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## Introduction

Within the last decade before the revolution, there was a state of demand for the religious aspects at the popular level, and a statue of official leniency in dealing with it, this religiosity aspects indicate the changes in social, economic and political fields.

The religious status in Syria within the last decade are summarizes in five central points:

the first: the wide Sufi tradition in the levant, the nature of relation between the sheikh and his followers or his students because the popular Sufi religiously is the common style, so the attitudes of followers in general towards the ruling power or what is related to it in the public affair is the attitude of their sheikhs respectively.

the second is: defeat of the Syrian society due to the repressive regime since the eighties and the inability of it to make any popular movement at any level, culturally, politically, intellectually or religiously, and later, the popular fear of Lebanon and Iraq's experiences in their civil wars.

The third: a small religious freedom led to emergence of religious elite which concerned of the political affairs and interested in the Syrian citizen's problems of life and preoccupied with issues of the nation, and how to advancement, ways to repair within the regional and international conflicts, and discussed secretly ways to reform the regime without violence

the Fourth: the effects of the global fight against "terrorism" campaign after the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2001, which led regionally and locally to push and encourage the Arab region to strengthen the role of , " Sufi moderate Islam " and to fight against , "the radical Islam" as recommended by the strategic centers of making decisions, such as Rand Corporation.

the fifth: listed the Syrian regime within the political theme of "resistance" which includes views and parties adopted the various Islamic thought such as (Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas), where following the group of "resistance Islam" enhanced the popular religiosity.

Hamas activity on the Syrian territory within the Palestinian refugee camps had a role in the revival of religiosity besides the political presence.

Religious currents in Syria were divided into three major sections: The first trend: followed the ruling Baathist power since 1975. After the events of the eighties and the conflict between the regime and the Islamists, the ruling authority intended to consolidating a religious structure which will be disciplined by the Baathist regime; so, the regime provided religious scholars and sheikhs which were away from public and political life, they do not have ambition except what the regime wanted.

sheikhs and scholars of this current were assigned in the leadership positions of the Ministry of Endowments, and spread them in Damascus and Aleppo, where the Sufi Naqshbandi trend<sup>1</sup> prevailed, in addition to some other trends such as Refaiyah Shazeleyah and Nabhaneya in Aleppo<sup>2</sup>.

The most prominent students of this school, Sheikh Suhaib Al-Shami, the director of Aleppo's endowments for almost thirty years, the current Mufti of the Republic Sheikh Ahmad Hassoun, and the prominent orator Mahmoud Al-Hout.

The second trend: distanced itself from politics, and working in calling to Allah within their own councils, practice social charity activities, and to devote one single motto that "the reform of the ruling is better than changing him", and to focus on Islamic education for Muslim individual. This trend did not try exposure to the policies of the State or the repressive of security, its role was limited with respect to public affairs to criticize some aspects of corruption and nepotism within the state institutions.

Both of the two previous trends one way or another contributed to the restrictions of any trend which was different from the religious popular trend in Syria which was restricted to them.

They issued statements rejecting the other trends that began occupying places in the Syrian religious, such as the Salafist currents and other religious trends that were distributed to different schools such as school of nonviolence and kinetic school (party of liberation) and the reform school.

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<sup>1</sup> see records tapes about (men of Nakabandi Series)

<sup>2</sup> the name is related to Shaikh Mouhamed Al-Nabhan who was died in 1975. he established a sharia trend known as (Al-Kiltawyah).

The third trend: it was limited to a group of scholars and sheikhs and Islamic intellectuals as symbols, such as: Dr. Moaz Al-Khatib, Dr. Imad El-Deen Al-Rasheed, Dr. Khaldoun Al-Jazaeri, Sheikh Abdul Kader Arnaout, Abdullah Alloush, Dr. Mamoun Hammoush and Abdul Al-Akram Al-Saqqa in Darya (Damascus), and Naiem al-Hariri in Muadamiyat al-Sham. This trend has supported owners of some publishing houses such as (Al-Resala foundation, Dar Al-Qalm and Dar Al-Beirut). This current was characterized by the trend of the Salafi Muslim Brotherhood, which its attitude toward the traditional Sufi school (as a group of Zaid) ranged between acceptance and rejection.

But it had a bad relation with the Syrian regime and its religious institutions. It is worth noting that most of the followers of this trend formed the first ranks in the Syrian revolution.

In total, the aspects of the religious situation in Syria were not separate fully from interventions of official religious institutions and its evaluations ; which means that the official institutions, backed by the ruling Baath regime and the system of oppressive security intelligence had a hidden role and sometimes, and overt in other times in controlling shifts of the society and its religious developments, and then making the necessary steps to control it through the enactment of laws and make judgments either to crack down on certain developing religious currents, or to dispose of them by preventing the exercise of their activities and their representatives' works.

