhan. "The Caliph is a dictator." Some of the other American Azhari students started to chuckle.

"I think most Muslims would be OK with a dictator," I continue, "but only if it was the Prophet Muhammad. But he is not here with us, and there are Muslims from all over the world, with different ideas. Let candidates emerge, talk openly about their ideas, and let Muslims choose."

As a researcher in Cairo, I try to observe and listen, not preach. But on this occasion, I felt as though I had to say something. It seemed that those who called for an Islamic government over-idealized Islam's role in it, without addressing the problem of how to choose this leader—especially one who claims divine authority. The Ikhwan used Islam as a blanket to cover their power grab, such that a critique of that party is equated to a critique of God.

As covered in Chapter 2, the first immigrant Muslim communities in the United States were "inevitably" built on the Protestant model, part of the acculturation process where communities are encouraged to be good American citizens, work hard, and come together as co-religionists. Hamza, along with many of our Azharis, grew up around Mosque communities, and if they didn't, were socialized in the American religious context. Mosques became places to celebrate coming-of-age rituals like weddings and funerals and to create social solidarity through socializing, creating business ties, and even charity. It is inevitable that American modes of religion become enculturated in our American imams.

The purpose of this chapter was to illustrate how political-economic context drives certain "Islamic" priorities, using the case of Imam Hamza and his experience in the US, including Saddleback Church and the Muslim American Society, as an example. As we saw with Morsi and the Ikhwan, the staking of the economy on neoliberal plans ingratiated the group with the American right, speaking the same language of religious conservatism combined with the values of a free market and a hard work ethic. I argue that certain notions of evangelical American religiosity, including social conservatism, a neoliberal economic policy and work ethic, and even notions of masculinity intersect with the Ikhwan in Egypt, making it appealing to students like Hamza.

I close again with Hamza and the American Azharis, reiterating that it is the contemporary conditions, both in the US and Egypt, that intersect with socialization, driving the understanding of the shari'a. In Hamza's case, his appeal to the Caliphate is utopic, a polity where social conservatism and social welfare come together in an

idealistic political economy, without consideration for how the very notion itself is modern.

I describe Hamza as "the Ikhwani," but Imam Sadiq also has Ikhwani sensibilities. Though he is not an official member, he was sympathetic to the group's rise until Muhammad Morsi decided to get an IMF loan, breaking an Islamic principle by taking debt on interest. Nevertheless, Hamza's and Sadiq's social activism, as well as their views on how Islamic politics and religion are articulated in the state, correspond to what they see in the Ikhwan, albeit before Morsi came to power. It also corresponds to how evangelical Christians organize and practice in the US, including their family-centered communities and notions of masculinity, as well as their methods and the reach of their social service programs.

In the next Chapter, I focus on Rami the Sufi, whose American socialization is different from Hamza's, less about social activism and its organizing and politics, and more focused on the inward and spiritual. Having been exposed to Sufi spirituality, Rami's zakat is primarily an expression of personal piety, its act an expression of social solidarity.

4. Rami The Sufi

In this chapter, I feature an American imam, Rami, whose Sufism is a defining characteristic in how he understands Islam, including zakat practice. Sufism is an Islamic spiritual practice more interested in inward spiritual states and personal piety than political action and is one of the predominant forms of Islam in Egypt, centered around the many mosque-shrines all over the country. Like Hamza in the previous chapter, Rami attends al-Azhar and is American, yet his socialization and experience has led him to divergent Islamic practices, shown in his relationship to others as he understands and performs zakat. The case of Rami illustrates the principal thesis of this dissertation, how and why zakat is being transformed by cultural and politico-economic forces, intersecting with the deeply personal and the transnational.

I begin with Rami's background and his pursuit of the *haal,* a spiritual state that puts him in connection to God but also identifies him as a Sufi. Next, I provide a brief historical background of Sufism, a mode of practice traditionally more concerned with ecstatic practices, but in recent times subdued by the textual Sufism of the urban working class. I then accompany Rami to the Mausoleum of Sheikh ash-Shadhili, where he performs zakat and charity as an act of pursuing the *haal* in social solidarity with co-religionists. Though Sufism is seen as politically quietist, I look at how the state has appropriated Sufism as a bulwark against Islamism, especially the threat of the Muslim Brotherhood.

I close by examining zakat in the context of the current neoliberal financial order, first covering the Murabitun—a transnational Sufi movement that understands zakat as part of an Islamic economic system—then looking at usury and interest. In turn, I argue that zakat is incapable of poverty alleviation without addressing the underlying economic order.

4.1. Pursuing the *Haal*

Not too far from where I was staying in Mokattam, off the main thoroughfare that connects old Cairo in the west to New Cairo in the east, sits *Alsayida Nafisa*, a small mosque named after the great-great-granddaughter of the Prophet. A pious woman revered by Sufis and entombed in Cairo, was known for her asceticism, which comprised acts of worship, fasting, and charity that brought her *fanaa'* (enlightenment), a goal of the Sufis. In one account, the governor of Egypt sent her a gift of 100,000 dirhams, saying, "Take this money from me. I ask nothing in return, but I thank Allah for this opportunity to repent. I give this money to you because of your piety." She received the money and "distributed it to the poor until nothing remained" (ash-Sha'rawi n.d.).

Rami, one of the Azhari Americans studying in Cairo, brought me to *Alsayida Nafisa*, to pray the *maghrib* prayer and participate in the recitation of the *Wird 'Amm*, or the daily litany of the *Shadhili* Sufi order. Rami dressed in a long blue *galabiya*; I too had a white one that I bought from the United States. Before we left his apartment, we put on some *oud,* a musky scent that men wear as a cologne. Sufis typically wear *oud* when going to a *dhikr* gathering, during which people will even pass around the small, half-

ounce glass bottle. Rami had many prayer beads hanging on a key hanger near the front door—he took one for himself and gave me one too.

Rami came to al-Azhar after studying economics at UC Irvine, becoming more interested in Islam after encountering devotees of the *shadhili tariqa* and their sheikh Nuh Keller. Rami is of mixed heritage: his mother is "white" and his father immigrated from India in the 1970s. He credits Sheikh Nuh but more importantly Sheikh Hamza, who founded Zaytuna College in Berkley, California, for his renewed interest in Islam. The focus on spirituality was a reprieve from the more "common and dry" Saudi-inspired Salafism present at his home mosque. Both Sheikh Nuh and Sheikh Hamza were Christian American converts to Islam, whose impeccable English as well as cultural understanding of American society helped make Islam more intelligible to Rami. As he delved into their recorded lectures, first on CD or VHS tape and now available on YouTube, he decided to commit himself to the study of Islam at al-Azhar.

The atmosphere of the *Alsayida Nafisa* was intimate: around eight devotees dressed in local *galabiyas* and a few youths in t-shirts and jeans were present at the dimly-lit ceremony. In a rhythmic chanting voice, the devotees go on for about twenty-five minutes reciting the litany given to them by the eponym of the order, or *tariqa,* of Abul Hassan Ash-Shadhili, or simply Sheikh ash-Shadhili (d.1258 AD). Though not a member of the order, Rami attends because he enjoys the *wird.* The *wird* is very simple: in addition to some passages from the Quran establishing the attributes of a merciful and compassionate God, the devotees recite *astaghfiru allah* ("I seek forgiveness from God") 99 times, *Allahumma salli `ala sayyidina Muhammadin,`abidka wa rasulika, an-nabiyyi*

alumiyyi, wa `ala alihi wa sahbihi wa sallim ("O God, bless our master Muhammad, your servant and messenger, the unlettered Prophet, and his family and companions, and grant them peace") 99 times, and then *La ilaha illa Allah* ("There is no God but Allah") another 99 times. Sitting on the floor facing the *qibla* (Mecca as the direction of prayer), chanting rhythmically, their bodies slowly undulate from side to side, in praise of the Prophet and the unity of God, bringing the devotees to a *haal*, a spiritual state of closeness to the divine.

Though Rami is not a *shadhili*, he enjoys the spiritual closeness that the wird gives him.:

"You don't get the *haal* in the classroom, through books and texts, you get it through doing."

"Can you describe this *haal*?" I ask.

"Can I describe love to someone who has not been in love?" There is a pause, though he is smiling, looking straight at me. I turn my head, and nod in agreement.

"I used to get high, smoking marijuana and then go surfing in the morning. Now, I just do this. It's better than getting high—a high without the intoxicants, an intoxication of God through the *wird."*

The pedagogy of al-Azhar encourages students to participate in the practice, as many teachers are Sufi-oriented and members of various orders, the *shadhili* being one of the most popular. After school one day, Rami is excited and tells me of the grand opening of the new mosque and shrine of Abul Ḥassan Ali ash-Shadhili taking place the following week.

"It's a two-day trip; we go south for ten hours on a bus. It's in the middle of the desert where he died on the way to Hajj, and they built his *maqam* [mosque and shrine] there."

"Sounds like a good reason to get out of Cairo," I say, "and visit the real country."

"Yeah, I want to get away too. It will be a good break from school. Seems like a lot of people will be going: Ali Gomaa' will be there as well as Ali Jifri—*big* Sufi gathering."

"We have to go!" I could not pass on the opportunity to visit the *maqam* of the founder of the *shadhili* tariqa, in an organized trip with Azharis, with a grand appearance by Ali Gomaa, the former Mufti of Egypt (2003–2013), and Ali Jifri, a famous preacher and scholar of the Ba'Alawi tariqa.

4.2. Historical Background

O God, if I worship Thee for fear of Hell, burn me in Hell and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise; but if I worship Thee for Thy own sake, grudge me not Thy everlasting beauty. (Rabe'a al-Adawiya)[22]

Sufism—a practice that "emphasize[s] the inward over the outward, intuition over intellect, spiritual contemplation over scholarly debate, and ecstatic poetry over legalis[m]" (Rozehnal 2007, 1)—is over a millennium old in Egypt (Johansen 1996, 3). One of the most famous writers of ecstatic poetry, Jalal al-din Rumi (d. 1273), devoted

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[22] The famous female Sufi and mystic, Rabe'a al-Adawiya (d. 752) from Basra, Iraq. She is one of the early Sufis and advocates of divine love. Quoted in ('Aṭṭār and Arberry 1966).

his life to the Sufi way. He was critical of the overly strict legalism that many of the Ulema evinced. He considered them more concerned with shari'a rules and regulations than actually getting to know God:

> *Lawyers are clever, a hundred per cent competent in their own specialty. But between them and the spiritual world, a wall has been built to preserve their empire of logic and proofs. If that wall did not exist as a veil for them, no one would consult them and their work would disappear (Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī 1975, 165–66).*

By contrast, the relationship of the Sufi to God is one of love, transcending the law. In his *Discourses* he says:

> *This sacred Law of Love is a watering-place, a fountainhead. It is just like the court of a king where many study the king's laws, his commandments and prohibitions, his government—equal justice for nobles and commons—etc. The edicts of the king are without end, and on them the stability of the country rests. But the status of dervishes and Sufis is one of love for the king. Out of their love springs conversation with the king, and knowing his mind and heart. What is knowledge of the king's laws, compared with knowing the ruler himself, his mind and heart? There is a vast difference (Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī 1975, 183–84).*

Almost every town and village in Egypt has a saint shrine, a mausoleum-mosque that remains central to the community's social life. In contemporary Egypt, Samuli Schielke describes a *maulid*—the popular saints-day festival taking place around the innumerable *zawiyas* (mosque-shrine)—as a festival "characterized by a profound ambivalence of experience and meaning" (Schielke 2008, 539). As a place of exception, with young and old and different motivations and desires, dancing, crying and laughing, the festival possesses an "atmosphere of the extraordinary, which allows various festive practices and experiences to come together in an ambiguous mixture" (Schielke 2008, 539).

Sufism arose very early, as soon as the 8th-century groups of Muslim ascetics *"*began to form themselves into little groups for mutual encouragement," acquiring the nickname *Sufis* after wearing simple garments made of course wool, or *soof* in Arabic ('Aṭṭār and Arberry 1966). Ascetic practices, however, came into tension with the rational-legal practices of the Ulema, as some Sufis eschewed ritual prayer and through their "closeness to God" were deemed heretical. For example, the Persian mystic Al-Hallajwas executed in 922 for declaring himself the Truth, an identification with God that was deemed blasphemous ('Aṭṭār and Arberry 1966). By the 9th century, Sufis wrote to reconcile their beliefs as "inward" practices of the heart with orthodox theology and law. In the 12th century, the famous al-Ghazali reconciled Sufism with orthodoxy, arguing through his knowledge of the law that his practices as a Sufi helped train his ego and discipline his desires (Rozehnal 2007; Sirriyeh 1999; 'Aṭṭār and Arberry 1966; Johansen 1996; Hoffman 1995).

Sufi practices grew in popularity, and by the 18th century was the most practiced form of Islam (Sirriyeh 1999). Sufi sheikhs travelled to different areas, and the stories of their status and miracles preceded them. The status of the sheikh became an arena of power, where charlatans arose who claimed mystical powers and cults grew around men who could display authority, charming a mostly illiterate and rural population. Nevertheless, the Ulema continued to rail against what they considered heretical practices, from within Sufism and without.

As Muslim power began to wane against the British and French, Muslim reformers began to equate the ecstatic Sufi practices with backwardness, superstition, and

ignorance. In 1950, the scholar and translator of Sufi poetry, A.J. Arberry, condemned the popular Sufism of the 18th century and its continued prevalence in modern Egypt:

> *Every village or group of villages acquired its local saint, to be supported and revered during his lifetime, worshipped and capitalized after his death. Few indeed were the voices that dared protest against this ruinous order of things, for politician and theologian alike feared to oppose the true masters, and found it easier and more profitable to share in the swindle (Arberry 1956, 121).*

During the colonial period of the 19th century, science, empiricism, and rationality drove both the imperialists as well as local anti-colonial nationalists to view popular Sufism as a relic of the past, something to be rooted out through modern education (Sirriyeh 1999, 31–34). The Ulema likewise criticized heretical Sufism as one of the causes of decline, which a project of religious education could rectify. The reformer and Sheikh of al-Azhar, Muhammad Abduh, helped envision a new curriculum that included math and science, with a moderate Sufi practice that emphasized "a moral earnestness and concern for the interiorization of the faith that would have satisfied al-Ghazali" (Abduh quoted in Rozehnal 2007, 126).

The anthropologist Michael Gilsenan notes the stark disenchantment of the al-Radi branch of the Shadhili tariqa in the Nile Delta, where in 1964 charismatic leaders still claimed authority on the miraculous. On his second visit in 1970, however, the discourse had shifted, such that the authority of the sheikh centered not on his charisma but on his textual knowledge and his ability to outwit the Ulema on their own terms (Gilsenan 1973). Additionally, this kind of textual Sufism appealed to the local bourgeois class, who had built their own mosque in the upscale district of Zamalek in Cairo. Instead of becoming irrelevant in a seemingly disenchanted world, Sufism reconfigured its

practices to the needs of the "enchanted modern" (Deeb 2011). Imam Rami's background

parallels this development, as his public lectures and materials—as well as those of

Sheikh Hamza and Sheikh Nuh—appeal to his sensibility by highlighting his "textual

knowledge", rather than his oracular capability. Likewise, Sheikh Hamza and Sheikh Nuh

rarely speak about miracles, and never their own; rather, they command authority through

their knowledge of scripture, fiqh, and even history. It is notable that Sheikh Hamza

founded Zaytuna College, not Zaytuna zawiya.

The upper-middle class practice of Sufism is politically "safe," as its ecstatic

elements emphasize discipline and the centrality of labor in spirituality. As such, this

moderate Sufism is not a threat to the state, serving instead as a rejection of political

Islamism on the one hand, and as a "bulwark against leftist political activity" on the other

(Sirriyeh 1999, 150). Hoffman also writes that the political quietism of the Sufis signifies

a rejection of overtly political project of the Islamists(Hoffman 1995). Aishima argues

that the economic sensibilities of Egyptian television producers privilege a religion of

"private spiritual pursuits," a domesticated and nationalist version of Sufism typical in

Egyptian *musalsalat* (religious television series). She gives the example of the former

Sheikh of al-Azhar, Abdul Halim Mahmud (1910–78), in a television series *The knower*

of God, Abdul Halim Mahmud (Aishima 2016, 35). Mahmud's biopic that featured

> *activities for al-Azhar and the Islamic umma were carefully translated into the*
> *'struggles for the homeland' discourse… producing and iconic figure from recent*
> *Egyptian history who could buttress their version of modernism (Aishima 2016,*
> *36).*

In terms of Mahmud's Sufism, the television series focuses on the textual "rationalized knowledge of Islamic law rooted in intellectual exercise rather than intuitive knowledge acquired through Sufi practices" (Aishima 2016).

Rami and I go to the small *zawiya* (Sufi gathering site) and mosque of Sheikh Yosry Gabr in Mokattam, near Alsayida Nafisa to sign up for this trip. Sheikh Yosry's daughter is married to Osama Syed, "the face of Azhar and replacement of Ali Gomaa," Rami tells me. We pay our 200 *ginah* (EGYP), put down our names, and receive instructions to bring our own food and water since none will be available in Humaithara. The day before the trip we go shopping at Spinney's, a modern air-conditioned grocery store that serves the upper middle class of Mokattam. We buy five-gallon bottles of water for each of us and cans of ready-to-eat Egyptian beans, corned hash beef, and a variety of canned tuna, as though we were camping for double the time we would be there. With bread to serve it on and bags of chips for the bus ride, we were ready for Humaithara.

We show up to the *zawiya*, late in the afternoon for our departure. We should get to our destination early in the morning, driving through the night to avoid the heat and traffic. Outside there are four late-model tour buses, the kind with luggage down below and an air-conditioned passenger cabin on top. We go to check in, and on the list of 79 people, Rami and I are the last two, categorized as "al-Amreeki," the Americans. Everyone else is either from Indonesia or Malaysia, with about twenty from Thailand, and all of us are men: there are no women on this trip.

"I told Ali to come," Rami says, looking out for a friend. "He's a *shadhili* and one of my first Arabic teachers, he didn't even know about this until I told him this morning." We see Ali approach, a tall Egyptian with a glowing smile and no luggage but a plastic bag containing his leftover lunch. "I came straight from work, didn't have time to go home." Rami looks at me and says, *"tawakkul ala-Allah,"* or "reliance upon God," a way of the Sufis.

Figure 8. Loading the Bus to Humaithara

We sat behind Ali on the bus, and for the first hour everyone was quiet, making our way out of busy Cairo and onto the main highway that cuts southeast and makes its way to the Red Sea, hugging the shoreline until Marsa Alam, a port city 450 miles from Cairo. From there it is another 100 miles to Humaithara, branching off a highway into the desert interior that connects Marsa Alam to Edfu off the Nile.

4.3. Visiting the Mausoleum of Sheikh al-Shadhili

We are on the bus out of Cairo, on our way to visit the Mausoleum of Sheikh al-Shadhili, around 10 hours away. Rami begins to tell me about Ali: "a murid ["devotee"] of Sheikh Nuh," and "not like other Egyptians—he has enormous *adab*." I'm not sure what he means by "other Egyptians," so I have to ask: "What do you mean 'like other Egyptians?'" The question provokes in him a chance to enumerate t all the issues he had with other Egyptians, namely the bureaucrats, who at the best of times were rude and at the worst incompetent, delaying his visa, among other problems Mostly, however, he had had bad experiences with the infamous taxi cab drivers of Cairo who were notorious for upping the fare. I told him that he was being taxed as a foreigner:

"You can afford it," I said. He looked at me quizzically and then I explained: "So what! You pay 10 or even 20 ginah more? How much is that, 1 or two dollars, out of a fare that is itself one or two dollars? They are on poverty wages. I don't know how they survive."

Since we had a lot of time on this bus, I decided to tell Rami of the story of Adli, a cab driver that got me into his local neighborhood, having shisha with his buddies. A driver picked me up somewhere in Cairo after I had gotten lost taking a bus touring the city (Normally, I found taking public transportation a very useful ethnographic technique in getting to know a city: take the bus, any bus, and see where it goes; usually, it will end up at some bus depot or intersection where you can take the reverse line back, or jump on another line if feeling brave. This time, however, the bus just seemed to keep going, and when it was getting late, I just wanted to get home.).

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Adli, a cab driver, happened to pick me up and asked me where I was going. "Mo'attam," I say, in Egyptian slang that leaves out the hard consonants in "Mokattam." I figure we were somewhere around Ramses, between downtown and Medina Nasser—at most it would be 40 ginah (with foreigner tax), 25 if I wanted to haggle like a local. "40 ginah" he tells me, and I assent to it without a word. He smiles, shakes my hand, and begins towards downtown, where we would go around the Salah El Din citadel and up the road to Mokattam. But instead of continuing, he turns around toward Medina Nasser, a much longer route that would take us outside the city and drop us east of Mokattam. "Ya *basha*" I call him, "Mokattam *hunak* (is over there)," pointing in the direction of the citadel. He laughs, racing his car in the opposite direction, and begins to tap my hand sitting on my lap. In Egyptian colloquial he tells me, "This is longer, but much faster! The new highway around the city will get us there in no time. Who wants to drive through the city at this time!" When I thought about it, he was right. The traffic through Cairo, especially downtown and old Cairo slows to a standstill. Plus, he already had my money.

Adli loved driving fast, being outside the city on Martyrs Corridor, passing everyone. He answers a call—his wife—and tells her what time he's coming home, and then quickly talks to his four-year-old son. As soon as he's off the phone, he shows me a picture of his son by handing me his entire wallet with a picture of him and his son. I look, he beams proudly, and we begin to talk about his family and how long he's been driving a taxi. He asks where I'm from, though I look Egyptian I can only get so far in colloquial Arabic before I have to switch to the formal register of my training.

"America," I say, looking at him then out the front window and back again, "I'm here to study American students at al-Azhar." "Azhar," he nods in humble deference, but just as we are about to turn into Ring Road and into Mokattam, he quickly stops under the overpass where a group of taxi drivers are parked under the shade and enjoying cigarettes, an impromptu taxi stop in the middle of the freeway. He yells some jokes, typical Egyptian prodding of one's masculinity, receives some back, and then tells them he'll call later—a fifteen second pit stop. I'm enjoying the joviality, he senses I'm also enjoying his company, and then he invites me to come with him to smoke shisha on the weekend. I oblige, taking the opportunity to visit a part of Cairo I would never go to otherwise. "All this for not making a big deal of 40 ginah," I tell Rami. "Ya," he nodded, "you could consider it *sadaqa* (charity)."

