Relevant cultural dimensions in the Egyptian Society

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Diverse Egyptian society with different cultural dimensions

- **cultural dimensions**
  - **Islam orthodoxy**: koranic Islam, fundamentalism, political Islamism, Salafism, dogmatic Islam, but the „building” of the Islamic Civilization as well
  - **Sufism**: Islam mysticism, Islam philosophy, mystic Islam, tolerant Islam
  - **Popular Religious possesses**: mixed elements from both interpretation and the basic of the everyday religious possesses
  - **Folklore Traditions**: even ancient traditions, mixed with Islamic elements as Arabic tribal traditions or pre-Islam traditions colored with Islamic elements
  - **Modernity**: overlay the 4 pillar of the traditional patterns as a new break line
Cultural layers

• The Egyptian Society’s different cultural layers overlap each other, and has different aspects.

• In Islamic culture exist many diverse folkloric elements what flavors in the common religious processes, but differ from the Islam orthodoxy, and rejected by the fundamentalism.

• These phenomenon has a syncretic mixture of the Sufi Mysticism, the pre-Islam traditions and even the orthodoxy.

• These practices often hides or satisfies important social aspects, like stress releasing, replace social needs, and has other cultural or socio-psychological projections.
Deep embedness

• explained their deep embeddedness, and strong origins in the popular Islamic Culture despite the rejection of Islamic dogmatism.

• In this presentation I long to introduce the most culturally relevant social dimensions, and I recall some explicit example with stress release technique like *Sufi dikr*, *women zar*, *dance occasion* and modern *popular music trends*
Cultural Context

• These dimensions and their overlays and relations define the cultural context and the behavior in the recent situations

• Egypt is deeply traditional society colored with a modern cover, but the deep patterns are still traditional

• Western attitudes and secularism correlate with high society status, BUT

• as well as the leaders of fundamentalism - who accept the technical innovations but reject the western social changes

• Specific in urban areas

• At countryside is still rural and traditional.
## Characteristic features

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Fundamentalism</th>
<th>Sufism</th>
<th>Modernity</th>
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<td><strong>Trends</strong></td>
<td>Islam Orthodoxy</td>
<td>Islam Mysticism</td>
<td>Sufism religious Traditions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Main patterns</strong></td>
<td>„Koranic Islam, religious studies (fiqh) The most respected area in Islamic Culture”</td>
<td>Sufism „philosophy of Islam” “Islam Mysticism” Popular religious possesses Religion, how the people practice</td>
<td>Plural and colorful tradition mixture Arise from Arabic tribal, or pre-Islam traditions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>„Madhahib”, system of religious schools- Islamic madrasa system Tariqa-, sufi ways, paths, system of dervish orders Syncretic Mixture od Sufi and orthodox elements</td>
<td>Mixture of diverse traditions</td>
<td>Hugh Axis crossover the society Left-right Axis From Western secularism to “Far right” religious fundamentalism</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Places</strong></td>
<td>Mosques Privat Houses/ Mosques Mawleed, Magraganat Folkloric celebrations, Festivals</td>
<td>Social and Common Events</td>
<td>Urban Cities</td>
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<td><strong>Appearance</strong></td>
<td>System of Islamic Law (a šarī'ah) Religious Schools, Religious Education Institutes (madhab/madrasa) Preaching after Friday Pray (Khutba) Recommendations (fatwa) By High respected religious lettered Circle (Yulamā)</td>
<td>Sufi dikr Possess of Remind of God Different Sufi practices to getting closer to God Popular dikr, Women possess of Zar mawleed (festivals), ziyyara (visit of a Tomb of a sufi Saint), Respect of Waly (sufi saint) high rejected by fundamentalism Old traditions under an Islamic Cover: Like Express of Women Freedom Dance occasions But FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) (khitan) superstitions (hasad el oyoun) The Evil Eye Folk Tales Arabian Nights</td>
<td>Arabic nationalism In the middle: Moderate Islam, Radical: Islam fundamentalism but: Shaabi pop music culture Performing Arts Film Industry Pop Music</td>
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Cultural Dimensions

- Folk Traditions
  - Folkloric Religious possess
  - zaar
  - Dance
  - Cult of Saints
  - Festivals

- Islam Orthodoxie
  - khitan (FGM)
  - Islam law
  - Dikr

- Fundamentalism

- Sufi Mysticism

- Urban Culture
  - Pop music
  - Film industry
  - Entertainments

- Western attitudes
  - Modernity
Overlap

• The overlap of these areas has several dimensions
• In these field we could understand the social situations and the contexts
• The public behavior is strictly controlled by the social norms even if does not fit with the individual attitudes
• Existing individual attitudes can be recognized from the stress realise-(relax) events, ceremonies
• The possibilities of individual behavior, stress reveling event depends on the social distance → the context and situation
• Hugh distance: the strict norms are strictly working
• Close and little distance: Many colorful diverse „freedom”
Stress between social norms and attitudes

• Creates latent Frustrations:
  • Depend on the family status and habits uses stress reveling possesses

• Exist Contradictions between the traditional norms and the social reality and normative environments

• Repressed frustrations → creates latent unconscious process
  -sexual frustration: hugh gap between biological and social maturity
  -Cultural frustration: contradictions between modernity and identity

2 actor→ the biggest drive of „jihadism”

- Personal frustrations and repressions
Sacrificed Religious Events: Dikr/Zaar- social function: divine experience, stress revealing

• Sufi dikr: re-involving to the community by a religious experience

• Women Zaar: Religious posses with superstitious elements and folk traditions with the jins (spirits) who obsesses the women

• Social function: reunion community – make it strong
Possesses flowered in interpersonal area and disappeared with social distance

• Women Dance:
  • the little circle of women freedom
  • Flowered in everyday life but just in closed familiar circles
  • Mainly without men, men are overclosed

• Pop music: flowered all over the Middle East, rich pop culture creates many diverse music styles
  • Expressing personal freedom

If an „authority” appears the circles of freedom and happiness disappears but appear again if it is possible.
„Little Circles of freedom” - where is allowed to dance
Upper Egypt – Land of contradictions

• Women – invisible social group – „she is not allowed to go outside”
• BUT Location of Common and western popular touristic places like Valley of the King, Luxor, Karnak
• For western tourist – even for women – everything is allowed
• Real Sa’id is strictly hidden- low „real” connection between people and tourist → but exist friendly connection, people also living from tourism → „open” but „closed "society→ open to the tourist but it is not real connection, and closed to the traditional values which are not seen by the tourist.
• Even we can find western girls „ride a bike” next the Nile, and the local society hospitable but we cannot find Egyptian young girls moving alone. But it is invisible, and we do not recognize....
More Contradiction

• Upper Egypt: very traditional society
• 19th century: the sultan Mohamed Ali expelled all not decent considered social group by the muslim leaders to Upper Egypt.
• Simultaneously European discovered the Pharaonic Ruins → generate a high touristic interest

• Make a specific mixture: tourists, dancers, entertainment and a isolated traditional Rural society
Egypt as diverse colorful culture

• The „West” has it’s own stereotypes about Islam.
• The popular western attitudes prefer to define: Islam is as the Salafi fundamentalism.
• But the Sunni Islam itself is diverse, not even the Arabic culture.
- Thank you for your attention -

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