The Syrian regime realized in the last decade that allowing young people to exercise their rituals and religious activities -with limitation- will be an outlet for them and compensation for thinking and attention to political affairs and crises of living, such as poverty, unemployment, corruption problems and the issue of freedoms, reform and development, as long as that it controlled the religious discourses raised at that time.

The focus was on religion without polices, and the soft popular religiosity confined to ritual such as interested in worship, practice Sufi behaviors in mosques and mausoleums, shrines and houses (such as those which were held in the Sheikh Mahmoud Al-Gourab house based on Al-Akbaryeah

way<sup>3</sup>), the religious ceremonies, such as the Prophet's birthday and the day of Ashura, the promotion for religious tourism such as visiting the shrines of saints and the righteous of the Sunnis and religious sites affiliated with the Shiite such as Sayeda Zainab shrine in Damascus, shrine of Nuqta scene in Alppo, and the shrine of Ouais Al-Qarni in Raqqa

Among the fields which had a felt religious popularity in Syria, was the football field, which has developed to professional level and achieved successes in a number of tournaments, where it was noted, for example, thousands of Al-Karama club fans in Homs flocked to the stadiums, encouragement for their club during the match included some of the religious aspects such as reading Al-Fateha on the intention to reconcile, the players collectively prostrated when they scored a goal in the match, and most of them wearing legal shorts. These phenomena were not confined to a particular team, but extended to include most of the other clubs, although in a lesser way.

In exchange for allowing the regime to some breakthroughs in the field of popular religiosity, it dealt much of caution and apprehension with the activities and forums interested in political affairs; where he gave way during the first period of Bashar rule for some political events and cultural activities such as the Damascus Spring phenomenon (2000-2001), which was a period of intense activity and the temporary exhibitions of political liberalization moderated by intellectuals Democrats. This period was characterized by demanding political, judicial and economic reforms. there were political and cultural activities such as (Democratic Dialogue Forum, launched by Syrian MP Riad Seif at his home in Damascus mid-September 2000 / September, the satirical newspaper (Al- Doumari) which licensed in 2001 and subsequently banned in 2003<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Akbaryeah way is related to the Sufi philosopher Muhi El-Deen Ben Arabi (1164-1240) who was known as the greatest sheikh, and buried in Qassioun mountain.

Shaikh Mahmoud Mahmoud Al-Gourab (was born in 1920 in Egypt, Tanta) then moved to Damascus in fifties of the last century, he received the followers at his house to spread over the world, many of his works are about the greatest sheikh.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Doumari magazine was the first license which granted for an independent newspaper in Syria since 1963, when it started, about 600 thousands copy were published, this exceeded the acceptable range formally, ceased publication after stop

But the regime quickly buried these reforms package after feeling of victorious after 2007 due to failure of US forces in Iraq and after the July 2006 war in Lebanon, in addition to the western and Arab openness for its regime and the recognition of the centrality of its role in the Middle East files, especially Iraq, Lebanon<sup>5</sup>.

Al-Assad then invoked the fact that the Syrian people is not ready yet for democratic openness, and it needs gradual policy in the political and cultural reforms, revealing a disrespectful look at all segments of people<sup>6</sup>.

Thus, in the midst of these political, social and economic transformations, the regime provided a religious discourse, holding lectures and religious ceremonies, encouraging the sheikhs to work in devoting the traditional religiosity popular, and to contribute directly or indirectly, to promote the political and social agendas of the Baathist regime, where a lot of them discoursed the political system as (secular Baathist Syria) which facing spread of veiled universally secular through imposition of the international regime for its "fake" morals and values of democracy on the Syrian society; especially after the US invasion of Iraq, which made them mention the central role of the Assad regime in the theme of "resistance", so they held conferences and walked marches to the embassies, and thanked the regime to revive the institutes of Assad for memorizing holy Quran and advocacy centers<sup>7</sup>.

In 2002 had a precedent in Syrian politics when Bashar al-Assad visited Sheikh of "Zaid group," Osama al-Rifai, unlike the Syrian political tradition, where the sheikhs visit the president, in an apparent attempt to contain some religious currents.

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it license from its funder ( cartoonist Ali Farzat, who was born in Hama 1951), and he won many Arab and international awards.

<sup>5</sup> Azmi Beshara, Syria: ways of pains towards freedom, an attempt in the current history, Beirut: Al-Arabi center for research and studies, copy 1, 2013, p.62

see his interviews in January 2011 with wall street magazine, Interview with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad.