Adab of Ali: The *Murid* of Sheikh Nuh

Rami returns to the topic of Ali, and he is right, Ali is not your typical young Egyptian. Adli the cab driver, fun-loving and street-savvy, embodied the mad rush of Cairo, the tumult of the fast-paced temporality of the urban landscape. Ali, on the other hand, has a bearing and grace that transcends the hustle and evinces a cultivated personality, disciplined through Sufi techniques of the self.

Ali is a *murid* of Sheikh Nuh Ha Mim Keller, which I found out after we realized we both knew several *murids* of Sheikh Nuh in Southern California. Sheikh Nuh has established a community of Shadhilis, mostly second-generation immigrants, many of whom are highly skilled professionals including doctors, engineers, and lawyers. He is known for translating a Shafi'i text on *fiqh* =, combining strict orthodox legal practice

with the esotericism of the Sufis in a manner that Hermansen characterizes as "techno-fiqh" and "ultra-orthodoxy" (36) and that is different from the practices of most other Sufi groups, especially the rural practices of the Sufis of Egyptian folk tradition. Gilsenan attributes these differences to the "textual Sufism of the bourgeois class," and considers them the result of a process of disenchantment among the al-Radi branch (Gilsenan 1973).

Four hours after we left Cairo, the group leader on our bus begins to recite from the *Risāla* of Imam Shafi'i, a book of legal jurisprudence and a seminal text of the Shafi'i *madhab.* Most Muslims from Indonesia and Southeast Asia are Shafi'i in *madhab,* regardless if they follow a Sufi tariqa or not. Additionally, many of the famous Egyptian Shadhilis are also Shafi'i*,* including Yosry Gabr and Osama Syed. An hour later, we stop at a roadside rest area around Hurghada, a resort town on the Red Sea that is building a reputation for scuba diving away from the more distant sites in the Sinai region. The Red Sea boasts a beautiful shoreline where rich Egyptians and foreign tourists vacation, but under the cover of night it is hard to see anything other than the glistening lights of the mega-resorts. The rest stop has a gas station, restrooms, a mosque, and few restaurants with seating to accommodate 250 people. We stop for about 45 minutes, get back on the bus, and proceed to Marsa Alam.

Sitting towards the back of the bus, Rami and Ali are now catching up. I'm drawn to Ali, a handsome man, tall, smiling, with sharp features and soft gestures that give him a noble bearing. Speaking to Rami, Ali says,

I called my wife as soon as you told me about this and made sure the kids would be ok. When I told her I have an invitation to visit the maqam of Abul Hassan Ash-Shadhili, she made sure I was able to go, alhamdulillah.

"Is that all you brought?" exclaims Rami, pointing to his small plastic bag.

"I didn't have time to bring anything else. But I have this bread, *inshallah* I'll be OK." Rami hands him a bottle of water. "Don't worry, we have plenty of food," and hands him a bag of chips. We try and get some sleep on the bus; it's very late now and we should be arriving in a few hours.

I wake up at dawn to find that we are just outside Marsa Alam, ready to cut into the desert towards Edfu. It's been almost 12 hours since we've left Cairo, but we are still two hours out. Marsa Alam is a port town, but to the south and north are new, world-class housing developments marketed to anyone willing to buy, primarily for local elites, Gulf investors, and European retirees. After another hour, we hit a small but well paved two-way road with a sign in Arabic that reads "Humaithara." Along this highway there is nothing until we reach our destination. Every once in a while, we see Bedouin encampments, a dozen tents at most, or a shepherd with a few goats living off a small spring and a bit of shrubbery in the middle of the desert. The contrast between the housing developments only an hour away is stark.

 Ali begins to explain to us the significance of Sheikh Ash-Shadhili: "He died on the way to Hajj," he begins. "In those days, this was the way of the caravan to Medina. Medina is right across the Red Sea from us. He died on the route, and they built a tomb over him right where he died." Ali takes a moment to reflect before continuing:

You know this road? It is a kirama [miracle] from Abul Hassan. A pious lady who used to feed the poor, came here to dedicate her life to take care of his maqam and serve the poor who are here. At that time, there was no road, and it took hours to reach Humaithara by either camel or donkey, carrying supplies and anything else they needed. So she went to the governor of the area and asked that a road be built. He laughed, and said a road would cost eleven million ginah, and this was not a priority at that time. She asked for him to open his hand, he did, and she placed one ginah coin in his palm saying, "you will build this road. People will come from all over bearing gifts to the maqam, feeding the poor and helping the needy. This one [ginah] will turn into 11 million."

Eleven million Egyptian pounds, at the time of him telling me the story, was a little over a million dollars. I could think of many other things to spend a million dollars on than a road to nowhere, and I guess the governor agreed.

So she left him, knowing that the road will be built. Just after she visited, the governor was told he had money for projects in the area. And so he took the money and built roads and helped his region, and years went by. After he spent all his money, you know how much he had left? 11 million! He put his hands in his jacket pocket and pulled out the dirham the lady gave him years before. And so he built the road.

I could not verify this story, but it is part of the hagiographical literature that speaks of the *kirama* (miracles) of the *awliya* ("friends of God", a term used for Sufi saints), their piety, their charity, and their zany, irreverent relationship to those in power. Though the *tariqa* no longer relies on *kirama* for authority, stories of the saints and their miracles help reaffirm one's faith. From Alsayida Nafisa to the unnamed female saint-heroine of this story, the *awliya* are known for their miracles, many times intersecting with charity.

The Mausoleum of Sheikh Shadhili

Though it is a few hours after dawn, it is still early when we finally reach Humaithara. The brand-new shrine and mosque complex towers over the desert, nestled between the

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typical hill-desert of upper Egypt, where we are closer to Sudan than to Cairo. We are

taken to the old mosque right before the new complex, now converted in a large hall

where we have to pull our own bedding from a stack of mats in one corner. We find a few

suitable mats among the ones too torn up to use, others that should have been discarded

long ago, and set up camp among the one hundred or so from Cairo who are here, from

our group and others who came on their own. As soon as we get our things arranged, we

are told there is some food being prepared for us in the cafeteria next door. We get our

bread, olives and cheese and bring it back to our camp, where Rami sees two muftis he

knows from Dar al-Iftah. Excitedly, they hurry us to join them, sitting us down, offering

tea and beans they had prepared on their own. Rami was happy to find familiar faces, and

they welcomed me with pleasant greetings of *salaam, marhaba,* and cups of tea.

The first thing they wanted to talk about was the greatness of Sheikh Ali-Gomaa,

the former Grand Mufti and their boss the year before. They had learned the technique of

Figure 9. Sheikh Ali Goma arriving with his security detail. Sheikh Ash-Shadhili, Humaithara, Egypt.

the mufti from him and were visiting Humaithara not only for Sheikh Shadhili but for Sheikh Ali Gomaa.

Rami and I sat, listening to them praise Ali Gomaa, his fight against extremism, and his ability to make fatwas relevant to this generation—the hallmark of the Azhari way and the job of the mufti at Dar al-Iftah. They didn't know that we couldn't care less about Ali Gomaa, the state sponsored mufti who the year before justified the massacre at Rabaa, condemning all those who were protesting the removal of Muhammad Morsi as "terrorists." In a leaked video addressing the Egyptian military and Al-Sisi, the *de facto* dictator of Egypt, Ali Gomaa said: "Shoot them in the heart … Blessed are those who kill them, and those who are killed by them … We must cleanse our Egypt from these riffraff" (Osman 2014; On the Arab Revolutions n.d.). Sometime after this speech, the military fired on protestors in Rabaa, killing up to 1500 people, though the government admits to only half that (Khalifa 2016).

Morsi was the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate, elected to office after the January 2011 revolution that ousted Hosni Mubarak and cleared the way for Egypt's first democratic elections. Unsurprisingly, two main candidates emerged, one from the Military and the other from the Muslim Brotherhood—the only two well-formed and organized political groups in Egypt. Mohamed ElBaradei, the Nobel Peace Prize winner for his work on preventing nuclear proliferation and Egyptian native, pulled out of the elections early, noting the need to first reform the constitution and time to develop civil society organizations for political organizing. "The former regime did not fall," referring to the entrenchment of the military in political affairs. "My conscience does not permit

me to run for the presidency or any other official position unless it is within a real democratic system" (Kirkpatrick 2012). This came true when Sisi, at the time the head of the armed forces, deposed President Morsi and reestablished military rule. Ali Gomaa, critical of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, welcomed the military as true guardians of Islam and the State.

Although Rami was also critical of Morsi, we had many conversations about the role of the military, Islamism, Muhammad Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. Why not allow his term to end and then not reelect him? Or if Sisi did depose him, why not continue with building civil society, reform the constitution, allow for an independent judiciary—in other words, continue with the goals of the revolution of January 2011 that provided so much hope for the people. All of these prospects were dashed, however, and Ali Gomaa gave the military government religious legitimacy. Later that day, a young boy was dressed as Sisi in full military uniform—desert camouflage jacket and pants, military stripes, and a replica of Sisi's billed General's cap with its insignia—with thrilled onlookers taking photographs with him. The scene put the alliance between Sufi-Azhari and military interests on full display.

The muftis of Dar-al-Iftah did not know our politics; they could only assume we were there for the same reasons that they were, with the same allegiances. We listened politely and enjoyed the hospitality of the young muftis of Cairo, and then proceeded to our mats to take a nap. In the early afternoon, we got up, and proceeded to the *maqam* of Abul Hassan ash-Shadhili.

The first thing one notices is the acts of charity: travelers arrive, and whoever has food offers it to them. Though it may be water and a little bit of bread and beans, no one goes hungry seeking the blessings of Sheikh Shadhili. After Rami and I realized we had over-packed—we would be leaving the following day—we went back to our belongings, took out half of our food, and began giving it away. A small minivan had just arrived, the door opened, and I could see the people inside eating on a few oranges that they had. I handed them some bread

Figure 10. Market and charity outside Sheikh Ash-Shadhili. Photo by author.

and a can of corned hash as well as beans. He glanced at them and immediately pulled the tab of the ready-to-eat chow. Making hash-bean–pita sandwiches, he started passing them around the van. There was something satisfying watching him prepare what I gave him, under the shadow of the mausoleum, feeding a van of weary pilgrims. It's the *haal*, Rami tells me: a feeling that inculcates a connection with people and God through charity. It is here, in this charitable act, that political affiliations became irrelevant: who Rami is, who I am, and to what organization, if any, we belong. His relationship as a giver and his relationship to God are mediated through the *haal*, not through the state or some organized relief effort: his circumstances resemble those of the saints, and his practice of giving put him on equal footing with all those who supplicate for God's mercy.

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Barakat of Sheikh al-Shadhili

When visiting the grand opening of the mausoleum of Abul Hassan ash-Shadhili, the former Sheikh of al-Azhar, Ali Gomaa, gave the Friday sermon from the mosque pulpit. I remember him arriving with his entourage as the vehicles pulled up, he came out of the car with guards all around him, right past the mausoleum to the mosque backdoor. Thirty minutes later he is delivering the sermon from the pulpit. After the sermon, the mausoleum is cleared out for him to visit with his coterie. When the media covers the event of the grand opening of the mausoleum of Sheikh Shadhili, there are pictures of Gomaa at the pulpit giving a sermon, but there are no pictures of him doing ecstatic Sufi practices such as the *hadara* which requires body motion and recitation which is condemned as singing and dancing by legalists.

The presence of Rami and I at the event signaled to the Muftis of Dar al-Iftah that we were "safe," especially for Americans who are perceived to privilege the rational-legal form of Islam and also be critical of the state. In this situation, if we are at an event with Ali Gomaa, knowing his ideological role in the military coup, then we must be politically quietist Sufis more interested in personal devotion than democracy, human rights, or even law and Islamism. After we came back to Cairo, the muftis invited Rami and I to visit Dar al-Iftah. When we arrived, we first met with Ibrahim, a high-level advisor to the Mufti of Egypt, an American-educated consultant who dealt with western journalists and academics. It was through him I received affiliation to Dar al-Iftah. After our meeting, we moved to the top floor in the five-story building, past the guards and a retinue of secretaries and into the office of the Mufti of Egypt. After exchanging some

pleasantries and photographs, and after discussing the need of westerners to better understand Egypt, Rami and I left to return to his apartment. I was incredulous: How did we go from visiting a Sufi shrine in the desert to meeting the Mufti of Egypt? Wondering what had just happened and after some contemplation, I looked at Rami, half-jokingly, and said, "It was the *barakat* of Abul Hassan ash-Shadhili!" With a confused look but smiling, Rami was not prepared for an enchanted response. "You see," I smile back, "our presence at the *maqam*, with Ali Goma, Habib Ali, and all the Sufis signifies we are not part of the Muslim Brotherhood, nor are we interested in politics. We are ok with the military state, and more concerned with personal piety." Rami nodded his head in agreement, "Yes," he said, "there is no way any Ikhwani would be there. And they [Dar al-Iftah] must be excited to see two American students, one at al-Azhar and another a PhD student, as a way to reach western students at al-Azhar."

The relationship of Sufism and Sufis to the state signifies a non-allegiance to political Islam, whether it be the Ikhwan or the Salafis who criticize Sufis for their ecstatic religious practices. For the military state, Sufism is safe, and by co-opting the Mufti of Egypt as well as the Sheikh of al-Azhar, Sufism is the official denomination of Egypt, with the military as its protectors. Sufis prefer stability and security rather than revolution, leaving politics to those who have been put in charge over them. For Rami, politics is irrelevant to his personal spiritual practice, moving to the background while studying in Cairo or pursuing the *haal* through acts of devotion, especially prayers and charity.

4.4. The *Murabitun* and the Gold Standard

Sheikh al-Shadhili's complex is made up of the *makam,* or shrine-tomb, in a decorated room large enough to fit 200 people. Next door is the mosque, with a capacity to hold thousands. As we came in to visit the shrine and burial place, the room was already packed with men and women, along with a few children. Among the people were local Egyptians, *fellaheen* in their worn garments, poor folk from the countryside who came in small vans for the occasion. In another corner stood a handful of well-dressed Europeans, the men in slacks and dress shirts, the women in long flowing dresses, status handbags, and loosely worn hijabs, as though they put them on only in pietistic settings. "Those are the *murids* of the Murabitun, they helped build this place," Rami tells me, "Westerners— they helped collect money for the construction."

The Murabitun World Movement is a branch of the Shadhili *tariqa*, founded by Ian Dallas who converted to Islam in Morocco in 1967. He later joined the *tariqa* from Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Habib of Meknes, and returned to the UK to establish the Murabitun along the Darqawi-Shadhili branch (as-Sufi 2018).

Ian Dallas, now Sheikh Abdalqadir, has a colorful history. A 2010 Telegraph (UK) article features the Sheikh in a headline titled "Radical Muslim leader has past in swinging London," with the subheading, "As part of the bohemian scene in swinging sixties London, Ian Dallas inspired Eric Clapton to write Layla and counted George Harrison and Edith Piaf among his friends" (Henderson 2010). Though Henderson doesn't have citations in his article, the claims are corroborated by anthropologist Nils Bubandt in a journal article published the year before (Bubandt 2009, 108). Bubandt

narrates that Dallas gave Clapton a copy of the Persian poem "Layla," a heartbreaking parable of a princess who married the wrong person. Clapton writes the song as a paean to Pattie Boyd, the wife of his friend George Harrison. Bubandt uses the anecdote to establish Dallas's appeal and "success among the British intellectual and artistic jet" (Bubandt 2009, 108). Marcia Hermansen, a researcher on Global Sufi movements, especially among westerners who converted during the hey-day of the "New Age religious movements" cites that Dallas was the one-time editor of the socialist paper *The International Times*, and that "He also worked as a scriptwriter and played the part of the magician in Fellini's movie 8 ½" (Hermansen 2009, 35).

Bubandt eschews "Radical" in describing Abdalqadir, since the movement is explicitly non-violent, though the Sheikh's stance towards capitalism remains revolutionary left. Bubandt calls the movement "Revolutionary millenarianism":

> *Like the anti-globalization movement, the Murabitun movement sees global capital as the scourge of the current moment and the global 'banking entity' as a systemic attempt to repress human freedom. But it frames its notion of freedom and its political vision for an alternative socio-economic order within an Islamic imaginary that is millennial as well as emancipatory, mystically motivated yet economically oriented, religious and global (Bubandt 2009, 105).*

Abdalqadir as-Sufi indicts the west and its financial incursions in the name of universalist enlightenment values as a 'terror model,' turning terrorism on its head. "'[L]iberty' is doomed to create slavery, 'fraternity' is doomed to forge enmity, and 'equality' is doomed to create a financial oligarchic elite" (as-Sufi, quoted in Bubandt 2009, 110). Echoing Jesus and the casting of the money lenders, this former bohemian-socialist transfigures into a millenarian Sufi Sheikh—with staff raised he proclaims:

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It is a Jihad against the usurious banking entity ... [which] is not merely a personnel but a method, a deen. [It is a method with] its Temples, the banks with its holy places, the Stock Exchanges of the world; and its false scriptures, the data-banks of figures, these magical millions and billions that hold the world's poor to ransom for the sake of a small elite of kafir power brokers (as-Sufi, quoted in Bubandt 2009, 111).

After establishing a community in Norwich (UK) the Murabitun set up branches in the south of Spain, reimagining a new Muslim Andalusia. The mosque and *zawiya* they built in 2003 overlooks the 13th century Alhambra palace, the seat of Muslim Spain that still captures the western Muslim imagination as a utopic place of *convivencia,* where Muslims, Jews and Christians lived side by side. Al-Andalus, the southern region of Spain with the great medieval Muslim cities of Cordoba and Granada is the bridge between east and west, Muslim and Christian, where Ibn Rushd (Averroes) wrote on Aristotle and become famous—in the East and West—as "The Commentator," influencing St. Thomas Aquinas and introducing Aristotle to Europe.[23] Averroes' contemporary and fellow Cordoban, the Jewish philosopher Ibn Maimun, or Moses Maimonides, developed and participated in the culture of *convivencia* of medieval Andalusia. Contemporary art and architecture still influences what we think of as "Spanish architecture" and "gypsy Andalusian Music" (Menocal 2009, 413).

The history of Al-Andalus is not at all lost on the Murabitun and Abdalqadir as-Sufi. They have purposely established themselves at the top of Albaicin, right across the escarpment of the Alhambra, in a *zawiya* and mosque whose semiotics is architectural

(being built in the Andalusian-Spanish style), sonorous, (chanting *dhikr* right above the old gypsy neighborhood of *Barrio De Sacromonte* where tourists still go to see the shows), and deeply historical. In this vein, they have established their headquarters in South Africa, doing *dawaa* ("missions") to indigenous Africans and teaching Islam as the "true black" religion. They have also proselytized in Chiapas, Mexico, where an indigenous Murabitun community can now be found.[24] The Murabitun see themselves as historical actors, stakeholders in a long and glorious history, and as a part of a global religious movement does not need to conform to politics of identity of the contemporary nation-state, but rather transcends it.

Sufi Islam is usually associated with the "popular Islam" of the illiterate countryside, a more ecstatic form of religiosity than the more sober and textual enterprise of the literate urbanite. Ernest Gellner described this dichotomy as between the Sufi and the *Ulema.* Whereas the Sufi is the archetypal Weberian charismatic leader—an "addict of leadership, of the cult of personality"—the *alim (pl. Ulema)*

> *is a member of a tradition which has found a compromise between the sovereignty of the community and the sovereignty of the Book, by having within the community a non-sacramental guild of scribes-lawyers-theologians, guardians and interpreters of the social norm, who yet do not claim deep or hereditary differentiation of spiritual status (Gellner 1983, 103).*

Weber famously described the process of modernity as an inevitable move away from an 'enchanted' world of magic, spirits, and demons into a more 'rational-legal' order

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[24] At the time of this writing, a mosque is being built in Chiapas by the Murabitun.

described by science alongside a political order of laws and a reason based procedural bureaucracy (Weber 1993).

The Azhari *Ulema,* in the type of Ali Gomaa, bridges these divides—one has not displaced the other, but the Sufi has become rationalized and the *alim* enchanted. In the case of the Murabitun, Olivier Roy discusses contemporary global Sufi movements as " 'New Age religiosity' [that] appeals to the modern disenchantment of white, urban, middle-class individuals by placing them within a new, close community (Roy 2011, 225). Laura Deeb writes about reacting against the impersonal nature of modernity, public performance of piety and identity, in a mode of self-fashioning that bridges the traditional-modern, secular-religious divide she calls the "enchanted modern" (Deeb 2011, 4–6). Abdalqadir, through his website, recorded lectures and publications, typifies the *"'hikmat'* synthesis of theology, mysticism and the textual sciences to jurisprudential expertise" more typical of the *alim* (Hermansen 2009, 28).

The Murabitun are known for their stance on zakat, a practice they declare has not been instituted correctly in the modern capitalist world. Umar Vadillo, a Spanish convert and now an intellectual of the movement under Abdalqadir, describes the ideal 'Islamic' political economy as based on the early Caliphate and the use of gold coins—in other words, a return to the gold standard. Their critique points to three main problems of the current financial order—central banks, paper (fiat) money, and usury-based debt (Vadillo 2010). Without the gold standard, the rich control the printing of money that ensures their dominance, especially over third world economies who are beholden to the U.S. Dollar.

For zakat to return to its redistributive mechanism, Vadillo claims it first must be based on the traditional Islamic economic system based on the gold standard—reintroduction of the gold or silver dinar, public markets based on the *souk*, and a return of the craft guilds that controlled production (Vadillo). Zakat*,* in this system, would also be collected and redistributed by an *amir* (leader), not left to the personal discretion of the individual believer (Bewley). For the Murabitun, of course, the *amir* is Abdalqadir, and his devotees pay him the zakat for redistribution. It is not clear if they consider the mosque and *zawiya* projects eligible for zakat, but they do collect voluntary *sadaqa* for various other projects.

As Shadhilis, they recite the *wird* and perform rituals according to their eponym, and now they are here, in Humaithara, helping to sponsor the new mausoleum complex.[25] They are transnational actors with a cosmopolitanism not seen in local Sufi movements. This Sufi movement, however, is not politically quietist, at least not economically, nor is it based on traditional forms of Sufi organization. Instead, it is a modern Sufi movement, and like the Ikhwan it is bureaucratically organized mediates considerable in its members' activities.

