Practicing Islam in Egypt

Following the ideological disappointment of the 1967 Arab–Israeli war, an Islamic revival arose in Egypt. Yet, far from being a mechanical reaction to the decline of secular nationalism, this religious shift was the product of impassioned competition among Muslim Brothers, Salafis, and state institutions and their varied efforts to mobilize Egyptians to distinct projects. By pulling together the linked stories of these diverse claimants to religious authority and tracing the social and intellectual history of everyday practices of piety, Aaron Rock-Singer shows how Islamic activists and institutions across the political spectrum reshaped daily routines in an effort to persuade followers to adopt novel models of religiosity. In so doing, he reveals how Egypt's Islamic Revival emerged, who it involved, and why it continues to shape Egypt today.

Aaron Rock-Singer is Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Cornell University. He holds a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University.

Practicing Islam in Egypt

Print Media and Islamic Revival

AARON ROCK-SINGER Cornell University, New York



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108492058 DOI: 10.1017/9781108590877

© Aaron Rock-Singer 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Names: Rock-Singer, Aaron, author. Title: Practicing Islam in Egypt : print media and Islamic revival / Aaron Rock-Singer. Description: New York : Cambridge University Press, 2018. Identifiers: LCCN 2018042448 | ISBN 9781108492058 (hardback) Subjects: LCSH: Islam – Egypt. | Islam and politics – Egypt. | BISAC: POLITICAL SCIENCE / Government / International. Classification: LCC BP64.E3 R63 2018 | DDC 297.0962–dc23 LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018042448

ISBN 978-1-108-49205-8 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press 978-1-108-49205-8 — Practicing Islam in Egypt Aaron Rock-Singer Frontmatter <u>More Information</u>

For Cara

Contents

Lis	st of Figures	<i>page</i> viii
Acknowledgments		ix
A Note on Transliteration and Spelling		xii
	Introduction	1
1	Mind before Matter: Visions of Religious Change in Postcolonial Egypt	26
2	Currents of Religious Change: Ideological Transmission and Local Mobilization	52
3	Could the State Serve Islam? The Rise and Fall of Islamis Educational Reform	t 75
4	Prayer and the Islamic Revival: A Timely Challenge	106
5	Beyond <i>Fitna</i> : The Emergence of Islamic Norms of Comportment	132
6	The Ambiguous Legacy of the Islamic Revival: How Women Emerged as a Barometer of Public Morality	154
	Conclusion	179
Bibliography		185
Index		206

Figures

2.1	Popular participant distribution by governorate	page 61
2.2	Popular participant distribution by city	61
2.3	Popular participants by occupation	64
2.4	Student distribution by university faculty	65

viii

Acknowledgments

This book was born as a dissertation in Princeton's Department of Near Eastern Studies. Its origin, however, can be traced to the Fall of 2004, when I first studied with Heather Sharkey as an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania. Heather's combination of modesty, knowledge, and perspective gave me the compass to navigate research, and a model of what it means to be both a scholar and a teacher. In a case of fortune begetting fortune, I then had the opportunity to study at Oxford with Walter Armbrust, who introduced me to the critical study of media and to the discipline of Anthropology.

It was then at Princeton that this project officially took root. Muhammad Qasim Zaman and Cyrus Schayegh carefully and perceptively read each chapter over the course of several years, Michael Cook gave me an exhilarating crash course in the nuts and bolts of the Islamic scholarly tradition, and Jonathan Gribetz and Satyel Larson challenged and deepened this study through their nuanced and thoughtful comments. It is my hope that these pages bear the mark of the erudition, sensitivity, and commitment to critical inquiry that all modeled for me.

I am also deeply grateful to Cambridge University Press. I would like to thank Maria Marsh for seeing potential in this project and shepherding it to completion; Abigail Walkington for her editorial support; Cassi Roberts for efficiently yet thoroughly bringing this manuscript into book form; Mary Starkey for precise and perceptive copy-edits; and Sri Hari Kumar Sugumaran for the production. Portions of Chapter 2 formed an article entitled "A Pious Public: Islamic Magazines and Revival in Egypt, 1976–1981," which was published in the *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. A version of Chapter 5 entitled "Prayer and the Islamic Revival: A Timely Challenge" was published in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*.