<sup>6</sup> see also: Syria Strongman: Time for 'Reform'

<sup>7</sup> see the following video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eCkb\\_gQ7ew](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eCkb_gQ7ew)

The regime also adopted some of vocabularies with religious content within its speeches in that period, as happened in the University of Damascus in November 10, 2005 while Bashar al-Assad's speech which contained the famous phrase "god save Syria" (a phrase which was written on the walls of Syria as a holy phrase of the "resistant" president, , in an attempt to invest in the state of religious at the popular level

Within the restoration of Syria's strong position in the global political scene, as we have mentioned, there was a severe back for the passive approach, where it was drafting a number of new laws aimed at more accurate regulating for financial flows of private charities, it has been developed a greater control over sheikhs who were prevented from assuming the presidency of charities<sup>8</sup>. Other examples for changing the regime position towards the religious phenomenon in Syria is preventing Qubaisiate from their meetings at houses and taking them out to the mosques under the intelligence oversight in 2006, the excelling of 1200 excavated from the Ministry of Education in 2010, and restrictions of the regime backed again to control the details of the religious scene according to the developments in the local and international scene .

In return for this emphasis in the religious and the political fields, the regime went to re comprehensive economic restructuring, and sought to move the Syrian economy from a socialist economy to liberalize the economy, which was known as the economy of the "social market"; foreign investment were attracted and special banks, investment funds, companies and private mobile communications were established and the tourism sector was growing.

economic figures were brought which worked in international institutions such as Abdullah Dardari (who born in 1963, and was Deputy Prime Minister for economic Affairs from 2006 to 2011), and he was tasked to create this shift.

Economic liberalization process led to complicated relations between the new capital which made up from security personnel and politicians in the ruling power and new business men layer, characterized by some religious

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<sup>8</sup> Taji Donker: the face of uncertainty: the dynamics of the relationship between the Sunni community and the Syrian regime, translation: Hamza Yassin, 01 December / December 2016.

nature, such as the businessman Mohamed Hamsho, who formed an alliance with religious scholars and sheikhs as the latter justified these alliances under the pretext of necessity knows no law.

On the external front, the regime was sought clearly to provide a modern appearance for his head, it has been focusing heavily on Western culture of the young president and elegance of his Wife Asma al-Assad, their modern scientific component, and the relative openness to civil society and civic organizations with their cultural and social activities, which Asma Al-Assad adopted their values and quotes through her developmental activities and a youth associations, such as "Ferdous", "Shabab" and "Masar" and "Rwafed of cultural development" and "the Syrian Center for Research on development", which merged in 2007 under what was called the "Syria Trust for development."

The time scale for this study is Limited in monitoring the aspects of the Sunni religious situation and the official tolerated in the period between receipt of President Bashar al-Assad to power in June 2001 until the start of the revolution in March 2011, which is called (the last decade) in this study.

The study relies in the descriptive and analytical approach in addition to comparative causal which the religious aspect can be understood through it, and the reasons for increasing or decreasing in each period of the rule of the Baath regime in the last decade, depending on the global, local, and regional balances, which can be considered a measure for the transformation of the Syrian regime politically, economic and socially

The study was based on live field observations backed by the personal involvement of some religious and cultural events, Views and audio interviews conducted by the authors of this study, which is characterized by objectivity character and makes it closely to reality, and It came back to a lot of studies and research involved in this field, noting the predominance of the theoretical side academic on them.

## Activate means and tools of advocacy

### 1-Islamic book and tape

The last decade had rebound in markets of religious books, tapes, CDs, in conjunction with the spread of the Internet and social networking sites and the spread of religious and scientific information through them. In addition to the advisory opinions on air by the satellite channels that facilitated access to information without reference to the sheikhs and scholars; the Internet was a platform for religious education and the paper book decline comparing to the regular book, and the individual learning which were spreaded rather than the collective learning.

The regime allowed granting license to some publishing houses which have religious characteristics despite being follow the Brotherhood group historically such as Dar Al-Qalm which founded a publishing home in the capital, Damascus.

It was also allowed to sell books for Syrian or non-Syrian intellectual figures form the Muslim Brotherhood group, such as Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, Dr. Mustafa Sibai, Sheikh Mohammed al-Ghazali, Abdul Qadir Awdah and others

Al-Assad book fair which was held annually in the capital Damascus was a great opportunity for seekers of the Islamic writers to get the banned books such as books of Sayed Qutb and his brother, Muhammad Qutb, where a large proportion of sales recorded for religious book. The diversion of some publishing houses participating in Al-Assad fair of these books with juicy formally.

Not only books of Brotherhood symbols which the Syrian regime fought a bloody conflict against them, but it was very surprising that visitors can get the books of Ibn Taymiyyah and other masters of the Salafist call, who dealt sharply with minorities classified as "esoteric".