4.5. Usury as Necessity (*Durura*) in Egypt

I was sitting with Rami at a local juice bar in Mokattam, one of the many street side stalls in Cairo that juice the splendid bounty of the Nile. For fifty cents, more or less, one can get orange, apple, and even freshly squeezed pomegranate juice. For less than twenty-five

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[25] I have not been able to independently verify where the money for construction came from.

cents one can get freshly juiced sugarcane, a local favorite that grows like weeds on the world's longest river. The bamboo-like stalk grows quickly and is harvested just as fast, showing up in the big city piled high on the back of trucks. In the older narrower parts of the city, donkeys still make the last quarter mile. You can find large stacks piled on the corner of any side-street stall. We were not in the old streets where doormen (*Abwaab*) or common folk frequented, but at upscale Abu-Layla, where they serve sugarcane in chilled cups and offer cut fruit with ice cream. Mokattam is an upper-middle–class suburb right outside downtown, on the hills overlooking the old city and away from the crowded streets of the city. It contains modern grocery stores, local air-conditioned gyms, a KFC and a McDonald's in the main square—the hallmarks of globalization and the lifestyle that comes with it. Many western students of al-Azhar live there since it's the most like home, especially for those students who have families. At sunrise from a certain vantage point, when the air is cool and still, the morning sun casts it shadows on the city of a thousand minarets. In the distance, as the call to prayer rings from every direction the eye can see, one can see the citadel, the Nile, and even spot the minarets of Hussein and al-Azhar. It also doesn't hurt that Mokattam sits right above the smog layer.

Rami doesn't wax as nostalgic. As a third-year student of shari'a at al-Azhar, he is anxious to finish and get back home to the USA. Along with a thousand minarets are the thousand smokestacks choking the air. The infamous Cairene smog, a concoction of unregulated industrial pollution and two million cars, mixed with the Saharan dust that blows in most evenings. In the fall it gets even worse when the winds bring in black plumes from the country where farmers burn rice husks to prepare for the next season. It

doesn't bother me much, but exacerbates Rami's preexisting asthma. Along with the overcrowding and endless traffic, Rami longs to go back home. He is in the process of renewing his yearly entry visa and it can take multiple visits downtown waiting in line at the mercy of bureaucrats. Egypt is infamous, like much of the post-colonial third world, of mid-level managers who wield power by arbitrarily stopping work, taking long breaks, and accepting bribes for immediate service. Some have understood their tactics as low-level resistance where wages are low and where no matter how fast one operates, the line never stops: better to have a work life where you can at least control the pace, especially when technology isn't available and hiring more staff is not in the budget. But when you are on the other end, the frustration of what should take hours instead of days makes one envy the efficiency of the DMV.

Since it is a little cool this evening, he shows up to the café in jeans and a hoodie. His Jansport backpack and Nike sneakers complete the outfit of any typical college student. We might as well be sitting at a Starbucks in any typical college town, two non-descript locals sitting and chatting in modern Cairo. Islamic finance is the topic of discussion. Since he is in the shari'a school, he jumps right into the current topic of his studies, the prohibition against interest in Islam, but its necessity (*durura*) in the modern marketplace.

"This is a big issue in the States," he says. "We have families who have been renting apartments and homes for twenty or thirty years because they are told home loans are *haram*. They could have *owned* their own homes by now!"

I add, "that's a big deal. Plus, their rents have probably been going up for the last twenty years as well. Not only would they have owned their own homes, they would have paid less as well."

"Traditionally the fiqh is very clear," he says. "*Riba* ['interest'] is *haram*."

"Then how are they able to justify paying out interest?"

"First of all, interest is the payment of money for borrowing money. Since we are talking about home loans, they are saying that since it is tied to property, and under a reasonable interest rate, it can be considered a purchase with reasonable *profit,* not interest."

"Is that what they said in class?" I ask.

"Well, the textbooks give us one fatwa that supports this position, and another that is against it. But the teacher is on the side of making things easy on people and that it is a necessity for the empowerment of the Ummah."

This is not the first time I have heard about "necessity" and "public interest." Dar al-Iftah, or the ministry where the Mufti of Egypt sits, has given a religious opinion, or fatwa regarding the permissibility of taking out a home loan and even student loans since it is considered a "need" in the first place, and secondly it is not traditionally what interest is. In many cases where modern circumstances make traditional law difficult to follow, the state as well as al-Azhar have made modern exceptions in the name of *darura* (necessity) and *maslaha* (public interest). Even when the Ikhwan took over, economic reality forced President Morsi to apply for an IMF loan, in the name of *durura* and

maslaha. The international financial system is based on interest bearing loans, where Egyptian banks and markets articulate with the global system. After 40 years of neoliberal policy, both the Military or the Ikhwan were not prepared for the consequences of detachment.

Julia Elyachar discusses how NGOs have been at the forefront of neoliberal development in Cairo, disciplining the informal economy of craftsmen into the regulatory regime of the state by offering micro-loans, privileging short-term profit to long-term stability, making them more vulnerable to market volatility and dispossession. Elyachar's work is in a long line of critique of the neoliberal economy, rightly pointing our attention to the workings of capital and the function of the market that keep people poor. When Dar al-Iftah proclaims that contemporary home loans are permissible, they re-inscribe the states development goals and financing methodology congruent with international norms. In this context, charity (zakat included) only masks the responsibility of the underlying financial system in the causes of poverty and heightened inequality.

This chapter illustrates the different mode of zakat practiced by Sufis as it intersects with the state, focusing on the personal as it relates to the national and transnational. Rami, in his development of inward experience and piety, is focused more on his relationship to God through the *haal* instead of politics or the organizational methods of charitable giving. For Rami, zakat is a spiritual practice, personal and communal, where his giving

to travelers or enjoying the hospitality of the Muftis is part of the same practice, establishing an equal relationship between giver and receiver. I then looked at how Rami discusses interest or usury, based on making an exception to a rule by the use of *durura* (necessity) and *maslaha* (public interest). I argue that zakat needs to be understood in terms of a larger financial system that currently creates the conditions of poverty, rendering zakat incapable of solving poverty without addresses its structural causes.

Both Rami "The Sufi" and Hamza "The Ikhwani" practice zakat, but based on their different socialization, have come to espouse differences in their form and practice, despite their Azhari training. However, they both assent to the hegemony of the current neoliberal order, forced to participate in global finance as it articulates with the Egyptian economy on the one hand and personal finances on the other. In the next Chapter, I move to Sameer the Social Worker, who resides in the United States, the core of the neoliberal order. I focus on Sameer since it is his status as a typical middle-class American social worker that determines his approach to zakat, giving us the opportunity to explore the intersection of race, class, and gender.

5. Sameer The Social Worker: Race and Gender

The previous two chapters investigated religious thought and attitudes toward the zakat in Egypt. In this chapter, we turn our attention to the United States to examine the thought and milieu of Imam Sameer, who may be considered a typical, even quintessential, American and who identifies as neither an Ikhwani nor Sufi, nor Salafi for that matter, but as an American Azhari. In his own words, he takes things "from here and there," creating a practice that suits his American sensibilities and experience. In this chapter I intersect Imam Sameer's practice in two major locations of zakat practice, a Black Mosque in Los Angeles, *Masjid Farooq*, as well as a social services agency run mostly by Muslim women, Connect California. These locations give us the opportunity to examine and interrogate local imams and the communities they serve, exploring the ways an American Azhari imam is socially situated, and how he responds contextually according to the circumstance. Sameer's sketch is important in understanding the principal thesis of this dissertation, illustrating how and why zakat is being transformed by cultural and politico-economic forces, most significantly neoliberalism and the ethics of international humanitarianism. For Masjid Farooq, a black mosque in the inner city, race intersects with poverty, with zakat being reconfigured as social entrepreneurship and discussed alongside tax reform. For Connect California, conservative gender norms dominant in male mosque spaces come into tension with the work and leadership of the women of Connect California, spaces which Imam Sameer must navigate. To further

understand these tensions, I close chapter 5 on Muslim masculinities, contrasting an American-born Azhari, Imam Jibril, to my Arabic tutor in Egypt, Ibrahim.

Imam Sameer, from an Indian-Pakistani heritage, did his bachelors in Ethnic Studies before earning his Master's in Social Work (MSW) from University of California, Los Angeles. Imam Sameer consults with both Masjid Farooq (an African American Mosque) as well as Connect California (covered in the next section), a refugee and social services agency where he applies his social work experience. Before going to al-Azhar with his wife and three kids, he was a high school counselor for Los Angeles Unified. Having seen the drugs, alcohol, and trauma of his teenage patients, he knows well the problems of the inner city and what the young have to endure. He decided to go to al-Azhar so he could give back to the Muslim community.

Imam Sameer blends traditions from all over the place, a syncretic sartorial practice that he performs with flair. During a Friday sermon from the pulpit he could be wearing his Azhari turban and *galabiya*, the mark of the Azhari. At Connect California, he is dressed in slacks with a button-up shirt and tie, or sometimes a suit. At one occasion I accompanied him to Masjid Farooq. When I picked him up he was wearing slacks, an African print top, and *topee.* The *topee* is the headgear of South Asian Muslims, and with western slacks and an African top, he was signifying the spaces, connections, and heritage of the contemporary cosmopolitan American imam.

"Where'd you get that shirt?" I ask. He laughs with a slight grin,

"It's custom made homie," addressing me in street slang. "It's a *kurta* that I modified. I have a couple of these."

I exclaim. Extending my arm, I reach out to feel the texture as he sits in the passenger seat. "It's nice" I say, smiling as we pull away.

The *kurta* is usually below the knee and comes in a variety of colors and patterns for both men and women. What seemed like an African top was actually a modified *kurta* made to look like a long top. Imam Sameer is a friend, we both grew up in Southern California and are around the same age. He greets everyone with the same smile, but over the years we have loosened up around each other. Only a native Southern Californian can understand the semiotics of two friends getting in a car and going an hour away to South Los Angeles. It's not just a commute, but a mission.

5.1. Masjid Farooq: Race and Poverty

Masjid Farooq lies in the heart of South Los Angeles, serving a primarily Black Muslim

community in a longtime racialized and neglected part of L.A. For over thirty years,

Majid Farooq and Imam Saleh have sought to establish a sense of community, solidarity,

Figure 11, Liquor Lining at Masjid Farooq

and charity in the gutted neighborhoods of a post-industrial landscape. "You see that over

there," says Brother Ali as he's pointing to a corner retail block. "It's called Liquor

Lining," and then he shifts his gaze directly across the street and says, "and that's a

motel, rented by the hour," glancing away and then turning to me: "if you want—!" Brother Ali drifts; I ask: "—Prostitution?"

Ali nods with one hand up, trying to grab the attention of people to collect signatures, and with a clipboard in the other. Hakim, the director of the charity program adds, "families also rent by the week there, bad credit with no other options, and it ends up costing them more." "It's called 'triage' in the medical field," Brother Ali continues: "We the discarded."

It's Friday afternoon, *Jumma* day (weekly congregation), right before the weekend of the first annual Black American Muslim Conference. People have come here from all over the United States: New York, Atlanta, Chicago and Oakland. The congregation is a mix of different sects of Black Muslims, from The Nation of Islam to the Shehu Jamaat. Men in suits and bow-ties to turbans and flowing African prints. I'm told that the mosque is "Orthodox Sunni," and that most people here are Orthodox. Imam Saleh converted to Sunni Islam from The Nation, soon after the death of the founder Elijah Muhammad in 1975 and the public conversion of Elijah's son Warith Deen Muhammad to Sunnism, taking most of the movement with him. "He [Warith Deen] said pull out the pews and roll out the carpets!" says Imam Saleh, "and we did."

Imam Saleh has invited out Imam Sameer to Masjid Farooq on various occasions. Imam Sameer gives Friday sermons as the guest preacher, weekend *halaqa* (religious education for youth and adults), as well as consults with them regarding the zakat program.

"*Salaam Alaikum aahk*," says the young black Imam Saleh to Imam Sameer.

"*Walaikum assalam aakee*," returns Imam Sameer. *Aahk* is Black-American shorthand for the Arabic *akhi,* meaning "brother." *Aakee* is the vernacular pronunciation for *akhi. Ikhwan* (brotherhood), by the way, shares the same root.

They slap hands in the fashion of 90s hip-hop, coming in sideways with a hug. The anthropologist Su'ad Abdul Khabeer calls this "Muslim Cool," developing William Cobb's concept of "cool" for Black Muslim spaces. According to Cobb, "'Cool' is a form of Negro Zen," developed by black folk as "retaliation" to white supremacy: an "effortless" performance of "self-possession, elegance, and the ability to be fluent in body language—and it becomes obvious that cool was our antidote to the heat of hateration" (Khabeer 2016, 139). Khabeer argues that Muslim Cool is not only a response to white supremacy, but also to the hegemony of "Arab and South Asian US American Muslim" identities (Khabeer 2016, 144).

I am standing outside the mosque in a small parking lot right after the *Jumma Salat* (Friday sermon), where a local Christian Pastor was invited, after the sermon, to ask the congregants to sign a petition to modify Prop 13, a 1978 California tax bill that disproportionately affected school funding in low income neighborhoods. "You see the condition of these streets. The reason why our schools are in disrepair is because of tax bills like Proposition 13 that cut our funding to needed services. Sign the petition outside." Here, "triage" seems like an apt description of the consequences of unequal

taxation policies, where some people are sacrificed by diverting resources and attention to those who can be saved.

Brother Ali, standing outside collecting signatures after the sermon, coming after work dressed in black slacks and a white button-down shirt, but with the *tarbush (*Fez cap and tassel), typical of the 19th century Ottoman Pasha's and appropriated by some black Muslims of the 20th century (Gomez 2005, 171), as well as the Masonic Shriners, to signify the oriental and exotic. I am here to meet Hakim, who is to show me around the mosque and explain the charity program that is run out of it. At six-foot-six with wide shoulders, he towers above the crowd and is easy to spot. Despite his stature, he has disarming calm demeanor and welcoming smile He is dressed in sweatpants and a T-shirt, but instead of a skull cap, turban, or fez cap as some others are wearing, he had a simple black beanie—a look typical in these parts. After prayer when we were putting our shoes back on, I noticed the flying 'Air Jordan' logo on Hakim's size 13+ black sneakers. "Clean Jordans," I say, proud of myself for being hip to the urban aesthetic and at the same time acknowledging his membership in a fraternal organization of its own. In the streets of Los Angeles, those with the "freshest kicks" win, and a pair of Jordans can range anywhere between a few hundred dollars or upwards of thousands, based on the year of debut and condition. But because Hakim is humble, he quickly and calmly responds: "They're a year old." Like many prestige items, they hold their value and increase over time as long as they are kept in good condition. When I describe his shoes as "clean," I am acknowledging the high-quality condition of his apparel and his well-to-do status in the community. By retorting that they're "a year old," however, Hakim

denies that his shoes are either a mint-condition status symbol or a vintage set-piece. At the same time, his one-year-old "fresh kicks" signify that he likely has a whole collection of similar items, and that's saying something too.

Since the mosque was built, helping out those in need was a top priority, especially in this neighborhood where getting a paycheck and paying rent is an everyday concern. The mosque has a food pantry, registered with the Food Bank of Los Angeles and is open every weekend. There is also a thrift store in another location, selling used and donated items. In one room, I saw four racks of brand new men's suits waiting to be delivered to the thrift store. "A men's store closed down, and sent us all their suits," quips Hakim. A priority for Masjid Farooq is safe and affordable housing, where rents in the Los Angeles area have increased due to gentrification.

"The landlords no longer want to qualify for HUD," Hakim explains, referring to the low-income program that renters use to pay for rent:

> *To qualify for HUD, the property has to be in a certain condition, and when the inspectors come around they find the smallest little problem and tell them they have to fix it. They [landlords] rather just let the property run down, move out the tenants, and then renovate or completely rebuild for much higher rents. You see that new complex on the drive from the freeway, that used to be low income housing. Now it's high class.*

The mosque wants to work with HUD and establish low income housing, as well as a half-way house for transitioning people who have just come out of prison. "If they don't find housing, because they have a hard time qualifying for it, they end right back into the prison system," remarks Hakim. "But housing is difficult, rent is high, and we have donor fatigue."

"Donor fatigue?" I ask. He responds:

> *Yes, donor fatigue. We have people who keep giving and giving, and there are also other causes out there. People are looking for investments. I had one big donor ask me, what will happen to you if I die? This got me thinking, and he's right, what would happen to us if he died, and a major source of funding dries up? We need a social entrepreneurship program. A business with a social mission, social responsibility.*

There are a few large donors, giving in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, some known and others who remain anonymous. I remember being at one Masjid Farooq fundraiser in Orange County, a suburb just south of Los Angeles with a Muslim community comprising mostly professionals and business owners. One donor raised his hand and pledged fifty-thousand dollars on the spot. Others remarked that the same donor has given similar amounts at other fundraisers, for building schools, mosques, and helping refugees from Syria or Myanmar. Nevertheless, when the United Nations is asking for billions of dollars to maintain camps for millions of refugees, the need is endless, the causes plenty, and the resources finite.

Muslim immigrants who have come to the United States as professionals, including doctors and engineers, have been instrumental in raising money for building mosques since the late 1970s. But the mega-donors, the "whales," (as they are known among donor circles) are business owners. There has also been a flow of money from suburban to urban mosques, as well as a historical, cultural, and racial divide that, though assuaged by belonging to the *ummah, remains prevalent.* I attended one fundraising event with Masjid Farooq where the focus was on the homeless of Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles. Arriving to see the program in action one Saturday afternoon among the

homeless encampment, though the organizers were Black Muslims, the volunteer doctors

doing checkups as well as the major donors were immigrants:

> *We can't keep doing this, year after year. Thirty years of non-violent protest and nothing changed. White people are now concerned about drugs, now that their communities are affected. Trump is president, school shootings treat white perpetrators differently. With social entrepreneurship we can solve our own problems without government.*

Hakim has been doing this a long time, and it's clear he is fed up with the situation of

dependency that the contemporary charity model has helped create. So instead of

competing for donations for an endless need, Hakim is transitioning to investments, a

program of social entrepreneurship that can employ people, and see investments grow,

combating "donor fatigue." "Donations you eat," says Hakim, "investments you plant and

grow." He looks at me and makes the connection, "*Zakat means* 'grow!'" This is the first

time I've heard of zakat being connected to social entrepreneurship and an investment

logic, but Hakim is correct; the etymological root *Z-K-W* means *growth*, as in: "A tree is

nourished and grows in the presence of Allah-owned resources such as the soil, the rain,

the sun, and the air" (Alam 2017).

Context, both temporal and spatial, helps us understand the mutability of language

and meaning. For Qaradawi in Egypt, the intellectual history of the *fiqh* of zakat

consolidates around 'social welfare', writing as an Islamic scholar and working out the

place of the state in terms of zakat and redistribution. In the pre-modern *fiqh* discourse,

we see a focus on "purification" (*tazkiyah*) of those who pay the zakat, and also as a form

of worship. For the one who receives the zakat, it is a right bestowed upon them by God.

None of these interpretations of zakat contradict each other; the different meanings of zakat emerge from different contexts with their particular needs. In the inner-city, 'growth' captures the needs of the community, responding to donor fatigue and the need to develop investments and employment, in line with Imam Sameer and Imam Abdullah's notion of social welfare.

Before he became an imam, Sameer was a counselor for the Los Angeles Unified School district, mostly dealing with troubled teens in High Schools. "I've seen it all," he says, "abuse, violence, abandonment. Most problems, though, stem from broken families." Imam Abdullah has also reiterated the same position,

> *The family is more important in building community than the individual. We have to rebuild the black family from a solid two-parent household. Those that get into the most trouble don't have a father in the house, and the best of our community come from strong families. Or when blackness is equated with poverty, what is lacking is an understanding that to build strong communities we need to be thinking about building strong families.*

This narrative mirrors conservative Christian discourse and "the culture of poverty" that places responsibility on families and communities instead of the structural problems associated with racism and inadequate funding. However, in this case, the very failure of government generation after generation has turned this community to look inwardly, and in the words of Hakim, "solve our own problems." For Masjid Farooq, that includes building strong families, communities, and local businesses.

"They're are our 'partnerships,'" explains Hakim, "and then our 'civic engagement.' With other Muslims, our brothers, we form partnerships. Civic engagement is working with the city, non-profits, or interfaith where they need the token 'good

Muslim.'" He's sitting on the outdoor alley stairwell, away from the parishioners still mulling inside after the *khutbah*. I'm taking notes standing on the sidewalk.

"It's a two-way thing, they need us for something and we need them too—how do you utilize that relationship?" He smiles and adds, "you need to churn that milk into butter," and motions as though he is turning a large handle.

"What's a 'good Muslim?'" I ask.

"One that doesn't get into trouble, well-behaved, mannered, like a good student." I can't help but think of the racial, class, and religious politics of a community organizer seen as a 'token,' or 'good student,' instead of a fully enfranchised citizen who can demand rights and command respect on equal terms. Zakat reconfigured as social entrepreneurship fills the empty signifier of the "good Muslim," working within the current hegemonic economic paradigm. Zakat, as a right, demands payment on equal terms, Muslim to Muslim; zakat as social entrepreneurship asks for investment based on being a "good Muslim," as seen through the discipline of neoliberal civic virtue. I can see Hakim's dilemma: he has been working and living in the community for a generation, with little to no economic change. Tired of being the recipient of zakat and charity, he would rather ask for investment and create opportunity, an ethical stance congruent to the American Dream—personal responsibility and its promise of social mobility regardless of race and religion.

Most people clear out after the sermon. After about 45 minutes its only Hakim and I sitting on a bench outside, with Brother Ali still standing in the parking lot and talking to someone, the imam and cleaning crew still inside.

An older woman with a beanie on, seemingly homeless, is walk-limping outside the gate, with two tall cans of Miller Light in one hand and a half-burnt cigarette in another. "Are ya'll serving dinner tonight?" she loudly asks from the gate, and Brother Ali responds, "No, not tonight." Just as she was about to continue walking, Hakim jumps up and says, "Tomorrow! Come by tomorrow and we'll have something for you!". She recognizes him and begins to slowly limp-walk towards him, "Hey mama," Hakim gently says, "give me a hug," and with one arm he's able to wrap her in a warm embrace. "How you been?" he asks her. She responds: "Good," with her voice rising in pitch. Despite his salutation, it is evident that Hakim and this woman bear no familial relationship. Rather, he treats her with utmost dignity, raising her up with a hug and calling this elderly woman "mama," a term of engagement in which he reaches out to her in a congenial manner. By contrast, Hakim's role in civic engagement demands that he first disciplines himself under the norms of civic virtue and social entrepreneurship and maintain a certain emotional distance before he can ask for anything. That being said, coming in as a social entrepreneur allow a certain equanimity between investor and investee, a model based on partnership, as long as one is disciplined by and working through neoliberal terms.