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press 978-1-108-49205-8 — Practicing Islam in Egypt Aaron Rock-Singer Frontmatter <u>More Information</u>

х

Acknowledgments

Numerous colleagues have taken the time to read and engage with different parts of this manuscript. In particular, I wish to thank Megan Brankley Abbas, Joel Blecher, Vaughn Booker, Jeff Culang, Simon Wolfgang Fuchs, Angela Giordani, Samuel and Tally Helfont, Hilary Kalmbach, Leo Katz, Daniel Lav, Nadirah Mansour, Elizabeth Nugent, Jacob Olidort, Christian Sahner, Emilio Spadola, Daniel Stolz, Lev Weitz, Arthur Zarate, Oded Zinger, and members of Princeton Islamic Studies Colloquium and the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture, also at Princeton. I'm particularly grateful to Steven Brooke and Susanna Ferguson, who read and commented on the entirety of the manuscript with a keen eve for both argument and minute detail. This study has benefited immensely from all these individuals and the intellectual communities that they played such a vital role in building and maintaining, often through the unsung work of organizing workshops and commenting on others' work. Just as important are the friends who have been with me going back to childhood, particularly Teddy Fassberg and Pete Silberman.

I must also thank individuals in both Israel and Egypt who helped to make this project possible. In Israel, Meir Hatina hosted me at the Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem during the 2014–15 academic year when I wrote most of the original dissertation; I must also thank Meir and Sasha Schneidermann for their help in accessing a rare printed collection of the sermons of 'Abd al-Hamid Kishk. Just as importantly, Uzi Rabi at Tel Aviv University provided generous access to the Dayan Center's Arabic Press Archives, which proved crucial to this project. On the other side of the Egyptian–Israeli border, I wish to thank members of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jam'iyya Shar'iyya who assisted me in this project. In light of the current political circumstances, many of them must go nameless, but I hope that, if this book is ever translated into Arabic, they will recognize their contributions to it.

The transformation of my dissertation into a book occurred thanks to the support of Bill Burke-White and Mike Horowitz at the University of Pennsylvania's Perry World House. It was during my year at Penn – a period in which Bill and Mike worked diligently to discourage me from even considering teaching a course – that I revised the dissertation while adding two new chapters. As I went through the process of revising and finalizing this manuscript, David Powers continuously provided me with both sound advice and necessary perspective; in

Acknowledgments

this, as in all matters of research and teaching, David encapsulates what it means to be a professional.

Ultimately, though, this study is the product of a lifetime of love and support of family. Since I was young, my parents have encouraged and made it possible for me to explore my passions; I hope that they will see themselves – and the intellectual and personal journey to which have they been so central – in these pages. My siblings, Patrick and Miriam, have also provided encouragement and gentle mockery, helping me keep my sanity when dozens of pages stared back at me. I would also like to thank all the wonderful family whom I inherited through marriage – Craig and Judy Singer, Ellen Singer Coleman and Michael Coleman, Sarah and Nathan Gregoire, Matt and Rachel Busman Rosen, Chad Singer and Cari Mondragon Mesa, and Rachel Bishop, for their love and support.

This book, though, is for Cara who, for going on eight years, has supported me, personally and intellectually. While I might have finished a book without her, it would have been a lesser product, and I certainly would have been a lesser person. And our daughter, Liora Daphne, has also played her own powerful role, grounding me with her deep sweetness, endless curiosity, and sharp wit. And as I write these words, Cara, Liora, and I await a new addition to our family. In this moment, as in so many others, it is my family that gives these professional milestones meaning.

Aaron Rock-Singer

A Note on Transliteration and Spelling

Transliteration of Arabic terms follows a modified version of the style of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. I employ full diacritical marks for technical terms, and, for non-technical terms, indicate the *'ayn* and the initial and medial *hamza*. For the sake of clarity I exclude the final *hamza* (thus *'ulama* rather than *'ulama'*). I render personal names based on this system, with the exception of the names of Egypt's first two president, Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir and Anwar al-Sadat, which I render according to *IJMES* conventions.