But it was notable that regulatory books of Muslim brotherhoods were still banned such as books of Sheikh Saeed Hawa , Adnan Saad al-Din , Issam al-Attar and others, what makes us closer to the conclusion it was noted that the system was being too lenient with books of Brotherhood symbols which have public Islamic issues such as Sunna issues ,its importance , Shura Council , the call of Islam , the ethics of law and the Muslim creed

without regulatory partisan issues ; which means that it has been lenient with literature containing extreme radical content in judging regimes and minorities without allowing books that affect organizational and partisan affairs even it was moderate.

The situation of Islamic books is the same to Islamic tape and CD which are commonly sold in various Syrian regions in conjunction with the prevalence of new young advocates in the Arab world, such as the Egyptians Amr Khalid and Khaled Al-Jundi, with the spread of Islamic satellite channels that provided untraditional religious attractive content in terms of form (such as the Saudi channel(Iqraa) and Al-Resala channel which follows Rotana company.

The topics of Islamic tape were various with different issues, such as the Palestinian issue and the invasion of Iraq as an entry point for criticism the political situation in the Arab world and the state of abandonment that are exposed to both Iraqi and Palestinian issues, morality and chastity, preserve women and save Muslim from myths, and the call to follow Sunna and Development Islamist psychology skills.

In the same context, the religious song became popular at weddings and parties as well as the religious, resistant and Canticle associated with some of the events and the anniversary<sup>9</sup> such as the Prophet's birth and Israa and Meraaj.

some sheikhs also got several concessions, including the widespread use of technical means starting to Web sites and CD-ROMs that have helped to spread the Awareness religious discourse widely, to the visual media such as television, and radio programs, like the program of Dr. Mohammed Rateb Al-Nabulsi, which was broadcast daily morning on the radio.

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<sup>9</sup> It is worth mentioning that the major restaurants in Syria affected by the religiosity, such as restaurants on the outskirts of the capital as a gateway of Damascus, which abstained to sale alcohol in addition to the existence of prayer places inside the restaurants, the restaurant of Deek al-Jeen Homs which its owner sensed, "that there is a religiosity in the city, so he tried to respond flexibly. " See: life and death of a restaurant named Deek Al-Jeen

## 2-Allow visits of advocates to Syria

Some advocates and famous sheikhs visited Syria, including the Egyptian Sheikh Mohammed Youssef al-Qaradawi in April / April 2004 and in 2009, the Saudi advocates, Aeyed Al-Qarni.

It has also been allowed to channel of (Toyour Al-Jannah) which follows the Muslim brotherhood to make concerts and festivals in the public galleries in Aleppo and Homs, also the Yemeni advocates Habib Ali Jafri in 2004 by an official invitation from the Abu Nour compound, and in 2009 under the auspices of some traders of Damascus (Sahloul family), where sessions, ceremonies and religious lessons were held to him in the Umayyad mosque and several mosques

## phenomenon of conservative schools, and reactivate the mosque

### 1-Spread of conservative schools

Under various names such as Tallae'e Al-Nour and Al-Thanaa schools (in Homs), creativity (in Aleppo) and other names, the regime has allowed in the last decade to establish a number of conservative schools which admitted the Syrian education curriculums with religious extras, whether in the nature of scientific additive or in the general atmosphere of the institution such as Omar bin Abdul Aziz school in Damascus, the typical school charity in Homs. Also, it was allowed to open kindergartens marked by religious character clearly.

It is worth mentioning that these schools are not the same to informal legitimacy high schools that rely legitimate intensive curriculum, they are schools which awarded high school certificates, and qualifies its graduates to enter public and private universities.

It was notable that these private schools owned and managed by families and personalities mostly belong to the bourgeoisie class and their fees were high compared to the average of individual income in Syria were nevertheless achieved a high profit, which means that the spread of religion at the time was not limited to the poor class, and these schools achieved a distinct presence in the educational field, especially among the urban conservative middle class and among some officials (including senior officers ) due to the efficiency of its teaching staff , the high teachers'

salaries compared to the salaries of their counterparts in public schools and the quality of their facilities and infrastructure.