After they quickly chat and she moves along, he tells me that she's a regular and probably lives around here somewhere but doesn't think she lives on the streets. "She gets food from the pantry, and on some weeks we serve a warm dinner for whoever wants it." He stops and says:

> *you should see this place during Ramadan; we bring out the tables and chairs, the place fills up, and non-Muslims start cheering, 'It's Ramadan! The Muslims are*

here! And people from the neighborhood know they can come in and get a good meal.

I ask him if the pantry takes zakat funds or general *sadaqa*, and he says "I prefer to take *sadaqa,* because we can do what we want with it." He looks aside, hands in his pocket, and then adds with some exasperation, "we have to rethink zakat. Some people give us bags of flour or large bags of rice for zakat. What's she going to do with a bag of flour? I don't think she even has a stove to cook on."

"What does she need?" I ask. He explains that she needs

> *canned goods, ready-to-eat items. If you do have a kitchen, who wants to cook if you're holding multiple jobs, exhausted from a long day, and need to eat and feed children as soon as you get home? It's easier to go to the drive-thru and eat from the 99-cents menu.*

In the inner city, where housing is precarious and liquor stores are more numerous than grocery stores, structural violence starts with unfair taxation and ends up reconfiguring people's relationship to food. In the last thirty years, the disappearance of healthy grocery stores is the natural consequence of the free market, the ubiquity of fast food, and the demands of a population that no longer has the luxury of cooking, let alone the time that it takes to prepare a meal from a base of flour, eggs, and milk. Cooking from scratch is a product of cultural capital, whether it be a process of socialization, learning grandma's cooking and helping set the table, or the time and ability of following a cookbook recipe. Zakat, if looking at the religious law of the pre-modern period, featured the redistribution of seasonal agricultural goods, many of them staples, such as flour, the product of milling wheat and a main ingredient of Middle Eastern cooking since the

cultivation of the Tigris and Euphrates in 9600 BCE. But in the contemporary inner-city, the foods are different as are the sources of redistribution.

Hakim laughs when I ask him if they are doing anything about the liquor store and Motel. "Those are local *institutions*," he says with emphasis and a smile. "We are not ready to go against all that right now."

"Institutions?" I ask, reiterating his interesting choice of words. "Yes," he responds, then looking down: "They are institutionalized." Looking back up he continues: "I'd rather open up a grocery store with good products, give people a choice."

Choice is the language of the free market, but in this neighborhood it manifests itself as a *lack* of choice, namely of affordable, healthy food options—a stark contrast with Beverly Hills, ten miles away. How are liquor stores and cheap motels institutionalized, when public institutions such as public schools and parks underfunded? Why are some residents powerless, and others enfranchised when it comes to zoning, taxation, and funding?

At Masjid Farooq, zakat works in tandem with civic engagement, whether it be representation on a panel, working to modify Proposition 13, or looking for investment rather than charity as social entrepreneurs. In the realities of the inner-city as it intersects with race and poverty, zakat is one of the tools this community uses to work against racism, working in tandem with the flair of Muslim Cool.

5.2. Connect California: Gender

As a licensed social worker, Imam Sameer's work extends beyond the boundaries of the mosque and into the non-profit world, contributing his skills not only as an expert in Islam but as a professional counselor. Having cultural knowledge, religious literacy, and an MSW, Imam Sameer was the perfect candidate for Connect California to bring on board. In the next two sections, I discuss gender as it intersects with the imam, including how the women of Connect face gender discrimination, and then examine the social significance of masculinity in Muslim-American communities. The purpose of this section is to show how imams are negotiating shifting gender norms in a context where women are taking leadership roles in Muslim communities, especially in the non-profit sector where zakat is redistributed, and opportunities are greater than at the mosque.

 "*Muslim Terrorist Organization* was spray painted right here on the parking lot, over there was *long live Israal*, but Israel was spelled wrong! And on our doorstep was *Go home Muslims*." I'm at Connect California, an Arab-American charity that focuses on connecting the underprivileged to public social services. Laila, one of the employees who is showing me the refugee program, is nonchalantly telling me about a hate-crime that happened a few months back. "Ah," she shrugs, "we just painted over it and power

washed the other. The police took a report, but nothing came out of it. We didn't report it to CAIR,[26] because what would come out of that?"

Connect California is a non-profit that receives government funding as well as charitable contributions, including zakat, from the community. In late 2017, Connect was running a refugee resettlement program, as well as helping immigrants of all backgrounds, but mostly from Muslim countries, with mental health, English-language classes, legal help, and job placement. Nadia, an Arab-American who founded the organization almost twenty years ago, has established the charity primarily with the help of other women. Around 2014, Nadia sought out the help of Imam Sameer, who consulted Connect on how to grow and professionalize their mental health program.

Hijab, Gender, and the Women of Connect CA

I'm sitting with Laila in her office going over the refugee program when Nadia walks in. She helped set this meeting and knows that I am doing research among Muslim organizations. After a few pleasantries, Nadia asks, "do you know anyone from the community who could one day replace me, preferably a man?" I turn to Laila. "What about her?" I ask. "She's been here a long time and she's great!"

"Oh," jokes Nadia, "how much did she pay you to say that!"

"No, no, no," says Laila, "I like my job, her job is too stressful."

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[26] Council on American-Islamic Relations, a US based civil rights organization that usually would pursue litigation and press hate-crime charges bringing acts of vandalism to public light. In this case, the Connect California decided not to bring this to national attention. CAIR is covered in Chapter 6.

"This place is dominated by women," I say, and both of them give out a chuckle maintaining their smile.

"Why do you want a man when you have so many qualified women here? I don't understand," I say.

"It would be easier for a man to get community support and to get respect," Nadia says while Laila is still smiling. I have known this organization for years, the work it does, and the amount of respect it receives from the community. For them to sit there and tell me this, so casually, breaks my heart.

"The community doesn't respect you? What about Imam Sameer?" I know Imam Sameer has consulted with Nadia and has spoken at their yearly fundraising dinners attended to by over five hundred people. Nadia responds:

> *Imam Sameer is great, I'm not talking about him, but you can ask him! We were at a Shura Council meeting and I was nominated to the Majlis [board], but I didn't get elected, because I wasn't a man.* [27] *There are many on that board who are from conservative mosques, and they overlook us, don't even know or acknowledge what we do. Sameer was there. One man came to me and said, 'sister, why you not wearing hijab?' And after the meetings, the men go to eat together, or go to mosque together, I'm not invited to those.*

I did ask Imam Sameer, and he does remember the event. "Some of these guys don't have power at work, being Muslim and not white, so they have power trips when it comes to the community. It's the effects of colonialism.[28] I also think"—he pauses to

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[27] The Shura Council of Southern California, a consultative body made up of local Mosques and Muslim organizations.

[28] Nandy discusses "internal colonialism" as a "homology between sexual and political dominance," a subjectivizing of colonial power as a "manly or husbandly or lordly prerogative." See Nandy, Ashis. 1983. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*. Delhi: Oxford. Pg. 4-5.

gather his words—"a jocularity among guys that they can talk openly and about things when women are not around."

"What about Imam Aziz?" I ask Nadia, knowing that he had spoken at one of her events.

>*Imam Sameer is great and so is Imam Aziz. I have so much respect for Imam Aziz. At one event, he saw me from across the room, stood up, walked over to me and said, 'salaam Nadia,' shook my hand in front of everybody!*

Her eyes were watery by the time she ended the sentence. The acknowledgement and respect shown by one of the elder imams, an imam whose authority everyone recognizes, in front of the old boys' club meant everything to her.

And shaking her hand was a particularly provocative gesture. For traditional Muslim societies with sex segregation, touching a woman's hand, specifically someone not from one's own family, is a boundary that conflicts with pre-modern notions of sex segregation, the public/private divide of men's and women's roles in society, and the *fiqh* that is built on top of it. However, as women have entered the workplace, and the public/private divide no longer holds even in places like Cairo or Karachi, let alone California, the semiotics of the handshake carry different meanings—meanings that were conferred between the imam and Nadia. Just as Geertz taught us about the wink and its meaning in different contexts, a handshake where the elder imam gets up and walks over to a non-hijab wearing woman is a sign of recognition of her as an equal, a professional, and a Muslim worthy of respect because she embodies the ethic of *sadaqa,* zakat, social justice and solidarity.

I have been to a Shura Council meeting; though there are mostly men representing the various organizations, there are a few women, all in hijab. As of this writing, the board consists of eight members, two of whom are women, and two staff out of five are also women. In these meetings, although men and women occupy the same space, Muslim men and women perform gender-specific roles, in which a violation of norms identifies those who belong and those who do not. Women wear the hijab and loose clothing, and there is no physical touching or shaking hands between the sexes. Communication is moderated, professional, and business-like. Anything deemed too friendly can be construed as flirtation, the borders of which signify the pious from the impious.

Nadia illustrates this binary in contemporary Muslim discourse, signaled by those who wear the hijab and those who do not. I argue that the violation of conservative Islamic gender norms disrupts normative notions of piety, especially amongst conservative men, signaling to them an uncertainty of one's obligation and allegiance. In Southern California, Mosque spaces, fundraising dinners, and community events, draw Muslims from different ethnic backgrounds, cultural practices, along with a variety of gender performances that get interpreted in various way.

Over the last five years, I have attended the fundraising events for Connect California, as well as many other fundraising events for Mosques, civil rights organizations, and other non-profit charities. The events are not only fundraisers, but a public and advertised assessment of the state of the organization, a review of each year's accomplishments, a declaration of its core mission and values, and a call for support for

the following year. Additionally, the kind of speakers, entertainment (if there is any), as well as gender performance establish if the organization is "conservative"' and "traditional" verses one that is "liberal" and "modern." For example, at one Deobandi[29] mosque fundraising event, the men and women sat in different sections. There was a large ballroom separated by a curtain running down the middle, with a stage up-front and in the middle. The speakers on stage could see both sides, but the men and women could not see each other and did not mix other than upon entering in the lobby. For most mosque and national events, especially during dinner, people sit with their families or friends in mixed gatherings.

Connect California's annual fundraising event is held at a nice hotel in Orange County, attended by over five-hundred people, dressed in formal attire from suits and tuxes worn by the men to cocktail dresses and long flowing gowns by the women. Imam Aziz as well as Imam Sameer have been regular speakers, signifying the religious importance of the organization's community work, especially for the most vulnerable. Keynote speakers have included politicians, such as the local mayor and members of Congress, as well as notables from the non-profit world, including a Reverend and Catholic Priest, signifying local ties and broader membership in humanitarian projects.

The event starts with a silent auction in the lobby with hors d'oeuvres, where people network, bid on a range of "Islamic" items ranging from an Umrah Package,[30] to

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[29] Dominant in South Asia including India and Pakistan
[30] Umrah is a trip to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, with flight, Five Star hotel accommodations, and transfers.

Islamic artwork and prayer carpets.[31] People mingle and take pictures for about thirty minutes before moving into the ballroom for a sit-down dinner. I see Nadia, dressed in professional black slacks and a fashionable blue-black floral dinner coat. Laila, in her early thirties, is wearing an above-the-knee sleeveless cocktail dress. Some staff members, especially those that wear the hijab, are either wearing full-length pant suits, or large flowing gowns. The men are in suits, tuxes, or semi-formal shirts and slacks. I'm there in my go-to black suit, and my wife is with me in a below-the-knee-length floral black dress. We have been to this event before and dress appropriately for an evening at a nice hotel in Southern California.

Only after Nadia's comment about finding a man to replace her and the comment by one conservative male mosque board member about why she doesn't wear the hijab do I notice the absence of a majority of Deobandi's at the fundraising event, some of them prominent figures who I have seen at other events.[32] "They won't come to a mixed gathering," one imam tells me. I have known him for years and decide to press and make apparent the differences in gender performance, asking "what about young girls in cocktail dresses?" The imam nods, looks down embarrassed, acknowledging the tension of breaking the rules of normative Islamic gender performance.

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[31] Alcohol is most definitely a red line, though some participants undoubtedly sneak a drink either before or after in the hotel bar Except weddings or publically "Liberal" and "Progressive" groups who use alcohol to demarcate their identity.

[32] It is worthy to note the presence of one conservative business owner. Nadia has told me he has privately given Connect California tens of thousands of dollars over the years. She wanted to publically award him, but he refuses all acts of public acknowledgement as a matter of personal piety.

Not only are most women not wearing the hijab, but for conservatives, the women are immodestly dressed. Showing one's hair is one thing, but flesh is another. The event and politics surrounding the organization bring together different "converging histories" and different subjectivities. As Karen Leonard shows in her anthropological history of mosque communities in the U.S., two different historical phases of Muslim immigration are put at odds with each other within mosque politics (Leonard 2003). The working-class migration and white assimilation of the 1920s offers a useful comparison to the present post-civil rights era that opened up migration to "non-white" people coming at the heels of the post-colonial re-Islamization of the Arab world. Arab immigrants in the early twentieth-century built mosques along the Protestant Church model, where men and women adopted local dress and gender norms. Evelyn Shakir, in *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States*, recounts this history:

> Soon the mosque became the scene of weddings and funerals, of cake sales and dinners. Sunday Schools were established and the habit of community prayer on Sunday took hold… [since the mid 1970's] revivalists from abroad have moved to root out these innovations that seem to them egregiously out of keeping with their faith…Friday prayer has been reinvested with new life, beer is no longer sold at mosque picnics, and teenage dances on mosque premises have been eliminated (Shakir 1997, 115).

In a recent ethnography of Muslims of Pakistani descent living in Houston, Ahmed Afzal discusses the enactment of these boundaries at an annual Pakistan Independence Day event, examining the event and termed it "Islamicizing the Festival," in which

> *the observance of the alcohol prohibition, the restrictions on mixed-gender dancing on stage, and the definition of permissible attire for men and women at the Festival construct Pakistani normative social behavior and public life as irrefutably Islamic. (Afzal 2014, 159-160).*

In 1986, someone had brought alcohol to the event despite the organizers' explicit contravention against it. "We made a clear policy," says Mohammad Omar, the president of the organization in 2001. "We would not allow the consumption of alcohol [at our events]." He explained further:

> *there is no mixed [sex] dancing at any of our events. There really isn't even any dancing by women on the stage at formal events because that is not really looked up to. Because, see, all of our events are family based events. We do not have events that cater to singles, for example. We have events in which young people participate in large numbers but all of our events are family oriented programs. So all of our programs reflect that—the family values— to make sure that there is no [display of] revealing dresses on the stage, or any loose [sexually inappropriate] song being played...or mixed dancing on the stage. This is part of our Pakistani culture we want to preserve (Afzal 2014, 159).*
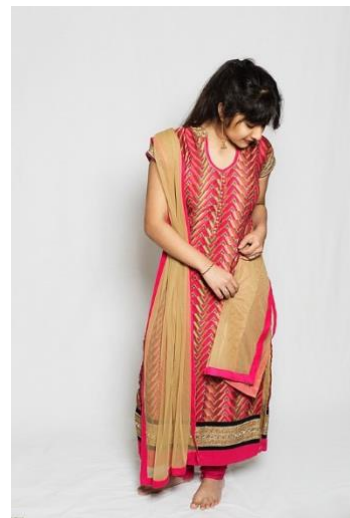
Figure 12. Salwar-khameez. photo by Harry Kramer, CC via Wikicommons

Though the veil is worn, it isn't typical at these events, but "loose clothing" and "mixed dancing" would not be tolerated. In my visits to Pakistan Independence Day events in Southern California, women are mostly dressed in colorful and festive *salwar-khameez,* a loose covering long shirt and pant style of Pakistan. However, more recently the traditional *salway-khameez* has modernized with form fitting pants and tops, with sheer fabric around the arms and neckline.

Islamic revivalists and the project of re-Islamization was scorned by early Muslim feminists, who derided it as a regression destined to fail. The triumph of modernity, including liberalism and the personal individual freedoms it entailed, seemed an inevitable process of Weberian disenchantment, with the hijab being an enchanted relic

from the past. At an international women's conference in the late 1980s, at Harvard's

Center for the Study of World Religions, "two of the doyennes of women's rights in

Islam were discussing the apparently growing adoption of the veil in Cairo" (Haddad,

Smith, and Moore 2006, 9). Nawal Sa'dawi "argued that the veil was a passing fad that

the great majority of Egyptian women would never tolerate," and that Fatima Mernissi of

Beyond the Veil fame "agreed entirely, and the two laughed merrily at the images on a

new video showing Cairene women in various stages of 'Islamic cover'…they regarded

veiling as a very limited phenomenon connected to the pressures of urbanization as more

rural peasants moved to the city centers for jobs and education" (ibid, 10).

Haddad, Smith and Kathleen Moore *in Muslim Women in America: The*

Challenge of Islamic Identity Today point out that "the most visible ways a woman can

affirm her identity with Islam is by wearing Islamic dress." They continue:

> *The majority of Muslim women in America choose not to wear garb that would*
> *distinguish them from the rest of society for a variety of reasons: they never did so*
> *before coming to America; they were born in America and have no desire to wear*
> *distinguishing garb; they do not want to be pushed into such a choice by friends*
> *or family; they do not want to draw attention to themselves or to have other*
> *Americans know they are Muslims because it may cause discomfort or*
> *discrimination; they believe that in time they may decide to dress more modestly*
> *but are not ready to ''take the step''; they do not like the look of most Islamically-*
> *fashioned outfits; or they refuse to wear anything that will make them*
> *uncomfortable (''Summers in Houston are bad enough without all that extra*
> *material wrapped around me. . . .''). Many simply have never given serious*
> *consideration to wearing so-called modest dress. ''I'm a very modest person and*
> *I hope my dealings with others reflect that,'' says a young university student in*
> *the Midwest. ''Why do I have to prove it by what I choose to wear?'' (ibid, 10).*

The women of Connect California have surely proved themselves. Perhaps it is their

important work in the community, the success of their projects and financial

independence that allows them freedom from Islamic gender norms. Who can question their allegiance to community and identity as Muslims when they are at the forefront of serving its most vulnerable members, in an ethic that incorporates zakat, one of the five pillars in Islam in an act that is equated to worshiping God? Both Imams Aziz and Sameer recognize this fact: sometimes lay Muslims are more "Muslim" than their imams.

Muslim women are increasingly visible in not only individual acts of piety and charity, but serving the community in positions of "leadership [that have] dramatically exploded, " especially in "parallel structures and institutions" (Bano and Kalmbach 2012, 122). Muslim women are active in Youth Groups, Mosque programs, and study circles, and in the United States they have served on Mosque boards as well as held the highest position in America's largest Muslim organization, the Islamic Society of North America. Ingrid Matson, a convert and professor at Hartford Seminary, held the position as vice president then president from 2001–2010. This being said, women are still underrepresented and "seldom play institutional leadership roles" (Haddad, Smith, and Moore 2006, 64). Instead, they are typically relegated to positions of care where they

> *participate in gender-specific aspects of Muslim community life, such as preparing food for functions and events, organizing activities for children, occasionally participating in educational events, and, very important, raising money for the community (Hammer 2012, 133).*

In the Muslim world, from Egypt to Lebanon, Muslim women have been active in mosque, charity, and *dawah* movements (Mahmood 2005; Hafez 2011a; Deeb 2011). Historically, women have played an important role in *hadith* transmission as well as other religious subjects, endowed one of the oldest colleges, and have set up various charitable

endowments from Nurbanu Sultans' Atik Valide or "Old Mother Queen" large Mosque and madrassa complex to Nura's free kitchen in the City of the Dead in contemporary Cairo (Mittermaier 2014, 57).

Saba Mahmood, in her influential study of a women's piety-mosque movement in Egypt, is critical of elements of western feminism that frame gender equality in liberal terms and female agency in secular liberal discourse. Borrowing from Talal Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition, Mahmood places female leaders in the mosque movement as part of a tradition in which their voices, actions, and subjectivities are non-liberal. Sherine Hafez, on the other hand, acknowledges the discursive aspects of Cairene female actors, but complicates the "imbricated subjectivities" of Cairene subjects outside of the binary of liberal or traditional, but of a multiplicity of desires, aspirations, and modes of being of intersecting histories. The Muslim-American females of Connect California, in a cauldron of Muslims from all around the world and as minorities in a secular-liberal normative cultural and legal environment, are imbricated subjects all of their own. Their ethic is rooted in piety, zakat, and a gender performance that delicately balances a conflagration of gender norms in a uniquely Muslim-American way.

Nadia's role as a leader who doesn't wear hijab underscores Julaine Hammer's account of achieving gender justice where she "links space and leadership to the issue of women's voices" looking at "questions of leadership, ritual, exegetical, and social/political." Though her thesis investigates exegetical roles of women leading prayer, she looks at the broader and more complex question of who has "the right to decide which woman is Muslim enough, pious enough, or dressed properly enough to be

accepted as a leader" (Hammer 2012, 125&134). As Hillary Kalmbach notes,

nonconformity of prescribed gender roles, especially eschewing the hijab, puts into relief

"the importance of audience expectations in processes of legitimation [that also] place[s]

significant barriers in front of women seeking religious authority" (Bano and Kalmbach

2012, 25).

5.3. Muslim Masculinities

Colonial Masculinity

Over the last thirty years, and especially after 9/11, a lot has been written on hijab,

women's rights, as well as feminist and apologetic discourses concerning gender

justice.[33] Instead of discussing the issue of hijab, its Islamic legalistic discourse, and the

position of Azharis in America that range from "it's an obligation" to "it is highly

recommended, part of the tradition, but it is a woman's choice," I prefer to look at the

less studied construction of Muslim masculinities. To better understand the tension

involved in shifting gender norms I provide this section as a background to the question

of masculinity, illustrating a generational change undergone through colonialism. In

Chapter 2 I give a background on "effendi masculinity" a notion of masculinity stemming

as a reaction to the feminized constructions of the East and its role in the construction of

the Egyptian nation-state. In Chapter 2 I covered the Ikhwan and their gender norms,

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[33] See Julianne Hammer for references an an empirical approach, Hadaad et al, for Muslim women in the US, and Katz for a textual analysis and intellectual history of women's role in the mosque from the time of the prophet to the contemporary. For ethnographies of Egypt, see Mahmood, Hafez, Mittermair.

including what it means to be a man in relation to family, community, nation, and work. In this section, I cover work on the South Asian context, since many of the mosque critics of Connect California are Deobandis, many members of which will not come to gatherings where men and women sit together. I rely on De Sondy, who argues that pre-modern masculinity in South Asia was diverse and less rigid than the post-colonial situation typified by the Deobandis.