This indulgence policy in the last decade contrasted with the regime's policy in the era of Assad's father, which prohibited any educational institution outside the formal framework. The Syrians know that the Syrian regime has made the (subject of religious education) given by these new schools special interesting, while it was a very minor subject in the Syrian curricula, where it had two lessons weekly, with low grades, and the results of this subject were not included in the overall total for the students of secondary certificate, so it did not benefit them in the trade-off for the registration in the university, so they were not a field of academic interest<sup>10</sup>. Despite the regime allowing the international schools in the last decade which adopt another curriculums that is different from the Syrian education one, such as the famous International Schools of Choueifat and despite the excess religious of the official limit contained in the atmosphere and the lessons of conservative schools, but the latter (such as Marj Al-Zouhor<sup>11</sup> school which was founded in Damascus 2002) managed to attract some members of the Syrian ruling elites with secular orientation, whether military or economic

## **2-Building mosques and Holy Quran memorization institutes**

The rate of the construction mosques in the last decade increased from what it was in the time of Assad the father, due primarily to the speed of issuing building licenses compared to the previous period and to increase the demand for mosques among the youth who left their beards freely within the state of religiosity, which became popular in the Arab region. It was notable to specialize places for prayer in the commercial markets, restaurants, tourist facilities and even in universities such as university of Damascus and Aleppo.

It was allowed to build mosques in the mixed religiously towns, as happened in Homs

<sup>10</sup> from scaling the subject of (religion) in Syria to cancel it, educational curricula to serve the regime, Syrian net, August 8th, 2016

<sup>11</sup> It is known that Marj Al-Zouhor is related to the village southern of Lebanon which 415 Islamic Palestinian activists exiled to it from the western bank and Gaza strip on 17th January, 1992, they belong to Hamas and Islamic jihad movement.

Furthermore, the high number of mosques ,at some events, such as the last ten days of Ramadan, the opening hours of the mosques have increased and have not been adhered to close them between prayers and sometimes hours extended from evening prayers at dawn prayers.

Although the establishment of "Assad institutes for the memorization of the Quran," dating back to the era of President Hafez al-Assad, but their activities have intensified in the last decade so unlike the state they were in prior to the receipt of President Bashar al-Assad. the regime that has wanted to achieve two objectives: first, emphasis on the adoption of the of religiosity aspects Although the secular state, and the second those institutes represented most suitable place for practicing preachers and sheikhs their spiritual and educational roles, it has been entrusted with some of these institutes manage to considerable social personalities were able to maintain a distance from the regime which kept its prestige and status of the prestigious such as Sheikh d. Mohamed Nur desk (born in Aleppo in 1965 and killed under torture in 2012) who was a member of the committee of supervising the Assad koranic institutes in Aleppo

## Islamic banks and solidarity insurance companies

To understand the changing economic situation in the last decade in Syria and its relations with the socio-economic and political scene, it has to remind that the only development pattern adopted by the regime embodied in the authoritarian model of economic liberalization after he abandoned the socialist economy.

Syria has seen in the last decade a number of developments in favor to allow the private sector to enter the area which were banned, among them because it were dominated banks , and insurance companies , as have dominated various government banks with all kinds of banking sector in the past, the General Insurance Corporation and acted unilaterally in the insurance field.

And that the regime later allowed to enter the Islamic banks and insurance companies, taking advantage from the state of popular religiosity and the success of Islamic banking in occupation an important place in the

banking sector at the regional level and even the international. Sham Islamic Bank was established in September 2006 to be the first Syrian Bank which has a legitimate body that has the right to supervise the overall work and adopted the Islamic law, followed by Syria International Islamic Bank in September 2007, and Al Baraka Bank in 2010, after allowing the private sector to involve in the banking field in Syria after the issuance of law related to private and joint banks in 2001, and the decree of creating Islamic banks in 2005. the subscription

on these three banks has achieved a turnout surpassed the required amount<sup>12</sup>

solidarity company of Aqeela also founded in 2007 as an Islamic alternative to commercial insurance, so that "solidarity insurance contract is devoid of any of things that invalidate contracts<sup>13</sup> in Islamic law," then "the Syrian Islamic Insurance".

It was noted a strong turnout, because these banks gave solutions to the dilemmas they encounter Syrian religious groups who were ashamed to deal with the existing banks on interest-based basis.

Although the opening of the Islamic banks is part of economic liberalization led by Bashar al-Assad at the start of his rule but it has a political dimension in the context of the efforts by the regime to meet the desires of the religious categories, and the religious sector in Syria; the president of Sharia Supervisory Board in Syria International Islamic Bank since its inception and Al Baraka Bank is Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Ghouddah (1940)<sup>14</sup>, also Dr. Wahbah Al-Zouhaili (born in Deir Atiyah 1932 to 2015, head of the Department of Islamic jurisprudence and doctrines at Damascus University, Faculty of Sharia) was president of the Sharia Supervisory Board in Sham Islamic Bank.

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<sup>12</sup> Baraka bank in Syria:

<http://www.albaraka.com.sy/Home/AboutUs/EstablishedtheBank/tabid/92/language/ar-SY/Default.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> what is the solidarity insurance? website of Aqeela company.

<sup>14</sup> Son of Shaikh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghouddah (Aleppo 1917-1997), he was the former observation of Syrian Muslim brotherhood

## Social cultural activities, and charities

charities with Religious nature and links have seen a remarkable recovery in recent years that preceded the outbreak of the revolution, both at the geographical level or quantitative level; With the late nineties, the government gradually began to reduce the severity of the obstacles imposed on charities, and knew activity in the light of the crisis area charity<sup>15</sup> economic experienced by the regime. In the context of the steps taken to liberalize the economy to move towards a "social market", the regime has encouraged charities and social activists to work without interfering in political life.

New charities are becoming less local, as it is now operating on an urban or regional level, instead of the neighborhood level, such as Al-Afyeh fund, which is a project of the Federation of charities in Damascus, the number of beneficiaries increased to about nine-fold, from 536 in 1997 to 4.455 beneficiaries in 2006.

<sup>16</sup>Activity of charities have included a lot of fields such as ; health (Al-Berr hospital in Homs and the Health Assembly in Harasta -Damascus countryside) , social (care for orphans , to facilitate the marriage, Al-Mawaddah and Al-Rahmah fund<sup>17</sup>, " catering "Save Grace Project" and the participation of the Ministry of Awqaf in preparation of the tables for official breakfast in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus), benevolence (poor subsidy and to sponsoring orphans and students combat begging as in Berr association for social services in Homs ).

The group of Zaid (due to the mosque of "Zaid ibn Thabet), founded by Sheik Abdul-Karim al-Rifai (1904-1973), in alliance with the" sheikhs of Al-Maidan neighborhood "in Damascus, has a dual role in the popular religiosity:

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15 Thomas Perret and Kjetil Slavic, "authoritarian limits of modernization in Syria: the private social security, Islamic charities, and the rise of Zaid group ", translated by Ahmad nazer-Atassi,16 th October 2016.

16 Laura Ruiz de Oliveira and Tina Zantl, the end of the Baathist social contract in Syria, Bashar al-Assad: Reading in the political and social transformations through charities, translation: Habib Haj Salem, October / 02 October 2016

17 "Annual expenditures increased to fund of Mawaddah and Rahma from 2.7 million SP (about \$ 60,000) in 2002 to 22.1 million SYP (about \$ 500,000) in 2006".

First role: social charity, where it had a big role in establishment of a charitable and social associations which were a compensation for the state's responsibility to address the problems of poverty and unemployment in Syria, but it was still limited within middle-class, which is directly linked to those religious groups and Sufi trends.

The second role: advocate to recall the need to apply the law of God in worship, transactions and behaviors, which was practiced freely in mosques, zikr sessions and prophet's birth ceremonies in Damascene houses.

This advocacy role had an active religiously impact parallel to the official religious institutions.

It has been licensed to some private cultural associations concerned with the affairs of thought, heritage and raise awareness in accordance with the conservative backdrop which can be felt by examining the trustees' names or holders of its license, an example is the "Al-Asala cultural association" in Homs which was a model of Civil voluntary activities aimed to provide events and activities affecting various aspects of society according to the unmistakable conservative vision<sup>18</sup>.

The re-opening of the social and charity accusation for Islamic civilization, under the supervision of Sheikh Moaz al-Khatib al-Hassani (Damascus, 1960), which adopted the approach adopted the evidence from the Quran and Sunnah with a deep awareness of the purposes of the law, and openness and cooperation with all Islamic movements, without lock and intolerance, with keen interest in the conditions of the nation and to fill gaps at every level, and a deep awareness of the message of Islam and its universality.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Where the volunteers met students of the seventh grade and explained to them the consequences and the effects of smoking, and they distributed printed brochures explaining the dangers of smoking legitimacy and related provisions, as the Assembly requested from each student at the end of the meeting, signed on a voluntary basis on a promise not to submit to smoke throughout his life, whatever the reasons." , site of Homs, November 11, 2008,

<http://www.esyria.sy/ehoms/index.php?p=stories&category=ideas&filename=200811111515024>

<sup>19</sup> The association was founded in 1933 and issued its magazine in 1935, and which carried the features of the Salafist reformist with maintaining good relations with intellectual and other trends, also suggests name assembly itself is framed modernism according to the template and the Islamic pattern, indicating that put a different

The regime also allowed the opening of a branch office for the International Islamic Forum for Dialogue in Damascus, which is "a non-profit organization founded in 1996 to advance the mission of dialogue , consolidate its concepts and put controls , mechanisms and identifying the necessary means to achieve constructive objectives of the dialogue and to coordinate among Islamic organizations in this field", headed by Dr. Muhammad Habash<sup>20</sup>.