In *Crisis of Islamic Masculinities,* Amanullah De Sondy begins with the colonial contact in South Asia, recounting the variegated notions of what it is to be a man in pre-modern India and Pakistan. He decries "rigid notions of masculinity" and "theocratic inflections" as a consequence of "complicated sociopolitical reasons…regional instability, colonialism" that marks itself "through familial dominance and shows of power" (De Sondy 2015, 1).

De Sondy's analysis looks both at the South Asian cultural context as well as a textual reading of the Quran and concludes that Islamic masculinities are "relational, contextual masculinities." Quranically, De Sondy argues, there are four male archetypes: Adam, Joseph, Jesus, and Muhammad, all of whom led different lives. Adam and Eve do not fit the current model of sex and gender, insofar as the Quran God gives them the "command to submit" ("though they do not uphold this"), and as Adam is not the breadwinner nor is Eve the homemaker (De Sondy 2015, 104). Joseph is an archetype of "restrained virility," fleeing from the advances of Zuleikha, the "housemaster's wife." In

De Sondy's retelling, it is not the seductive nature of woman that is at play, a move demeaning to women, but the mutual love and attraction and the Quran's admonition of deception through adultery (109). Muhammad, the last messenger, is interesting because he is the Prophet of Islam and the main archetype through his *sunna* or way. However, contrary to contemporary understanding of gender roles, his first wife, fifteen years his senior and *his* employer, asks for *his* hand in marriage because of his business ethics in dealing with her caravans outside Mecca (112). She employs him, is older, and upon marriage, in a more powerful position than he is. Jesus, a prophet in Islam, is a "nonfamilial prophet" (116), never married and is construed both Biblically and Quranically as celibate.

De Sondy's analysis of the Sufis of Mughal India in a context of courtesans and pederasty focuses on Ghalib and his poetry of love, which includes themes of homoeroticism, a taboo subject during the reconfiguring of family and masculinity during the anti-colonial struggles of the mid-twentieth century. As the social historians of Mughal India show, same-sex love and especially pederasty were common among the elite. Though family life was esteemed, masculinity revolved around fertility, where procreation was a social duty "but did not necessitate erotic commitment" nor did erotic commitments threaten marriage (Kidwai in De Sondy 2015, 146). Portraits of Mughal emperors also represent a different notion of masculinity, frequently featuring such seemingly feminine gestures as posing with or sniffing a flower.

Sufis in general have historically spurned textual rigidity in favor of transcendence, experience, and spirituality. Since Ghalib's time in the mid 1800's,

however, many Sufis too have also come under the disciplinary regimes of contemporary masculinity and normative juristic discourse. The Qalandari Malangs of South Asia retain their free expression and make a public performance of their dismissal of normative custom, travelling from shrine to shrine. In turn they have

> *stormed across Islamic boundaries of social etiquette and legal rectitude in an attempt to rescue ritual from the demands of order and restore it to its primordial statues as 'play'. Qalandars reject all property (even clothing at times), are celibate, do accept employment (but alms-taking became fairly regulated), are homeless wanderers, and are thoroughly antinomian in appearance and behavior"* (171).

De Sondy names Maulana Mawdudi and the establishment of his political party, the Jammāt-I Islami, as pivotal in the re-articulation of proper gender norms in South Asia. I argue that the same processes affecting masculinity in South Asia can also be applied to Egypt. The Oriental subject from the gaze of the colonizer is the same backwards creature, effeminate and lazy, and the anti-colonial struggles take on the same features—reform, resistance, building political parties, and the re-articulation of a Muslim masculinity up to the task of repelling domination. It is well documented that the writings of Mawdudi greatly influenced the Egyptian intellectual of the Muslim Brotherhood, Syed Qutb, and its founder Hassan al-Banna—all of whom were working in the contemporaneous anti-colonial struggle as pan-Islamists (see Rahman and Ali 2012; Jackson 2010).

The American Azharis of this study are Muslim, American, conservative in some respects, and liberal in others—and eschew simple binary classification. None of the imams to whom I have spoken police gender norms as Nadia had been subjected to.

Imam Sameer, being at the meeting where she was denied a board position, witnessed a policing he was ashamed of, pointing to "colonialism" and "power trips" of men from another generation. It is notable that the man who was so quick to police gender boundaries and Islamic norms is not an imam, or someone with a classical training.

Imams Getting Fit

When I returned to Egypt I continued fieldwork amongst American Azhari students, staying in Medina Nasser one semester and Mokattam in another. The middle-class neighborhood of Mokattam became a preferred spot for many western Azhari students, elevated on a hillside right above al-Azhar and the old city. The air was cleaner than dusty Cairo, and featured a main street with plenty of cafes, coffee shops, grocery stores, and a few gyms, from bargain basement weight rooms to full service co-ed gyms with spa, sauna, group classes, with modern cardio and weight rooms.

Jibril, studying to be an imam and now employed as head imam at a mosque in the United States, asked if I wanted to go with him to tour a few of the local gyms. We had discussed joining one and finally after Friday prayers (weekend/a day off in Cairo) decided to finally join one. "It's a good idea," I said, "I need to be working out." Jibril responds, "I used to play basketball every day, I've gained weight and don't want to get the *maulvi* gut!" *Maulvia* and *Maulana* are the south Asian terms for the clerical Ulema class; no aspiring imam would use it, as they prefer the Arabic title *sheikh*. *Maulvi* has become a pejorative, a term of belonging to south Asian religiosity that is seen as parochial whereas *sheikh* belongs to Global Islam. It is the *Maulvis* who don't speak Arabic, only Urdu or a local dialect, and who in recent decades with the abundance of

sugar have fallen victim to an obesity epidemic, being particularly affected because of a south Asian custom of bringing sweet *halva* to the local *Maulana*. Jibril is consciously distancing himself from a parochial Islam that has its local conceptions and masculinities to a more western and global intelligible conception of contemporary manhood and religiosity.

The problem with Cairo, at least for Americans, is that they play soccer. Most of Americans here grew up playing basketball, but lack access to facilities to play it here.

Figure 13. Imams doing planks during Umrah in Mecca

What we do have access to, however, is weight rooms—and to abate the possibility of developing a *maulvia* gut, Jibril and I settle on a mid-priced local Mokattam gym, with cardio equipment upstairs and weights below. It wasn't as fancy as the bigger and newer facility a few blocks down, but it was half the price at fifteen dollars a month. Jibril and I met a few times a week to work out, starting with a ten-minute warmup routine on the treadmills and then push some weight for around forty-five minutes or so.

When Jibril first became an imam in the United States, he would post pictures of himself on social media with a his Azhari uniform, a fez hat wrapped in a turban, and a long robe. There were also images of him giving speeches in shirt and slacks, or behind a podium in a suit, and more recently active gym shots. I first noticed a profile-picture change, a sideways profile

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head shot in sunglasses wearing a tank-top—not the kind of picture expected from an imam, but typical of the social media presence of cool Christian American preachers reaching out to millennials for Jesus. At a recent Umrah trip to Mecca, intermixed with pictures of him and other imams in a mandatory *ihram* picture, there is an after-

Figure 14. Imam Jibril's exercise routine.

fajr (sunrise prayer) photograph of a few imams doing planks in the hotel's gym. There is one video of Jibril doing pull-ups, doing a full six reps with the hashtag:

> *#swolana- promoting a healthy lifestyle for religious leadership. Swolana= swole + Maulana.*

Swole is the American dialectical usage for swollen, commonly used among body-builders who want to a strong, muscular physique. Jibril has also motivated other imams in his generation to get fit, keep active, and especially play sports with the youth. Now in his late thirties, Jibril can still keep up on the basketball court.

When I entered my last meeting with Imam Hassan in his office, he was drinking a Pure Protein banana flavored protein drink, the 24-pack case open on the floor with another case of chocolate next to it. "Those are good," I say. "Yeah, the local imams are

having a contest on who can lose the most weight. I like these: high in protein, low in sugar." He also showed me some of his workout bands and the DVD workout program he was following, a routine that he could do right in his office.

Today's Azharis, as well as contemporary Cairo, are a consequence of multiple movements and ideas whose subjectivities are imbricated with multiple desires, modes, and meanings (see Hafez 2011). The imams perform an American masculinity, knowing that appearance and fitness is a judgement criterion. Being out of shape is a sign of laziness and backwardness signified by the *maulvi*. These imams are distancing themselves from that, growing up in the United States and ministering to a new generation, they need to work out, play basketball, and model what a Muslim man should look and act like.

5.4. Inadequacy of Islamic Finance

As I sit with Imam Muhammad during his office hours, a man in his early twenties walks in for a meeting. I introduce myself as an anthropologist studying imams in Southern California, and ask if I could sit in on the meeting to observe, as I did regularly. Today has been hit or miss for me: about half of the people coming in have said no while the other half have agreed to let me observe. I don't want to add any pressure to Muhammad's clients, some of whom are distressed or dealing with highly personal matters, so of course I make it easy for them to refuse. "I would like to sit in, but for any reason you are not comfortable, please say so—I'll go wait outside, no questions asked. This is of a professional nature, and I don't want you to feel any pressure." This time the

man, Amin, responds positively: "yeah, no problem." With a smile, he turns to Imam Muhammad and says, "I just come in time to time to ask the sheikh a few questions."

As we all arrange the chairs to sit around facing each other, Amin jumps right in and asks a question regarding the prohibition of usury in Islamic law. "Is getting a bank loan *haram* for buying a house?" he asks.

"Why do you want to buy a house?" answering a question with a question. "Is paying rent too difficult for you right now?"

"Well, my family thinks I should buy a house. It would be good to have when I think about marriage."

"Do you find it a *necessity* to buy a house?" After a brief pause Imam Muhammed clarifies what he means: "Is it necessary for your livelihood, something that you can't do without?"

"Well, of course I can live without it, but renting forever is also something I don't want to do. I know I would have to pay interest, but I don't know if that's *halal* [permissible]."

"Have you looked into the options provided by Islamic Finance?"

"Yes, I have, but those options have more restrictions, are harder to qualify for, you know they require a larger down payment and end up costing more in the end."

"Well, just because you end up paying more, that doesn't mean that it's the worse option. Again, I would ask if it is a necessity and then if it is to look at the Islamic Finance options."

Amin doesn't seem convinced or satisfied, and so the imam continues, "have you

done any other research on the topic?"

"Well, yes, but it is confusing, some say you can, others say you can't, and also

that the Islamic Finance options just hide the interest [*ribaa* or usury] and end up costing

more money."

"I would look at the Islamic Finance options, they are not perfect, but they are

better than getting a regular bank loan that is based on *ribaa*. Not everyone has to buy a

house, and that's why I asked you if it is a *necessity*. I can't say go take a regular loan

when we have Islamic Financing options available." After Amin leaves, I ask Imam

Muhammad why he didn't just give Amin a recommendation of a particular bank or loan

provider:

> *I don't like to give recommendations, he [Amin] can do the research and find
> one. If he asks me what I thought of a particular bank, I'll tell him. Some are
> better than others, but I'm not an expert in the field. I have to give them room to
> think and come to their own decisions, otherwise if I just tell them what to do, they
> may not like it and end up doing what they want to do." [He adjusts himself in
> his seat, and with emphasis he looks at me and adds], a lot of times people come
> to me to validate decisions they already made. They have already made up their
> minds. So the most I can do is help them think through their decisions. At the end
> of the day, can they stand before Allah on the Day of Judgement and be ok with
> the decision they made?*

Muhammad's method, probing Amin with a question, is remarkably Socratic.

With the shared assumption that Amin wants to do what is Islamically correct by

avoiding *ribaa*, all Muhammad can do is probe the assumptions underlying Amin's

insistence on buying a house.

"You never did say getting a regular loan is haram, do you think it is haram?" I ask.

"This is why I asked him if it is *necessary* for him to buy a home. Having a roof over your head is a necessity, but buying is not when you can rent. And if you have to buy, then getting a loan through Islamic Finance is better."

Necessity, or *darura*, is a keystone of how Azharis negotiate tensions between modern realities and traditional *fiqh*.

David Graeber in his international bestseller—rare for an anthropologist—centers inequality in the context of *Debt*. With the arrival of agrarian societies, Graeber argues, we see rising inequality and two new groups of people: creditors and debtors. When inequality became unsustainable presaging a collapse, "Debt Jubilees" would erase all debt by royal decree. The Biblical Law of Jubilee would cancel all debts on the Sabbath year, or the seventh year (Graeber 2011, 82). In the *fiqh* of zakat, we see that debtors are one of the categories eligible for zakat, whose loans are paid off by the rich or forgiven by the creditor.

Graeber makes an important distinction between the pre-modern mercantilist world of the Ottomans and Abbasids and modern capitalism today. First, usury was outlawed, and though one had money changers and bankers charging fees, they could never rise to the stature they enjoy today. Second, market ideology was different: its

primary purpose was *cooperation* instead of *competition*. Graeber goes further to say that some arguments Adam Smith uses "trace back directly to economic tracts written in medieval Persia," using the analogy that "no one has ever observed two dogs exchanging bones" (Graeber 2011, 279).

Islamic Finance is a rapidly growing $2tn industry, and Indonesia is one of the centers of Islamic Finance. However, critics argue that the products offered mirror conventional loans. Instead of interest rates, the rates are hidden in fees in a legal process the economist Mahmoud El-Gamal calls "shari'a arbitrage," where investors seek market competitive terms but in an Islamic guise. This "form-oriented" technique combines the skills of modern lawyers who can construct the contracts and classically trained Islamic jurists who give it legitimacy based on its prescriptions to pre-modern terms (El-Gamal 2006). As imams in Southern California deal with zakat, loans and debt form the other side of the equation. Any coherent program of zakat will have to articulate it within a greater economic vision, including Islamic Finance. As we saw in the previous two chapters with Hamza the Ikhwani and Rami the Sufi, zakat is not enough to deal with poverty without addressing the structural issues of international finance and the inequalities it helps create.

The main purpose of this chapter is investigate how and why an American imam, Sameer the Social Worker, negotiates his religious opinions and practice in two zakat

redistributing locations, Majid Farooq and Connect California. I focus on the question of race as it becomes central to the experience of a Black mosque in Los Angeles, and gender when it arises in a social services agency run primarily by Muslim women. Notwithstanding his training, Imam Sameer integrates his experience and socialization into his practice, using linguistic flair, sartorial style, and culturally relevant cues. I close with a discussion on Islamic Finance, where structural conditions render zakat inadequate, on its own, to eradicate poverty.

The last three chapters, Hamza the Ikhwani (3), Rami the Sufi (4), and Sameer the Social Worker (5) were primarily concerned with sketching the standpoints of these American Azhari imams, in the service of validating my principal thesis of how and why zakat is being transformed by cultural and politico-economic forces.

In the next chapter, I look at the institutional practice of zakat in Southern California, bringing together our imams as members of the community of interpreters creating an archive of religious opinions. I start with Connect California's programs as it is configured under the non-profit legal framework of the US, paying attention to the structural conditions that are shifting notions of zakat, the relationship of giver to receiver, as well as the deserving and non-deserving.

6. Humanitarianism

The library of the Quran and *fiqh al-zakah* informs the discourse and practices of imams and the communities they serve in Southern California, creating an archive under the regime of humanitarianism. The previous three chapters were concerned with sketching the standpoints of three main Azharis, illustrating the principal thesis of this dissertation: how and why zakat is being transformed by cultural and politico-economic forces. Imams are featured throughout this chapter, consulting with organizations, informally auditing them, as well as creating policies as to who and what is zakat eligible or not. Throughout the different sections I weave countervailing points from other imams into my account when appropriate, contrasting the differences of opinion of the imams from different backgrounds, Azharis or otherwise, and the differences evident in their practices and priorities of zakat in the Southern Californian context. I argue that the differences in practices and priorities are socially positioned. Considering the background and socialization of each imam is essential to understanding their divergent legal opinions.

For critics, legal structures of international humanitarianism are a form of governmentality, categorizing humans for the purposes of state management (Bornstein 2012; Venkatesan 2016; Agamben 2017). Zakat institutions in the US are all registered as 501(c)(3) organizations, taking tax-deductible contributions as well as having not-for-profit status with the IRS. This allows the organization to appeal for funds that donors can write off on their taxes as well as larger institutional and government grant funding.

In this chapter, I explore how humanitarian non-profit management is changing the role of the imam as well as zakat practice in the political-legal context of the US.

I start with Connect California as an organization that receives zakat as well as federal funding for refugee programs. As professionals, they maintain transparent audit procedures, but are vulnerable to government priorities as to who is deserving versus who is not. In the current (2018) climate, refugees from Muslim countries are seen as a national security threat, and future funding for the refugee resettlement program has stopped. In the post 9/11 financial regulatory environment, institutions are focused on transparency and accountability to defer any accusations of mismanagement including terrorist financing. This form of governmentality is not only a dictum of the state but surfaces in humanitarian projects in three ways: worthy values for individual professionals, best practices in zakat institutions, and categories of the deserving versus undeserving. The section continues with how Connect California incorporates these values in its institutional management as well as zakat eligible programs.

Friendship USA is motivated to move the poor from being "needy" to becoming "self-sufficient," running a food bank, financial literacy, and job placement program. In a social environment that exalts an ethic of hard work, Friendship USA articulates its mission well within the confines of current American socio-political discourse. Since a food bank is open to anyone, the people at Friendship use interviews—going so far as noting a candidate's sartorial style and the degree of his or her humility—to determine who is deserving versus who is not. Their work also embodies a spirit of hard work as

well as a socially reproduced culture of giving, one that their children reify as a model for the poor.

Lastly, I show how the open category of zakat-eligible persons, or *fi sabil Allah,* is used to collect zakat funds in new and innovative ways, shifting zakat practice in the US under the priorities of activists and institutions, limiting the role and power of imams as advisors, with their religious opinions non-binding and unenforceable.

6.1. Connect California

As we saw from Chapter 5, both Imam Sameer, the "Social Worker," as well as Imam Aziz, a senior and respected imam, consult with Connect California and approve of zakat collection for some of their programs. Women's services along with the refugee program both serve Muslims in need. However, we can see that zakat is not enough without outside grants and federal funding, putting into question the relationship zakat has when the state vacates its social welfare role. I argue that their policy, as instituted and audited at Connect California, form part of the archive of zakat practice in Southern California.

Getting and Managing the Grant

Connect California's refugee program provides in-house mental health services, job-search assistance, English-language classes, and a government-funded Refugee Health Services program. "We used to get sixty new refugee arrivals per month," says Laila, "but after Trump got elected they canceled the program. We are down to one per month, and soon we will run out of funding for the health services program and will shut that down."

Connect California received a grant from the county, around a half-million dollars to provide resettlement services. She gives me a handout from the Joint Resettlement Agencies Standing update, dated February 16, 2017. It describes the "dramatic drop in the number of arriving refuges," an overall 42% drop from the year before and 94% drop of Muslim refugees, a nearly 100% drop of Syrian refugees where the current need is the greatest. Resettlement agencies are also closing across the country; twenty current offices will soon close, and a further eleven previously planned ones will not open. "The slow rate of refugee arrivals hasn't just compromised agencies' ability to serve refugees. Because most resettlement agencies also provide a variety of services for immigrants, services for *all* immigrants are being compromised" (emphasis original).

SmaÏn Laacher, in discussing the role of the state in immigration policy notes,

> *The power, efficiency and credibility of the…state depend[s] on their respective capacities to discipline migrants and also decide what kind of people they allow into the country. Their power emerges through the process of exercising this disciplinary power to regulate immigration by the use of numbers and statistics that categorize people and take account how many people are extradited or turned away at the border, Issues of immigration are always perceived as fundamental to national sovereignty. (Laacher 2007, 17).*

"We not only serve Muslim refugees," says Laila, but also Christian and Jewish, and this program is effecting all that." She turns to the handout and I read:

> *the Lautenberg program [is a] nearly three-decade-old program…has been a salvation to those enduring religious persecution in the former Soviet Union and Iran, allowing Christians, Jews and other religious minorities the chance to resettle in the USA as refugees. But now that lifeline has been snapped.*

Though the resettlement funding for health services is being shut down, the other services will continue. Almost four-hundred thousand dollars comes from donations, mostly from

Muslims, but also Arab Christians. Laila again shows me the books, a fully documented and audited financial for the previous year. "This is all transparent, open to anyone who wants to see. It's a reporting requirement for the RFP." The RFP, or "Request for Proposals" is a standardized application that government gives out grants. A full-time Programs Director manages the quarterly and weekly reporting requirements for the different grants the agency receives; from public to private funding, nearly all benefactors require a report for internal and external audit. In terms of refugee vetting who is being resettled and why, the reporting requirements of Connect California must maintain detailed financials and case management for every single person served. Though the organization is willing to show me its finances, names and case documents are private.

Audit cultures and their "pervasive practices of accountability" are not only a form of ensuring transparency, but a form of governmentality and disciplinary technique through ensuring "compliance" (Shore and Wright 2000, 62; Strathern 2000). Refugees are vetted, processed, documented, and sent through agencies for further discipline in becoming productive members of society, but just as quickly, and even more suddenly, the program is withdrawn, refugee flows are stopped, and millions of people are abandoned. Through "elaborate systems of audit and inspection," the RFP auditing process and the power of quantified reporting are a form of management and control, in a regime of neoliberal governmentality (Shore and Wright 2015; Kipnis Andrew B. 2008; Rose 1999). "Their symbolic significance goes beyond issues of bureaucracy," notes Laacher:

and involves the way that policy claims to represent the will of the people. Public opinion is important to consider in examining how the state acts to preserve the country from outsiders and controls outsiders who have been granted entrance. To fulfill its role the nation-state requires a legal and practical opposition between the national and non-national. It requires a principle of positive discrimination for citizens (Laacher, 17).

In the last US presidential election, the "will of the people" ensured the country "would protect its borders," defining outsiders from insiders, redefining the state in hyper-nationalist terms and re-signifying "the national and the non-national."

"We got the grant because of our language and cultural expertise. Before, it was either a Catholic organization or World Relief that would get the grant. We were the first to take it away from them," Nadia says proudly. The offices are clean and welcoming, with a computer room where classes are held, a play area for toddlers, an after-school tutoring room, a conference room large enough for around seventy-five people, and a few private counseling rooms with private offices for case workers, social workers, and administrative staff.

The place is run by mostly Muslim women, but of different ethnic backgrounds. Laila tells me about the Women's Services, where abused women who need language and cultural support come through the system, brought either by police or local shelters. The director of Mental Health, Adam, then manages the cases from there. On this particular day, there are 15 women taking a day-care licensing class, a 40-hour workshop that helps stay-at-home mothers learn a skill they can do at home. Adam gets about two to three cases of abuse per month. Some of them stay for the workshops, including parenting, language, and additional day-care licensing classes.