Among the cultural currents, the ideas of the Jawdat Said group were spread (born in 1931, his book: the problem of violence in the Islamic Action)

In the last decade of the twentieth century, which the most prominent principles is to devote philosophy of nonviolence, and held a number of lectures to spread this philosophy, as they were held many literary salons in the elites Damascene educated houses (Women's Salons, and other mixed ) to discuss the concerns of the Syrian individual through this the principle by inviting educated figure , sheikh, or religious scholars from all Islamic sects and even non-Muslim, to emphasize the culture of non-violence, tolerance, compassion and coexistence between the spectra of the Syrian society.

## Governmental institutions, and the leniency with the conservative voices

during the rule of Hafez Al-Assad, members of parliament were chosen carefully to ensure there are no dissenting vote, where the task of the security branches to prepare lists of candidates who did not assigned, but the regime in the last decade allowed some people with the background a chance to run for the legislative elections, it was encouraged by a professor of al-hadeeth at the Faculty of law in Damascus dr. Nour el-Deen Al-Atter (Aleppo, 1930).

religiosity typical. It closed on the aftermath of the bloody confrontation between the Syrian regime and the Muslim Brotherhood

<sup>20</sup> International Islamic Forum for Dialogue.

The candidates for Syrian parliament were dr. Muhammad Habash, and dr. Abdul Salam Rajeh Dean of Faculty of Sharia and Law in Complex of Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro. In Homs, the young Sheikh Abdul Salam Muhammad candidates for election. In Aleppo, also a list called the group of 36 which all its members were Halaby young from high class families of Aleppo. (Some Of them were arrested due to being candidate to election)

That was an indication to the beginning of the regime indulgence with some religious symbols who run to the political field on the one hand, and the desire of those to deal positively with the regime and to participate in political action.

On the other hand, usually routinely that the Ministry of Awqaf and ordered its directorates to an old figure which spent ages in the professional bureaucracy endowments. This reality has changed with the appointment of Mohammed Abdul Sattar Al-Sayeed as the deputy Minister of endowments in 2002 and then as minister of endowments. The consequent activation of Endowments Directorates activities in the provinces, which also have too young figures such as Ghazwan Halo in Homs, which led to the intensification of religious events on occasions such as religious awareness weeks in Ramadan.

## Escalating the aspects of feminist religiosity

### (Al-Qubaisiategroup for example)

Aspects of religiosity in Syrian women's circles are an integral part of the religious system in Syria structurally and ideologically; the feminist religious groups were working within the official religious establishment and allowed them to exercise their activities within the specified lines by the regime and the security services, according to the international and domestic political transformations.

the most prominent aspects of religiosity was the feminist group Qubaisiate founded by Sheikh Munira Al-Qubaisi (1933), which studied at the Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro, who supported her formally and legitimately , and then Dr. Bouti supported her by religious and educational guidance

Qubaisiate group characterized by its proximity to the traditional religious schools in Syria, in Damascus particularly; such as Al-Fateh institute, a complex of Abu Nur, and community Zaid group.

The group relies on advocacy and education Ziker and the jurisprudence of worship , teaching the Koran and incitement to hijab (which is often spread among girls) and embryogenesis of Islamic morality without addressing the terms of reference of a high scientific level, or the slightest interest in political issues.

Given the tendency of Syrian society to religiosity ,the movement widely accepted by the Syrian-rich conservative houses especially in Damascus, Homs, Hama, and most of its activities were limited to cities without the Syrian countryside, except Damascus countryside, which recorded a big presence.

Qubaisiate have controlled of a large segment of private schools and representatives of this group Spreaded in the general field around Syrian.

The Syrian regime allowed them to practice teaching in mosques after they were working at home since 2006. The group had wide criticism from both the Salafist and secularists, such as they followed the Naqshbandi Shazali way, depending on the fear, and encourage girls to reject marriage, and the relationship of blind obedience among Sheikha / Miss and students, which were in some cases as sanctification

It is understood that students of Munira Al- Qubaisi conceived their approach in the neighboring countries and the Gulf states, they are Tabaiat in Jordan relative to Fadia Al-Tabaa, Al-shariat in Lebanon relative to the Sahar Halabi, and daughters of Bayader in Kuwait. the most prominent representatives of the group is Amira Gabriel sister of the Secretary-General of the Popular Front for Palestine Liberation - General Command, Ahmed Jibril, which support later the Syrian regime against the Syrian revolution, and dr. Salma Ayyash which became Deputy Minister of Awqaf Dr. Mohammed Abdul Sattar, Al-Sayyed. in Damascus 2014.

## phenomenon of Salafi model

In contrast the popular religiosity of a Sufi Ashari trend that dominated the educational scene is religious in Syria and confined to learn Fqih, worship and moral education, there is the Salafist movement based the Wahhabi or Syrian Salafi reformism that has grown in the early twentieth century by Jamal al-Din Al-Qassimi, Bahjat Al-Bitar and Tahir Al-Jazaeri

The institute of Zahra for legal sciences and the mosque followed it (Dak Al-Bab mosque in Damascus) and the Institute of the largest Mouhadeth Badr al-Din al-Hassani who had a major role in spreading the Salafi ideology in Syria, where those two institutions interested in revision the Sunnah and fighting against superstition and spreading of the faith according to the perception of the Ahel Al-Hadeth.

During the last decade turns, Syria has witnessed some leniency in dealing with literature and behaviors of the Salafi movement; it was noted in the annual book fair, for example, a heavy presence of a number of books of Ibn Taymiyyah, the Albanian, Ibn Baz and Ibn Othaimeen.

also it has been allowed to establish Eid prayers at the foot of Qassioun Mountain near the presidential palace imamate famous Sheikh Salafi safe Hammoush for several years and the presence of a large number of worshipers, and the Friday sermons delivered by Hammoush itself in the Mosque of Hassan behind the Le Meridien in the capital Damascus, an indication of the growth of the phenomenon Salafist and attracting youth sliced wide, and can be linked to Hammoush phenomenon of the phenomenon of the rise of Salafism in some areas Syrian such as always with the Hanbali school and the eastern region, particularly in Deir al-Zour province clan link with Saudi Arabia.

The Salafist call activates in the eastern region, especially in Deir El-Zour , and its countryside were opened a number of libraries on the sale of the Salafi writers such as Imam Bukhari library in the city of Deir El-Zour (opened in 2001)<sup>21</sup>, as well as Imam Shafi'i records, and in the border town

<sup>21</sup> Audio recording of a meeting with Mr. Khaled Al-Hammad son of the eastern region and the Salafi activist in that period, and currently chairs the originality and Development Front, the opposition to the regime

of Abu Kamal with Iraq, project of Iftar which he has done some youth advocates Salafist to distribute reached 1,200 meals daily .

Ma'shuq Khiznawi one of the founder of the way Alkhoznoah (Izz El-Deen al-Khiznawi 1925-1992) also helped the intellectual change shown in (1958- 2005), which deployed in the eastern region towards the rejection of "the excesses of the way" and mistakes in supporting the path of the Salafi ideology and strengthen its authority in front of his opponents

The Cultural Attaché in Saudi Arabia and the Trustees of the library had a major role in supporting the Salafi ideology in various regions of Syria by facilitating Salafi books and distributed free of charge starting from Douma and Bu Kamal through Homs and Al-Salmyah in the eastern countryside of Hama , where it had Salafists spreading after some of its sons became Sunni on the Salafi approach, in spite of some of the security pressures and provocations repeated by dr. Bouti the opponents of the Salafi ideology.

## Conclusion

The regime in Syria did not hesitate in the exploitation the popular Sunni religiosity and using the religious discourse and rehired it in favor of fixing the domestic political legitimacy

It was resorting to the sheikhs of the popular and middle classes who are representatives of popular religiosity incapacitated owners cognitive authority-religious proportional and inversely with the need to them in controlling social equilibria the light of the political developments at the local, regional and international, as happened after the events of September 11, 2001 / September and the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005 and the departure of the Syrian troops from Lebanon after this level.

The regime also used the emerging and fast-religiosity in quantity and quality as an external bargaining to intimidate the international community to go this rise to its maximum and the growth of religious currents "militant" form a threat to Western interests in the region and be an alternative non grata, following the swap "extremism" stable approach. It was expected of this religious boarding that involves a lot of demagoguery and dogmatism and delinquency extremism in the absence coincided with a political breakthrough or opening up an intellectual

capable of rationalization, what is easy on the system continuing to barter approach, and like out thousands of demonstrators in Damascus and burned to the embassies of Denmark and Norway in 2006 under the security cover in response to the caricatures of the Prophet and paper manipulation system "jihadist" in Iraq and Lebanon (Nahr al-Bared), a practical application of this approach.

The cases of inaction and screwing which dominated the last decade in Syria had effects and shadows later reflected in attitudes taken by the various popular and elite religious currents of the revolution, while the official religious institutions remained alongside with the regime as expected, the attitudes of the other religious actors of the revolution and revolved mostly in a positive circle, monitoring cases of defection against the backdrop of the attitudes, as happened in the ranks of some Qubaisiate

An important part of this period activists were engaged (elitist, reformist, Salafism and Sufism) in the revolution since its beginning, many of them held senior positions in the political and military formations, civil and Islamic organizations and bodies that emerged from the revolution. In conclusion, we can say that the protest flashes underlying that calls of this period returned again with the revolution but with stronger momentum and effectiveness of the most active free of restrictions and controls of the last decade.



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