Adam tells me about one case, an Iraqi woman with five children who came to them through the shelter:

> *Once they come to us, we assign them a social worker and we take it from there. When she came to us, she had left an abusive relationship. It's usually control issues, where the woman is left powerless. He was from here but brought back his wife from Iraq. She was eager to go to school, work, but he did not want her to do that. She couldn't even leave the house, and the children were being abused by the father's brother. He would pinch them, twist their flesh. There was domestic violence, and at one point the neighbors were able to call the police. She left, but with only four of her children. There was one child left behind with the father, and we had to go to court to get him. You can't just walk in there with the police, you need a court order. So we went, I was the advocate, there is a public defender, we bring a social worker, and then get a restraining order against the father. In the interview with the child, we learned that when the father wasn't home his [the father's] brother would lock him in a cabinet for hours, maybe even the whole day.*

He looks away and shakes his head. "They need counseling after that, counseling for a long time," and then looks down. "What happened to her," I ask, "is she still here?" "Oh yeah," he responds, "she works in a restaurant and stays with a family with her kids." I ask, "Where do these families come from?" and he responds:

> *We have families who will take in people in this situation, they are signed up with us. We also have families that will take children, foster care for a short-term basis. This has to go through the court again, and that takes some time because the families have to go through a background check. That can take weeks in these dependency cases.*

The Mental Health services has its own entrance with lobby, and a few private counseling rooms, like a small doctor's office. There is an intake administrator with one person in the lobby, all other doors are closed. Adam has to take an appointment and takes me back to Laila in Connect California's main offices, where we have to go outside the building and enter from the main entrance.

The director of Connect California, Nadia, recognizes me from my other visits over the years and from attending their recent fundraising gala a few weeks ago. She sees Laila and I with the Refugee Health Services grant proposal, a two-inch–thick binder. "You know we had to print 9 of those!" she exclaims, "we had to put them in a cart and wheel them into the county offices." The Social Services Agency makes sure the organization is financially stable, has references to gauge its reputation, provides services in compliance with local, state, and federal regulations, with the means and structure to provide timely and detailed reports. Shore and Wright note:

> *They embody a new rationality and morality and are designed to engender amongst… staff new norms of conduct and professional behaviour. In short, they are agents for the creation of new kinds of subjectivity: self-managing individuals who render themselves auditable.*

In introducing me to the Programs Director and in showing me the level of professionalization, Nadia has a "pervasive belief… in the need for the discipline which it provides" (Power 1994, 45). "We don't just create reports when they [funding agencies] ask, we keep our records where we are, ready for an audit at any time," Nadia boasts. Power describes the audit process in a context where autonomy is reduced and trust lost, calling for a return to more in-person forms of sociability and accountability. Nadia seeks out federally funded grants where the size of the system requires a large auditable bureaucracy. At the same time, she attends community meetings, interfaith gatherings, and City Council meetings making relationships where she is known by first name and invited to "sit at the table," giving advice and input. Locally, there is a communitarian

and reflexive nature to Connect California's work, but when funding is federal, how do

we create more flexible forms of transparency and accountability?

Refugees and Expressive Art Therapy

> *Within the framework of expressive arts, we could say that poiesis implies that capacity to respond to the world in which we find ourselves. We suffer, both individually and collectively, when we find ourselves unable to respond (Stephen K. Levine).[34]*

I walk into the conference room where Connect California is holding an informal art

exhibit. About forty people have come to see and hear about the Expressive Art Therapy

program. With paintings lining the walls and a large triptych mural upfront, we meet the

program coordinators, professional artists, and social workers who collaborated on this

project. Both adult and child refugees had participated in the program over the last few

weeks. From a definition in *Psychology Today*, expressive arts therapy is centered on

> *the concept of poiesis, a Greek word that is the root of the word poetry, which refers to the natural process of moving from everyday expectations into the world of imagination and creativity that results in art making. Because art comes from a deep emotional place inside you, creative endeavors enable you to undergo a profound process of self-discovery and understanding. Creativity becomes the pathway to the expression of inner feelings, leading to a process of self-discovery and understanding. In other words, your creative process becomes your road to emotional health ("Expressive Arts Therapy" n.d.).*

Sarah, the artist and coordinator for the mural, explains to me the process of getting half a

dozen teenagers to work together, share experiences, and express themselves through

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[34] Stephen K Levine, "Art Opens to the World: Expressive Arts and Social Action," in *Art in Action: Expressive Arts Therapy and Social Change*, ed. Ellen G Levine and Stephen K Levine (London; Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Pub, 2011), 21–30.

"color, community, respect, and heritage." Sarah is showing me the mural on wood. "It's Acrylic on Panel, a three-part movable mural on wood," she explains. "It's movable so we can take it around. It will be displayed here and then at a museum." The teens first start with color and word associations, coming up with "dark and intense colors, black, dark blue, dark red" for the "negative" emotions, and then "bright colors, like bright green, yellow, orange for the colors that make them feel good." I ask if she came up with those colors, "No, they talked amongst themselves and came up with the colors. I had the two categories, negative and positive emotions."

Figure 15. Expressive Art Therapy. Acrylic Panel, Three-part Mural on wood, 2'x4'.

In children, trauma manifests itself in various ways, and the Art therapist designs the activity anticipating multiple responses. "The symptom (response) to trauma (abuse)

is dysregulation of affect, thoughts and/ or behavior," where organizing emotions among their peers helps re-regulate affect. "[Dysregulation] may include relying on rigid defenses to survive, compartmentalizing pain, and inability to distinguish between safe and unsafe situations" (Slater 2003, 174).

The group was then split into three, where each smaller group worked on a section. They first laid down the dark colors, in an act of releasing negative emotions. Then, "they each came up with Arabesque designs," using their "smartphones and googling designs. It's something they have with them that's easy to do." They then used tape to stencil the arabesque onto the mural, so when the positive colors were applied and the tape removed, the dark base left lines in arabesque.

"I then had them choose three Arabic letters, and they came up with *ta, geem*, and *wow* which we also taped in kufic script, kufic because it's block and a character we can manipulate" Sarah tells me. "For *geem* I had them talk about hobbies, and they came up with sports, basketball, watching movies, music, which you can see there," pointing to the mural. "For *ta* we went with favorite foods, since the [letter] *ta* looks like a plate. Arabic foods came up, like shawarma for sure, but it is California so In-N-Out came up a lot and so did tacos."

Sarah's process is remarkably collaborative, an engagement between the artist and the subject that is not "intended to produce a likeness but encounters more akin to ethnographic exchanges" (Allison and Ossman 2014, 2). The artist and anthropologist Susan Ossman, explains

Rather than asking the subject to sit for a portrait, I ask her to intervene in shaping a work of art. Artworks emerge from the process of talking about an event, looking at old photos, or exploring feelings about a person or a place. Dreams or conversations between the artist and subject might set the rhythm for the strokes of the paintbrush or offer clues about the media or color of an installation" (ibid., 2).

The last panel of the mural was for the letter *wow,* on the theme of education. "Classes they enjoyed, favorite subjects in school, and also a safe environment. But as soon as I said safe environment, they brought up school shootings, so we worked with that. The kids already have trauma, OCD, I guess school isn't a safe space anymore," remarks Sarah.

The teens are mostly refugees from Syria mixed with recent immigrants from places like Iraq and Iran. Many have already seen violence, and Art Therapy is a process of dealing with trauma. Nancy Viva Davis Halifax writes,

As art therapists, we often deal with issues that are not readily manifest in society or culture, issues which have no audience, no community. We are dealing with the common and profound problems of chronic illness, poverty, malnutrition, racism, abuse, trauma, despair, depression, isolation and disconnection. My work tries to make conscious the internalized aspects of culture which obscure my view, limit my perceptions and cause my defenses to rise. This consciousness serves to reflect back to me where I have internalized my culture's biases (Halifax 2003, 44).

Sarah's mural project gets teens to discuss their experiences, some joyful and others traumatic. The project also underscores the refugee experience in the United States, escaping one form of trauma only to face another: the burden of being a Muslim refugee fearing the threat of mass school shootings.

In another circumstance, these children may be vacationing in Lebanon along the coast, taking a trip to the vibrant and magisterial old markets and citadels of medieval

Aleppo, or visiting family in Amman in neighboring Jordan. Their parents were

embedded in social, family and business networks; among them are businessmen, doctors

and engineers. Because of war and displacement, they are no longer enfranchised citizens

of a state let alone global citizens, expats, or cosmopolitans—they have simply been

reduced to refugees. Susan Ossman, revisits these categories of global mobility,

proclaiming that

> *we need fresh means to compare 'rival ways of life' in a world situation where national borders and cultural markers are increasingly blurred, we might imagine that a global vision inspired by all kinds of people on the move might help us to see more clearly (Ossman 2007, 201).*

In walking around the room, seeing the lives of these people in brushstroke, the broken

caricature of *homo sacer* becomes a "person on the move," away from an inflexible and

exclusionary state-sanctioned category deprived of identity and belonging and toward a

simpler and clearer category of the human. Ossman writes on the power of naming and

how "subjectivity, modes of action, and strategies of social visibility are shaped in the

process of moving from one place to another" (ibid, 2). People whose "passage through

different territories and submission to various regimes of identification" (ibid, 3) signify a

malleable subject, a condition in which "Refugees can turn into immigrants," and how

"displaced people, like political exiles might come to demonstrate 'cosmopolitan'

proclivities" (ibid, 201–202). The state may categorize them as refugees, and the program

is constructed to create services for them as a group, but they self-identify, depending on

context and who is asking, as Syrian, Iraqi, Irani, Muslim, Shia, Sunni and even

American.

In a methodological move concerning ethnography, Ossman says, "one of the first things that my conversation with people who have lived in several countries shows is that we need to pay more attention to the work of time and the different paths taken by people on the move." For the Syrian family who left Aleppo, leaving behind their land and belongings, spending their inheritance on smugglers who could traffic them into Turkey with months of waiting, working, across multiple borders and utilizing every contact and every resource—the cosmopolitan becomes a refugee.

In the same volume, SmaÏn Laacher writes about Ali, an Afghan amputated while trying to pass under a train in France hoping to cross into England. "His entire extended family and even his friends made sacrifices so that he could leave home and travel to Europe. They gave their possessions—their sweat—so that he could make this journey. Their sacrifice had been in vain" (Laacher 2007, 23).

Figure 16. Syria my Love. Art by Syrian refugee.

Children's art therapy is especially productive, the same plasticity that inscribes trauma also helps in recovery. Carrie MacLeod writes:

Yet despite outer discord, the younger generation yearns to reshape visions of transitional justice at the center of loss and longing. They must take on the difficult task of re-inhabiting spaces where layers of betrayal have taken place. The medium of performance can help make sense of a legacy of turmoil, as it offers an intimate dwelling place in a wider culture of displacement (MacLeod 2011, 148).

Not only is art therapeutic for the one doing it; its ability to transcend spoken word and preconceived cognitive paths opens new ways of knowing. In discussing the role of performative art in Sierra Leone, Macleod states that artists "are courageously exposing key symbolic values that often remain hidden amidst prescriptive 'solutions' for pre-war nostalgia and post-war trauma" (ibid., 148).

Mental health, including art therapy, has become recognized internationally as a means of healing communities. MaryBeth Morand explains:

Although tents, blankets, and sacks of food are necessary for survival, they do not provide the sustenance that individuals and communities need in order to reinvent themselves after they have been ripped asunder and irrevocably changed by traumatic events. The necessity of this healing and reunification has been recognized in humanitarian relief in the last decade. As a result, psychosocial interventions, especially those using the arts, have moved forward as a primary response to crises, not as a leisurely postscript provided when time allows. Nowadays, the arts are widely used to work with communities during or immediately following an event that has displaced or traumatized a community (Morand 2011, 229).

Those who give money to Connect California, including zakat, help fund programs like Expressive Art Therapy. Proper mental health is directly related to physical health and the health of communities. As such, this policy, validated by our Imams Sameer and Aziz, enter the archive of zakat practice in Southern California.

6.2. Friendship USA

Our mission is to empower and support the needy to become self-sufficient by alleviating their hardships during tough life-changing circumstances (Sadaqa Mission Statement 2018).

Our approach is to utilize the needs of our clients, engage the community in meaningful volunteer work, heal the hearts of those in hardship, encourage clients and build confidence, and empower clients by training them to be self-sufficient (Friendship USA website 2018).

In Southern California, most mosques collect zakat for redistribution to the poor. Many mosques, usually the larger ones, have a zakat program that redistributes money to those who come and ask for it. Over the years, a professionalization has occurred where those who seek zakat must go through an application process, making sure they are eligible. One board member of a mosque told me, "Money is not mine, we just manage that money to the best of our ability because the donors have put trust in us." Many mosques give that money to zakat organizations, who specialize in case managing and redistributing zakat according to its requirements. The largest organization, Islamic Relief, is an international relief organization that has refugee camps in Jordan for Syrian and Palestinian refugees, camps in Bangladesh for the Rohingya escaping ethnic cleansing in Myanmar, and smaller programs all around the world, from Asia to Africa sponsoring orphans, redistributing emergency aid in Haiti and even New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina (Benthall 2016; "Annual Reports | IRW" 2017).

In Southern California, in addition to the various mosque-run programs there are a handful of zakat organizations that specialize in helping the needy, including refugees

and those who lack employment or cannot make ends meet. Imam Muhammad, an Azhari, as well as Imam Aziz, have both consulted with Friendship USA, a charitable organization that accepts zakat funds and redistributes them locally.

Background: Friendship USA

Friendship USA is a "501(c)(3) non-profit community development organization" whose mission it is to provide "services to refugees and the homeless population in Orange County" where "every human has the right to live in dignity as a fully contributing member of society" (Friendship USA). In my conversations with the President of Friendship, Yusuf, he tells me the biggest program is for refugee settlement (mostly Syrians escaping the civil war), the aim of which is to "empower them to be self-sufficient," providing everything from "rent, medical help, furniture, food, clothing, medication, utilities, and job placement." In a few cases, they were able to get a family a car. I met him one day at his workplace, located a half of a mile from the Friendship office and Food Pantry. He is with someone, a customer I presume, so I wave through the office to let him know I'm here. A few minutes late, he invites me in, introducing me to a gentleman who is the food pantry manager. "Just trying to finalize the order for this week," he tells me. The manager leaves, and Yusuf brings up the camera surveillance system, housed in a small (1300 sq. ft) rented office nearby.

"Nobody is there now," he says, "since we are open on the weekends and have also opened hours on Tuesdays. Everything else is done by appointment." The pantry is organized as a little grocery store in an industrial park office, typical of the office spaces all over Southern California. With a small 300 sq. ft office in the front, and a 1000sq. ft warehouse in the back, CAM-1 gives us a birds-eye view of the front office, CAM-2 of the warehouse where the pantry is, and the other two cameras of who is coming in and out of the doors. The pantry has two main aisles, with large shelves in the middle and a row of shelves on one wall and a row of refrigerators and freezers on another. "Clients," as Yusuf calls them, come in, take a shopping cart, and go shopping. Shahab, let me tell you, women and children come here, and by the time they leave, the cart is completely full to the top."

> *You know, there was this Arab Christian lady who heard of us, and she was told to come here because she needed assistance. Her husband's hours were reduced at work, and now they were having trouble getting even the food. At first she was hesitant, because we are Muslim. But her friend told her to come, she knows us*

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and we are good people, and so she came pregnant and with a two-year-old toddler. We welcomed her, she took a cart, and went around shopping taking whatever she needed, and kept looking back to make sure we were ok with her taking whatever she needed. I said [cheerful emphatic voice] 'take, take, whatever you need!' When she got to the meat, she really was hesitant, so I walked over there and said [cheerfully again] 'don't worry, we have enough, so take what you need! You want more?' so I put more in her cart.' Shahab, at this point she was crying, she had not seen anything like that before, there were tears in her eyes. It's this kind of thing that makes me do this.

At this point, Yusuf opens up a new tab on his browser, switching from the camera display to SoftBox, a food pantry management software. On his large two-monitor office computer, he ignores emails and phone calls as they come in, but opting instead to show me the data behind Friendship. Pointing to a spreadsheet, he lists off the clients that have come in weekly, broken down into households, age, individuals, languages spoken, along with other demographic data. "We have to report who is coming in, before anyone comes into the pantry we have to fill out this information." I ask, "Is this a government reporting requirement," and he nods in agreement. He continues, "We receive some federal money, and also from Islamic Relief, as well as food stuff from Second Harvest, so we need to show them these reports." Friendship is servicing anywhere between 15–20 households per week, a total of 50–75 individuals. I ask him about the software, and he says he found it through online research: it's a cloud-based food pantry management software, something he can log into anywhere which simplifies the mandated reporting process generating client-management and financial reports.

The Friendship pantry receives produce and some dry goods from Second Harvest Food Bank, a larger Orange County-based organization that provides for smaller pantries throughout Orange County, many of which are "faith based" and organized out of

religious institutions. Second Harvest was founded in 1983 by Dan Harney, a member of the Catholic Society of St. Vincent de Paul, who was inspired to start a food bank in Orange County after visiting St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance in Arizona. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is dedicated to alleviating poverty and suffering, and call themselves "Vincentians[:] … men and women who strive to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to individuals in need" (www.svdpusa.org). I find it interesting how Friendship's religious ethic intersects with ideas of faith-based philanthropy in the United States.

Zakat Eligibility

There is nothing in "Second Harvest" that denotes religious affiliation, its name and website seemingly secular, though most of the food pantries listed in their directory are religious institutions. Only when you download the "Partner Handbook" on guidelines and reporting requirements to subscribe as a food pantry, does the history of the organization point to Harney and its origins in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Likewise, there is nothing in the name Friendship USA that denotes an Islamic charity. The website, like Second Harvest's, is seemingly secular. Only in the section on "disclosure information," buried under legalese is there a section on credit card transactions:

> *IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING CREDIT CARD DONATIONS FOR ZAKAH: Please consider adding an additional amount (we suggest $1.50 for each $100 donated), when using a credit card, to your total zakah donation—this will help to offset any transaction fees deducted from your donation by the credit card companies, and will ensure that your intended zakah amount is paid in full.*

When I ask Yusuf how much in donations he gets in zakat, he said about one third. He pulls the financials back up on SoftBox, but it wasn't designed to report zakat; instead, there is one category under income that lists zakat, and zakat *al-fitr*, along with "unrestricted funds." Zakat and zakat *al-fitr* are mostly collected during Ramadan, and they have to disperse the funds according to zakat criteria. Zakat *al-fitr* is food or money, collected during Ramadan and part of the month long fasting ritual, that feeds a poor person one meal, paid by all those who can pay, and whose responsibility lies with the head of household. During an Eid prayer, Imam Aziz mentioned the requirements: "Every man, woman, and child must be paid for, it is about ten to fifteen dollars per head since this is the cost of a decent meal. You must pay this before the Eid prayer to complete your fasts of Ramadan."

When I ask who determines zakat criteria, Yusuf responds, "We have Muhammad and Aziz as our 'spiritual advisors' who tell us how we can use zakat." Yusuf is again using a decidedly secular language, and when he pronounces 'spiritual advisor,' he enunciates it carefully looking me straight in the eye. It's as though he is code switching—I have seen him in other contexts say "Sheikh Muhammad," or "Imam Aziz," but I sensed a hesitation in his voice before he enunciated, as though he had to 'translate' to me what he meant.

I found the term 'spiritual advisor' strange, as though he was talking about some personal new age blessing practice and not shari'a compliancy. However, considering the reporting requirements dictated by Second Harvest and the government, compliance was not determined by the sheikh.

Most donations come "unrestricted," mostly from Muslims but also non-Muslim friends. "During Ramadam," Yusuf continues, "when people donate in the envelope, there is a box that says 'zakat,' and if they check that box we earmark it for the refugee program. For *fitr [zakat al-fitr]* we give poor Muslims grocery gift cards. We do that because non-Muslims cannot receive zakat.*"* I'm looking at the spreadsheet that lists all expenses, but I don't see if it distinguishes zakat from unrestricted money. "Don't overthink it," he tells me.

Don't Overthink Zakat

We all [board members] have experience in running a masjid [referring to his time on the board of the local mosque], and know what the issues are regarding zakat. We strictly adhere to where zakat eligible families are in need, by visiting them in their home. When you go in, and see if they only have two chairs, you know they need help.

The food pantry is operated by unrestricted funds since everyone can come, and they do serve "the Hispanic community; white people also come," Yusuf tells me, "we also take non-halal meat," pointing to a refrigerator and freezer with surplus pre-packaged grocery store meat, "it's good meat and we have non-Muslims who will take it, there is the halal section," pointing to the six or seven other industrial freezers. The refugees that come are from Syria, and Muslim, and so zakat funds can be used.

I ask Imam Aziz, who is one of the 'spiritual advisors' mentioned by Yusuf, about the regulations for zakat eligibility and he tells me:

yes, usually it [zakat] is for Muslims, you see in our countries, like India, the Hindus collect charity for poor Hindus and the Muslims for poor Muslims. It is our responsibility to take care of our own first, otherwise no one would help them,

this situation is even worse now in India. The prophet did give zakat, however, to 'soften people's hearts,' and I think in this case, especially if it they are poor, we also have an obligation to help poor people in the places we live, and it can be zakat eligible. But not everyone agrees [imams] and they take the more conservative opinion.

Zakat is only a third of Friendship USA's income, though I wonder if donors are giving to Friendship, and other organizations, with the intention of zakat but not specifying it. In the *fiqh* literature (see section Quran), Qaradawi mentions intention to give zakat as an individual responsibility between one and God, and not something to be enforced by the state. In Indonesia, reformists have been making the same argument, including everyone who belongs to the nation as part of the national community, or *ummah,* and eligible for zakat since it is in the national interest. The same can be said of the categories of who can and cannot receive it, and in what way.

Creating Self-sufficient Subjects

The refugee program as well as financial assistance requires applicants to disclose financial information, including pay stubs, bills, rent, W–2s, and tax returns. A case manager is assigned to each applicant who tries to make a home visit to determine need. "We make sure they are not on the street," says Yusuf. "If we don't pay the rent, the whole family is on the street. We make sure that doesn't happen." In addition to help from Friendship, the case manager looks to see if the family qualifies for any government assistance. Eventually, they would like the family to get off assistance and become "self-sufficient." Another male board member told me:

Sometimes they do not want a job, or a higher paying job, because that jeopardizes their welfare check. I had this one lady working part-time in a grocery store bakery, and they wanted to give her more hours. She didn't want to take it because it would then disqualify her for assistance. Don't they see, if you work hard, you can eventually become manager and not need this anymore. [He shakes his head, shrugs] Some people are just like that.

This board member is a successful businessman, starting out from his parents' room selling clothing on the weekends at the swap-meet, and now running a multi-million–dollar business. Friendship is how he gives back. As a success story of the American dream, he believes with hard work anyone can be self-sufficient: Friendship is there to help those along the way.

Yusuf told me, "If we give money or support for rent, they have to take financial literacy classes," held at Friendship. In financial literacy, they learn budgeting, prioritization, and what common expenses to look out for. "We want to make sure the money is being used right," says Yusuf, "otherwise it could be wasted, and they are back where they started." The case manager makes sure clients are not only given food, money, and material support when they are on the bottom rung, but the tools to help them climb. Humanitarianism finds itself allied with the rational-ethical, subjected to what Agamben calls bare life: a life in need of intervention (Agamben 2017).

In the case of Friendship, through techniques of mandated reporting requirement, mandated financial literacy classes, and an ethic of self-sufficiency, Friendship intersects with Bornstein's "liberal-altruism" model of humanitarianism, with its legal regime of individual rights, with the "relational empathy" set of duties and obligations culturally reproduced and advised through the ethic and legal prescriptions of zakat.

What Motivates You to Give?

I ask Yusuf what motivates him to spend time and money volunteering for Friendship, managing the non-profit even while he is at work. He takes a moment to reflect, and then brings up the story of the "Arab Christian lady" cited above. "She cried, Shahab," for something we take for granted:

> *You know, she had probably never seen that before and became overwhelmed. Before she left, I asked her if she needed anything else. She wanted a bed, right now her toddler was sleeping on the floor with a child on the way. I said, don't worry, we'll get you a bed and have it delivered. And you know what, I was going to order it from IKEA, and a few days later a lady from Irvine called and said she was moving and if I could use a children's bunk bed. We had it picked up from her house and delivered that day. When she [the Arab Christian] received it, she was again in tears.*

Yusuf takes a moment again to reflect, looks down and continues,

> *You stop worrying about how much money you have, or the kinds of cars people drive, their clothes, none of this matters anymore. I know I can help people doing this, it softens the heart… you feel good doing good… this is* baraka *[blessings] for me and my family.*

> He looks up at me and then says, "Shahab, a female scholar said to me":

> *'All of the good you and your wife do, you may not see it in terms of money, wealth, and all these measures of success. All the deeds you are doing is going to your daughter', you know Shahab, she's a grade A student and keeps surprising us with her accomplishments. How blessed we are to so see her grow, she only 18 and just won young entrepreneur of the year' for her online business. People come up to us at the mosque and say can your daughter talk to our daughter, people recognize and look up to her. Often I get a lot of praise for what I do, [I do it] in a quiet and humble way, I get a pat on the back, but I don't do it for the recognition.*

"Where does this come from," I ask, "this feeling to want to do this?" "My upbringing in helping others," he responds. "Back in the UK my parents were very involved in the

mosque, they enjoyed doing good and we enjoyed it too, helping the community, and when we [his wife and him] came here [to the US] we just continued." What I found interesting is that his motivation centered around two main locations: the idea of *baraka* [blessings], which illustrates his relationship with God as a Muslim, and which he thinks has manifested through the success of his daughter; and simply his upbringing, a social pattern of charity being reproduced in his own family.

Humanitarian Day: Friendship, MONA, and the Cham Community Center

I arrive on a Saturday morning to a mosque built by the South-East Asian Cham community, an ethnic group found in Vietnam and Cambodia. Originally refugees from the Vietnam War, the community has been in Orange County amidst the greater Vietnamese diaspora since the early 1980s. Today they are hosting a food distribution event run by Friendship, and as I walk in I see that set up behind the mosque in the parking lot are two rows of tables under shaded outdoor tents, the kind you would see at any outdoor event. The larger row along the back has food, and a smaller row perpendicular to the larger one, forming an 'L' shape, has clothing. I see a sign on one wall that says "Humanitarian Day," with a sponsorship logo by MONA, or the "Memon Organization of North America." Memons are a South Asian ethnic group, known for being merchants historically and businessmen in the Southern California Muslim community.

I see Yusuf and he tells me: "MONA is here doing clothing, household supplies like shampoo, and also blankets. We are doing the food." Hundreds of people have shown up, mostly families standing in line with shopping carts, moving through and getting a box with basic cooking supplies including oil, flour, sugar, and then to the line to pick up produce: surplus squash, Brussel sprouts, bell peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, among others. They then proceed along the corner where they are met with brand new clothes, still with the tags on, donated and operated by a local Muslim clothing retailer. Finally, there are soaps and shampoo, more clothes, and military surplus blankets, "50% wool, Mil-Spec," geared for durability and even outdoor sleeping. Wool will keep you warm, even if it is wet.

MONA has about a dozen volunteers, the board and their families and friends. I have my camera and notebook out, and so the board president hands me his phone to take a group picture. Afterwards we start talking about the organization and their zakat practices. MONA participates in various "Humanitarian Day" activities, at least two times a year, I am told, as well as a yearly Eid picnic that draws about 1500 people, mostly Memons and their families celebrating the end of Ramadan. MONA seems to be a social organization as much as a charitable one. The last humanitarian day was in San Diego helping Syrian refugees, giving away food boxes, providing rent for housing, and helping supply refugees with furniture and a few donated vehicles. I ask how much money is collected in zakat versus unrestricted funds, and he says "about 50/50." When I ask who is eligible, he explains that "Muslims have to receive zakat, but 90% of who they help is non-Memon," highlighting the significance of the ethnic group as well as their

religious affiliation. "We have a membership fee of $50 per family per year, and we have 280 families. Also, there is a once-a-year fundraiser," with the same kind of envelope that has a box for 'zakat.'

MONA also earmarks zakat for Muslims, using the unrestricted funds for everything else. The president, however, tells me: "I give zakat and don't ask how it is spent, as long as they are needy. Our *Ulema* say it is for Muslims, and the community is used to that, but I don't ask. You have moderates and conservatives," and he raises his arms to try and articulate the differences in opinion that Muslims have on this issue, indicating that the organization is conservative in its understanding of *fiqh*. However, in researching the historical as well as national practices, as well as the opinion of Imam Muhammad, conservatism is a historical problem of resistance to social change and the changes in Islamic law and practice it dictates.

I ask MONA's president the same question I asked Yusuf a few days before: "What motivates you to do this?" "Helping community without a title, same thing back home," he says, I asked him where back home was and he says, "Memon community in Bangladesh. There were floods back there, and we used to help. I've been in this country fifteen years, and we used to do this there. The young kids—" holding his grandchild, he points to his table where his daughter is with a one-year-old, several teenagers, and young college-age men and women "—they like to do this, the young kids want to work with charity." As in the case with Yusuf, the habits of the president's family socially reproduce charitable practices, putting into relief the significance of "upbringing" in zakat practices. And as we know from Singer, along with anthropological studies of the

culture of giving in Muslim societies, a culture of welfare remains prevalent among

Muslim communities in Southern California. Lastly, both Yusuf and the board President

of MONA were aware of the problems associated with "recognition" and the raising of

social status inherent in this kind of work, though they denied this being part of their

motivation.

Figure 18. Humanitarian Day

I watch the volunteers loading and unloading from trucks, keeping the tables full

and the lines moving. The traffic in the small parking lot has cars double parked, trunks

open and being loaded. A photographer from the Cham community sees me with my

camera, and begins to tell me all about her community, a fascinating topic for another

study.

The day seems to have come to a close, most people have left and volunteers were

packing away what they had left. There were two giant pallets of squash, one of bell

peppers, and a dozen cases of Brussel sprouts. "You want some?" asks the volunteer

behind the table. "If people don't take this we are going to throw it away." The volunteer

continues: "Really, it's all good stuff, why don't you give it to a soup kitchen, or some shelter? If you know where, then take it." I interject: "Is this all going to be thrown away? I can't believe there's so much surplus produce that just gets tossed out." "Well," he shrugs, "there's a lot of surplus, and it's crazy how many people go hungry when all this is thrown out. Actually, go ask him," pointing to another older man standing to the side.

As I approach, I see him overhearing from a distance another conversation between a client and Yusuf. I don't suspect anything going on, and ask, "is this really all going to be thrown out?" "No, it will go back out to the warehouse" and he quickly turns his attention to Yusuf and the client, one of the very few who is still there. I also turn to them.

"Which volunteer gave you this?" Yusuf asks, gesturing to a bottle of oil that he is holding. The client shrugs. "I don't know," he says, looking a little embarrassed.

"You get one box, and this is in there. None of our volunteers would have given this to you." Yusuf looks upset, but just shakes his head and walks away, leaving the man with two bottles of oil on the ground, one in the box, and one in hand. The stress of the day seems to have gotten to him, and his behavior seems out of character. I decided to leave and follow up with him later.

Scammers: The Deserving versus Undeserving

The next day Friendship USA had their usual distribution at their Orange County food pantry. Over twenty families showed up, and each had the chance to register (if they had not yet done so) and was given an empty shopping cart for their shopping. The first aisle

contains a variety of canned goods: beans, vegetables, a litany of tomato products, broth. In the refrigerated section there was a section of Halal and non-Halal meat products, depending on who donated, and a daily section with milk, eggs, and cheese. All of these sections had a sign: "Take as much as you need." Lastly, the pantry advertised "Home Depot" boxes—which, I heard, had also been given out the day before and had reputedly caused the "oil incident." The food pantry manager is the only staff member on the premises today and stands nearby.

Pointing to a bottle of canola oil, I ask him: "So, you only give one of these out?" "If you need more, go to Costco," he wittily replies. I smile, "ok, so only one per week?" He looks back at me, putting away things in the shelf, turns around and says: "You know, some of these people are rich. The other day, a lady comes here driving a 2017 Mercedes Benz, and she wants two bottles. I ask her, 'Can I take a selfie with your car?'"

"Really?" I respond. "What was that about?"

"I asked her: 'Why you drive such a nice car?' I guess she needs money to make her car payment. She said after she bought the car, there is no money left over. 'So,' I said, 'Why did you buy the car?'"

I go out front where Yusuf is sitting with an invoice from Second Harvest in one hand and his smartphone in another."

"Hey Shahab, sorry, I'm just sending out this email. So what did you think?"

"You have shopping carts, it's like a little grocery store."

"Yes, there's a lot of stuff in there"

"Yes," I respond, "top to bottom, the place is full."

"We had shopping carts yesterday as well."

"Yes, I saw that," I respond. I find my opportunity to ask about the "oil incident":

"What happened yesterday with that guy who had a few oil bottles."

"Scammers." He nods in recognition before saying:

We were giving out one box per household; it can be overwhelming to see all this stuff and just start helping yourself, not thinking of the line and the people behind you. He just started taking bottles of oil when he wasn't supposed to—none of our volunteers would have given him more than one. And when I asked him where he got it, he said 'a volunteer.' When I asked him who, he couldn't tell me.

"How many people are like that?" trying to get a sense of the problem, "You know—" I point in the direction of the lone staff worker in the back "—he said back there a lady came here in a new Mercedes." Yusuf explains:

You always have a percentage of scammers. Most people are legitimate, and it usually doesn't bother me until I see people trying to take advantage of the system. You always have a percentage, but I don't bother, it's between them and God.

Yusuf gets up, and takes me to the back to show me. "You see this box? This is the stuff we have to buy, yeah that oil only costs me two dollars, so I let him walk with six dollars of oil, if I say put it back, he might start crying." He points to the "MidEast" brand garbanzo beans: "fifty cents a can," then to the sugar and flour—"two [dollars] seventy-nine [cents] each," pasta—"fifty cents a bag," fava beans—"fifty cents." At this point, as I'm writing all this down, and with a smirk I say, "you should go on *The Price Is Right*, you would win."

Unamused he continues, "Salt—fifty cents, honey—one dollar ninety, tea—five dollars."

"Five-dollar tea?" I exclaim, getting caught up in the moment, "what kind of tea is five dollars?" He pulls it out and shows me—a one-hundred–bag box of Arabic tea. The carton costs Friendship $16.48.

Yusuf is not simply running a non-profit with endless supply, but managing a shop with limited inventory and limited supplies, caught in an economy of resource scarcity. His ethic evinces a humanitarian ethos of helping families and children, but he nevertheless expects dignity to go both ways: a willingness to give for the 'upper hand' matched with a willingness to take only what one needs for the 'lower hand.' Eventually, Friendship tries to get people into work and become "self-sufficient."

"How can you tell if someone is a scammer?" I ask.

"Oh, I can tell, I've been doing this long enough to understand people taking advantage, you know," he shifts in his seat, knowing I'm researching zakat, "people go around mosque to mosque, organization to organization scamming for zakat." In the context of everything I've seen, including their mission statement that asks for "self-sufficiency," Friendship is not an organization that provides endless help or any kind of frivolous giving; rather, it offers a generosity contingent on "genuine need," and the willingness of clients to become "self-sufficient."

"Do you really want to hear a crazy story?" Yusuf takes out his phone and looks up a text message from a few months ago:

This guy has gone from mosque to mosque. [Yusuf names various mosques in the area who have zakat programs.] He says he's a convert, Eduardo Lopez is his name, and is calling me asking for money. I don't even know how he got my number. Look at these messages, every twenty minutes he's texting me and asking if I can drive out to Riverside. I said, "Go to the mosque and fill out the application." And look at his message: "I'll be going to the mosque, I enjoy the hutba *[sic, sermon], please brother I need fifty dollars, one-hundred dollars, can you send Western Union." And then he sends me a picture of his driver's license.*

I know for cash distributions there is a process with the case manager who looks over financials, bills, and tries to get people off of support and into self-sufficiency.

We ran a background check on him, and he came back with fraud, white-collar felony conviction. He also has a concealed handgun license. You know, what if he comes here with our case manager, alone, who is female, with a gun? I had to let others know. So I started a text group, and found out he was banned in another mosque, some other mosque knew of him but didn't cause trouble. But then another brother, Rimzan, said that he [Eduardo] called him saying that I gave him his number. I never gave him [Eduardo] his [Rimzan's] number! You see the kind of people we have to deal with?

Yusuf's dilemma is real, and I do not underestimate the danger some people can pose. In running a non-profit in a neoliberal context, Friendship USA has made it clear that they are not a *khidma*, the kind run by Nura in the City of the Dead in Cairo. The transaction at Friendship is liberal-altruistic (Bornstein 2012) rather than based on the ethics of immediate need—a warm meal, a place to rest, for anyone who comes through the door, without applications and without the need to produce financial literacy (Mittermaier 2014a).

Yusuf is an imbricated subject, one with both Islamic as well as secularizing desires and sensibilities. As Hafez notes in Egypt in regards to Al Hilal, "Drawing upon Islamic principles that seamlessly merge with secularizing agendas and modernizing social reform histories, they reproduced normative roles and hierarchies that are part and

parcel of principles of development in modernization schemes" (Hafez 2011b). Muslims in the US are operating charities in a neoliberal context with its own hierarchies, legal mechanisms, as well as reconfiguring the relationship between the giver and receiver, creating new definitions of the deserving and the undeserving.

6.3. Zakat, fi Sabil Allah

Over a thousand worshipers come weekly to Imam Aziz's mosque. Sometimes he delivers the sermon and other times, such as when he is out of town (a frequently occurrence), there is a guest *khatib.* Imam Aziz is invited all over the country because of his long-standing relationship to the community, and the fatwas (juristic opinions) he gives regarding a variety of issues, namely the performance of rituals, sex relations, and zakat. I'm at Masjid Raheem to look at the food pantry that is open to Muslims as well as non-Muslims, registered with the county food bank. Imam Aziz tells me about the zakat program, where individuals can sign up to receive funds for rent, food, medical, and even educational expenses. The mosque has a school, and parents who have a hard time paying tuition can apply for zakat. "*Fi sabil Allah* is a general category," he tells me. "It includes defense of the religion and also spreading the message, *dawah,* books, literature, orphanages."[35] For the food pantry, however, they take general funds, because

> *zakat is supposed to go directly to the poor, so they can own it. You cannot take it [zakat] and use it and buy from it, and then give. It is open for abuse. For example, I take zakat, and then buy all the merchandise from my friend's shop. Or*

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[35] See section 2.3 on a textual treatment of *fi sabil Allah*

give people a voucher saying it is useable only at that shop, this is preferring one shop over another and is open to abuse.

I have a feeling that Imam Aziz is telling me this to avoid the issue of Muslim versus non-Muslim zakat eligibility. The other Muslim-run food pantries have also told me they take general funds not because of this technicality (susceptible to abuse, though legitimate), but an explicitly *fiqh* question of zakat going to Muslims. Imam Aziz is also explicit about the purpose of zakat: "helping the poor and needy, where you take from the rich and give to the poor." Echoing Hakim from Masjid Farooq, Aziz would like to see the future of zakat to be "employment programs, learn[ing] some skills, and social service programs."

Imam Aziz then tells me to see Javad, the mosque's finance manager who receives the zakat forms and can tell me about the finances. I have met Javad many times before at the mosque. Along with his duties keeping the books, Javad is seen at every major event volunteering at the table, in and out of the kitchen, setting up and folding tables and chairs—doing whatever needs to be done. "You're the hardest working person here," I once told him after a Ramadan program that ended after midnight.

"Most money goes to Raheem Academy," Javad tells me, pointing to a stack of applications for tuition support using zakat funds. Out of around 200 thousand dollars, 130 thousand go to parents for tuition support: roughly 65% of the total funds from zakat. He shows me the application that asks for detailed financial information as well as supporting documents such as W–2's, bank receipts, and paychecks. About 90% of zakat is collected during Ramadan, "you pay zakat once a year, and most people pay in Ramadan. The other 10% is from other donations throughout the year." The mosque has

five different kinds of donation boxes, marked "masjid, school, zakat, general, or weekend school," giving people the option to donate to the function of their choice. "There are a handful of people, two to five, that send me monthly checks [zakat], one thousand a month, year to year."

> *The need is great and the collection is not enough. Some weeks we get 200 dollars in the box but there is a line out the door looking for rent. The* majlis *(board) has approved $1500 per year per individual, which comes out to $125 per month. How are you going to pay rent with $125? So depending on the situation, I have to approve $200 or $300, which is still not enough. The board met and they have said we 'need to have balance' regarding who gets zakat. Priority was Raheem Academy. You have a family with four kids and they make sixty-thousand a year but need six thousand for tuition support, but if a person comes in here with an eviction notice, if they are living in their car, needs gas, they are more eligible for zakat. Public school is there.*

Javad flicks his hand, as though he is shooing me away. It's clear he is annoyed by the practice of giving money to parents who can send their children to public school. Imam Sadiq agrees:

> *They cannot keep using zakat to fill in budget deficits….when you have refugees, there has to be a priority. There is public school, I went to public school. And the secular education there is better than in the Islamic private school. What is the child's* haqq *(right)? It is to make sure they can recite the Quran, know the basics of Islam, this is something we can do with Sunday school, or after school program. Private school is a luxury, and zakat is not for luxuries. When someone is going hungry, you're going to say that you have to buy a steak when someone is going hungry?*

Javad gets 15–20 new applications per week, 8 out of 10 looking for rent money. "You have a line here," he says, "and they are mostly refugees." Though Connect California supports refugees, it is not enough. And with Connects' Refugee Health Services grant

being cancelled by the current administration, "more will come here." Javad wants to

move people into employment; zakat and state funds are never enough:

> *The biggest problem is language," he says, "I have places where they can work,
> but if you are in a store how will you communicate with employees? How will you
> work with others? And others don't have job experience. Some have degree,
> [they are] engineer, but now driving truck.*

Javad is excited about the kinds of questions I am asking, the different

organizations I'm visiting, and the imams and people I am interviewing:

> *You should give a presentation about your research, we need to learn what others
> are doing and standardize how we are dealing with zakat. I'm working in creating
> standardized process and papers. There is also a way we share information
> between groups.*

I tell him I'll be happy to share my research and perhaps give a presentation if all the

groups come together. "I can set it up with the Shura Council," says Javad, "lots of

organizations will be there." Anthropologists have long been talking about community

engagement. I hope this dissertation not only adds to the research on zakat and the

ethnography of Muslim communities in Southern California, but also benefits them and

the people they represent.

Within the community that Friendship USA serves, the question of where zakat

funding should go is fraught, caught between competing arguments in favor of school

funding or helping the poor with their rent. The use of *fi sabil Allah* can be used to argue

for both, but it is the social and political context driving practice. As federal funding for

refugee programs is being rescinded, more people are coming to the mosque looking for

support, shifting the priorities of where zakat money should go.

Zakat Laundering

I visit Sheikh Hassan one afternoon in his office in Orange County. Hassan is not an Azhari imam, but knows all the Azharis in the area, including Sadiq and Sameer. We are discussing issues of zakat eligibility when he shifts in his chair and looks at me sideways. "Have you heard of zakat *laundering*?" No, I respond. "[First] a masjid collects zakat money, then gives it to [a charity organization], then the [charity organization] turns around and gives twenty thousand to the mosque from their general fund."

"Is this really happening?" I ask incredulously.

"Yes, somebody has to talk about this, so I'm telling you, and we [imams] are trying to crack down."

"Why would they do this?"

"The mosque raises a lot of zakat money for the [charitable organization]. They are able to come there, raise funds, and so there is a close relationship. If the mosque is not zakat eligible, or the community doesn't want to give zakat money to the mosque, the organization will do them this favor. It's not fulfilling the *maqasid* of zakat, its purpose of reducing poverty."

Technically, a legal loophole has been found. Islamic charity organizations usually have two accounts: one for zakat, the other a general fund for expenses. Most people want to know that one-hundred percent of their zakat is going to the poor when donating to a charity organization dealing with poverty, refugees—all those whose eligibility is not questionable. However, there are people who will give *sadaqa* to the general fund, knowing that the charitable organization needs funds for administrative

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costs and that someone has to pay for the office, electricity, employees, and modes of zakat distribution. The mosque first collects zakat funds, which move directly to the charitable organization's zakat financial account, and then the charitable organization immediately turns around and gives the mosque a contribution from their admin fund, usually the same amount unless the mosque makes a contribution and asks for less.

Interestingly, this transaction is not illegal under either US law or Islamic law. Nevertheless, it raises broader questions about the letter of the law versus the spirit of the law. The mosque and charitable organization can both maintain that zakat funds are going to zakat, and it is not uncommon for a charitable organization to give to mosques in return for advertising rights, be it literature distribution or sponsoring a night in Ramadan when thousands of people come to the mosque. It is a legal loophole, however, that has found a way of turning zakat money into *sadaqa*—aka "zakat laundering."

Zakat avoidance has been an issue since the advent of Islam, where the Caliph Abu Bakr led the first wars against rebels who refused to pay the zakat (Lapidus 2014, 65). Classically, Islamic scholars have spoken of *tahayyul,* or "manipulation" of zakat rules that gives "lawful appearance" to actions but violates its intent. Examples include merchants moving inventory off premises before zakat collectors came, hiding livestock, and less obvious means such as fire sales before the yearly tax was due.

When Sheikh Hassan ends his elaboration of "zakat laundering," he notes that "it's not fulfilling the *maqasid* of zakat, its purpose of reducing poverty." In Islamic jurisprudence, discourses on *maqasid al-Shari'ah* ("objectives/ purposes") have become increasingly prevalent as imams bridge the gap between the letter of the law and its spirit.

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Maqasid is a moral and ethical argument; *fiqh,* by contrast, is rooted in legal positivism. *Maqasid* literally means "purposes," or "goals," and in the case of zakat, those who have accumulated wealth are tithed 2.5%, the proceeds going to the poor. However, it seems that Imam Aziz has a different conception of the *maqasid* of zakat, a purpose that he considers to include not only poverty alleviation, but giving money "in the way of Allah"—that is, building mosques, especially when he knows that donors give generously to the poor.

In the case of zakat laundering, though the procedure may be legal, Sheikh Hassan notes that zakat collection must ultimately fulfill the purpose of poverty alleviation. That said, it begs the question: Does the mosques' zakat collection not also increase the charity's zakat account, thereby augmenting help for the poor? One could argue that the zakat money collected *is* going to zakat programs run by the charity. For the charity, the transaction yields neither profit nor loss: they could, in effect, transfer money from their administrative account directly into their zakat account. But in the previous case, the mosque collects zakat that goes directly into the charity's zakat account, and an equal amount taken out of the charities administrative fund goes to the mosque. In both cases, the transaction for the charity is a net-zero loss. However, the practice does generate multiple ethical concerns: Is it a case of washing zakat money into administrative money? Does it attest to a greater lack of transparency in these organizations? Yet what if the mosque made this relationship clear—that they will explicitly collect zakat for a certain program for the charity, but the mosque will receive funds, of equal amount from excess funds that the charity has in their administrative

accounts—would that make the practice more palatable? I suppose it is easier for the

mosque to ignore all these quandaries, sticking instead to the letter of the law so that the

mosque and charity administration can collect funds and remain in technical agreement

on the issue of zakat eligibility, transparency, and purposes of the law.

What this situation illustrates is that the law can at times conflict with common

ethical standpoints. A strict adherence to legalism in turn conceals how differing

purposes motivate divergent practices. For Imam Hassan, poverty alleviation is the

purpose of zakat, and mosques are not eligible. For other imams, and the practices of this

mosque board, they would like to collect zakat for mosque projects, under the Quranic

category of *fi sabil Allah* (see previous and next section). These divergent opinions can

be socially positional, such as an imam not tied to a particular mosque advocating that

zakat is only for poverty alleviation versus an imam vested in a particular mosque and

feels its lack of funds as a communal existential crisis ("Who can talk about zakat in the

US if Muslims are scattered and there are no mosques to go to?"). *Fi sabil Allah* provides

the needed justification for both parties, yet their differing circumstances and social

positions influence their competing interpretations.

Because the mosque receives resistance, they have found a legal method which

allows them to operationalize their perspective in contradistinction to Imam Hassan's, but

still *technically* within the law. However, anyone can see how moving funds in this

manner is problematic due to its convoluted nature and lack of transparency. It would

simply be more straightforward and honest to say that the mosque is zakat eligible and

openly takes zakat funds, though it may call into question the purpose of zakat and its

corresponding legal codification, as maintained by Imam Hassan. In the next section, I examine how the Council on American Islamic Relations does precisely this, openly collecting zakat funds for purposes other than poverty alleviation, citing *fi sabil Allah* as justification.

CAIR: Zakat for Legal Defense

The Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) takes zakat money for legal defense and advocacy work.[36] In this section, I will examine their appeal for funds and what the Azhari imams say about them.

"They shouldn't be taking zakat money," says Imam Sadiq. "The purpose of zakat is for the poor, and I don't know how this fits." Imam Sameer is a little more nuanced:

> *One can use zakat funds for freeing the slaves, so some scholars say that this applies to prisoners of war. Organizations like CAIR fund legal defense and help people innocent people out of prison. If you can't afford the legal fees, what do you do? Especially if you're poor, then I have no problem with it. But I do have a problem if they use the funds for elaborate fundraising events catering fancy food. We have to make sure zakat funds go to these programs, not administrative costs, marketing, and events.*

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[36] CAIR is not a pseudonym. CAIR is a well-known national organizations extensively written about. All material used in this section is from staff interviews, their own published material, as well as visiting their various outreach and fundraising events.

CAIR is known among the mosques and imams as the leading Muslim advocacy group in

the nation. Whenever there is a hate crime or someone needs legal defense for

employment discrimination and even false terrorism charges, CAIR is the first group they

call:

> *CAIR's vision is to be a leading advocate for justice and mutual understanding. CAIR's mission is to enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding (from CAIR's website).*

One can donate directly on CAIR's website, though most donations come from

their annual fundraisers held across the nation. There is an article on the website that

explains why CAIR is zakat eligible, arguing that they "serve the Muslim community by

protecting their rights," and that this "can be classified as *fi-sabililah*." They cite an

Islamic scholar, Ahmad Kutty from Canada who encourages support, quoting:

> *I think it is not only permissible, rather it is also imperative that we do give our zakah to organizations like CAIR and CAIR-CAN, since they are fulfilling a most timely and essential service for the healthy survival of our community. Supporting such institutions clearly falls under the legitimate objectives of zakah expounded by authentic scholars and jurists of Islam, both of the past and the present.*

CAIR is a respected organization, by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, but also feared for its national prominence. For some anti-Muslim groups, CAIR is the stuff of conspiracy theories, from being Muslim Brotherhood plants in the United States to
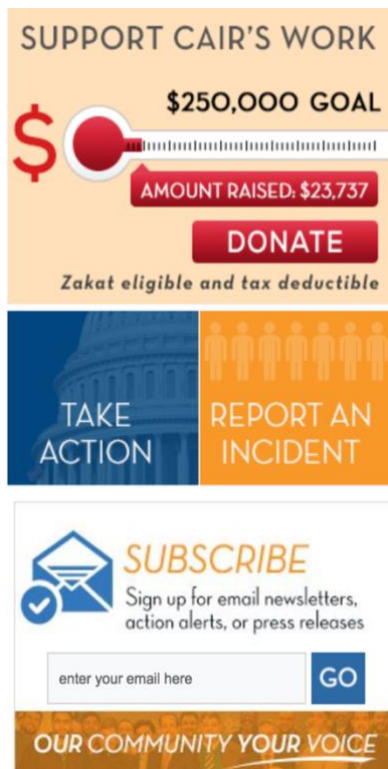

Figure 19. Zakat-eligible advertising

wanting to take over and impose shari'a law on everyone. The *Tea Party Tribune* regularly features articles on the threat of Islamic violence, stealth jihad, and the conspiracy to impose shari'a law. One article analyzes CAIR's zakat eligibility and use of *fi sabil Allah*. Though the author doesn't deny that *fi sabil Allah* can be used to promote rights, as CAIR claims, but he does suggest that CAIR is being disingenuous, lying about its intentions using *taqiyha* (lying about one's faith under duress). He goes on to say that "in reality, CAIR is claiming they are zakat-eligible because they are preparing for physical battle against the Kufr

(unbelievers)" (Perrin 2011). The example is interesting since it illustrates, albeit in a convoluted example, how socialization and perspective can morph into bias, and bias into full-fledged conspiracy theories. Combine this with an over-reliance on literalism by ignoring the tradition of Islamic commentary and scholarship (including Qaradawi), historical analysis, and empiricism (including ethnographic study), one reads a text without anything to correct or even put into question one's bias: right wing conspiracy

theorists share this with Islamic extremists, a constructed but unquestioned perspective that rests comfortably in its own certainties.

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In the US, zakat is being transformed from a variegated and personal practice to one monitored and regulated by the nation-state. One of the reasons for this is that zakat has been criminalized in a post-9/11 era that sees Islamic charity not as a form of humanitarianism, but as a potential threat to the patriarchal nation-state. Structural Islamophobia, manifested through government, media, policy and programming, sees Islam as anti-humanity, rather than humane, and is unable to see such financial practices off wealth redistribution as an alternative to failed state welfare policies.

Most of our imams in this study, because of their transnational and cosmopolitan character, have many lenses through which they can interpret the world around them. Most of our imams are college educated and able to see things critically and from multiple perspectives. All throughout the different sections in this chapter I include countervailing points from other imams when appropriate, casting into relief the differences of opinion of the imams who may or may not have had the same seminary training, but differ on the practices and priorities of zakat in the Southern Californian context.

In our examples in this last section, the library of the Quran and *fiqh al zakah* provide an open category—*fi sabil Allah*—which allows for socially-driven priorities concerning zakat practice. As such, different practices of zakat come into tension with the various perspectives of our imams and others, putting into relief their limited role and

power. On the one hand, their power is limited by other imams and the reality of multiple shari'a perspectives. On the other, there is no power to enforce the law—secular law is hegemonic and limits the role of an imams fatwa to an opinion, a non-binding religious opinion.

As we can see from Connect California and CAIR, the objectives of institutions are not driven by imams, but by the priorities of founders and board members, activists who are motivated to establish institutions to address a need on *their* terms, imbricated by multiple desires including secular and Islamic. It is community members, donors, and activists that respond to what they think is needed and that form various non-profits in the current political and economic climate. As such, they become part of the interpretive community of zakat practice. Imams contribute later by legitimating the "Islam-icity" of the organization, consulting and auditing their practices and helping set policies that enter the archive of zakat practice in Southern California.

7. Conclusion

This dissertation has demonstrated that, far from being universal and hegemonic, shari'a practices in Southern California are plural and variegated. They are constantly being defined and redefined by imams and the communities they serve in changing historical and political circumstances.

The main argument of this dissertation is that zakat is being transformed by cultural and politico-economic forces, most significantly neoliberalism and the ethics of international humanitarianism. The three sketches of our Azhari imams—the Ikhwani, the Sufi, and the Social Worker—illustrate this thesis, showing how imams socially situate themselves in today's socio-political climate as well as why they hold the religious opinions they do. In turn, they help us understand their different motivations and priorities, as well as the modes of zakat practice they advocate in the post–9/11 and Arab Uprising period.

In Chapter 1, I provided a background on the practice of zakat historically, its purpose to show the multiple practices of zakat over time. I then covered the relevant anthropological literature on charity, looking to the relationship between the giver and receiver—and focusing particularly on contemporary work that conceptualizes charity within modern neoliberal humanitarianism. It traced how social relationships within acts of charity were shaped by broader political-economic conditions, and by the ways in which the acts are managed, whether by the state or by corporate bodies like the Ikhwan.

Chapter 2 situated the dissertation historically, first in Egypt with a focus on the changes that al-Azhar experienced (both institutional and pedagogical) during the modernizing period. It is this context that helps to explain the role of the state in a neoliberal economy in which zakat practice is articulated today. This section also offered a brief history of Islam in America, tracing the development of two different communities: Black Islam and immigrant Islam. As we saw in Chapter 5, the different histories of the indigenous and the immigrant are reflected in how they practice Islam as well as the different priorities and needs concerning zakat.

I concluded Chapter 2 with a textual analysis of the Quran as well as Qaradawi's *fiqh al-zakat*, using Messick's notion of these texts as the library in the Southern California shari'a system concerning zakat. As we saw, Quranic verses can be read differently by different readers, with their historical understanding and personal circumstances differing throughout time. As was most evident in Chapter 6, texts are read differently and can be invoked to justify different zakat programs, from mosque building to the provision of legal defense funds, driven by the needs and priorities of communities in a post–9/11 context. Imams, with their particular background and social position, will invoke texts in different ways to justify their position, despite their classical seminary training.

Chapter 3 featured Hamza "the Ikhwani," whose idea of religion and whose ideal mode of charity were influenced by his experience growing up near an evangelical Christian community. Though this link may seem tenuous to most readers, the neoliberal idea of the economy, work ethic, and even notions of masculinity parallel Hamza's

experience with the neighborhood church, shaping his perspective on how charity should best be practiced. For the Ikhwan, it is a politics of social activism that serves the poor through modern bureaucratically-organized and institutionalized practices.

Chapter 4 featured Rami "the Sufi," whose practices of charity and zakat are a deeply personal undertaking that reflect a relationship between him and God, irrespective of the politics of neoliberalism or work ethic. Such practices, I argue, echo what Mittermaier terms the "ethics of immediacy."

Chapter 5 featured Sameer "the Social Worker," whose experience as a social worker in the United States greatly influences his practice and perspective of zakat. His work in a Black mosque in Los Angeles and in women's-run social service agency, demonstrate how race and gender intersect with zakat practice, showing us the unique ways in which Imam Sameer works in these different contexts.

Taken together, our three case-study imams illustrate how different socializations correspond to diverging outlooks on zakat, manifested through varying relationships between the giver and the receiver. Though all three attend al-Azhar and learn about zakat in textually similar ways, their perspectives on zakat differ—namely around the question of should and should not receive zakat—largely due to their social and cultural circumstances.

In Chapter 6, "Humanitarianism," I focused on institutions of zakat practice in the US in a post–9/11 context with their particular priorities and urgencies. Here, I argue that the American context and its regulatory environment is shifting zakat practice, disciplining it along the lines of international humanitarianism. Through methods of

accountability, transparency, and audit, zakat is being reconfigured under neoliberal institutional values such as self-sufficiency and financial literacy, reshaping the categories of zakat eligibility as well as the relationship between giver and receiver. It is in this regulatory and cultural context that imams audit and help create policy, reimagining the role of the imam as an advisor or consultant.

All the organizations in this dissertation take zakat money; if it is explicitly for the poor and needy, then no other justification is needed, since all imams agree that zakat is primarily for the poor. However, in the US, mosque-building as well as legal defense funds are advertised as zakat eligible using the Quranic category of *fi sabil Allah* ("in the path of Allah"), which has come to mean anything good in God's way. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, in his *fiqh al-zakat*, discusses social welfare as the primary purpose of zakat, but interprets *fi sabil Allah* as a discretionary category that qualified persons, imams or otherwise, can use for anything good in the cause of Muslims. As such, we see that imams as well as Muslim communities in the US have different ideas of what constitutes "good" for the communities, especially in the post–9/11 era. As a result, imams and communities vie for zakat funds for disparate programs, for varying motivations that reflect their varying backgrounds, socializations, and cultural contexts.

This is not to suggest that zakat has no normative assumptions; all Azhari imams acknowledge that the primary purpose of zakat is poverty alleviation, a redistribution from rich to poor. It is the exigencies of context, for example the existential threat posed

by Islamophobia around the world, that qualify a legal defense fund to receive zakat money. All other zakat institutions in this dissertation, in some form or another, provide money or services for those in need. In this concluding section, I consider some of the implications of my research, and specifically, the question of zakat as it relates to poverty alleviation.

7.1. Implications and Future Research

If the purpose of zakat is to "solve the problem of poverty," it is clear that in its current form it is insufficient. The zakat program at Masjid Raheem, for example, does not even offer enough to cover one-tenth of its receiver's rent. In the modern economy, zakat is a stop-gap measure between the services of the state, including welfare and refugee settlement programs. When Connect California loses its federal grant for refugee resettlement, refugees lose their healthcare, and zakat is not enough to fill the void. In Masjid Farooq in Los Angeles, zakat can help alleviate some people's basic food needs, but it does not fundamentally solve the structural inequalities present in the urban city. From mosques who help applicants with rent, to food banks and "humanitarian days" that instill an ethic of charity to help people empathize with the poor, the organization and pressure to conform to international standards subsume zakat under restrictive political and economic conditions, situating it within greater macro-economic structures.

This is not lost on some of the imams in Indonesia (Azharis included), who work in a modern capitalist state that is interested in participating in the world economy as well

as in reducing poverty. Zainulbahar Noor, the deputy director of BAZNAS, knows that zakat is one source of revenue with the "potential" to reduce inequality. Noor is working in a state zakat institution, enforced with other arms of the state and supplemented by other forms of taxes; 2.5% is not enough for redistribution in a capitalist economy.

The changes in Italy provide an example of how religious institutions and their practices of charity reconfigure under neoliberal reform. In Italy, Muehlebach argues that both the state and the Catholic Church are invested in a neoliberal idea of the "ethical citizen," who steps in through works of charity as the state recedes behind market reform. Through a comprehensive review of moral subjectivity within contemporary economic formations, Muehlebach incorporates the ideas of Smith, Marx and Weber in his discussion of the ethics of capitalism by examining the actions of the market. The ethical actor, according to her, is both a "disinterested," selfish actor looking for self-gain in the market place and also a person who self-fashions the affect of frugality and family love. I argue the Muslim family and the Catholic family have this in common. This "dual ontology," rather than being a crisis within neoliberalism, is part and parcel of it (Muehlebach 2012, 21–23). The duality centers on the public actor as a rational, frugal, and calculating citizen versus the private actor as a loving, compassionate, and moral individual. I cannot help but to draw parallels between Mosque volunteerism, city officials visiting Connect California, and the concerns of Friendship USA disciplining "scammers" and the need for recipients to become "self-sufficient" as subjects who are disciplined under contemporary neoliberal regimes.

In Egypt, *khidma* practices increase concern and social solidarity with others, but are powerless in the face of structural conditions that exacerbate inequality. Helping a traveler with food at a Sufi shrine makes the visit more enjoyable but the doubling of fuel prices can make it impossible. The Ikhwan can fill needed social services in the poorest areas of Cairo, but fail in the face of the state's austerity measures and rising inflation. As Hafez notes in describing the development program of Al Hilal in rural Egypt, social solidarity has been transformed under modernity: "Drawing upon Islamic principles that seamlessly merge with secularizing agendas and modernizing social reform histories, they reproduced normative roles and hierarchies that are part and parcel of principles of development in modernization schemes" (Hafez 2011b, 70). The Egyptian example of the Ikhwan (Chapter 3) illustrates this transformation most clearly, though Connect California and Friendship USA (chapter 6) also represent programs of personal and educational development that imbricate Islamic motivation with secular discipline.

Erica Bornstein problematizes what she calls the "liberal-altruism" model of humanitarianism that is becoming globalized through various global charitable organizations. In her work in India, she contrasts this to "relational empathy," a set of duties and obligations outside of the "individualized" legal and rights regimes of the West. Bornstein acquaints herself with Rajesh and his disabled sister Supriya, showing how a community of kin is tied with duties over individual rights, and how no one in this society desires "individual rights," which they consider alienating and "lonely" (Bornstein 2012, 160–65). A mother, father, or sibling can turn up at one's door and expect to be taken care of in the complex web of duties to affines. The entire

structure of obligations is tied to kinship, and does not extend to strangers as is the case with liberal regimes (157).

When it comes to zakat, the primary recipients, historically, are extended kin and neighbors—though this is an ethic that is being reconfigured in the US by a social context that is removed from living in extended affine communities. Instead, American Muslim families are increasingly nuclear, facilitated by US labor requirements. In a legal context that requires donors as well as receivers to obtain a certain kind of discipline, in showing documented need, audits and accountability, the modern political and economic context of the US has transformed zakat practice from an ethics of immediacy to a model disciplined by the state and the norms of international humanitarianism. Many American Muslim families give zakat to mosques and charitable organizations, disconnected from extended kin and not knowing the condition of neighbors, an attitude that reflects the conditions of the liberal-altruism model. Far from being universalistic, this model masks inequalities and hierarchy behind a formal equality before the law (Bornstein 2012, 146–48).

Humanitarianism finds itself allied with the rational-ethical, subjected to what Agamben calls "bare life", a life in need of intervention: refugees who are left to die because they are not citizens, immigrants who are deported because they are "illegal." Such accounts evince an inherent instability in our conception of political culture, a tension between the rights of man and the rights of the citizen. Drawing on Agamben, Didier Fassin shows how humanitarianism reproduces these implicit hierarchies by raising questions of which organizations should be deemed "humanitarian" and upon

whom should humanitarianism be "exercised." These two questions demonstrate that in the relationships that humanitarian relief establishes, one party is an active participant, and the other is passive (Fassin 2011).

Zakat organizations, when articulating themselves within international legal norms, reconfigure zakat recipients by subjecting them to the techniques of governmentality, inconspicuously "grasp[ing] human life in the figure of bare or sacred life, and therefore, despite themselves, maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight" (Agamben 2017, 133). US-based zakat organizations, especially those that manage funds in accordance with international norms, cannot escape this imposition. Islamic Relief, one of the biggest international zakat organizations, aids Syrian refugees in Jordan and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, precisely at the disjuncture of the international system.

The implications of this research come out of my time in Egypt as well as Southern California. My critique is not of zakat per se, but of its articulation within the current political-economic system. Zakat is subsumed under economic policy—whether it be in the urban setting of Los Angeles or in rural Egypt—and is therefore powerless to redress rising inequality on its own. If zakat is to redress poverty, it must do so find a way to do so within the confines of current state hegemony and economic policy, much of which is globalized under neoliberal reform.

This dissertation contributes to the anthropological literature on zakat practices specifically and to the literature on charity more broadly. When it comes to zakat practice, or even the practice of Islam, scholarship has hitherto neglected the influence of

imams and their training. This dissertation fills that gap in the literature, helping us to better understand the transnational and personal dimensions of zakat practice, and how it moves from a place like Egypt to become localized in Southern California.

In this dissertation, I have shown how the post–9/11 context of the US as well as the Arab Uprising in Egypt have changed zakat practice and renegotiated its role in Muslim communities. Taking into consideration their socialization, experience, and training, imams examine, prioritize, and encourage the practice of zakat within their communities whether it be institutionally or privately, in the service of the poor and empowering the Muslim community. The question is, which zakat practices are the most beneficial? Which practices relieve poverty, and which ones contribute to its perpetuation? Lastly, does zakat require changes to the structure of the political economy to fulfill its vision of poverty alleviation? Future research could focus on the consequences of these economic intersections, exploring how and if zakat manifests itself within Islamic Finance, with a focus on economic theories that remains true to the objective of zakat as a religiously obligated relationship between the rich and the poor.

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